



## Addressing plastic pollution for climate action and sustainable development in Uganda

Plastic pollution has become a significant environmental challenge in Uganda, intertwining with climate change and posing serious risks to public health and the country's sustainability. Rapid urbanisation and population growth have led to increased plastic consumption, yet the waste management infrastructure remains underdeveloped. This results in the improper disposal of plastic waste, which accumulates in water bodies, clogs drainage systems, and contributes to flooding.

Most of the plastics in Uganda are single-use, non-biodegradable products. This pollution not only degrades ecosystems but undermines critical economic sectors like agriculture and tourism. For instance, crops are affected by plastic waste that degrades soil quality, while tourism suffers as popular destinations are tainted by visible pollution. Compounding the issue, when plastics are burned (a common waste disposal method in Uganda), harmful toxins are released into the air, exacerbating air pollution and contributing to the greenhouse effect. Without immediate action, plastic pollution will continue to threaten Uganda's efforts towards environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

### Policy challenge

The struggle to effectively address plastic pollution in Uganda stems largely from critical issues of poor policy implementation, underfunding, inadequate infrastructure, and low public awareness.

Although measures like the 2009 ban on *kaveera* (polythene bags) have been introduced, their enforcement has been weak and inconsistent, allowing the continued proliferation of these harmful plastics. Uganda generates approximately 600 tons of plastic waste daily, but only a small fraction is properly managed, with the majority being dumped illegally or disposed of carelessly in urban areas. In Kampala alone, 51,000 tons of plastic waste is produced annually, much of it clogging drainage systems and contributing to severe flooding. While the need for robust waste management solutions is undeniable, the country's waste management infrastructure is inefficient, and recycling initiatives have limited funding. Additionally, limited coordination among key stakeholders and a lack of public awareness have further hindered progress.

For Uganda to tackle plastic pollution effectively, stronger enforcement of existing policies, substantial investments in infrastructure, and widespread public education are crucial steps.

### Stakeholders

- The Ministry of Water and Environment
- National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA)
- Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA)