National Action Plan to Tackle Plastic Pollution in Guinea-Bissau

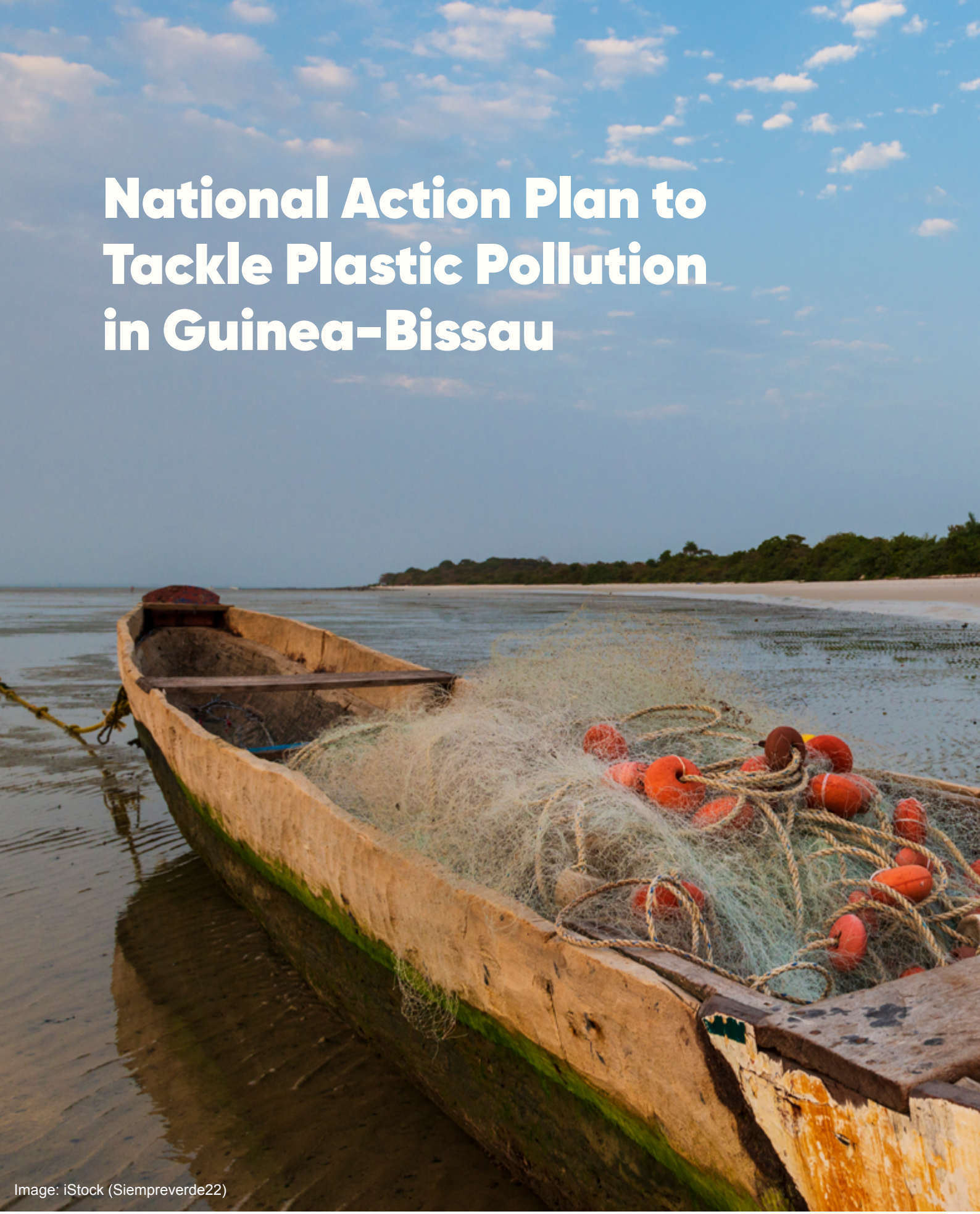


Image: iStock (Siempreverde22)

Common Seas

UK International Development
Partnership | Progress | Prosperity

GOVERNO DA GUINÉ BISSAU
MINISTÉRIO DO AMBIENTE, BIODIVERSIDADE E AÇÃO CLIMÁTICA

Authorship note

This report was prepared by Common Seas in collaboration with the Government of Guinea-Bissau and active participation of IUCN Guinea-Bissau.

It supports efforts by the Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action through the Competent Environmental Assessment Authority (AAAC), to establish a national framework that tackles plastic pollution across its full lifecycle – strengthening legislation, improving enforcement, enhancing institutional coordination, and enabling sustainable, long-term solutions.

Common Seas

Common Seas is a social enterprise that 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.

For more information please visit: commonseas.com

UK International Development

This work was supported by funding from the UK Government through UK International Development.

Common Seas is partnering with five Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to develop National Action Plans to tackle plastic pollution. This critical funding allows us to develop and scale an approach tailored to the unique challenges and needs of SIDS, which are disproportionately affected by the plastic crisis.

The project supports partner governments to radically reduce ocean plastic in their countries over the course of ten years and contribute to a sustainable blue economy.

For more information, please visit: sbe-platform.org.uk/about#sbe-programme

Citing this report

Citation: Common Seas, Guinea-Bissau Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action (2025). National Action Plan to Tackle Plastic Pollution in Guinea-Bissau.

Ministerial foreword

I am honoured to present Guinea-Bissau's National Action Plan to Tackle Plastic Pollution, developed in partnership with Common Seas and with the support of UK International Development.

This plan represents a significant milestone in our country's journey towards environmental sustainability and the protection of our unique natural heritage.

Plastic pollution poses a serious and growing threat to Guinea-Bissau's environment, economy, and public health. Our rivers, mangroves, and coastal ecosystems – vital sources of food security and livelihoods – are increasingly burdened by plastic waste. As a coastal and archipelagic nation, we see the impacts daily: polluted waterways, threats to biodiversity, and risks to community wellbeing. Tackling this challenge is essential to securing our people's future and sustaining the blue economy on which we depend.

This Action Plan provides a clear and evidence-based framework to address plastic pollution across its full life cycle – from production and consumption to collection, recycling, and safe disposal. It builds upon the Government's commitment to sustainable development, aligning closely with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), life below water (SDG 14) and life on land (SDG 15). It also supports the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the forthcoming Global Plastics Treaty.

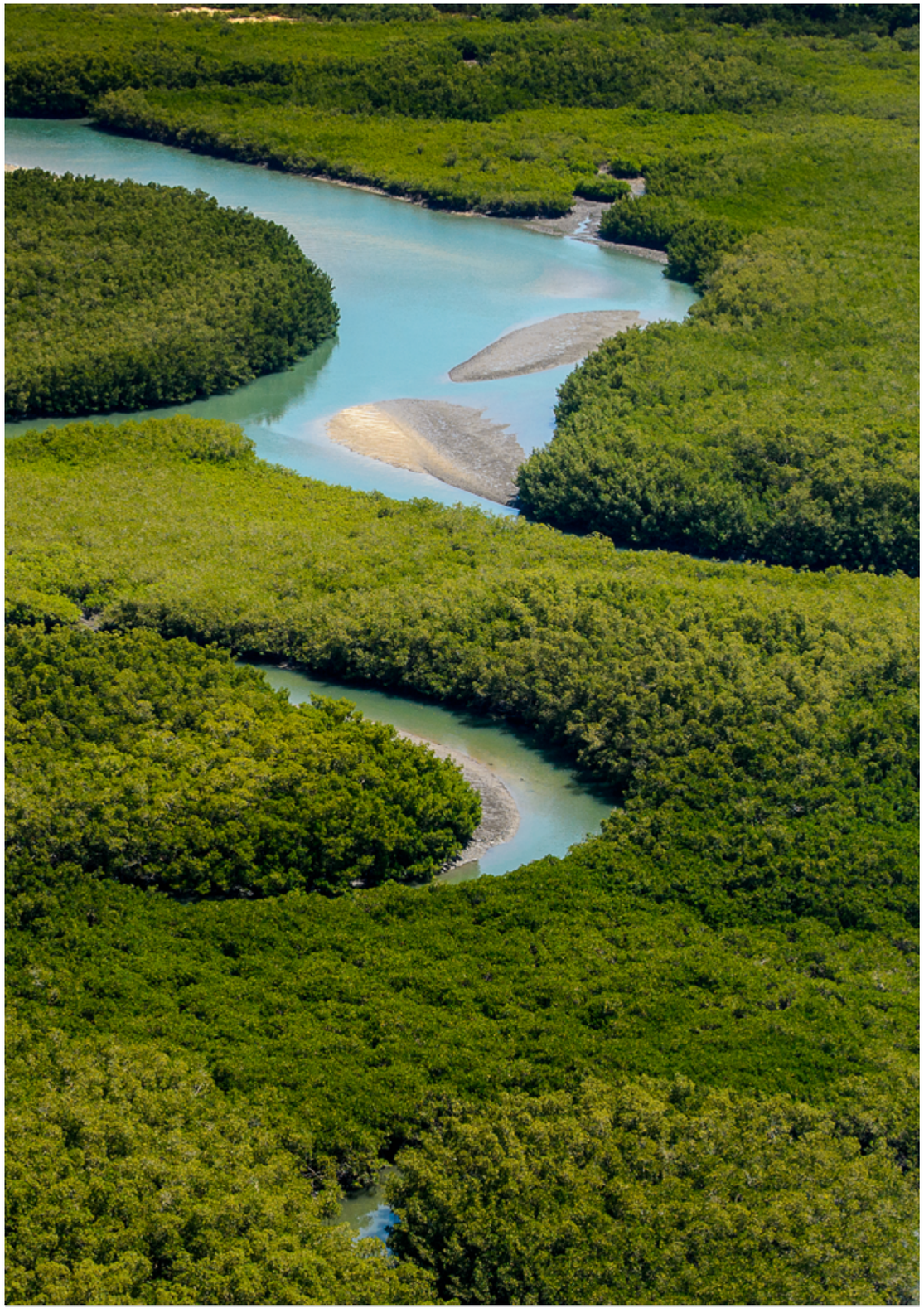
Guinea-Bissau has already taken important steps, including national bans on certain single-use plastics. However, enforcement has been limited, and coordination across institutions remains a challenge. This National Action Plan responds directly to these realities. It sets out three integrated strategies comprising twelve policy measures that target both upstream and downstream drivers of plastic pollution – from reducing consumption and promoting reusable products, to improving waste collection, introducing Extended Producer Responsibility, and preventing open burning and illegal dumping.

If fully implemented, the measures outlined in this plan could reduce plastic leakage into our environment by nearly 80 percent over the next decade, compared to a business-as-usual scenario. Achieving this goal will require collective effort, political will, and sustained investment. It will also depend on engaging our communities, whose participation is vital in shaping and sustaining behaviour change.

This plan is more than a policy framework – it is a national call to action. It embodies our shared vision for a cleaner, healthier, and more resilient Guinea-Bissau. It also signals our determination to play an active role in regional and global efforts to end plastic pollution and protect our common oceans.

On behalf of the Government of Guinea-Bissau, I extend sincere thanks to Common Seas, IUCN, our national and local partners, and all those who contributed their time and expertise to this process. Together, we are building a future where our environment is protected, our people are empowered, and our nation stands as a model of sustainable development for the region.

Hon. Viriato Luís Soares Cassamá
Minister of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action



Contents

Common Seas and Guinea-Bissau

National Action Plan to Tackle Plastic Pollution in Guinea-Bissau

Common Seas and Guinea-Bissau

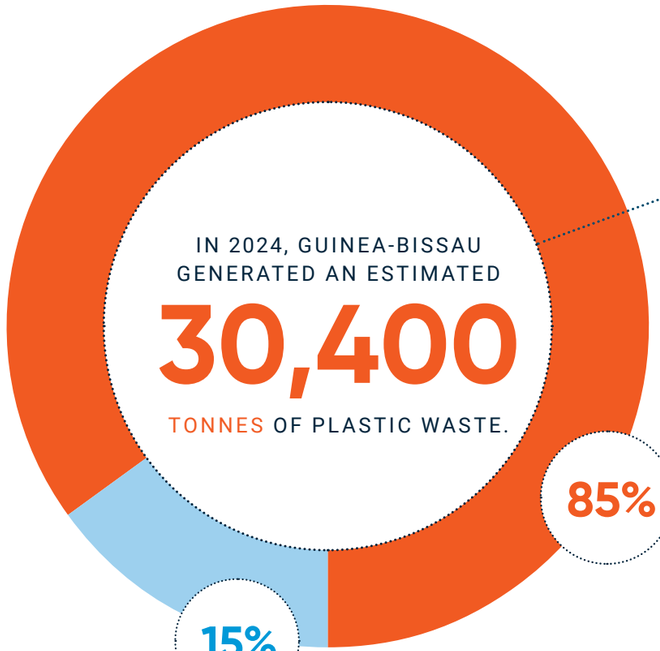
Key findings

Background and context

Plastic pollution poses a serious and growing threat to Guinea-Bissau's environment, economy, and public health. While plastic consumption in Guinea-Bissau is far lower than in many other nations, rapid population growth, urbanisation, and changing consumption patterns are set to significantly increase the pressure on the country's already fragile waste management systems. Without urgent intervention, plastic leakage into rivers, wetlands, and the ocean will continue to escalate, jeopardising biodiversity, health, fisheries, and livelihoods, particularly for communities that rely heavily on the blue economy.

