



National Action Plan to End Plastic Pollution in The Gambia

October 2024



Summary

This report was prepared by Common Seas in collaboration with the Government of The Gambia.

This jointly-funded report supports the mission of The National Environment Agency (NEA) to ensure that The Gambia's environment and natural resources are sustainably managed and conserved for the benefit of all, including future generations – and to increase resilience to climate change.

It underpins the NEA's strong efforts to promote the wellbeing of Gambians through strengthening evidence-based management of natural resources and ecosystems and addressing the threat of plastic pollution to biodiversity.

Additionally, it aids the NEA's objectives to build institutional leadership capacities, enhance stakeholder participation in natural resources management, and strengthen the country's institutional framework to protect people and communities.

Common Seas

Common Seas drives systemic change, creating partnerships to design and deliver resources and solutions that stop the flow of plastic pollution.

Our programmes are centred on

- Leading policy changes through partnerships with governments, providing technical expertise and convening the right stakeholders for action.
- Commissioning research and raising awareness of the human health impacts of plastics to inspire and motivate change.
- Empowering and equipping children, through their schools, to stop the flow of plastic pollution.

We work with countries that are most affected by plastic, particularly SIDS and developing coastal economies, supporting a just transition to a future freed from plastic pollution.

Image: © State of Mic



I am delighted to introduce the *National Action Plan to end plastic pollution in The Gambia.*

Developed in collaboration with Common Seas, it aims to promote the well-being of Gambians by setting out a strategy to reduce The Gambia's annual plastic pollution by 86 percent over the next ten years.

This National Action Plan comes at a time when country-wide action against plastic pollution is urgently needed. Plastic production is projected to double by 2030, with pollution from uncontrolled plastic waste choking our rivers and seas. That's why we're taking strong action now to reduce plastic pollution across The Gambia.

We also have a strong commitment to, and an important role to play in, international efforts to negotiate a robust Global Plastics Treaty, and the policies outlined in this plan will help us deliver on our obligations to address environmental challenges.

Our successful implementation of this National Action Plan is a key step in paving the way for a resilient future, in preparation for an international treaty that will address cross-border challenges.

The Gambia has already developed a wide range of policies aimed at safeguarding our natural world. In 2007, we enacted the Anti Littering Regulation to limit littering of plastics and other waste, and this was followed by the Plastic Bag Order in 2015 to prohibit the importation, sale, manufacture, and use of single use plastic bags.

We have also undertaken practices to maintain biodiversity, and under a new initiative led by the UN Environment Programme, have developed legal, institutional, and policy frameworks needed to protect our valuable ecosystems.

Our willingness to undertake the actions outlined in this action plan is a clear indication of the high priority we place on the reduction, and eventual elimination, of plastic pollution and the effective management of plastic waste.

The Gambia has always taken a progressive position and shown great leadership in mobilizing worldwide efforts to tackle climate change by calling on all responsible countries to take proportional actions.

However, there is still much to do, and plastic pollution still persists as a major problem. While a broad plastics treaty will address the problem of plastic pollution at a global level, this plan is specific to the problems seen in The Gambia and will provide us with the strategies needed to tackle our own pollution.

We are proud to show our commitment to this action plan – a meaningful example of The Gambia's focus on finding ambitious and holistic solutions to finally turning the tide on plastic pollution.

H.E. President Adama Barrow
President of the Republic of The Gambia

Preface by the Honourable Minister from Meccnar

Welcome to the National Action Plan to end plastic pollution in The Gambia, prepared in collaboration with Common Seas and the government of The Gambia.

This action plan will support the mission of The Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources to ensure that The Gambia's environment and natural resources are sustainably managed and conserved for the benefit of all, including future generations.

The United Nations is working towards a Global Plastics Treaty to end plastic pollution. Developing a comprehensive National Action Plan further cements The Gambia's role in negotiating a robust UN Global Plastics Treaty and places us amongst the most ambitious and forward-looking countries in our global efforts to minimise the damage that plastic pollution wreaks on our oceans, environment, and health.

Underscoring this National Action Plan is a comprehensive analysis of The Gambia's current plastic usage and plastic waste generation undertaken by Common Seas' Plastic Drawdown tool. This UN-endorsed analysis tool found that, without action, plastic waste generation in The Gambia is expected to increase by 42 percent by 2033.

As a result, five strategies have been identified for implementation through a comprehensive cross-sector engagement process including a workshop with the local community, waste management professionals and government ministers. These five strategies have the potential to reduce plastic pollution by 86 percent in The Gambia over ten years compared to the business-as-usual approach.

The first strategy set out in the National Action Plan is set to eradicate single-use plastic carrier bags by reinvigorating the existing 2015 ban on plastic bags through education and engagement campaigns and increased resourcing for enforcement of the existing ban.

This collaboration has also identified, that alongside plastic shopping bags, other plastic items including water bags are a key waste stream in The Gambia that must be addressed. These bags present a high risk to the environment as they are lightweight, generated in large numbers, and often bought 'on-the-go' for immediate consumption of the liquid inside. This second strategy will include a ban on small single-use plastic bags with a three-year lead-in period to ensure stallholders have enough time to source sustainable alternatives.

