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Africa's Waste Management Crisis



Waste generation in Africa to triple by 2050: From 174M → 500M+ tons/year

Only 55% of waste is collected; with 90% collected waste dumped or burned

Forms 57% organic, 13% plastic – high potential for composting & recycling

Inadequate infrastructure & policy gaps block solutions

Urgent investment can turn crisis into sustainable growth

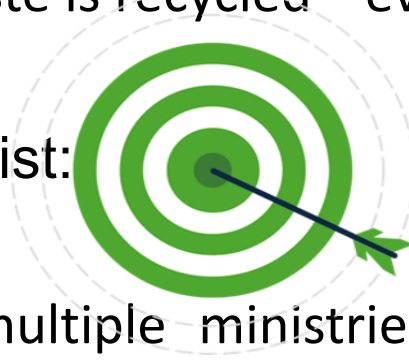
Why Act Now?

- Every day, poor waste management threatens lives, pollutes our environment, and weakens cities.
- Yet, the overlooked informal waste sector already prevents thousands of tons of CO₂ emissions, keeps streets cleaner, and supplies recycled materials that rely on waste resources.
- Ignoring the problem fuels disease outbreaks—cholera, malaria, dengue fever, etc. It contaminates the water and the air we depend on.
- Acting now means harnessing existing solutions, protecting public health, and building resilient, sustainable cities.
- The cost of delay is measured in lives, not just dollars.

Barriers Across Africa

- Poor waste management costs Africa billions of dollars annually.
- Municipal and local governments spend over 30% of their revenues on waste services.
- Yet, only 4% of municipal solid waste is recycled—even though about 70% is recyclable.

However, significant barriers persist:



- **Fragmented governance**, with multiple ministries (environment, local government, health, industry) and unclear mandates.
- **Inadequate financing** and severe data gaps on waste quantities and composition.
- **Outdated laws and weak enforcement** undermine compliance.
- **Technology mismatch**, with imported energy-intensive solutions (e.g., incinerators) often unsuitable for local waste streams and difficult to maintain.

What is Being Done?

Policy Priorities	Key Interventions
AU's Agenda 2063, Goal 7 , which aspires for environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient economies within African communities.	Decision by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment in July 2025 for AUDA-NEPAD and development partners to foster policy coherence and resource mobilisation for regional action.
Article 24 of the African Charter emphasises the right to a decent, clean and healthy environment.	African High-Level Panel on Emerging Technologies (APET) encourages African countries to utilise digital and environment-friendly technologies for effective waste material management.
African member states are working towards aligning waste management with their National Determined Contributions (NDC) targets and SDG goals .	Rwanda does not allow in-bound passengers to cross its borders with single-use plastics. All single-use plastic bags are seized and recycled.
Libreville Declaration on Health and Environment in Africa (2008) . It reaffirms African countries' commitment to the implementation of the Bamako Convention.	In 2003, AUDA-NEPAD with the support of UN-HABITAT, implemented the NEPAD Cities Programme. It aimed to address urbanization and development challenges in African cities: Bamako, Douala, Durban, Lagos, Lusaka, Nairobi, and Rabat.
The Bali Declaration (2008) on “Waste Management for Human Health and Livelihood.	Ethiopia utilises the Koshe dump site in Addis Ababa. Transformed this dumpsite into a waste-to-energy plant. Approximately 1,400 tons - accounted for 80% of Addis Ababa's energy supply.
The Bamako Convention (1991) on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa.	Kenya has actively managed waste collection by augmenting the recycling system to approximately 90% of all collected waste material.
The Basel Convention (1989) on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal.	South Africa leverages user-friendly smartphone applications to facilitate prompt service and bill payment through push notifications - enhancing cost-effective waste collection.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- Political will: It is compelling that leadership on waste management starts from the highest political offices within the African countries. Political will is needed for up-scaling the success stories.
- Policy enhancement: Waste management has to be treated as cross-cutting, including into national development plans, NDCs, urban development, public health and industrial policies. Effective implementation and enforcement of waste management-related policies will go a long way in ensuring sustainable waste management.
- Public buy-in: Robust communication that links waste reform to jobs and health is needed for effective waste management. The informal sector needs to be recognised and integrated into larger-scale waste management.
- Regional cooperation: There is a need to harmonize waste and extended producer responsibility standards across borders. This will ensure that countries maintain similar waste management practices.

Thank You