The Ministry of Environment and Biodiversity of Guinea-Bissau and Common Seas developed this National Action Plan to Tackle Plastic Pollution in Guinea-Bissau to provide a coherent and evidence-based framework for tackling the problem. Using Common Seas' Plastic Drawdown modelling tool, the plan quantifies current and projected plastic flows, identifies key leakage points, and evaluates policy options with the highest potential to reduce pollution. The analysis draws on existing studies, national data, targeted interviews, and a dedicated national workshop held with government, NGOs, community leaders, and the private sector, in June 2025.

The scale and nature of plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau



WITHOUT ACTION, ANNUAL WASTE GENERATION IS PROJECTED TO GROW BY

59%

TO

48,400

TONNES BY 2035.

85%

IS EITHER COLLECTED BY THE INFORMAL SECTOR, OPENLY DUMPED, BURNED, OR LEAKS INTO THE ENVIRONMENT.

FORMAL WASTE COLLECTION SERVICES CURRENTLY CAPTURE LESS THAN

4,500 TONNES

(15%)

OF PLASTIC WASTE PER YEAR.

Each year, an estimated

17,000 TONNES

of plastic waste, more than half of all plastic generated, directly enter the country's waterways, or remain as pollution on land

APPROXIMATELY

0.038 KG

PER PERSON PER DAY.

While lower than larger neighbouring economies (such as ~0.05 kg per person per day in Senegal (World Bank, 2023a)), this figure masks a rapidly accelerating problem and chronic deficiencies in the collection and management of plastic waste.

OPEN BURNING IS WIDESPREAD, WITH AROUND

14,200

TONNES OF PLASTIC WASTE BURNED ANNUALLY.

This practice releases toxic chemicals and fine plastic particles into the air, posing a serious public health risk and contaminating soil and water with microplastics.

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS (SUPS) DOMINATE THE WASTE STREAM. ITEMS SUCH AS BEVERAGE BOTTLES, SACHETS, GROCERY BAGS, AND TAKEAWAY CONTAINERS MAKE UP OVER

70%

OF ALL PLASTIC LEAKED TO THE OCEAN.

The prevalence of small-format plastics, particularly drinks sachets and bottles, reflects limited access to safe, affordable potable water forcing many households to rely on packaged alternatives.

Even the waste collected by the formal waste management system often ends up as pollution, with plastics leaking during collection and transport, as well as escaping from open dumpsites. **Together, these sources release an estimated 1,100 tonnes of plastic into the environment each year.**

If Guinea-Bissau does not take swift action,

MORE THAN

260,000

TONNES OF WASTE WILL POLLUTE ITS ENVIRONMENT OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS.

THIS WILL CREATE DEVASTATING IMPACTS ON MARINE LIFE, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND THE RESILIENCE OF COASTAL ECONOMIES.

Key findings

Figure E0.1:
Macroplastic Pollution (tonnes, 2024-2035)

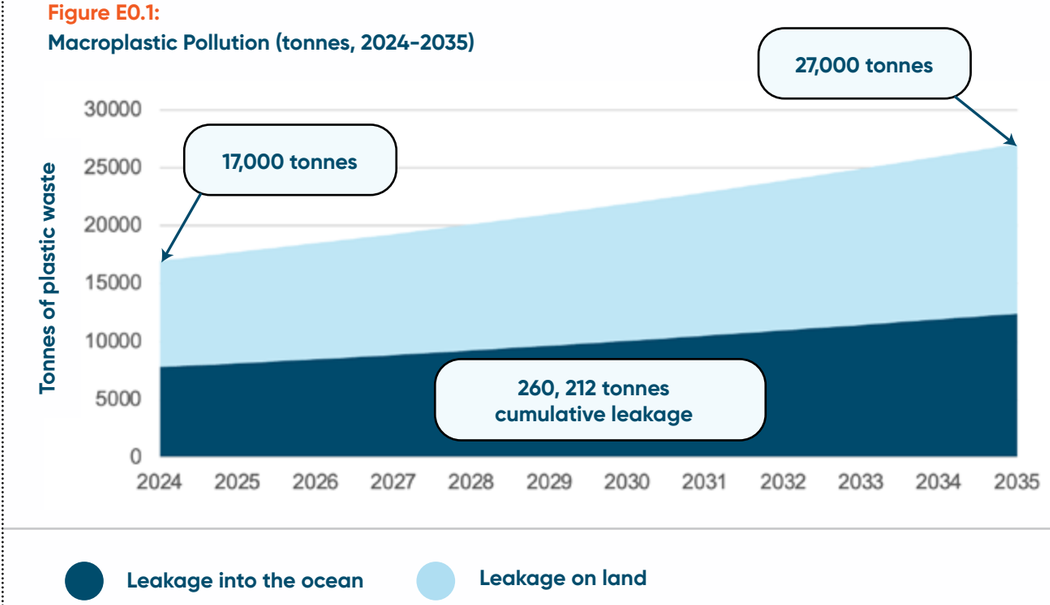


Table E.01 highlights the projections of waste generated between 2024 and 2035 under a business-as-usual scenario, along with the sharp rise in the two most common end-of-life outcomes: open burning and littering and dumping. It also shows the estimated growth in plastic pollution leaking into the terrestrial and aquatic environments over the same period.

Table E0.1:
Plastic waste generation, means of disposal, and end-of-life outcomes under a business-as-usual scenario in 2024 and 2035 (tonnes)

Year	Macroplastic waste generated	Plastic waste burned	Plastic waste littered or dumped	Plastic pollution on land	Plastic pollution in waterways
2024	30,400	14,200	11,700	9,200	7,800
2035	48,400	22,600	18,600	14,600	12,400

A comprehensive plan to take decisive action on plastic pollution

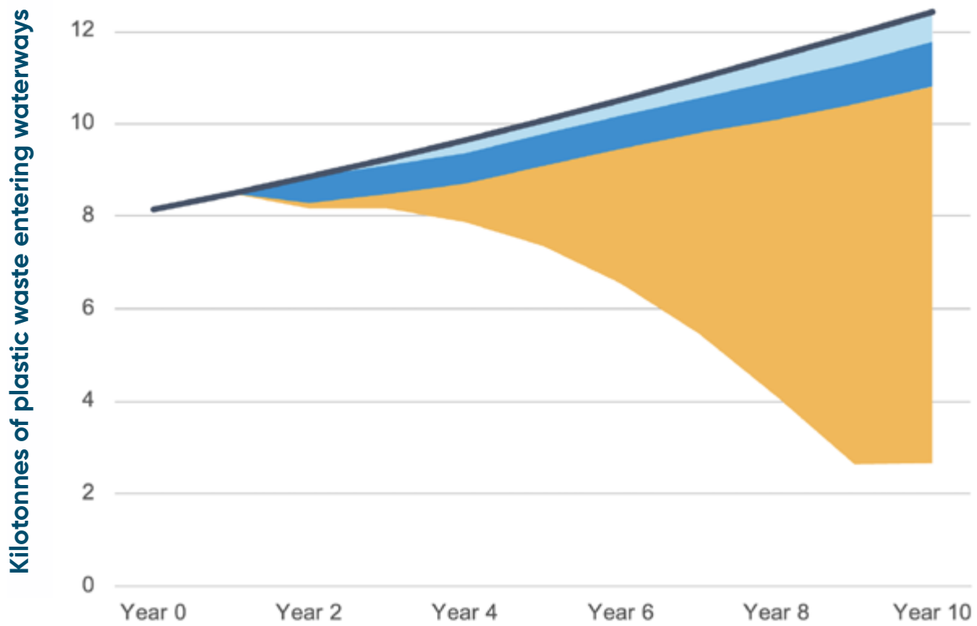
The National Action Plan establishes three interlinked system-change strategies designed to reduce leakage at source, promote sustainable alternatives, and strengthen waste management infrastructure. Collectively, these strategies address both upstream and downstream drivers of plastic pollution, providing a structured pathway toward a more circular and sustainable plastics economy. Although Strategies 1 and 2 demonstrate comparatively lower direct impacts on the reduction of plastic pollution relative to Strategy 3, they play a critical role in mitigating waste generation at the source – thereby addressing fundamental upstream drivers that downstream interventions alone cannot effectively resolve. Quantification of the resulting impacts and the corresponding degree of reduction in aquatic and marine pollution (as presented in Table E0.2) serves as a valuable proxy for assessing broader systemic challenges and the extent of leakage from land-based waste management systems and infrastructure.

Table E0.2:
System-change strategies to reduce plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau.
*Percentage compared to Business as Usual (BaU) quantities of aquatic or marine pollution

National Action Plan system-change strategies	Annual Plastic pollution reduction potential* (by Year 10)	Cumulative reduction in waste generated* (by year 10)
Strategy 1 – Item focus: tackling plastic beverage bottles and sachets Beverage bottles and single-use sachets are among the most prevalent and persistent plastic pollutants in Guinea-Bissau's rivers and coastal waters. This strategy supports the transition away from single-use sachets and beverage bottles through a multi-pronged approach: • Establishing low-cost water refill schemes in markets, transport hubs, and schools • Expanding access to potable water, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas, to reduce reliance on bottled water	**640 tonnes** (5%)	**3,300 tonnes** (3%)
Strategy 2 – Upstream measures to reduce consumption This strategy aims to "close the tap" on problematic plastics by: • Strengthening and extending bans on plastic grocery bags • Mandating reusable foodware in restaurants and public events • In the long term, introducing levies on high-leakage SUPs such as takeaway containers, sachets, and straws	**970 tonnes** (8%)	**6,700 tonnes** (6%)
Strategy 3 – Downstream measures to improve waste management and recycling Improved waste management is essential to capture plastics already in circulation. There is a strong focus among these downstream measures on integrating community-led and informal sector solutions. Key actions include improvements in waste management infrastructure and collections, through: • Introducing a national Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for plastic bottles to incentivise collection and recycling • Improving waste disposal • Expanding solid waste collections • Enhancing separations of recyclables • Improving capture of plastic pollution in drainage systems As well as regulatory measures: • Improving standards for waste collection and transport • Regulations and enforcement to reduce littering and dumping • Banning open burning of waste, paired with viable disposal and recycling options • In the long term, introducing an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme for packaging, requiring producers to finance the recovery of their products	**8,140 tonnes** (66%)	**N/A**
	9,750 tonnes (79%)	**10,000 tonnes** (9%)

Analysis using Plastic Drawdown suggests that together, these strategies could reduce annual plastic pollution into waterways in Guinea-Bissau by **79% over ten years,** equivalent to a 9,750 tonne reduction compared to business as usual. Strategies 1 & 2 could also prevent the generation of 10,000 tonnes (9%) of plastic waste over ten years.

Figure E0.2:
The plastic pollution reduction potential of the systems-change strategies assessed in this NAP. Assuming implementation of the NAP begins in 2026



THESE STRATEGIES COULD REDUCE ANNUAL PLASTIC POLLUTION INTO WATERWAYS IN GUINEA-BISSAU BY 79% OVER TEN YEARS, EQUIVALENT TO A

9,750 TONNES (79%)

REDUCTION COMPARED TO BUSINESS AS USUAL.

Recommendations and conclusions

Guinea-Bissau's National Action Plan represents a bold opportunity to reduce plastic pollution – reducing up to 79% of annual marine pollution by 2035.

By coupling quick wins, such as targeted bans, with structural reforms in water supply, waste management, and producer responsibility, it sets a clear path to protect the country's health, biodiversity, and blue economy.

