Waste Management and Circular Economy Policy Support: Strengthening capacity for evidence-based policymaking and data-driven circularity
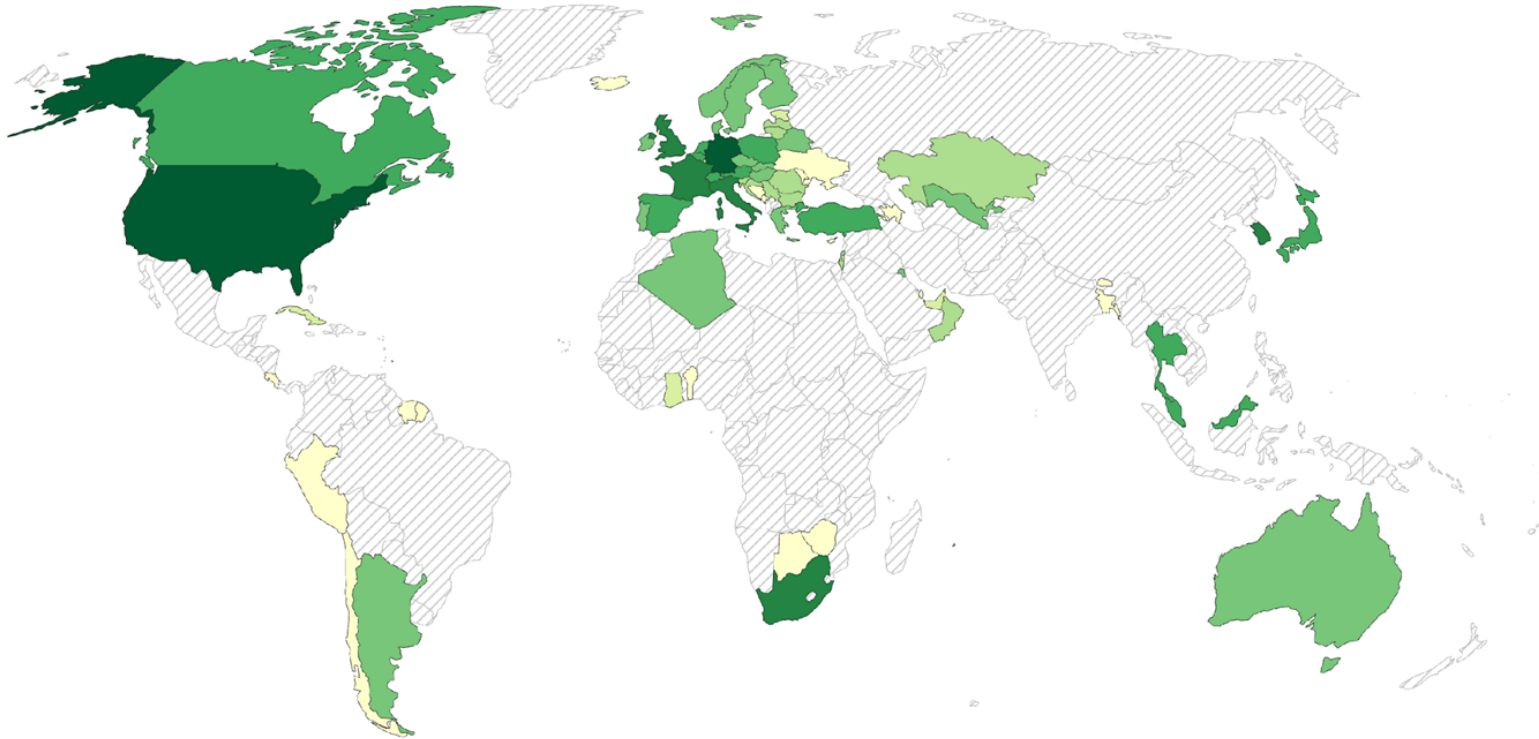
4th ACCP Assembly

Sara Castro-Hallgren,
Team Lead/Sustainable Development Officer
UN Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD),
Division for SDGs, UN DESA

United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs | Office for Sustainable Development

Municipal waste recycled, 2022

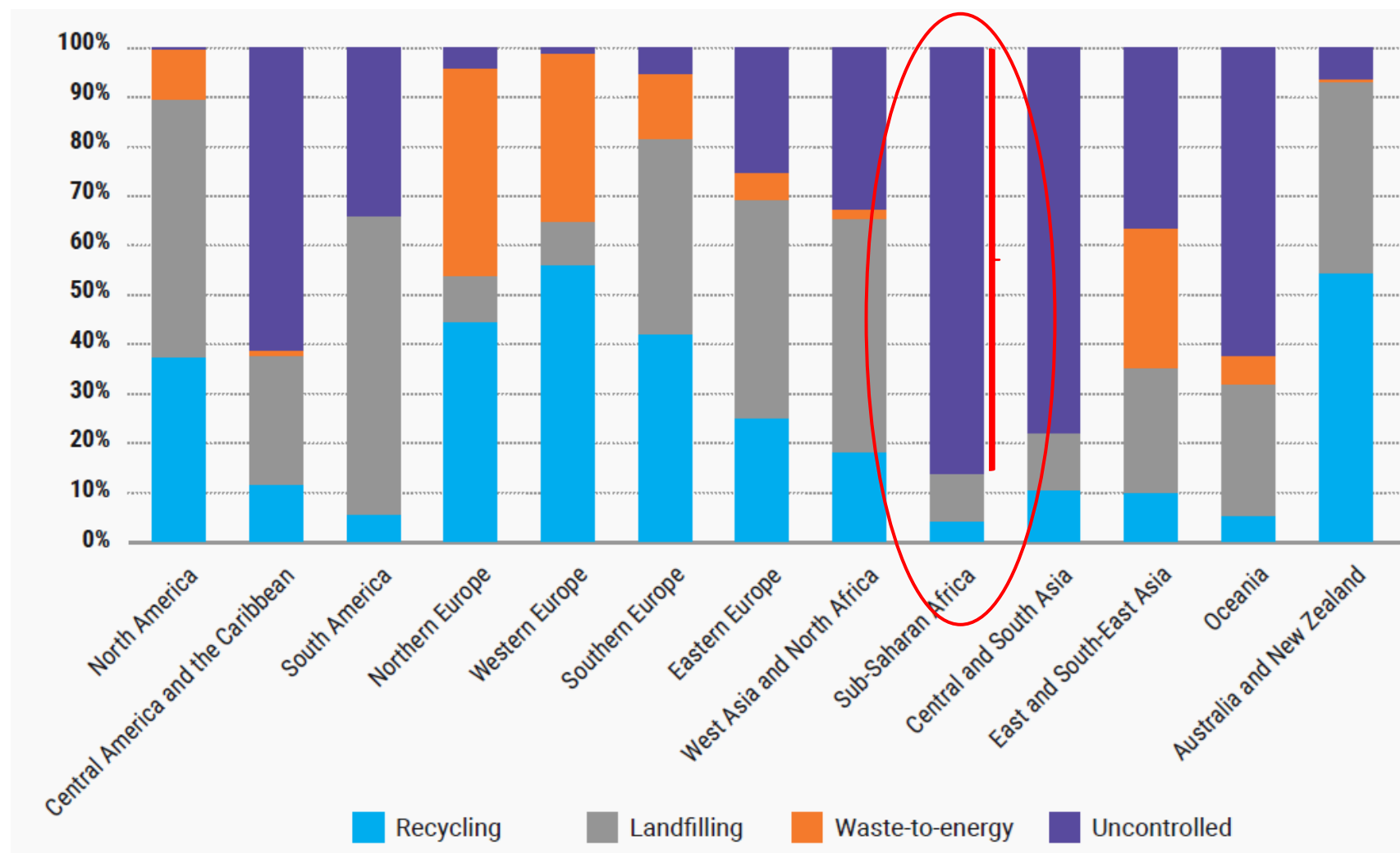Municipal waste is waste from households and businesses, that would be collected by local authorities.

Our World in Data

Lack of data

No data   0 t   100,000 t   300,000 t   1 million t   3 million t   10 million t   30 million t

Regional distribution of municipal solid waste destination (UNEP, 2024 based, 2020 data)[1]

The highest proportions of uncontrolled disposal occur in **Sub-Saharan Africa**, Central and South Asia, Central America and the Caribbean, and Oceania.

Regional distribution of municipal solid waste collection coverage and management in controlled facilities (UNHABITAT, 2023)[1]
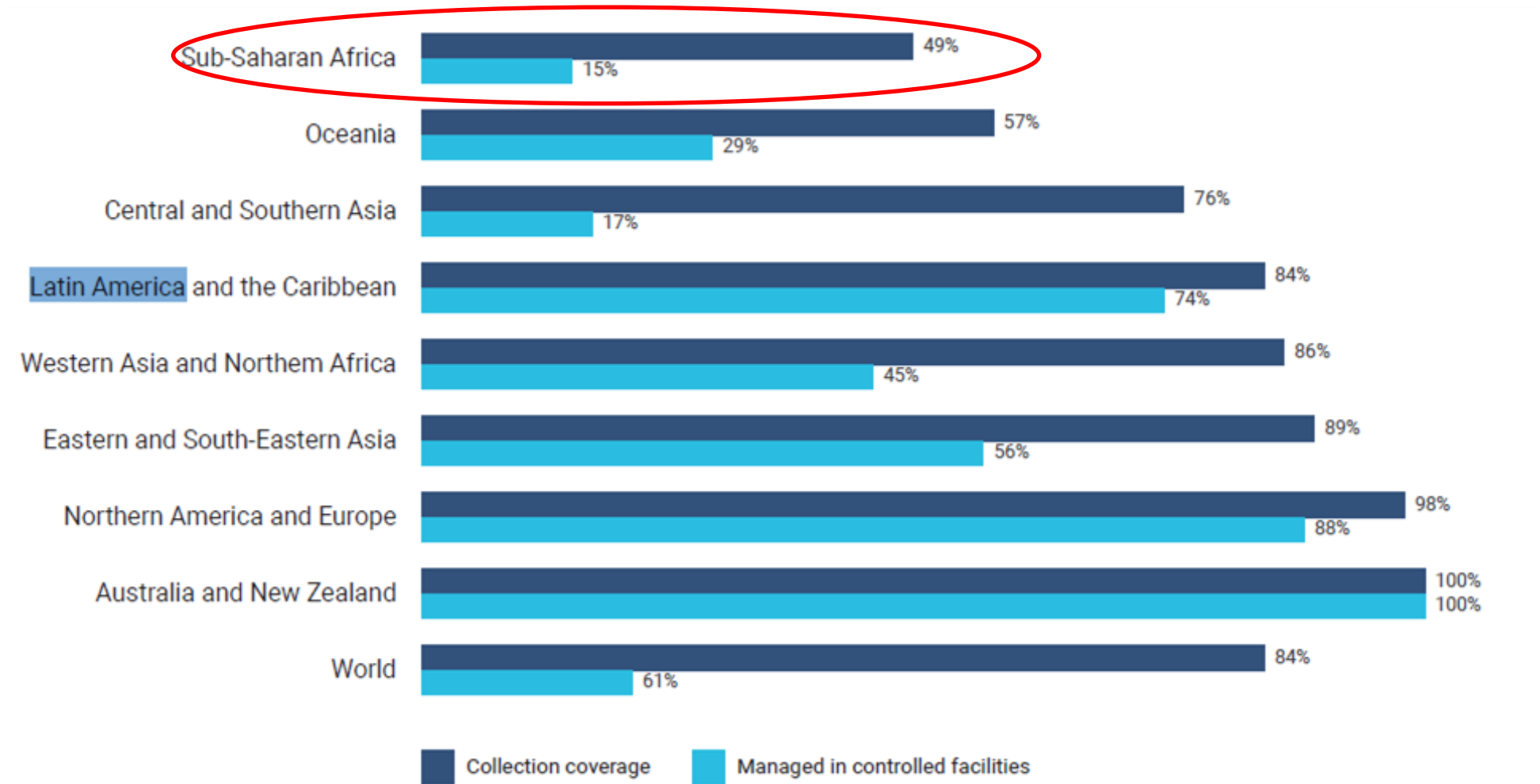
Source: UN-Habitat (2023).

The Growing Waste Crisis: Why Action Is Urgent

~2.1
Billion Tons

Municipal solid waste (MSW) generated annually.

~62
Per Cent

MSW that is managed in controlled facilities globally

~90
Per Cent

Waste in low-income countries that is discarded in unregulated dumps or burned openly

- Plastic waste increased by **126%** between 2000 and 2019

- E-waste reached **62 million tons in 2022** – up **82%** since 2010

- Waste sector contributes **~20%** of human-caused methane emissions

- Absence and quality of national data *Why?*

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Reliable Data: The Foundation for Sound Waste Policy and Finance

15 Years

Average age of waste management data from low-income countries

Accurate waste management data:

- Data helps set baselines and track progress

- Supports resource allocation and investment

- Enables evidence-based decision-making

- Many countries rely on outdated figures

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Why a Waste Management and Circular Economy Policy Support System?

- **March 2023**: UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Zero Waste issues global call to action – Waste and pollution identified as urgent threats to ecosystems and human well-being

- In response: expert group meeting with a co-developed roadmap towards a **practical tool for countries to self-assess their bottlenecks and strengths for progress**
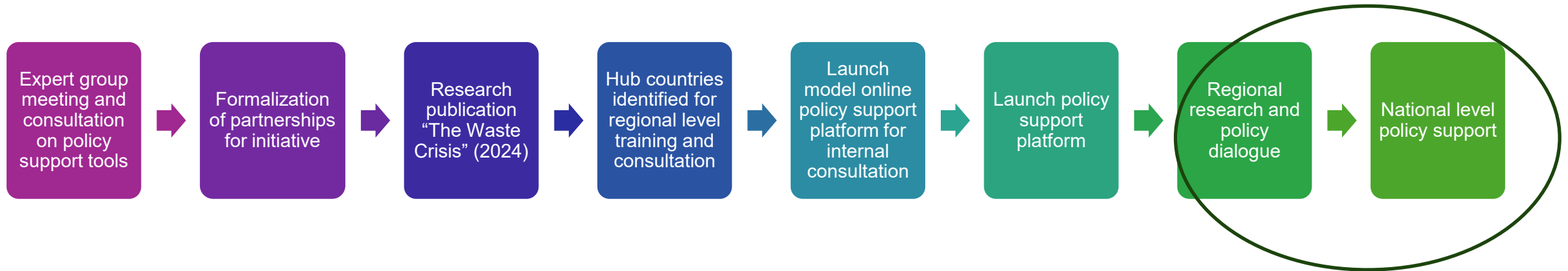
- UNOSD, in partnership with the Green Growth Knowledge Partnership **(GGKP) (UNEP),** the Global Green Growth Institute **(GGGI),** and regional actors held country consultations and developed **the Waste Management and Circular Economy Policy Support System (WMPSS).**

Effective and integrated waste management contributes to all 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Circular economy programmes have achieved results in energy and water, but there is still much to be done in terms of municipal solid waste.

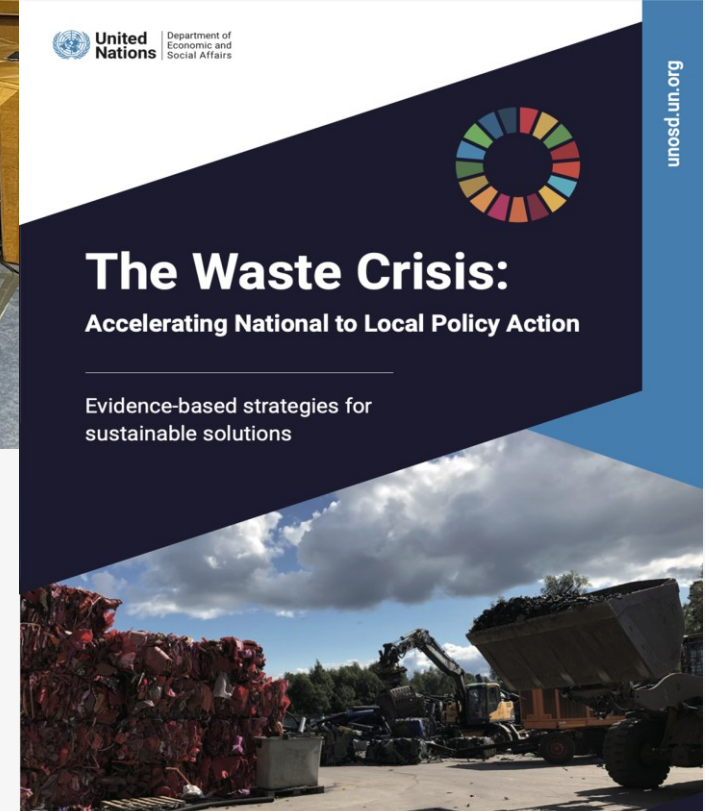Key SDG indicators include 11.6.1, 12.3.1, 12.4.1, 12.4.2, 12.5.1, and 14.1