The third strategy builds on the government's commitment to ensuring all Gambians have access to safe drinking water and a healthy environment. By weight, single-use plastic water bottles are one of the most significant plastic waste items in The Gambia. Strategy three is therefore to introduce a ban on single-use plastic bottles and implement a Deposit Return Scheme for all other plastic bottles that are not covered by the ban.

The strategy also addresses the important work of the informal sector that collects and resells single-use plastic bottles. The government will ensure their involvement in the design of legislation and consider their role in reuse and recycling to ensure the new legislation does not affect them negatively.

The Gambia has a thriving 'on the go' sector so consumers can buy food and drink to be consumed during the day, however this produces large amounts of plastic waste from items such as plastic takeaway boxes, cutlery and straws.

Policy four therefore addresses the needs of vendors and consumers, both locals and tourists, whilst protecting the environment with a phased-in ban after a one-year period on selected single-use plastic food and drink packaging items and introduces a charge on those single-use plastic food and drink packaging items that are not banned.

The final strategy is focused on improving solid waste collection and management in both rural and urban areas, taking inspiration from regions where collections are already in place. In The Gambia, informal workers are central to the delivery of key services and again, this National Action Plan identifies and recognises their importance for this policy.

This National Action Plan complements the Ministry's objectives to build institutional leadership capacities, enhance stakeholder participation in natural resources management; and strengthen the country's institutional framework to protect people and communities. The government of The Gambia is committed to creating a better environment for the future of our country, our citizens and all life that thrives in our seas.

Hon. Rohey John Manjang

Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources

Acknowledgement by the Executive Director of the NEA

The government of The Gambia and the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources gratefully acknowledges the work of Common Seas, the National Environment Agency (NEA), the NAP Steering Committee and wider consultees to develop this National Action Plan to tackle plastic pollution in The Gambia.

This comprehensive document was possible due to the generous support of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, which provided access to primary data from the Plastic Waste Free Islands initiative, which was vital in the analysis contained in this report.

Direct involvement from ministers and government departments has been central to this process, with thanks to the Office of the President, Ministries including Agriculture, Health, Justice, Police Force, and Community Development as well as input from Omar BJ Touray, Banjul City Council, Dodou Jallow Kanifing Municipal Council, Mansakonko Area Council, Kerewan Area Council, Basse Area Council, Janjangbureh Area Council, Kuntaur Area Council, Brikama Area Council.

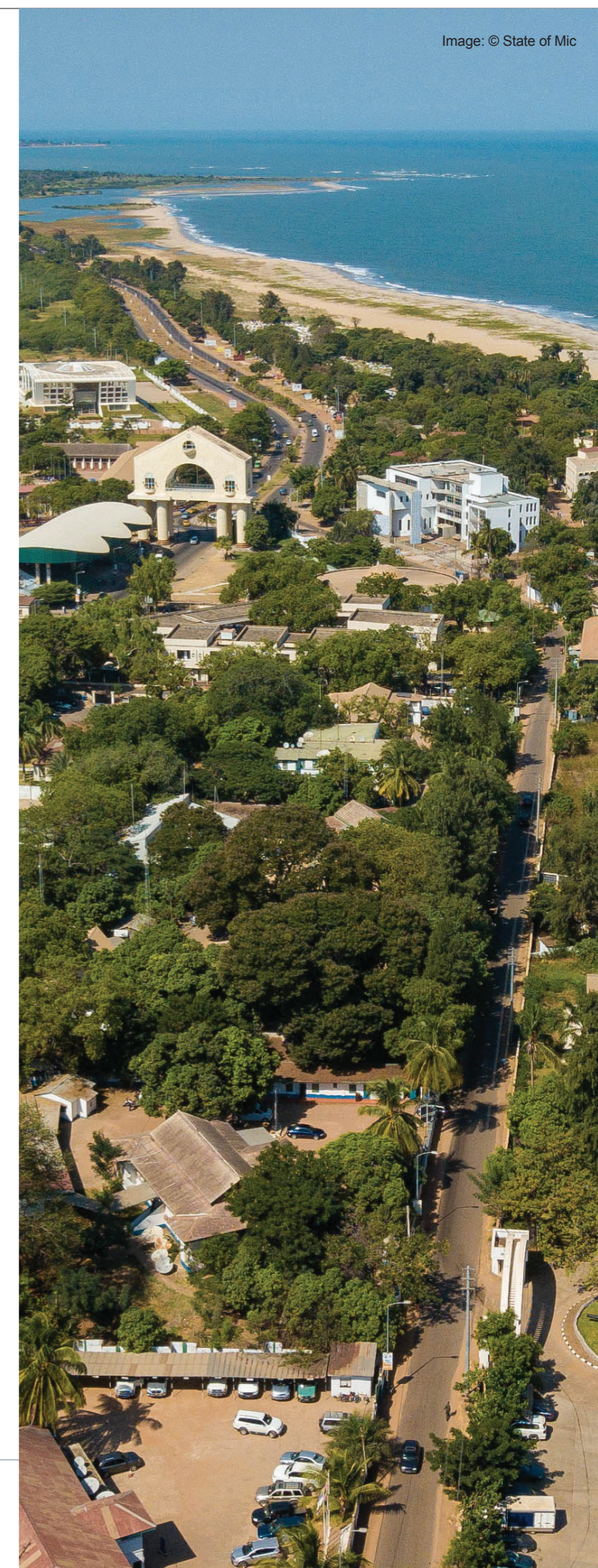
Wider consultees including Modou Mbaye, M & M Plastic Manufacturing Limited, Sukai Cham, TARUD, Ousman Manneh, UAid Foundation, Silvia Gracia, Mbolo Association, Muhammed Nyass, Gambia Ocean Heroes, Mariama Tunkara, Women Initiative Gambia, Lamin Fadera, National Water and Electricity Company gave their expertise to shape this National Action Plan.

The staff from across government, councils and wider stakeholders gave, as usual, dedication and commitment to information sharing and collaborating, becoming integral to accomplishing this final report. Finally, recognition goes to the team from Common Seas including Jo Royle, Carla Worth, Charlotte Spinazzé-Bourgoin, Patrick Mahon and Ingrid Henrys who worked in collaboration with all the individuals and organisations above to create the National Action Plan to end plastic pollution in The Gambia.

Dr. Dawda Badjie

Executive Director - National Environment Agency

Image: © State of Mic



Key messages

- 1 An estimated 22.8 thousand tonnes of plastic waste was generated in The Gambia in 2021 – that is the equivalent weight of about 23 cargo ships.**

This is expected to increase by approximately 42% over the next ten years.

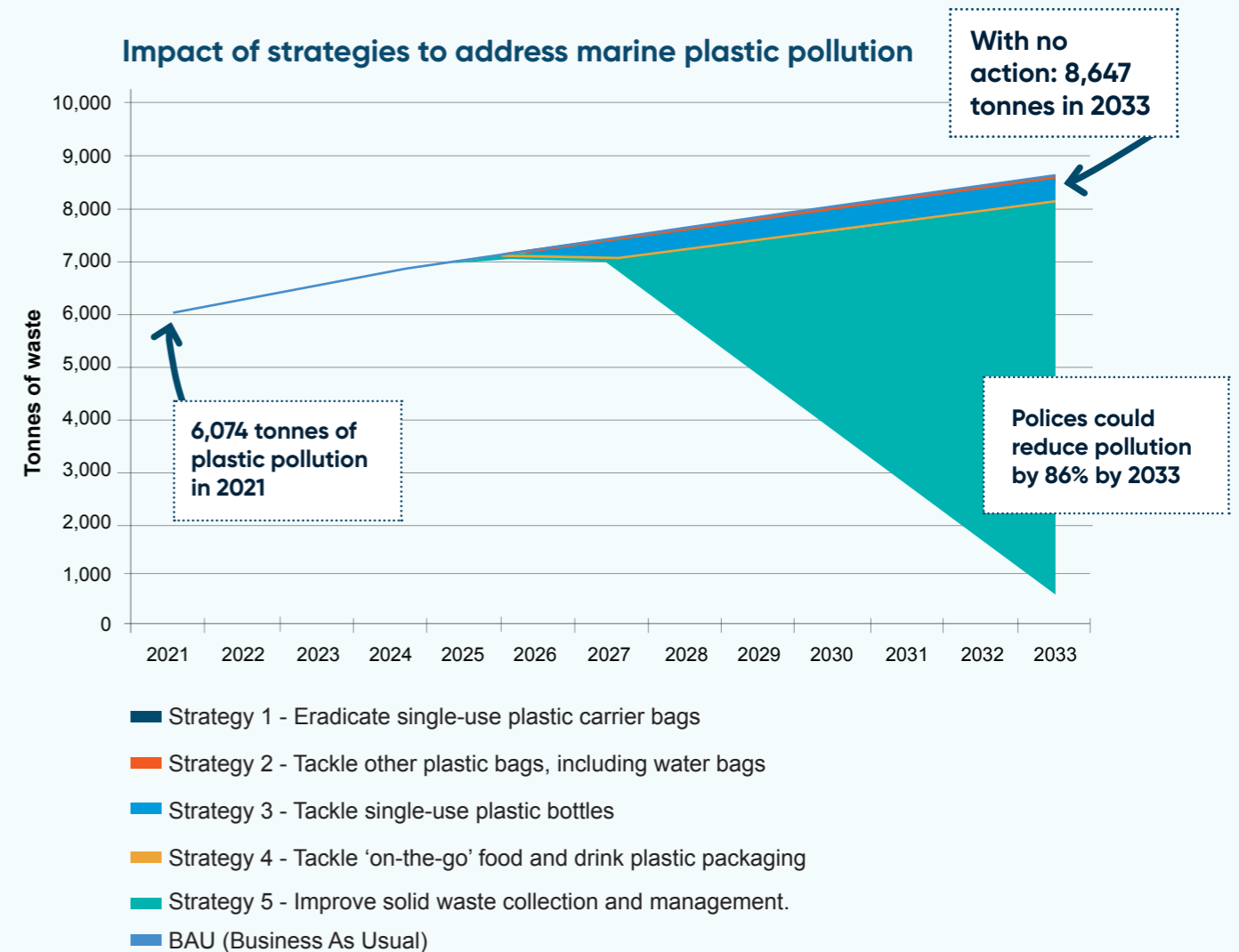
- 2 Of this, 17.2 thousand tonnes (75.5%) leaked directly into the environment – polluting our beautiful land and sea.**

This is made up of largely avoidable and unnecessary plastic items, such as plastic bottles (both beverage and non-beverage), plastic bags (including small water bags and carrier bags), takeaway food containers, as well as construction waste, tyre wear, and microbeads.