The challenge is significant. But, with cross-sector collaboration, investment, and strong leadership, the benefits will be transformative and enduring.

To translate the NAP's potential into real reductions in plastic pollution, the following six actions should be prioritised. They are sequenced to start with the most feasible and foundational short-term measures (expanding waste collection, enforcing the plastic bag ban, and rolling out water refill stations), build toward medium-term system improvements (expansion of public potable water supply, open burning ban, DRS), and culminate in long-term structural reforms (EPR) that ensure sustained reductions. These actions reflect the findings of this policy analysis and have been shaped by extensive stakeholder input:

1. **Expand waste collection and upgrade disposal sites (short-to-medium term, foundational):** Scaling municipal and community-led collection, upgrading disposal sites, and enhancing collection and landfill standards will address the largest sources of plastic leakage in Guinea-Bissau. These actions are also foundational for subsequent policies, including banning the open burning of waste and introducing waste segregation and recycling.

2. **Strengthen regulation of high-leakage SUPs (short-term, quick win):** Enforce and expand bans and levies, starting with strengthening enforcement of the existing plastic bag ban, to send a strong market signal and rapidly reduce the most prevalent, and unnecessary and avoidable single-use plastic items. This must be coupled with the provision of suitable, and where possible, reusable, alternatives.

3. **Pilot water refill stations (short-term, quick win) and expand public potable water supply (medium-to-long term):** to provide alternatives to water sachets and bottled water, reducing demand for these prevalent single-use plastics.

4. **Ban open burning of waste, supported by viable disposal alternatives (medium-term):** To reduce air pollution and secondary plastic contamination once collection and disposal systems are in place.

5. **Design and implement a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for plastic bottles (medium- to long-term):** to incentivises collection and recycling of one of the most commonly littered items, building on strengthened collection systems.

6. **Introduce an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme for packaging (long-term):** to shift financial and operational responsibility for end-of-life recovery and treatment of plastic waste onto producers and importers, establishing sustainable waste-management funding and encouraging improved product design and higher collection rates.

To maintain this commitment and momentum, the NAP also suggests the following implementation arrangements:

- Governance arrangements, including roles and responsibilities for key government agencies and departments
- Key elements of a monitoring and evaluation plan with suggested indicators
- Suggestions for sources of financing
- Key stakeholders for disseminating the plan

Each of these elements will be explored further during the implementation phase of the National Action Plan.

1

Why tackle plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau?

Image: iStock (Tiago_Fernandez)

1.1 Background

In November 2024, the Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action entered a partnership with Common Seas.

The partnership aims to better understand the scale of the country's plastic pollution problem and to develop effective policies to significantly reduce plastic waste generation and plastic pollution.

Building on recent studies of plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau, Common Seas used its Plastic Drawdown tool to:

- Develop baseline data on the types, quantities, and sources of plastic waste that leaks into aquatic environments, and what drives this leakage;
- Estimate how the quantity and composition of plastic waste and leakage will change over time under a 'Business as Usual' (BaU) scenario spanning 10 years;
- Analyse the impact of existing and proposed policy instruments on the BaU scenario.

This National Action Plan (NAP) sets out the findings of this baseline model of plastic waste generation and leakage and identifies the most effective policies to significantly reduce this plastic waste generation and pollution in Guinea-Bissau.

The policy recommendations have been informed by the knowledge and evidence outlined above, as well as supplemented by in-country data collection, expert elicitation, field observations and stakeholder engagement. A National Committee to Combat Plastic Pollution, comprised of 14 key stakeholders across the plastics value chain, oversaw the development of this NAP (see Section 2, Approach).

1.2 Country profile

Guinea-Bissau

Guinea-Bissau is a small West African country that borders the Republic of Guinea (South & East), Senegal (North) and the Atlantic Ocean (West) and covers an area of 36,125 km².

The country features a low-lying coastal landscape, including the Bijagós Archipelago, a network of more than 80 islands, 17 of which are occupied.

In July 2025 the archipelago was recognised by UNESCO for its importance as a World Heritage Site. Guinea-Bissau's coastline stretches for over 350 km, interspersed with mangroves, estuaries, and sandy beaches, while its interior consists of savannahs and forests (World Bank, 2023).

Today, the country has a rapidly growing population of approximately 2.1 million people (World Bank, 2023). Since the 1990s, the population has more than doubled and is expected to grow by a further 68.6% by 2043, reaching 3.2 million (ISS African Futures & AUDA-NEPAD, 2024). The national population density, estimated at 80 inhabitants per square kilometre, masks significant disparities in population distribution across the country (World Bank, 2025). In fact, more than 60% of the population is concentrated on the coast, with approximately 700,000 inhabitants living in the capital, Bissau (World Population Review, 2025). The hinterland, except for the population basin around the cities of Bafata and Gabu, is less populated, with densities of less than 50 inhabitants per km².

The country lies within the tropical zone, between the equator and the Tropic of Cancer, characterised by year-round warmth and humidity. There are two distinct seasons in Guinea-Bissau: the monsoonal-type rainy season, from May to October, and the dry season from November to April (World Bank, 2023).

Heavy rainfall and floods occur often in Guinea-Bissau, which have severe impacts on the country's infrastructure, agriculture, and public health (World Bank, n.d.). Severe droughts are also a recurring natural disaster in the country, with Guinea-Bissau having experienced several severe droughts in recent times, including in 2002 and 2006 (Nnopuechi, 2021).

Guinea-Bissau is classified as a low-income country. It is heavily dependent on agriculture, which accounts for around half of its GDP and employs over 80% of the population (FAO, 2022). The economy is driven primarily by cashew nut production, which represents the country's largest export (≈90%), alongside subsistence farming and fishing.

The fisheries sector plays a vital role in both food security and livelihoods, particularly in the Bijagós Archipelago. However, challenges such as overfishing and climate change pose threats to sustainability (World Bank, 2023). Secondary sectors, such as tourism and extractive industries also contribute to the economic growth of the country.

Image: iStock (Tiago_Fernandez)

1.3 Why focus on tackling plastic pollution?

Plastic pollution is more than a waste issue. At every stage of its lifecycle, from production through to disposal, plastic drives the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Plastic pollution also threatens vital Guinea-Bissau industries, especially fisheries, and has far-reaching implications for human rights and health.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which Guinea-Bissau has adopted, clearly lay out the need for Guinea-Bissau, and countries around the world, to address this problem. Plastic consumption and related pollution is associated with the following SDGs:

- SDG 3: Good health and wellbeing
- SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation
- SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities
- SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production
- SDG 13: Climate action
- SDG 14: Life below water
- SDG 15: Life on land

PLASTIC IS A PARTICULAR FOCUS FOR:

- **SDG target 14.1, to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, particularly from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution, by 2025.**
- **SDG target 12.5, to substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling, and reuse, by 2030.**

It is important to recognise the connections between plastic pollution and other environmental, economic, and social issues. By considering these connections, the Government of Guinea-Bissau can implement the policies in a way that presents multiple co-benefits for Guinea-Bissau and its people.

Some of these potential co-benefits include:

- Adaptation strategies to avoid plastic worsening the impacts of climate change-induced extreme weather
- Protecting vulnerable ecosystems and preserving biodiversity
- Creating new jobs and boosting employment
- Preventing further contamination of food systems and agriculture
- Empowering women
- Educating the next generation for environmental resilience

Below, we outline how plastic pollution contributes to wider environmental, social and economic crises in Guinea-Bissau, and the potential co-benefits of tackling plastic pollution.

Environmental impacts of plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau and co-benefits of addressing it

Climate change

Nearly all plastic (99%) begins as a fossil fuel, a major contributor to climate change (CIEL, 2017). Plastic production accounts for approximately 10% of the global annual usage of fossil fuels.

Plastic is also one of the most greenhouse gas-intensive industries in the manufacturing sector, and the fastest-growing. Greenhouse gas emissions associated with plastic production are expected to account for 19% of the global carbon budget by 2040 (UNDP, 2022).

Plastic drives climate change at every stage of its lifecycle, from greenhouse gases emitted during production, to the toxic chemicals leeched when plastics break down. Marine plastic pollution also interferes with the ocean's ability to sequester carbon, further accelerating climate change. Although Guinea-Bissau does not produce plastics, carbon emissions are still released through the disposal, burning, and environmental leakage of plastic waste.

In Guinea-Bissau, plastic pollution accumulates in the estuaries, mangroves and sandy beaches of the Bijagós Archipelago. It also builds up in surface water drains and other waterways. This exacerbates climate change-related flooding by reducing drainage capacity. In many coastal regions of the country, flooding has caused the loss of rice paddy fields due to saltwater intrusion.

The contribution of plastic pollution to flooding is likely to increase, as climate change and sea level rise are predicted to increase the frequency and severity of flooding events in Guinea-Bissau. Inland flooding events are projected to damage, on average, approximately 0.15% of Guinea-Bissau's physical capital stock every year throughout this century (World Bank, 2024).

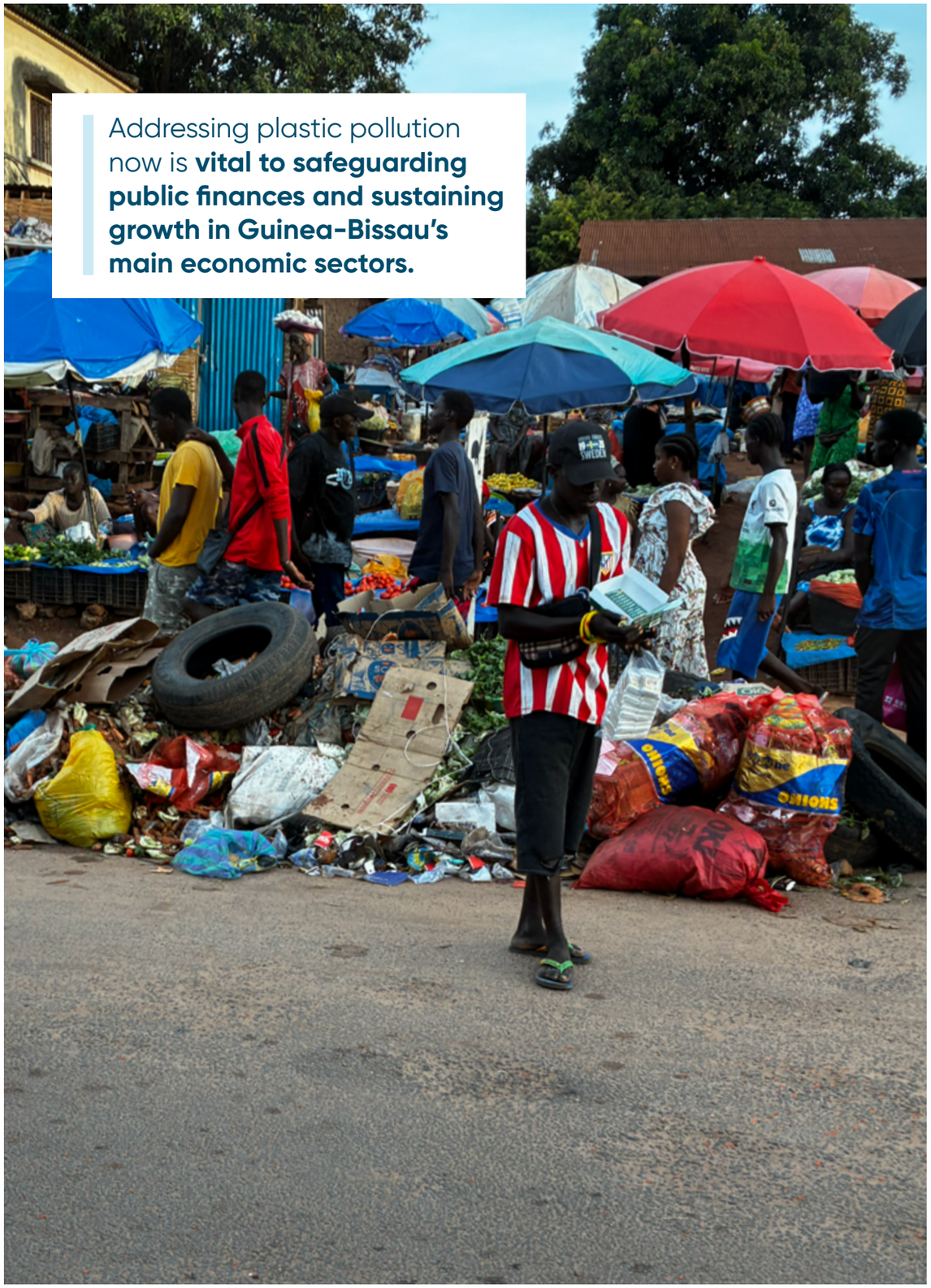
Projections also indicate that sea levels in Guinea-Bissau could rise by 0.2 meters by 2040, and by 0.3 meters by 2100. Approximately 80% of the population lives in low-lying coastal areas that are highly vulnerable to the impacts of sea level rise. Such changes are thus likely to result in significant infrastructure damage, erosion, and challenges to food security and public health (World Bank, 2024).