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

2026 HLPF review

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

14 LIFE BELOW WATER

- **November 2023**: Expert Group Meeting

- **December 2023 onwards:** country and stakeholder consultations (iterative process)

- **July 2024**: Publication and Initiative launched at the **High-Level Political Forum**

- **July 2024-onwards**: Hub countries and partners identified for regional consultations

https://desapublications.un.org/

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The Waste Crisis:
Accelerating National to Local Policy Action

Evidence-based strategies for sustainable solutions

- **2025-onwards**: Pilot platform launched at regional workshops
- **April 2025-Eastern Africa** workshop (Antananarivo)
- **July 2025** – Waste and Circular Economy Study tour for 33 high-level delegations from **Comoros, Ghana, Madagascar, Morocco** (National to local representatives)
- **August 2025-Western Africa** workshop (Accra)
- **2026** - National level policy support – *Data task forces*

Waste Management and Circular Economy Study Tour, Incheon, Republic of Korea, 29 July-1 August 2025, 35 participants from Ghana, Madagascar, Morocco and Comoros

Eastern Africa Sub-Regional Workshop on Waste Management and Circular Economy, Madagascar, Antananarivo, 1-3 April 2025, 50 participants from 12 countries in Eastern Africa

National Policy Support on Waste Management (e.g. Comoros, April 2025)

WMPSS
Waste Management Policy Support System

Waste Management and Circular Economy Policy Support System

Empowering UN Member States to Advance Sustainable Waste Management and Resource Circularity

Click here to start

Led by UNOSD, UN DESA and GGKP | In partnership with GGGI and UNEP | Supported by the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea.

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In partnership with

Supported by

WMPSS   UNOSD   United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs   GGKP   GGGI   UN environment programme   Ministry of Environment

Waste Management and Circular Economy Policy Support System

Embracing Holistic Solutions Beyond Plastics

Component Rank

Component	Score	Percentage
Capacity	70.30	60.6%
Monitoring	82.30	53.1%
Finance	67.75	51.9%
Engagement of key stakeholders	62.00	37.3%
Public Governance	13.00	7.9%

Scoring ratio by Component
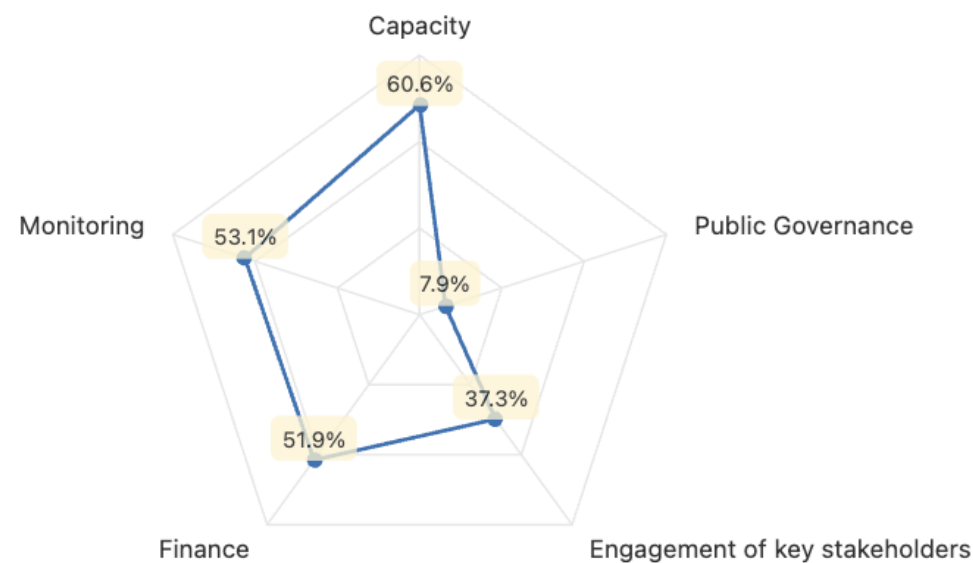
+37 countries and territories in Africa submitted at least one response to the UNSD/UNEP Questionnaire on Waste between 2004-2024 with an upward reporting trend.