- 3 The Gambia is responding to this urgency by putting together a comprehensive National Action Plan to end plastic pollution.**

This will build upon existing initiatives, while simultaneously putting forward ambitious new policies that will stop plastic pollution at source. In doing so, we will safeguard a clean and safe environment, free of plastic litter.

- 4 The time to act is now. This document outlines five strategies that will reduce The Gambia's plastic pollution by 86% over 10 years.**



These strategies and policies have been developed in collaboration with key stakeholders, including government, business and civil society, who are motivated and supportive of the actions outlined. At a workshop facilitated by social enterprise, Common Seas, the strategies and policies were refined and broadly agreed for inclusion in this National Action Plan .

The National Action Plan will be embedded into the Government of The Gambia's programme of work, leading the charge in tackling plastic pollution in our country. This programme could become a global exemplar, demonstrating how a low-income economy can address plastic pollution.



Executive summary

By 2050, an estimated 12 billion tons of plastic waste is expected to be in landfills and the natural environment¹.

Throughout its lifecycle, plastic threatens our climate, our oceans, our economies and even our bodies.

Addressing the plastic pollution problem is a key priority to safeguard biodiversity, protect communities and economies, and deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDGs 12, 13, 14 and 15.

While a Global Plastics Treaty will help to address the many cross-boundary challenges related to plastic pollution, governments can still prioritise national action against plastic pollution today. This will pave the way for a more resilient and healthy future, in preparation for a legally binding treaty.

The Gambia is on the right track to do this, by prioritising the development of a National Action Plan to tackle plastic pollution. The Government's 2015 Ban on Plastic Bags Order further illustrates that The Gambia is on the right track.

In 2022, Common Seas entered into partnership with the National Environment Agency in The Gambia to understand the scale of the country's plastic pollution problem and identify and implement policies to tackle it.

Common Seas' Plastic Drawdown tool was used to analyse the problem and assess potential policy interventions that could reduce pollution and form part of an ambitious National Action Plan to tackle plastics pollution in The Gambia.

This report sets out the results, disclosing the finding that an estimated 22.8 thousand tonnes of plastic waste was generated in The Gambia in 2021 – of which 27% subsequently leaked into aquatic environments. Without action, plastic waste generation is expected to increase by 42% by 2033.

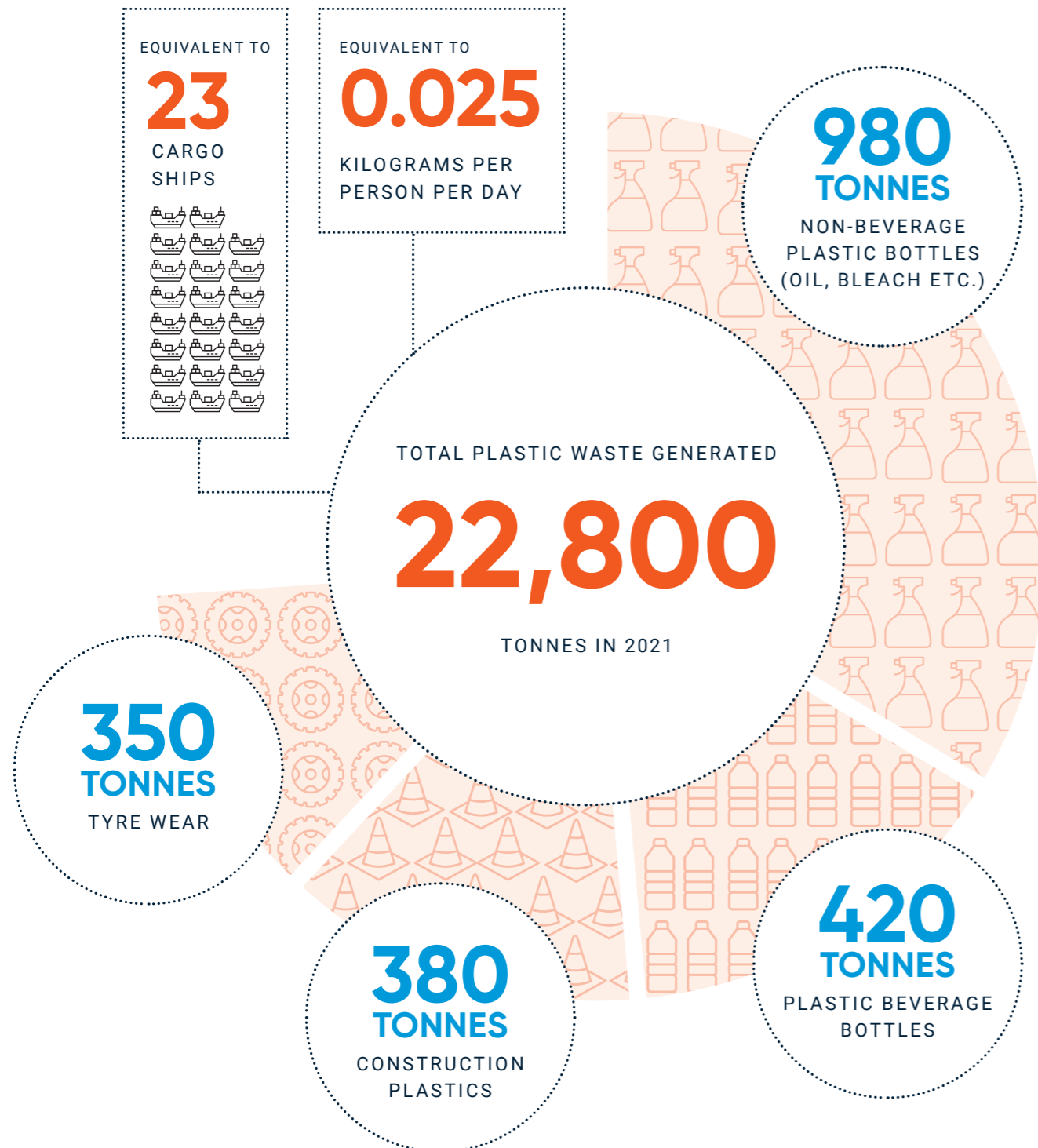
However, Common Seas' analysis suggests that by implementing the following five strategies, The Gambia annual plastic pollution could reduce by 86%. This involves eradicating single-use plastic carrier bags; tackling other plastics bags, including water bags; tackling single-use plastic bottles; confronting 'on-the-go' food and drink plastic packaging; and improving solid waste collection and management.