The cost of inaction on climate change in Guinea-Bissau has been conservatively calculated as 7.3% of GDP by 2050. It is also expected to lead to an increase in poverty, with over 200,000 additional people pushed into poverty by 2050 in the worst scenario – equating to 5 % of the projected population (World Bank, 2024).

Addressing plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau thus presents a critical opportunity to reduce the impacts of climate change.

> By reducing plastic waste generation and leakage, the country can contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, decrease flooding, safeguard agricultural land, and strengthen the resilience of communities facing rising sea levels.

[1]The total amount of physical assets (e.g. buildings, machinery, tools etc.) used by the nation in the production of goods and services at a specific point in time.



> Addressing plastic pollution now is **vital to safeguarding public finances and sustaining growth in Guinea-Bissau's main economic sectors.**

Biodiversity loss

Plastic pollution poses a pervasive and growing threat to biodiversity around the world. Plastic waste accumulation damages ecosystems, destroying habitats for species on land and in aquatic environments. It also poses health risks through ingestion – an issue of particular significance for Guinea-Bissau, where coastal and marine ecosystems, such as the Bijagós Archipelago, play a vital role in biodiversity and livelihoods.

Guinea-Bissau's coastal shelf is characterised by mangroves, mudflats, salt marshes, and river estuaries, as well as the Bijagós Archipelago (Diop, 2010). Plastic waste often accumulates in these near-shore environments where currents are weaker, smothering reefs, mangroves and grasses and reducing their function in terms of growth, marine life feeding, and carbon sequestration.

Microplastics also contribute to ocean acidification, which further drives reef decline. 'Ghost fishing' by lost plastic fishing gear continues to capture sea creatures long after its loss.

On land, microplastics leaching into soil and water can also impact biodiversity. Recent research suggests that microplastics hinder the ability of plants to photosynthesise, with an estimated 4-11% of the world's staple crops at risk of loss (Zhu et al., 2024). This could pose a particular risk to the agriculture sector, which accounts for a major share of Guinea-Bissau's economy; with cashew nuts accounting for 90-98% of total export earnings (World Bank, 2023).

By reducing plastic pollution and improving waste management practices, the country can help protect its unique coastal ecosystems, safeguard critical habitats for marine and terrestrial species, and preserve its rich biodiversity. This, in turn, supports the health of vital sectors such as fisheries and agriculture, which are key pillars of the national economy and rural livelihoods.

Economic impacts of plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau and co-benefits of addressing it

Plastic pollution poses a serious yet understated threat to Guinea-Bissau's economy. Under a business-as-usual scenario where plastic pollution continues to grow unchecked, the cumulative impact of plastic waste will place a considerable drag on two of Guinea-Bissau's most important economic sectors: agriculture and fisheries (as discussed above).

The status quo is not cost free.

The cost of inaction is significant: economically, socially and environmentally. Continued mismanagement of plastic waste will inevitably lead to higher clean-up and remediation costs for the future. Studies suggest it is significantly more expensive to clean up mismanaged waste than to properly manage it at source (WWF, 2021).

Addressing plastic pollution now is therefore vital to safeguarding public finances and sustaining growth in Guinea-Bissau's main economic sectors.

More profitable, resilient fishing and agriculture sectors

Removing plastic pollution at source helps prevent damage to fishing gear, reduces 'ghost fishing' losses – where damaged fishing gear that is lost continues to capture marine life – and protects marine habitats from degradation, all of which erode fishing incomes. Each dollar invested in prevention could lead to cost savings through avoided fishing gear replacement.

Addressing plastic pollution can also help preserve agricultural yields by preventing microplastics from disrupting photosynthesis, thereby protecting farmers' livelihoods and agricultural income.

Healthier reefs and mangroves also support eco-tourism activities such as snorkelling and sport fishing, creating new revenue streams for coastal communities.

The benefits of a cleaner, more efficient system – including reduced environmental damage, healthier fisheries, and more attractive tourism destinations – will continue to accrue well beyond the 10-year timeframe of this National Action Plan.

By acting now, Guinea-Bissau can avoid locking itself into escalating costs, while building a more sustainable and economically resilient future.

Social impacts of plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau and co-benefits of addressing it

Plastic pollution has significant implications for human rights and health. Especially for women and vulnerable communities in the informal waste sector.

Gender

In Guinea-Bissau, women often take a significant role in household management and approximately 26.9% of households are female-headed (Wendt et al., 2021). This role can heighten women's exposure to plastic products and hazardous chemicals, including those found in household cleaning supplies. In the labour force, women also predominate in informal, low-paid, and waste work. Women bear both higher ecological and health risks from plastics while receiving fewer protections and benefits (IPEN, 2024).

Women's strong representation in key sectors affected by plastic pollution makes it particularly important to engage them during policy development. This ensures that policies take account of their knowledge and experience and the potential impacts of policies on women.

The World Economic Forum's Guide to Ensure Gender-Responsive Action in Eliminating Plastic Pollution includes four recommendations that policymakers can use to achieve gender equality co-benefits in the implementation of the policies in this report:

- Meaningfully involve women when planning, implementing and evaluating projects.
- Establish accountability at the leadership level for incorporating the different needs, experiences, and realities of women and men across projects and sectors.
- Incorporate capacity building that helps staff, project implementers, evaluators, clients, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders understand how different aspects of identity – such as sex, age, social roles, and economic status – interact to shape people's experiences, opportunities, and challenges, along with the co-benefits of addressing these differences in programs and projects.
- Collect and publish gender-disaggregated data on the impacts of solutions, with transparent monitoring processes.

Implementing the policies in this NAP through a gender-informed lens will increase the likelihood of success and longevity. It will also highlight opportunities to strengthen social and health protections for women in the workplace and beyond.

Health impacts

Plastic pollution poses significant health risks. These include exposure to toxic chemicals such as BPA and PFAs, which disrupt the normal functioning of the human hormone system. This is known as 'endocrine disruption' and has the potential to impact reproductive health, cognitive function and metabolism.

In 2022, Common Seas identified microplastics in human blood for the first time (Common Seas, 2022). They have since been found in the lungs, liver, placenta, breast milk, semen and brain tissue.

Further studies have linked microplastics in the body with inflammation, cell damage, impaired immune function, reproductive issues, and several other health problems (e.g. Prata et al., 2020; Blackburn et al., 2021; Ewa, Jutel & Zemelka-Wiacek, 2024).

The majority of plastic waste in Guinea-Bissau is open burned. Open burning releases pollutants that harm respiratory health and contaminate soil and water, which can further adversely impact human health (Anokye et al., 2024).

Plastic waste also collects stagnant water and serves as a breeding ground for mosquitoes that spread diseases such as malaria. It encourages rodents, insects and other vectors, thereby increase threats to human health from Leptospirosis, Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome, and Haemorrhagic Fever (UNEP, SLSWMA & DSD, 2022).

Addressing plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau is essential for safeguarding public health. Reducing plastic waste generation and leakage – particularly through the open burning of plastics – can lower exposure to harmful air pollutants and toxic chemicals linked to endocrine disruption, inflammation, and other serious health conditions. Improved waste management can also limit the spread of vector-borne diseases by reducing mosquito breeding grounds and deterring disease-carrying pests.

1.4 Objectives of the National Action Plan

Guinea-Bissau has several plastic-related laws in place, including bans on certain single-use plastic products. However, the AFRIPAC "Analysis of Legislative and Institutional Frameworks and Plastics Policy Effectiveness" confirms that enforcement is weak, coverage is incomplete, and institutional coordination is limited. As a result, plastic sachets, beverage bottles, and other single-use items continue to leak into the environment at high rates, with limited collection, recycling, or safe disposal.

The Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action, through the Environmental Assessment Authority (AAAC), has set a clear vision: a legally robust, inclusive, and well-funded national framework that addresses plastic pollution across its full lifecycle. This NAP responds directly to that vision, presenting three integrated strategies and fourteen policy interventions to tackle both upstream and downstream drivers of plastic pollution.

Image: iStock (Tiago_Fernandez)

The objectives of this strategic document are to:

- Safeguard Guinea-Bissau's biodiversity, marine ecosystems, and freshwater resources from the impacts of mismanaged plastic waste.
- **Protect public health and the national economy** by reducing environmental pollution and safeguarding key industries including agriculture and fisheries.
- **Strengthen legal frameworks** to enable effective enforcement of plastic bans, product standards, and waste management regulations.
- **Establish a formal, statutory National Plastics Committee** to coordinate action across ministries (environment, customs, trade, finance) and with municipal governments, civil society, and the private sector.
- **Enable long-term financing and investment partnerships,** positioning Guinea-Bissau to access both domestic resources and international funding for implementation.
- **Align with regional and global frameworks,** including the African Union's Agenda 2063, the West Africa Coastal Areas (WACA) programme, and the forthcoming Global Plastics Treaty.

MODELLING WITH PLASTIC DRAWDOWN INDICATES THAT THESE STRATEGIES COULD REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION IN GUINEA-BISSAU BY

79%

OVER THE NEXT DECADE, COMPARED TO A BUSINESS-AS-USUAL SCENARIO – DELIVERING TANGIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH, AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS.

2

Approach

2.1 Country kick-off

2.2 Data gathering and baseline modelling

2.3 Policy analysis

2.4 Workshop and National Action Plan development

1
Country kick-off

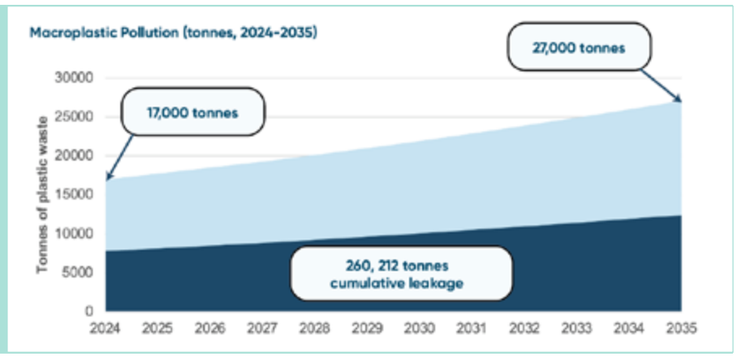
November 2024

2
Date gathering & baseline modelling

November 2024
-March 2025

3
Policy analysis

April 2024



4
Workshop and NAP

May-October 2025

2.1 Country kick-off

The work began with two fundamental activities:

- Establishing the National Committee to Combat Plastic Pollution to input into and review the major outputs of the project;
- Establishing a local partnership agreement between Common Seas and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), to provide on-the-ground support.

National Committee to Combat Plastic Pollution

Common Seas developed this National Action Plan with the Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action and a wider group of key stakeholders across the plastics value chain. These stakeholders were originally brought together to form the AFRIPAC National Committee on Plastic Pollution in Guinea-Bissau by the government at the start of the AFRIPAC programme.

This existing committee served as the foundation for a newly formed body under the current initiative – the National Committee to Combat Plastic Pollution in Guinea-Bissau. This approach aimed to ensure continuity, reduce stakeholder fatigue, and create synergies between the two projects. Additional stakeholders were incorporated to better address the specific objectives of this project, enriching the representation across the plastics value chain and ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive approach.

The Ministry played a central role in facilitating coordination between Common Seas and this committee. Fourteen key institutions comprised the National Committee to Combat Plastic Pollution, ensuring a comprehensive and cross-sectoral approach.

BOX 1: MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE TO COMBAT PLASTIC POLLUTION IN GUINEA-BISSAU

- The National Civil Society Movement for Peace and Development
- General Environmental Inspection
- National Maritime and Port Institute
- Institute of Biodiversity and Protected Areas
- Coastal Planning Office
- National Institute of Studies and Research
- Competent Environmental Assessment Authority
- General Directorate of Water Resources
- General Directorate of Territorial Administration
- General Directorate of Territorial Planning
- Waste and Chemical Products Centre
- Directorate of Environmental Health and Public Hygiene Services – Ministry of Health
- National Institute of Public Health (INASA)
- Directorate-General for Forests and Fauna

Partnership with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

As part of their approach, Common Seas engages a local partner to provide contextual insights and on-the-ground support throughout the life of the project. The local partner also offers logistical support such as arranging interviews and organising the workshop.

IUCN was Common Seas' local partner in the development of the work with the Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action. This collaboration was instrumental in bringing regional and local expertise to ensure the recommendations were relevant, effective and sustainable.

In Guinea-Bissau, IUCN works closely with the government and local communities. Their work addresses the impacts of climate change, and conserves and restores the country's rich natural and cultural heritage. It also strengthens institutional frameworks through the development and support of entities such:

- Competent Environmental Assessment Authority (AAAC),
- Institute of Biodiversity and Protected Areas (IBAP),
- Coastal Planning Office (GPC).

IUCN's work promotes sustainable development across diverse landscapes and ecosystems, including marine and coastal areas, watersheds, wetlands, and humid and sub-humid forests. Their cross-cutting focus also extends to key thematic areas such as waste management, the blue economy, and nature-based solutions. At the regional level, IUCN leads the AFRIPAC programme, which supports five African countries, including Guinea-Bissau, in advocating for a robust and ambitious Global Plastics Treaty.

2.2 Data gathering and baseline modelling

Common Seas developed the plastic pollution baseline study presented in this report (Chapter 3) by reviewing a wide cross-section of available data on plastic products and waste generation in Guinea-Bissau and the West African region. This included studies and initiatives conducted in Guinea-Bissau over recent years.

Stakeholder engagement was a key part of the process, including interviews with individuals and organisations from across the plastics value chain. These consultations offered valuable contextual insights and expert perspectives, helping to address data gaps and provide a comprehensive understanding of Guinea-Bissau's plastic waste management system.

The market research firm, Fact MR also supplied market data. This included data on the quantities and types of plastic products placed on the market in Guinea-Bissau, and the projected growth of relevant product and packaging markets over the next ten years.

Common Seas used the Plastic Drawdown tool to model plastic waste generation and plastic waste flows (see Chapter 3 and Appendix B).The diverse data sources also allowed estimation of the proportions of plastic waste managed by the existing waste management infrastructure, and the proportion of plastic waste that escapes into the environment.

The tool also projected the growth in plastic waste generation and plastic pollution over the coming 11 years (between the baseline year of 2024 and 2035) under a 'Business as Usual (BaU) scenario. The BaU assumes no further action is taken to address plastic pollution and that current policies, infrastructure, and behaviours remain the same.

Initiatives and projects consulted

Table 1 summarises the ongoing initiatives related to plastic and solid waste management in Guinea-Bissau, which were consulted in developing the baseline model presented in this report. Further information on relevant legislative instruments can be found in Appendix B: Plastic Policies & Regulations

Guinea-Bissau has already initiated and participated in some initiatives to address plastic pollution Nonetheless, due to the country's many pressing socio-political and economic challenges, tackling plastic waste has only recently emerged as a priority.

In 2013, the country introduced a ban on the import, manufacturing, and sale of plastic bags through Decree Law 16/2013.250. However, the ban has seen limited enforcement and public compliance, with strong resistance from consumers and retailers (Nielsen et al., 2019). As a result, its impact has been minimal (Muposhi, Mpinganjira & Wait, 2021).

AFRIPAC Programme

Guinea-Bissau is an active participant in the AFRIPAC (Effective Plastic Treaty Capacity Building for Africa) initiative. The initiative was launched in January 2023 by IUCN and GRID-Arendal, and funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). AFRIPAC supports five West African countries to strengthen their engagement in global plastics treaty negotiations:

- Guinea-Bissau
- Cabo Verde
- São Tomé and Príncipe
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone

Plastic Policy Effectiveness Assessment – AFRIPAC

As part of AFRIPAC, a policy effectiveness assessment evaluated Guinea-Bissau's legal and institutional frameworks on plastic pollution. It found that existing legislation – most notably Decree 16/2013 banning plastic bags – lacks comprehensiveness and does not address the full life cycle of plastics. Institutional responsibilities are fragmented, with weak enforcement due to limited capacity and outdated legal tools.

The assessment recommended adopting a lifecycle approach to plastics regulation, strengthening coordination, and improving public awareness and financing. These findings directly inform key areas of the NAP, including governance and policy coherence.

WACA ResIP 2

The WACA ResIP 2 project, funded by the World Bank, is supporting the Government of Guinea-Bissau to strengthen the national enabling environment for coastal zone management. The project focuses on governance and the legal framework, strategies and plans, and institutional capacity for management and monitoring. It also **aims to improve coordination between national and regional efforts for coastal and marine management,** and support Guinea-Bissau's participation in relevant conventions and forums.

Additionally, in 2024, Guinea-Bissau received an underwater drone from a civil society expedition originating in Portugal. The Institute of Biodiversity and Protected Areas (IBAP) uses the drone to monitor underwater waste pollution in the Bijagós Archipelago. The equipment enables authorities to assess marine debris up to 50 metres deep, addressing the significant issue of waste accumulation in this UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Waste Wise Cities Tool (WaCT): Application in Bissau, Guinea-Bissau

Implemented by UN-Habitat in 2024-2025, the WaCT helped the city of Bissau generate reliable baseline data on solid waste. The findings indicated that Bissau generates approximately 143 tonnes of municipal solid waste daily, of which only 16% is effectively collected and less than 1% is recycled. Organic waste comprises nearly 60% of the total waste stream, presenting opportunities for composting and circular economy initiatives. The study also highlighted infrastructure deficits and the need for system-wide improvements, especially in low-income and underserved areas.

Building on these insights, the WaCT report recommended critical interventions:

- Expanding collection infrastructure and logistics
- Developing community-based recovery stations ("eco-points")
- Introducing material recovery facilities (MRFs)
- Upgrading the existing Safim dumpsite using the Fukuoka method (a low-cost method developed by the Japanese International Co-operation Agency for tackling leachate and gas emissions from dumpsites).

Policy recommendations emphasised developing a national waste policy, revision of outdated municipal regulations, and creating robust data and financing systems. Priority was given to creating a just transition for the informal sector, extended service coverage, and integrating circular economy approaches. These insights form a critical input into the baseline model and strategic direction of this NAP.

Bissau Limpu (Green and Inclusive Cities Programme)

Bissau Limpu (2025-2029) aims to improve integrated solid waste management across five pilot neighbourhoods in Bissau by supporting the circular economy and the 3R approach (reduce, reuse, recycle). It is being implemented by ACRA and partners including Mani Tese, ISF, POLIMI, ESTà, and RENAJ, under the EU's Green and Inclusive Cities Programme.

The initiative strengthens municipal capacity through infrastructure upgrades, planning support, and technical training for city authorities and national ministries. It also supports micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), informal waste pickers, and associations with inclusive recycling measures, and engages communities – particularly young people and women – through awareness campaigns, education, and local waste-sorting schemes. Bissau Limpu provides valuable insights into the social, institutional, and behavioural dimensions of urban waste management in Bissau.

Safi's Leak (Preliminary Study – UN-Habitat)

As part of the EU-funded "Green and Inclusive Cities" Programme, UN-Habitat conducted a preliminary study of the Safim landfill site, the only active landfill serving over 430,000 people in Bissau. Located in a 10.77-hectare area adjacent to mangroves and urban expansion zones, the site is used informally by waste pickers, including women and children. Surroundings and interior areas of the site are also used for livestock grazing and nearby waterways support local fishing activities.

The study aims to reduce environmental contamination, improve spillway management, and strengthen livelihoods connected to the waste sector. Proposed interventions include:

- Improved access infrastructure
- Improving site fencing
- A solid waste deposit area using the Fukuoka method
- A sorting and recycling centre
- A facility for weighing and managing waste.

The study evaluated three fence sealing options: conventional, metal, and mixed, for their cost-effectiveness, durability, and environmental suitability, alongside recommendations for a vegetative green belt to mitigate pollution and improve visual impact. The study contributes critical infrastructure data and practical design concepts for inclusive, climate-resilient landfill management.

Table 1:

List of key data sources and initiatives consulted. For full list of data sources please see separate Technical Annex.

Title	Implementing Agency	Timeline	Brief Description	Reviewed	Incorporated Data	Spoken to Author
Waste Wise Cities Tool (WaCT): Application in Bissau	**UN-HABITAT**	2025	Detailed audit and diagnostic review of municipal waste in Bissau. Used extensively to inform baseline modelling including waste generation and composition.	√	√	√
West Africa Circular Economy: Realizing the Potential of Plastics	**World Bank**	2023	Regional analysis with specific references to Guinea-Bissau. Provided high-level plastic flow insights and circular economy potential.	√	√	
Analysis of Compliance of Bissau (Guinea-Bissau) MSW Management to UN SDGS	**Nantungue Fernando, Kharlamova MD**	2024	Reviewed Bissau's municipal solid waste management against UN SDG indicators. Included visuals of infrastructure and collection methods.	√	√	
GB-01 Project Fiche Bissau Integrated Solid Waste and Sanitation Project (Guinea-Bissau)	**Tetra Tech**	2022	Project fiche detailing investment scope, stakeholder engagement, and plans to improve waste and sanitation in Bissau. Helped shape understanding of current intervention landscape.	√	√	√
Minamata Initial Assessment Report for Guinea-Bissau	**Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNITAR**	2019	Provided data on waste treatment methods and tonnages incinerated, landfilled, or burned in Bissau.	√	√	
IOC SWIOFish2/ AIODIS project	**World Bank, Indian Ocean Commission**	2021	Provided data on the fishing fleet in Guinea-Bissau, including the scale of plastic leakage from the sector.	√	√	

Plastic Drawdown tool

The analysis, figures, and findings presented in Chapter 3 were produced using Common Seas' Plastic Drawdown tool. Plastic Drawdown models how macroplastic and micro-plastic material flows through waste pathways in Guinea-Bissau. It quantifies plastic waste flows through municipal waste management systems and leakages into the terrestrial and marine environments. Further details of these pathways can be found in Appendix A.

Plastic Drawdown was developed in consultation with 24 governments, more than half of which are SIDS, and has been published in the journal Global Environmental Change (Royle et al, 2022).

Common Seas used the tool to:

- Describe the composition of Guinea-Bissau's plastic waste
- Understand how much waste becomes plastic pollution
- Explore how the problem will change over time
- Analyse the impact of plastic-related policies

The tool has been tailored to the characteristics of Guinea-Bissau's economy and waste management system.

1. Describe the composition of Guinea-Bissau's plastic waste

The model uses country-level waste data and item-specific consumption data to gauge the total waste produced. It categorises the waste flows of the 25 plastic items that account for 95% of coastal litter. This includes single-use plastics, sanitary items, household goods, fishing gear and construction plastics.

The model incorporates a breakdown by item type and waste category. These are then modelled separately to account for the differences in their respective consumption patterns and end-of-life outcomes. It also estimates micro-plastic generation from tyre-wear, brake-wear, clothing fibres, pellets and microbeads.

2. Understand how much waste becomes plastic pollution

Plastic Drawdown delivers a material flow analysis that measures the amount of plastic waste flowing into the ocean and what remains on land. It quantifies plastic waste that is recycled, incinerated, sent to landfill, and exported.

3. Explore how the problem will change over time

Plastic Drawdown forecasts a Business as Usual (BaU) scenario projected over the next ten years for waste generation and plastic pollution. This scenario assumes that current policies, infrastructure, and behaviours remain the same and no further action is taken to address plastic pollution.

4. Analyse the impact of plastic-related policy

The model analyses the total and yearly reductions in plastic pollution that could be achieved by targeted policies. This is used to visualise the impact on plastic pollution of combining different policy strategies and the remaining plastic pollution after policy interventions.

2.3 Policy analysis

The Baseline Assessment was prepared first as an interim report. This was reviewed, refined and then validated by the Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action and the National Committee to Combat Plastic Pollution. Once validated, the baseline study provided a basis for assessing the potential impact of different policies for reducing plastic waste and pollution in Guinea Bissau.

The waste hierarchy (shown in Figure 1) informs Common Seas' approach to developing a comprehensive set of policies to address plastic pollution on land and in the sea. This approach combines both upstream and downstream measures drawn from throughout the waste hierarchy to support the transition from a linear, take-make-dispose model to a circular economy.

A circular economy minimises waste and resource consumption by keeping products and materials in use for as long as possible. This model shifts the focus toward resource efficiency, durability, and regenerative practices. Ambitious upstream policies – such as those promoting reuse, and waste prevention – drive a meaningful reduction in plastic waste generation and contribute more effectively to systemic change.

Shifting to a new circular system requires time, planning, investment, and education to support large-scale behavioural change. In the short to medium term, downstream policy interventions and effective waste management play a crucial role in preventing leakage into the environment.

Therefore, alongside upstream policies aimed at reducing plastic consumption, this plan also addresses the entire lifecycle of plastic waste management – from importing and processing to final use, collection, and disposal.

Common Seas used Plastic Drawdown to conduct a quantitative analysis of the potential of different policies to 'draw down' plastic pollution over time (as estimated by the baseline assessment). A shortlist of policies was selected in consultation with the Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action, the National Committee to Combat Plastic Pollution and IUCN.

Figure 1:
The waste hierarchy

2.4 Workshop and National Action Plan development

Over 60 stakeholders attended an in-person workshop in Bissau on Wednesday, June 25th, 2025. Together, they represented government, civil society organisations, academia and local media (See Appendix E).

Common Seas and the Competent Environmental Assessment Authority (AAAC) co-hosted the event. Ms. Isabel Evangelista Sanha, General Environmental Inspector at the Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action, and Dr. Welena Silva, General Director at AAAC presided over the workshop.

The workshop provided the opportunity to present:

- The baseline findings, including estimates of the types, quantities, and sources of plastic waste in Guinea-Bissau, and projections of leakage and plastic waste generation over the coming decade
- The potential impact of the different policy interventions on the business-as-usual scenario

This enabled the stakeholders to provide their perspectives on the potential challenges, opportunities, and key implementation steps for the proposed policy strategies.

This National Action Plan was informed through insights from these discussions. It also benefitted from additional follow-up in-person meetings with key stakeholders, coupled with continued engagement with the Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action and the National Committee to Combat Plastic Pollution.

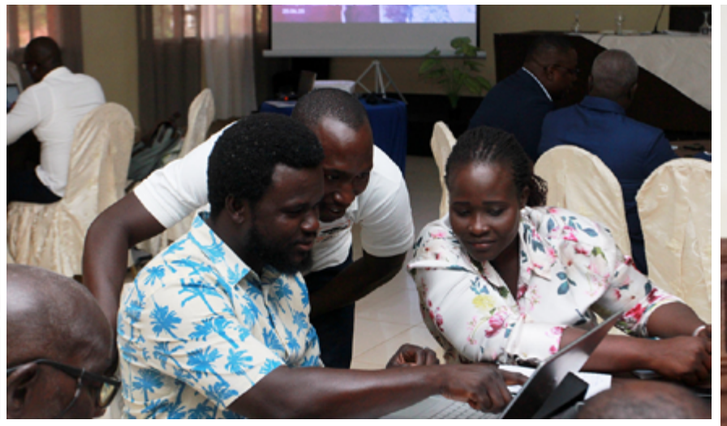


Figure 2.
Images taken at the policy workshop held in Bissau, June 2025

Common Seas and Guinea-Bissau

Common Seas and Guinea-Bissau

3

Understanding plastic pollution in Guinea Bissau

Image: iStock (Tiago_Fernandez)

3.1 Baseline findings summary

This chapter presents baseline findings across three key areas: plastic waste generation, plastic flows, and plastic pollution.

Plastic Waste Generation

KEY FINDINGS:

- Guinea-Bissau generated approximately 30,400 tonnes of macroplastic waste in 2024 or approximately 0.038 kg per person per day.
- Under the Business as Usual scenario, this is expected to grow to 48,400 tonnes in 2035 (59% increase).
- This equates to over 465,700 tonnes of cumulative plastic waste generated during this period, creating considerable pressure on Guinea-Bissau's limited waste management infrastructure.
- Total microplastic generation was estimated at 157 tonnes in 2024 and comprised mainly of pellets and clothing fibres.
- The five most common items account for approximately 6,200 tonnes (20%) of plastic waste generated:
  - Single-serve sachets (2,347 tonnes)
  - Beverage bottles >500ml (1,098 tonnes)
  - Other plastic bottles (oil, bleach, etc.) (1,034 tonnes)
  - Beverage bottles <500ml (969 tonnes)
  - Grocery bags (730 tonnes)

Table 2 summarises the estimated total plastic waste generated (macro- and microplastics) for the baseline year, 2024, and for 2035.

Table 2:
Plastic waste generation estimates under a business-as-usual scenario (2024-2035)

Year	Macroplastic waste generated	Microplastics generated
2024	30,400 tonnes	157 tonnes
2035	48,400 tonnes	250 tonnes

Plastic flows

This section describes the pathways that plastic waste follows in Guinea-Bissau, as modelled by Plastic Drawdown. The model explores how plastic waste flows through various pathways, including through the managed waste system, through mismanagement (i.e. littering, dumping and uncontrolled burning) and via wastewater and surface water drainage systems. Flows of microplastics are also considered.

Figure 3 and Figure 4, below, summarise the proportion of plastic waste that flows through different pathways and into the environment.

KEY FINDINGS:

- In 2024, 4,689 tonnes (15%) of plastic waste in Guinea-Bissau was collected and entered the waste management system. Some of these materials (509 tonnes or ≈11%) subsequently leaked into the environment during collection and transportation and became plastic pollution.
- An estimated 25,902 tonnes (85%) of plastic waste was mismanaged (i.e. littered or dumped (11,727 tonnes) or burnt (14,175 tonnes) in 2024.
- An estimated 1,549 tonnes (5%) of plastic waste entered the surface water drainage system, the majority of which then flowed directly into waterways.

Figure 3:
Summary of plastic waste flows in Guinea-Bissau (tonnes, 2024)

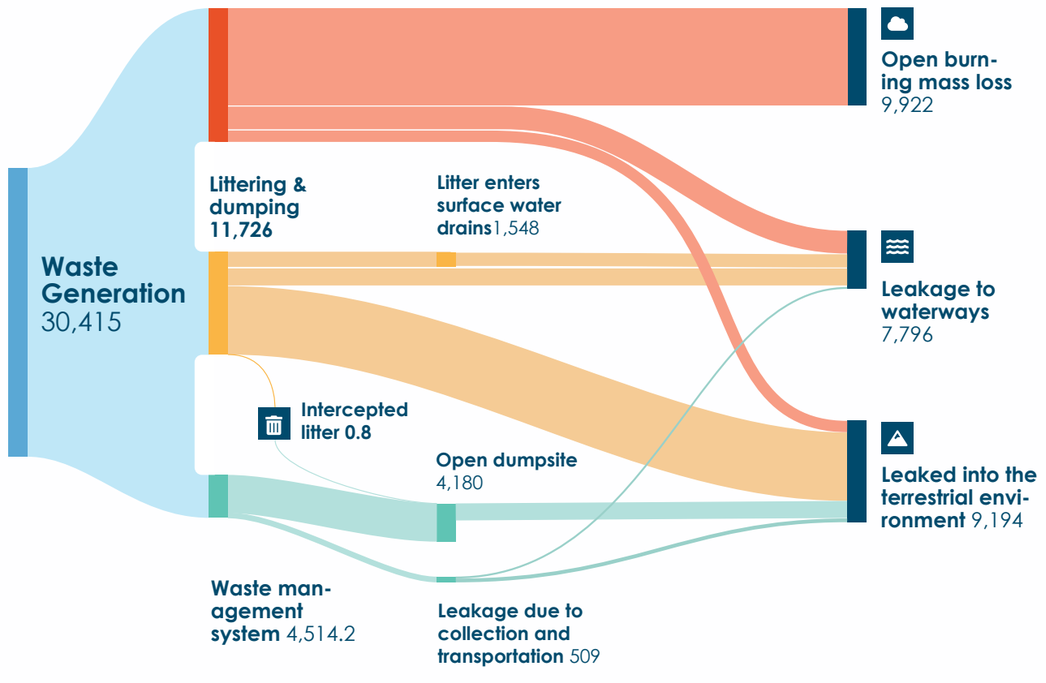
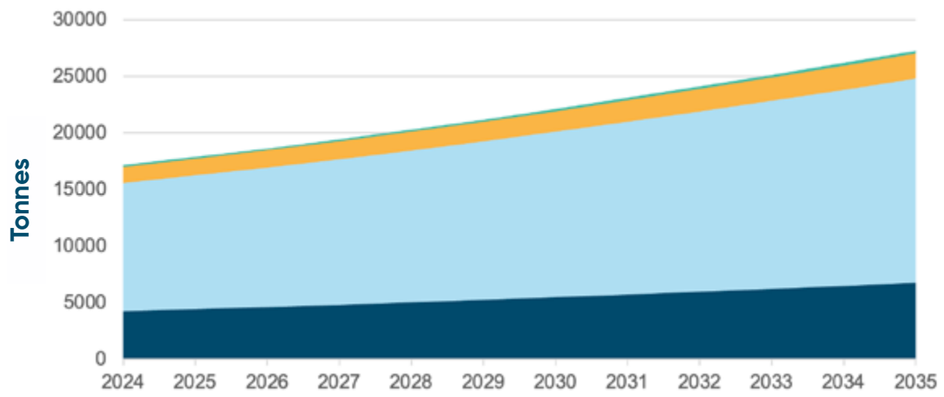


Figure 4:
Summary of waste leakage pathways into the environment (waterways & leakages on land)



Plastic Pollution

This section discusses the estimated quantities and types of plastic waste that escape into the environment in Guinea-Bissau.

KEY FINDINGS:

- 17,000 tonnes of macro plastic waste escaped into the environment in Guinea-Bissau in 2024.
- Of this, 7,800 tonnes of macroplastic pollution entered the ocean, with a further 9,200 tonnes littered on land.
- Without action, plastic pollution will increase by 59% to 27,000 tonnes in 2035.
- The most common individual components of macroplastic waste leakage in Guinea-Bissau in 2024 were:
  - Single-serve sachets (1069 tonnes)
  - Beverage bottles (798 tonnes)
  - Plastic bags (425 tonnes)
  - Other plastic bottles (oil, bleach, etc.) (412 tonnes)
  - Food wrappers (candy, chips, etc.) (150 tonnes)

IF NO FURTHER ACTION IS TAKEN, THEN A TOTAL OF

119,400 tonnes

OF PLASTIC WASTE IS EXPECTED TO BE RELEASED IN GUINEA-BISSAU'S MARINE ENVIRONMENT BETWEEN 2024 AND 2035.

3.2 Plastic waste generation

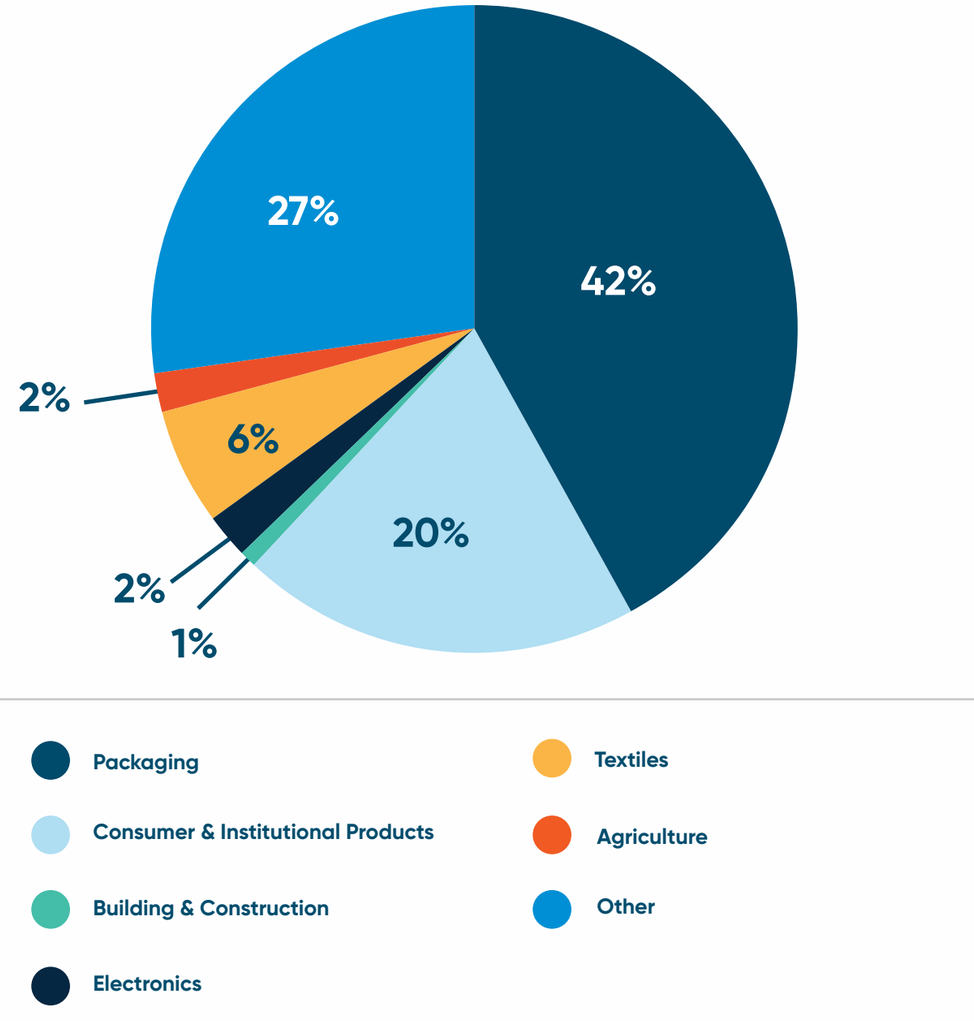
This section analyses the quantities and types of plastic waste generated in Guinea-Bissau.

Total quantities

Guinea-Bissau produced an estimated 30,400 tonnes of macroplastic waste in 2024.This is the equivalent of 13.81 kg per person per year or 0.038 kg daily.

Figure 5 provides a breakdown of plastic waste generation by application. The 'Packaging' category is the largest generator of plastic waste, accounting for 42% of total waste generated. This is followed by the 'other' category, 27%, which includes plastics used in the transport sector, along with a diverse range of plastics which cannot be assigned to the other categories. Consumer & Institutional Products and textiles are the next largest applications accounting for 20% and 6% of plastic waste generation, respectively.

Figure 5:
Breakdown of plastic waste generation by application (2024)



Types of plastic waste generated

Table 4 summarises the most common identifiable items that modelling indicates formed part of the plastic waste stream in 2024. Details of plastic waste generated by a longer list of items are shown in Appendix C.

The most commonly generated plastic items in Guinea-Bissau in 2024 are presented in Table 4 below. They are all single-use plastics.

Table 3:
Most common identifiable plastic items generated in Guinea-Bissau 2024

Item	Weight (tonnes)	Share of total plastic waste generated (%)
Single-serve sachets (including water sachets)	2347	7.8%
Beverage bottles (plastic) >500ml	1098	3.6%
Other plastic bottles (oil, bleach, etc.)	1034	3.4%
Beverage bottles (plastic) <500ml	969	3.2%
Grocery bags (plastic)	730	2.4%
Other plastic bags	640	2.1%
Food wrappers (candy, chips, etc.)	375	1.2%
Single serve sachets (food)	335	1.1%
Bottle caps (plastic)	210	0.7%
Cups, plates (plastic)	196	0.6%

Single-use plastics

Table 4 summarises the most common identifiable items that modelling indicates formed part of the plastic waste stream in 2024. Details of plastic waste generated by a longer list of items are shown in Appendix C.

The most commonly generated plastic items in Guinea-Bissau in 2024 are presented in Table 4 below. They are all single-use plastics.

In response to the challenges posed by single-use plastics, the Government of Guinea-Bissau enacted Decree Law 16/2013.250, prohibiting the use, manufacture, import, sale and distribution of plastic bags, which came into effect in 2014.

However, the ban is reportedly not widely respected or enforced, with strong resistance from both consumers and retailers (Nielsen et al.,2019). Consequently, it has had limited effect (Muposhi, Mpinganjira & Wait, 2021).

Figure 6:
Photograph showing discarded plastic film in Bissau (2025)

Fishing gear

Guinea-Bissau's fishing fleet consists of both artisanal and industrial fishers, and a mix of national and international vessels.

The country does not have a long-standing fishing tradition, and artisanal fishing by locals only started in the 1970s (Chavance, 2004). The artisanal fleet is comprised of both Senegalese fishers, who use large pirogues and local Guinea-Bissau fishers who use smaller dug-out canoes, referred to as pailão.

Local artisanal fishers fish on a seasonal basis and reportedly cease their fishing activity during the agricultural and rainy season. As of 2015, 880 registered pirogues made up the artisanal fleet (Intchama, Belhabib & Jumpe, 2018).

As of 2017, there were 160 industrial vessels from 17 countries licensed in Guinea-Bissau (IOC SWIOFish2 / AIODIS, 2021). Catches from international fleets are dominated by Russian, Chinese and EU fleets, which accounted for 30%, 20% and 15% of total catches respectively (Intchama, Belhabib & Jumpe, 2018).

There is limited reported data on the quantities of plastic fishing gear used by the artisanal and industrial fishing fleets operating in Guinea-Bissau. For this report, the value used is taken from the study conducted under the IOC SWIOFISH2/AIODIS project, which estimated that 20 tonnes of plastic pollution was generated by the industry.

Although this does not account for a significant share of plastic waste generated in Guinea-Bissau, fishing gear is a category of particular concern due to it being lost or disposed of directly into the ocean. Unlike terrestrial litter, which may be intercepted via street sweeping and drain cleaning activities, this is not the case for fishing gear that is lost or abandoned at sea.

Microplastics

Guinea Bissau generated an estimated 157 tonnes of microplastics in 2024. This consisted of:

- Pellets (65 tonnes)
- Clothing Fibres (64 tonnes)
- Tyre and brake-wear particles (25 tonnes)
- Microbeads (3 tonnes)

Microplastics pellets – also known as nurdles – are the most common source of microplastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau, and are typically released into the environment during transport, manufacturing and handling processes. These lentil-sized pellets are the main input material for plastic product manufacturing and are melted and moulded into finished products (Ocean Conservancy, 2023).

Clothing fibres also constitute a large proportion of microplastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau and are released into waterways when plastic-based clothing is washed. Around 60% of material made into clothing is plastic, including polyester and nylon textiles. Every time these clothing items are washed, they shed microfibres, a key form of microplastic pollution (UNEP, n.d.).

Projection of future waste generation

Without further policy intervention, plastic waste generation in Guinea-Bissau is projected to grow significantly, from 30,400 tonnes per year in 2024 to 48,400 tonnes per year in 2035 (see Figure 7). This equates to a cumulative 465,700 tonnes of plastic waste generated over this period. These waste generation outcomes form the 'Business as Usual' scenario throughout our modelling process.

Over the modelling period, population growth is expected to grow significantly (up to a 60% increase by 2050 (WHO, 2024)). This combines with projected growth of product and packaging markets to create a significant increase in plastic waste generation (Fact MR, 2024).

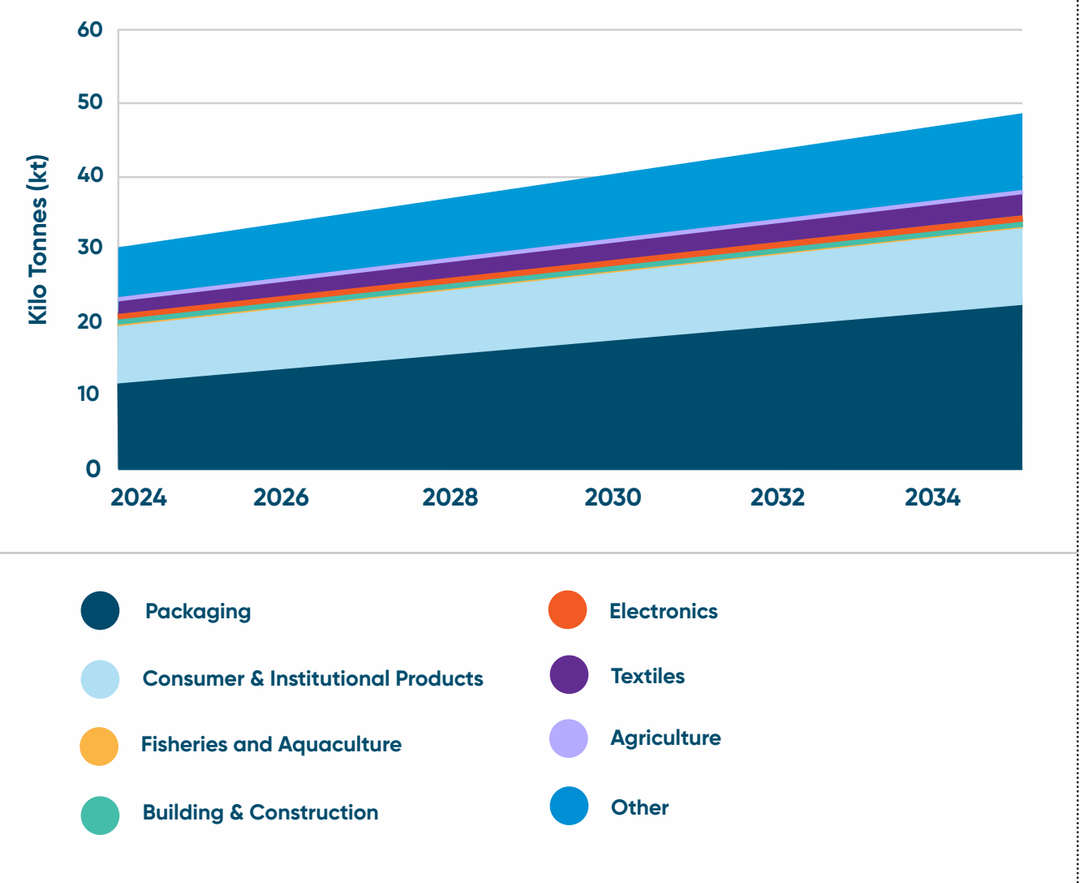
This will place considerable additional strain on Guinea-Bissau's limited waste management systems. Without improvements in plastic waste collection and management, most of this plastic waste is likely to be dumped and open-burned, which pose significant risks to human health.

WITHOUT FURTHER POLICY INTERVENTION, PLASTIC WASTE GENERATION IN GUINEA-BISSAU IS PROJECTED TO GROW SIGNIFICANTLY, FROM 30,400 TONNES PER YEAR IN 2024 TO 48,400 TONNES PER YEAR IN 2035. THIS EQUATES TO A CUMULATIVE OF PLASTIC WASTE

465,700 tonnes

GENERATED OVER THIS PERIOD.

Figure 7:
Growth in estimated plastic waste generation 2024-2035 BAU



3.3 Plastic flows

This section describes the pathways that plastic waste follows in Guinea-Bissau, as modelled by Plastic Drawdown. The model explores how plastic waste flows through various pathways, including through the managed waste system, through mismanagement (i.e. littering, dumping and uncontrolled burning) and via wastewater and surface water drainage systems. The model also considers flows of microplastics.

Managed waste

Bissau City Council is responsible for waste collection, transport, and disposal of municipal solid waste in the city of Bissau. Beyond the capital city, there is no formal waste management taking place, but Municipal authorities reportedly have financial autonomy and are directly responsible for waste management (IOC SWIOFish2/AIODIS project, 2021).

Waste collection points are concentrated along the main road, Avenida del Combatanti, and in the main market areas. To access the service, residents must take waste from their house to collection points. In some cases, the collection points can be a considerable distance from households (estimated to be up to 2km). There is an informal system in place whereby waste is transported via barrows to collection points for a fee. It is understood that this service may be provided by children. The number and location of collection points are insufficient relative to the number of residents, and a mapping exercise to review this would help target efforts to improve collection coverage. However, the infrastructure within the city is challenging for waste collection, with poor road surfaces and narrow streets being main considerations when locating collection points.

There are large containers at the collection points, but waste is often left surrounding the containers, suggesting that the capacity of the containers is insufficient for the quantity of waste.

Collection trucks and smaller tricycles provide access for less accessible areas. Crews work to load the waste using shovels and clear litter as they go. Vehicles and crews make up to two collections per day at each collection point.

Most of the waste collected is taken to a landfill site at Safim, 14km from Bissau, with another site in Bissalanca that is also used to a lesser extent. These sites are the only active landfill sites. A third site at Antula is no longer operational.