Statistics Division

Environment Statistics

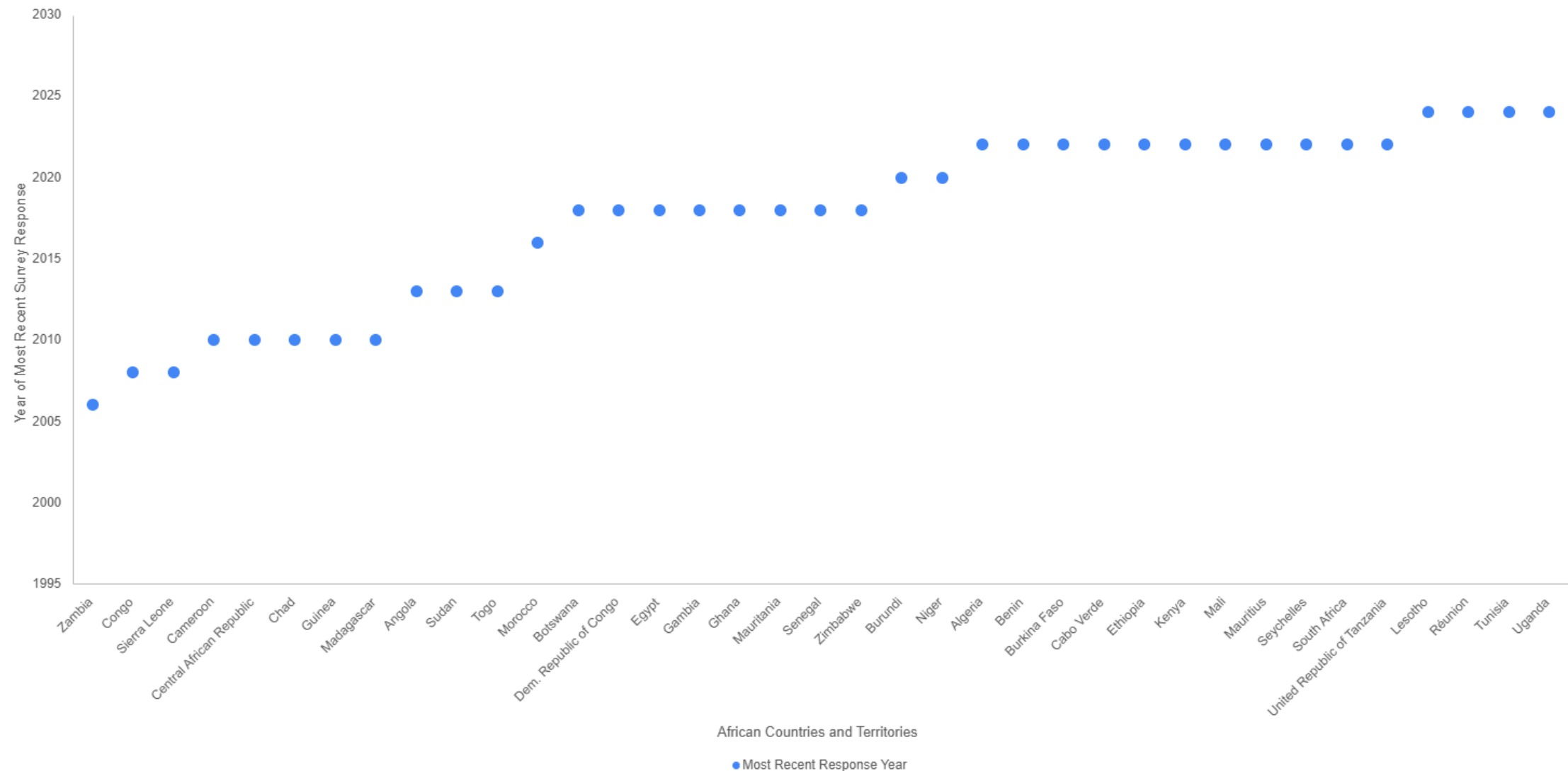Work Programme > Data

Questionnaire on Environment Statistics

The Questionnaire on Environment Statistics is part of the biennial UNSD data collection from all countries except those that are covered by Joint OECD/Eurostat Questionnaire. Definitions used are provided within each Questionnaire. From one collection cycle to the next, content change slightly, for example, to meet new demand such as that related to the Sustainable Development Goal agenda, circular economy, etc. such changes are mentioned within the Introduction of the Questionnaire.