Developed in consultation with key government partners and a wider expert group of stakeholders (to ensure that the analysis is fully informed by the knowledge and expertise of those organisations and people most closely involved in the use and disposal of plastics in The Gambia), this report will form the basis of The Gambia's National Action Plan, a document that is likely to be required from each signatory to the Global Plastics Treaty.

¹ (OECD, 2022)

Image: © State of Mic

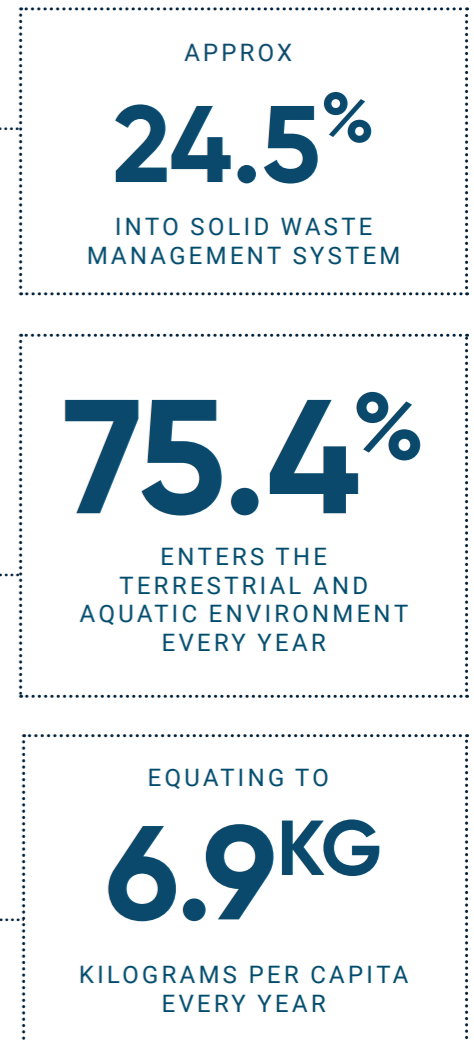
How much plastic waste is The Gambia generating?



What happens to The Gambia's plastic waste?

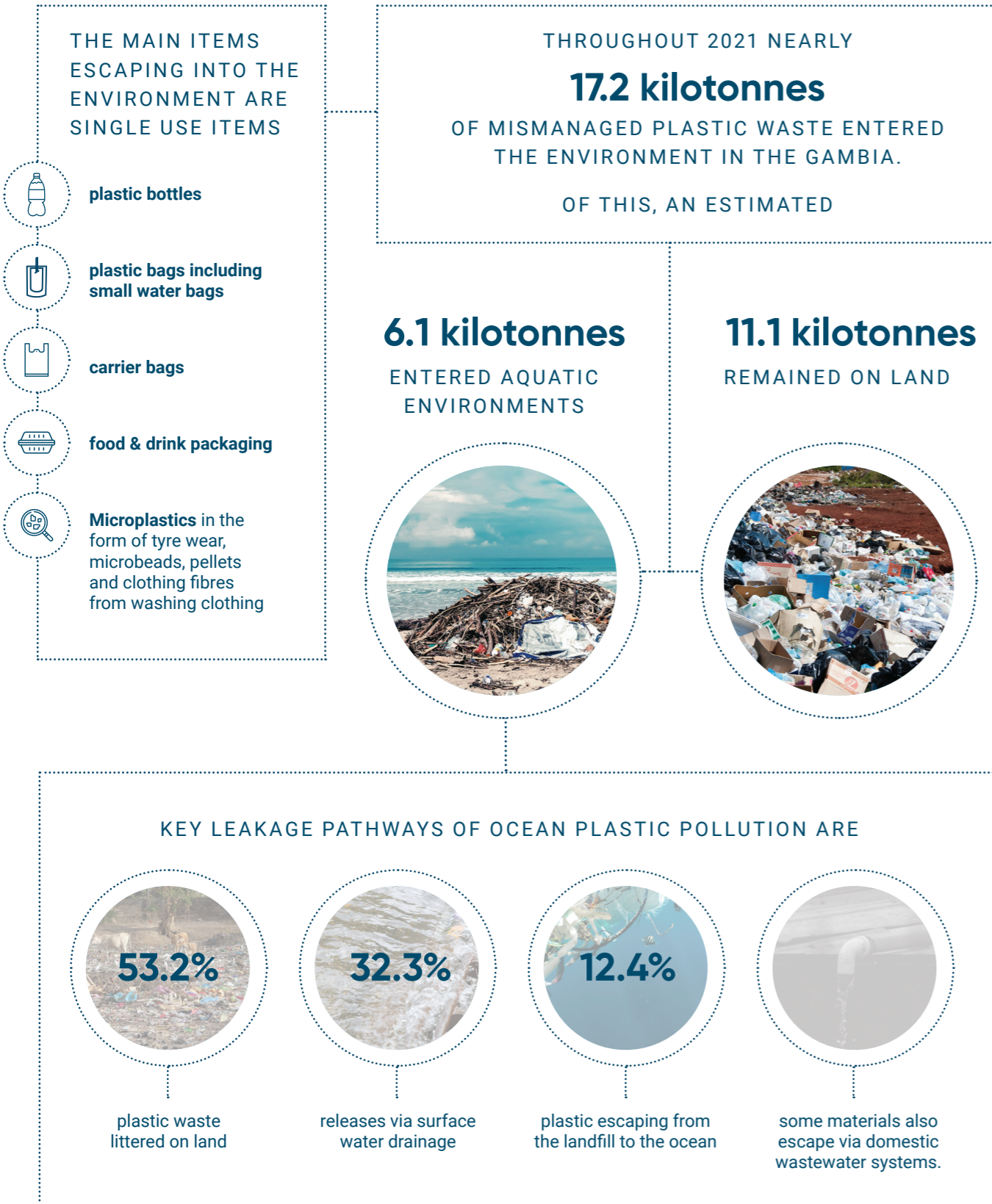
A minority of plastic waste generated in The Gambia enters the solid waste management system.

This means that 17.2 thousand tonnes of plastic waste enters the terrestrial and aquatic environment every year - equating to 6.9kg per capita of plastic waste disposed of subsequently leaking into the environment annually.



Key findings

How much plastic is entering our oceans?



What is the trajectory to 2033?

- Plastic waste generation is expected to increase by 42% between 2021 and 2033.
- Without action, plastic waste leakage into the environment is also expected to increase by 42% by 2033 meaning that, cumulatively, an estimated 95 thousand tonnes of plastics will escape from The Gambia into rivers and the sea between now and 2033.

Figure 1: Top 6 waste items generated by weight (kT) 2021

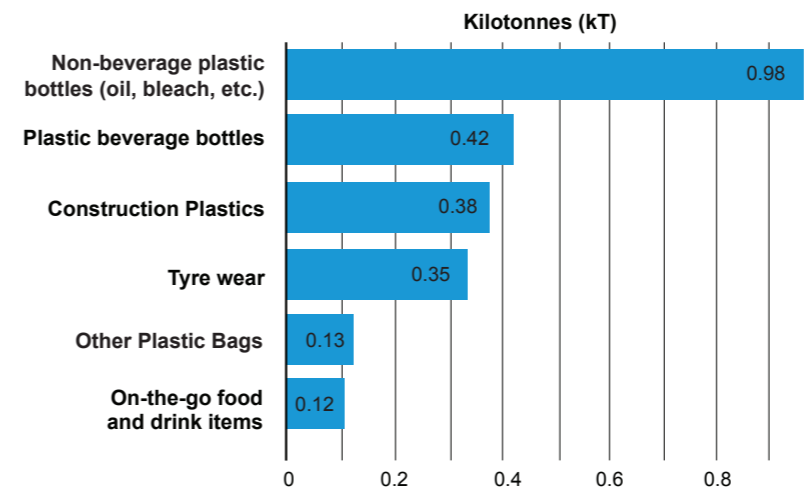


Figure 2: How much plastic waste is there per item today and in the future?

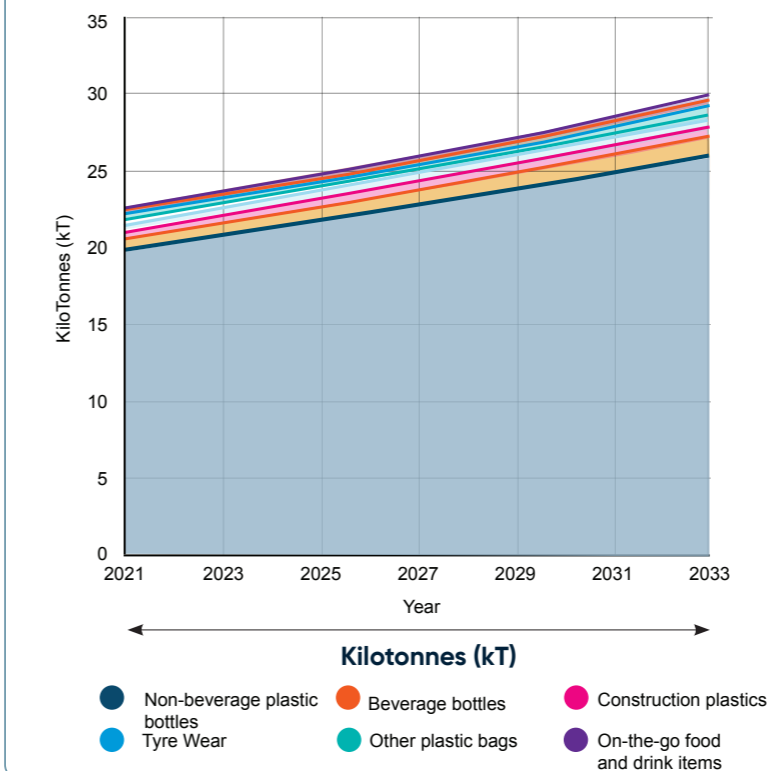


Image: © State of Mic

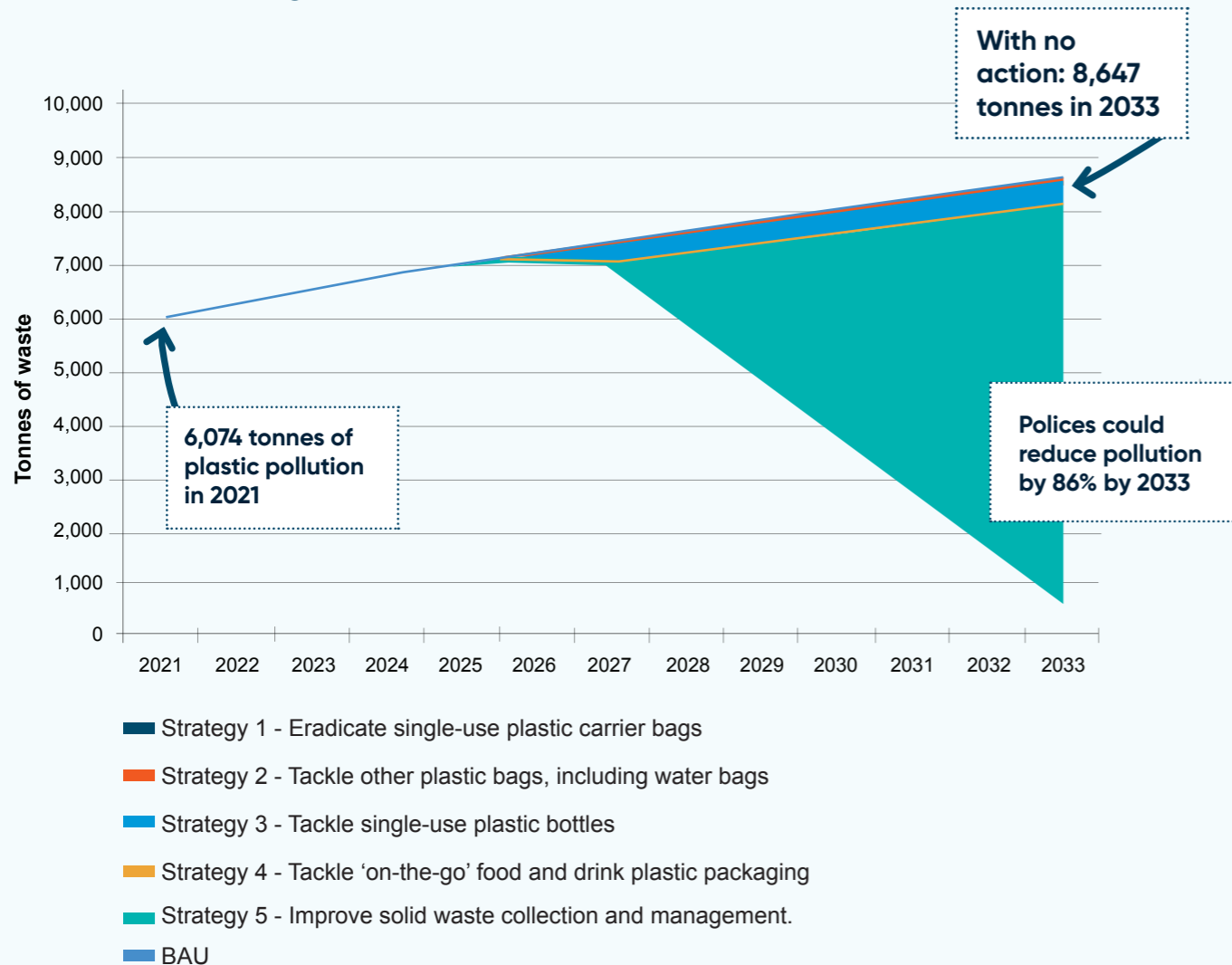


Summary of the key strategies, policies, and their impact

The following five system-change strategies will help address the key sources of The Gambia's plastic pollution. Analysis using the Plastic Drawdown tool suggests that by 2033, these five strategies have the combined potential to reduce annual plastic pollution in The Gambia by 86%.

Plastic pollution in The Gambia comprises both macro and microplastics. This action plan focuses on macroplastic pollution, a key element of plastic pollution in The Gambia and the component that can be tackled with action today. Action to address microplastics will require careful consideration and international action over coming years.

Impact of strategies to address marine plastic pollution



Strategy 1 - Eradicate single-use plastic carrier bags

This strategy includes the following actions:

- **Policy 1.1:** Update of the existing plastic carrier bag ban, through education and engagement campaigns, and improved enforcement
- **Policy 1.2:** Develop a standard for reusable bags, plus launch a design competition for a 'reusable bag for The Gambia'

Strategy 2 - Tackle other plastic bags, including water bags

This strategy includes the following actions:

- **Policy 2.1:** Ban on small single-use plastic bags
- **Policy 2.2:** Installing public water fountains
- **Policy 2.3:** Improving the supply and quality of potable water

Strategy 3 - Tackle single-use plastic bottles

This strategy includes the following actions:

- **Policy 3.1:** Phased ban on single-use plastic bottles
- **Policy 3.2:** DRS for all other plastic bottles

Strategy 4 - Tackle 'on-the-go' food and drink plastic packaging

This strategy includes the following actions:

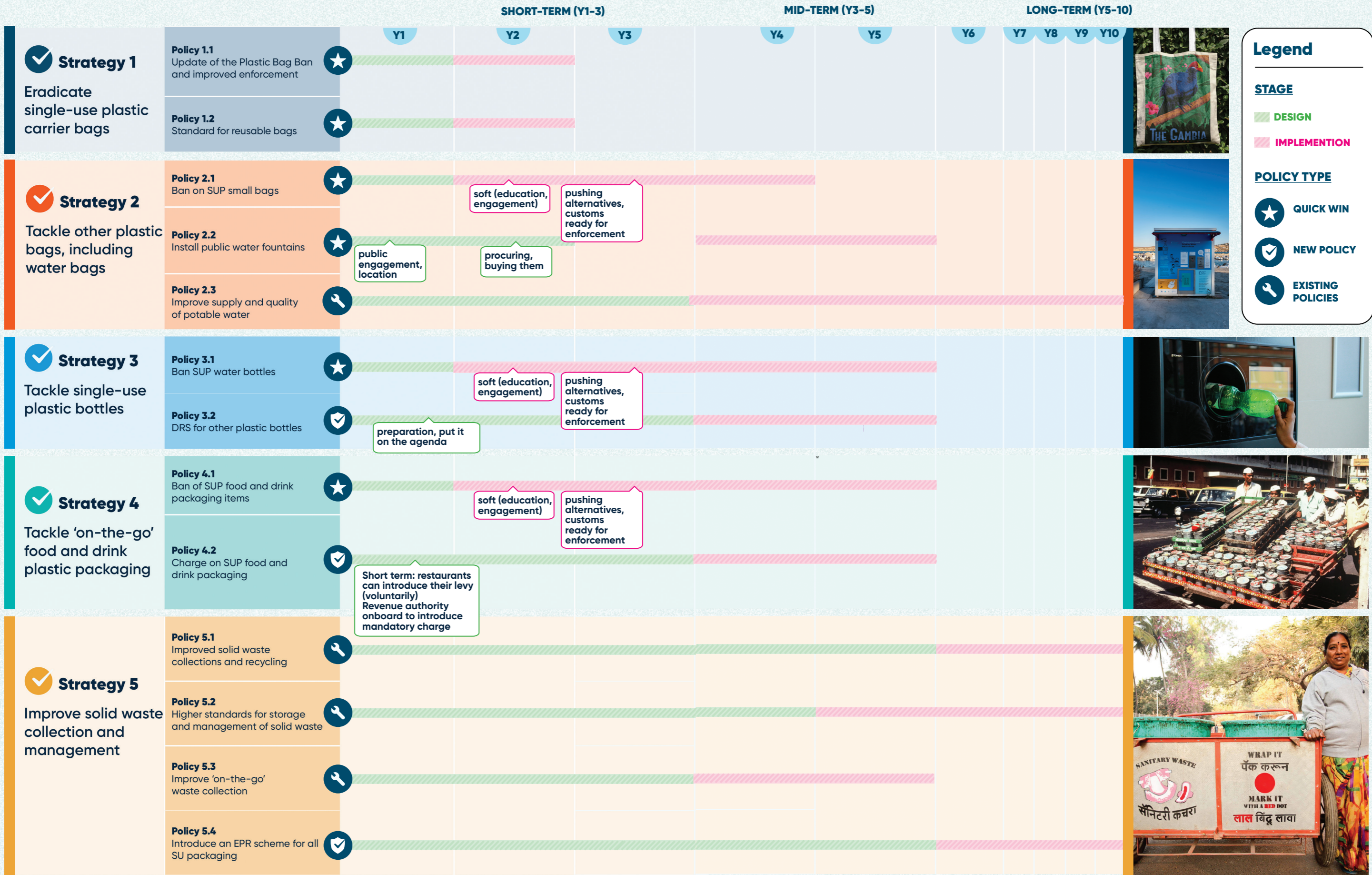
- **Policy 4.1:** Ban of selected SUP food and drink packaging items
- **Policy 4.2:** Introduce a charge on those SUP food and drink packaging items that are not banned

Strategy 5 - Improve solid waste collection and management

This strategy includes the following actions:

- **Policy 5.1:** Improve solid waste collections and recycling
- **Policy 5.2:** Higher standards for storage and management of solid waste
- **Policy 5.3:** Improve 'on-the-go' waste collection (key supporting policy)
- **Policy 5.4:** Introduce an EPR scheme for all SU packaging

The Roadmap



Legend

STAGE

- DESIGN
- IMPLEMENTATION

POLICY TYPE

- ★ QUICK WIN
- 📁 NEW POLICY
- 🔧 EXISTING POLICIES



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