Countries' responses to the Questionnaire are invaluable for monitoring the progress of the below Sustainable Development Goal indicators:

- 6.3.1 (Proportion of domestic and industrial wastewater flow safely treated);
- 6.4.1 (Change in water-use efficiency over time);
- 6.4.2 (Level of water stress; freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources);
- 11.6.1 (Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities out of total municipal waste generated, by
- 12.3.1 (b) (Food waste index);
- 12.4.2 (Hazardous waste generated per capita; and proportion of hazardous waste treated, by type of treatment); and
- 12.5.1 (National recycling rate, tons of material recycled).

The latest round of this Questionnaire was sent to countries in 2024 following 11 previous collection rounds. As much as possible, Questionn are sent on a regular biennial basis to a country's National Statistical Office and Ministry of Environment with request for countries to identify single focal point for communications with UNSD.The next round is planned for 2026.

African Country Responses to UNSD/UNEP Waste Survey (2004 – 2024)

Primary Data Gaps in Developing Countries

Data Gap	Description
Accuracy	Unknown whether data reported is estimated or measured. Unknown accuracy or repeatability of existing measurements.
Classifications	Common classifications of waste and waste types remain an issue.
Full Cost Accounting	Limited knowledge of the operational costs that the city sustains for MSW services. The cost of disposal is often only a small part of the cost of waste.
Indicators	Indicators for obtaining more granular data are either absent or not widely used.
Informal Sector	The informal sector represents a significant part of the waste sector and often does not feature in official data; hence its contribution is not adequately captured.
Information Management Systems	Recording and updating data in information management systems often has a considerable lag time.
Geospatial or Remote Sensing Data	Data collected using more innovating methods such as through satellite or Earth sensing can identify significant methane (CH_4) plume emissions from space. This provides longitudinal and precise data on anthropogenic emission sources from waste (both controlled and uncontrolled).
Longitudinal Data	Data over a long period of time is most useful to observe trends and to develop evidence upon which waste reduction interventions can be based.
Monitoring and Reporting	Lack of sufficiently sophisticated systems to generate data.
Standard Definitions	Lack of standard definitions of what constitutes waste.
Ward Level Data	Lack of data that is more granular than city-level.
Waste Collection Emissions	Greenhouse gas emissions due to motorized waste collections are generally classified under transport emissions rather than waste.
Waste Destination	Rates at which waste is dumped (legally or illegally), incinerated, sent to a landfill, or diverted back into the circular economy (example: composting) is lacking.
Waste other than MSW	Waste streams such as commercial and industrial, e-waste, plastics, marine litter, and hazardous waste are often sparsely reported.

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Policy opportunity - African Union's Continental Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP) for Africa (2024 to 2034)

- November 2024 - Action Plan officially adopted by the AU Ministers (5th Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water, and Environment)
- AMCEN Launch of the Action Plan July 2025
- Targets 8 priority sectors including water, waste, energy and agriculture, and four cross-cutting enablers: inclusivity, trade, education and finance.
- Promotes sustainable growth, local value creation and environmental resilience through coordinated action by the AU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Member States and UN

Next steps:
- Many policy documents exist
- To realize efficiencies and optimize resources we need to focus on **COLLABORATIVE** technical assistance for local implementation.
- Let's work together!

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UN-HABITAT

豊田市 Toyota City

UCLG ASPAC

2025 INTERNATIONAL MAYORS FORUM

Actions Today for a Resilient Future

Toyota City, JAPAN
14-16 October 2025

Contact: hui.kim@un.org

Last words

- Emphasis on country-led assessments and cooperation

- Regional policy dialogue and strengthened SDG reporting

- **National policy support – we want to hear from you!**

Thank you!

Contact: sara.castrohallgren@un.org