The main landfill site at Safim is managed by Safim Council. It is located near to a river which connects to the country's main watershed. As can be seen from the images below (see Figure 8), there seems to be a significant amount of burning of waste on site.

Households and commercial entities do not pay a waste collection fee. They do however pay a sanitation fee through their water bills, but this is not transferred to the Bissau City Council. As such, the public waste collection service is funded via the central Bissau City Council budget. There are also two private waste collection companies, Blufu and Limpeza na Comunidade, who provide collection services for businesses and some households in Bissau who pay monthly fees.

The Sankey flow diagram in Figure 3 illustrates the main flows of plastic waste. This was developed by Common Seas based on a review of the available information and discussions with key stakeholders.

In 2024, an estimated 4,689 tonnes of plastic waste was collected by the waste management system, representing 15% of total plastic waste generated. In addition, regular street cleaning intercepted an estimated 263 tonnes of litter, which re-entered the waste management system.

Overall, the proportion of plastic thought to be entering into the managed system is low. Additionally, there are issues associated with the management of this waste due to the extensive burning of waste at the Safim landfill site. This highlights the need for a strong focus on effective waste management, waste diversion and circular economy initiatives.

Figure 8:
Open burning at Safim landfill

Mismanaged waste

As shown in Figure 1, an estimated 25,902 tonnes of plastic waste was mismanaged in 2024:

- 11,727 tonnes littered or dumped
- 14,175 tonnes burnt

An estimated16,990 tonnes of this directly pollutes the terrestrial environment or ends up in waterways.

Litter collections, street sweeping, or fly-tipping clean-ups capture a very small proportion of littered waste (263 tonnes).

For the majority of households, who are not accessing the waste collection system in Bissau, there are two alternative routes for wase disposal: open burning or dumping.

Open burning of waste is a significant issue in Guinea-Bissau, being very common in both rural and urban areas. This report notes that the negative health, and climate, implications of burning waste, especially plastic, may not be widely recognised. Open burning is used at the landfill site to reduce waste quantities, so it is potentially considered acceptable by at the household level as well.

Littering and dumping of waste is also a significant challenge. Residents dump their rubbish in uninhabited areas, in ditches and open drains, (which flood during the rainy season and wash the rubbish away into nearby watercourses), into unused wells and directly into the river. Bissau City Council undertakes regular street cleaning within Bissau, with an estimated 263 tonnes of material intercepted and managed by the waste management system. However they lack the means to deal with the quantity of waste being littered and dumped elsewhere. There is thought to be a general lack of public awareness regarding the negative social and environmental consequences of these actions.

Surface water drainage and wastewater flows

Data on this issue is very limited in Guinea-Bissau. For the purposes of flow modelling, available information has been used. For example, the Joint Monitoring Programme data on sanitation provision (UNICEF and WHO) and a number of projections based on discussions with stakeholders, drawing on experience and information from other, similar contexts.

Surface water drainage flows

In Guinea-Bissau, open and closed drains (e.g. gullies, channels and pipes) manage surface water, such as rainwater run-off from roads, pavements, and other surfaces.

Any littered items or microplastics that enter surface water drainage systems either settle in the drainage system itself or enter surface water courses and the sea.

There is no known drain cleaning taking place. However, while the system in Bissau was previously reliant on open drains, some closed drains are now in use to reduce drains being clogged with dumped waste. An estimated 1,549 tonnes of plastic waste entered the surface water drain system in 2024, the majority of which then flowed directly into waterways.

Wastewater flows

Most properties in Guinea-Bissau are not connected to a municipal sewerage system. Existing sewerage infrastructure serves only about 2 – 3% of the population – 3% in urban areas and 2% in rural regions. The rest of the population relies on septic tanks, pit latrines, or practices open defecation.

Guinea-Bissau currently has no wastewater treatment plants, meaning that nearly all waste entering the limited sewerage network is discharged untreated into water bodies.

Microplastic flows

The majority of microplastic emissions in Guinea-Bissau are thought to come from pellets. While there is no domestic plastic resin production, the country does import pellets and pre-moulds which are then converted into final products, such as plastic bottles. Pre-production pellets are typically lost during handling and transportation and leak into watercourses directly.

Fibres shed from clothing are another key source of microplastic pollution. These are released during machine washing into building waste pipes, which often flow directly into waterways, or during hand washing, where they enter rivers and other water bodies.

3.4 Plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau

This section discusses the estimated quantities and types of plastic waste that escape into the environment.

Leakage from the managed waste system

In 2024, an estimated 180 tonnes of plastic waste leaked into the watercourse and 320 tonnes to the land from the waste management system. This is primarily a result of waste escaping during collection, transport, processing and disposal.

A further 890 tonnes of waste leaked from the Safim and Bissalanca dumpsite. This is, in part, a result of their perimeters not being fenced, and waste remaining uncovered and thus being exposed to the wind and rain, further increasing leakage.

Leakage from mismanaged waste

An estimated 2,137 tonnes of plastic waste is littered directly into the watercourse with 3,228 tonnes remaining on land.

Approximately 80% of the population in Guinea-Bissau lives in low-lying coastal areas (World Bank, 2024). This proximity to watercourses, combined with the high prevalence of littering and dumping, leads to this level of plastic waste being directly littered into the watercourse.

This pathway also encompasses plastic waste that is openly burnt (see Figure 9) and then leaks into the watercourse through wind and rain. An estimated 14,170 tonnes (47%) of plastic waste was disposed of via open burning in Guinea-Bissau in 2024. The majority of this plastic is combusted, but the residues and uncombusted fraction either stay on the land or are washed/blown into watercourses. An estimated 2,860 tonnes of plastic disposed of via this route leaked into the ocean in 2024, while a further 1,390 tonnes remained on land.

Figure 9:
A partially combusted pile of litter in Bissau (2025)

Leakage from surface water drainage and wastewater systems

Around 1,420 tonnes of plastic waste leaked into local waterways in 2024 through the surface water drainage system. Plastic waste entering the ocean through this leakage pathway includes littered plastics washed into drainage systems. This is often directly dumped into the ocean from the drainage system as there is little or no waste screening in surface water drains.

There is a lack of comprehensive data and information on Guinea-Bissau's wastewater system, including typical disposal practices. For example, whether sanitary pads are commonly flushed down toilets or discarded into pit latrines. Due to this information gap, plastic waste leakage via the wastewater system has not been modelled. Consequently, potential macroplastic flows through wastewater pathways have been excluded from this baseline assessment. This should be further explored during NAP implementation.

TOP ITEM ENTERING THE OCEAN IN 2024

SINGLE SERVE SACHETS (INCLUDING WATER SACHETS)

1,069 TONNES

Types of plastic waste leakage

An estimated 7,800 tonnes of macroplastic waste and 105 tonnes of microplastics escaped into the marine environment in Guinea-Bissau in 2024. The details of plastic waste leakage by item type is shown in Appendix D.

The Plastic Drawdown model estimates that a further 9,200 tonnes were leaked onto the land in 2024. This total comprises a wide variety of material types and items.

The most common individual types of plastic identified leaking into the ocean are shown in Table 4, below.

Table 4:
Top 7 Items and item category totals entering the ocean in 2024

Item	Weight (tonnes)
Single-serve sachets (including water sachets)	1,069
Beverage bottles	798
Plastic bags	425
Other plastic bottles (oil, bleach, etc.)	412
Food wrappers (sweets, crisps, etc.)	150
Bottle caps (plastic)	84
Cups, plates (plastic)	78

Single serve sachets (including water sachet) are the most likely items to leak in the marine environment in Guinea-Bissau via littering and dumping, accounting for 1,069 tonnes in 2024.

Beverage bottles are another major source of aquatic pollution in Guinea Bissau and the second largest identifiable macroplastic item polluting the aquatic environment (798 tonnes). They are followed by plastic bags (425 tonnes), other plastic bottles (oil, bleach, etc.) (419 tonnes) and bottle caps and cups and plates (59 and 55 tonnes, respectively).

The science surrounding the leakage of microplastics and the measures that could curtail their release are still in their early stages. However, it is important to recognise that they form a key component of plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau and are an issue that will warrant careful consideration in the long term.

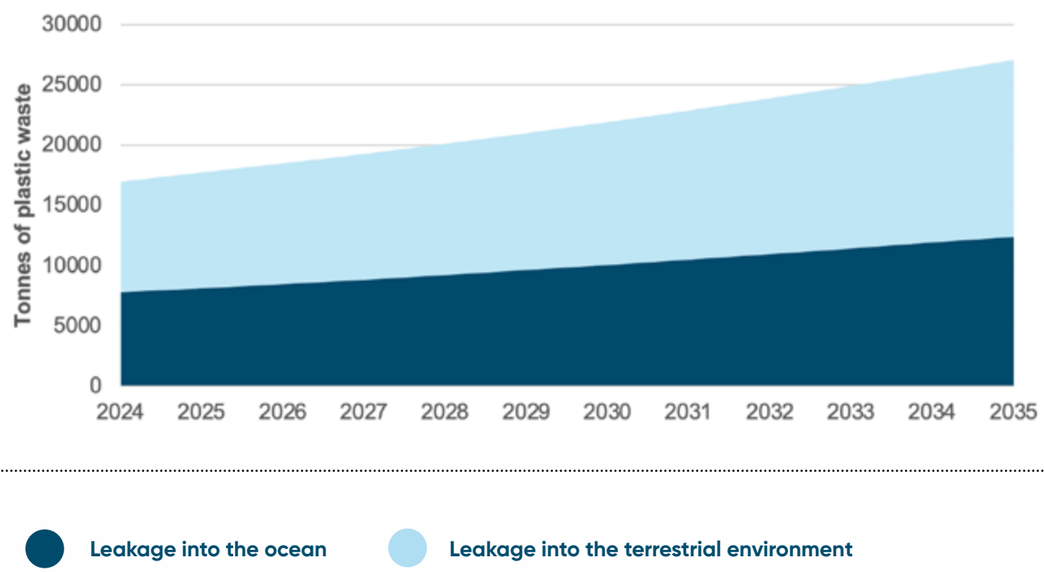
Projection of plastic waste leakage

In the absence of further policy interventions, **an estimated cumulative total of around 260,200 tonnes of plastic waste will enter Guinea-Bissau's environment between 2024 and 2035**. This includes both the aquatic environment (119,400 tonnes) and terrestrial (140,800 tonnes) environment (see Figure 10).

This increase is primarily due to the increase in population over this time period. Market research (via Fact.MR, 2024) also showed a projected growth of relevant product and packaging markets over the modelled timeframe, further contributing to this increase.

The increase in plastic waste generation, coupled with a lack of effective policy or control mechanisms under the Business as Usual (BAU) scenario, leads to a significantly increased amount of plastic waste entering the sea by 2035. This is shown in Figure 10 and demonstrates the urgent need to improve and adopt additional policy measures to curtail plastic pollution.

Figure 10:
Macroplastic Pollution (tonnes, 2024-2035)



4

National Action Plan to Tackle Plastic Pollution in Guinea-Bissau

Image: iStock (Tiago_Fernandez)

4.1 National Action Plan summary

The three strategies presented in this NAP include both upstream and downstream policy measures, addressing the entire lifecycle of plastics to provide a comprehensive approach to tackling plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau.

Strategies 1 and 2 emphasise upstream approaches aimed at reducing plastic consumption and waste generation, while Strategy 3 focuses on downstream interventions to enhance waste management.

Strategy 1 – Tackling plastic sachets and beverage bottles

Plastic sachets and bottles are among the most common items leaking into Guinea-Bissau's marine environment, representing an estimated 1,069 tonnes and 798 tonnes respectively in 2024. This strategy aims to reduce their use, and resulting pollution, through two key policies: introducing a national water refill scheme and improving access to potable water. Together, these measures will expand reuse options and support long-term behaviour change.

Strategy 2 – Upstream measures to reduce consumption

This strategy focuses on tackling plastic pollution at its source by reducing the use of single-use plastics. It includes three key policies:

- Strengthening the ban on single-use plastic grocery bags
- Requiring restaurants and food outlets to provide reusable foodware (plates, cups, Cutlery, etc.) for dine-in customers
- in the long-term, introducing taxes/levies on single-use plastics.

Effective implementation will depend on targeted capacity building for enforcement and implementing agencies, along with public education and behaviour change campaigns.

Strategy 3 – Downstream measures to improve waste management and recycling

Guinea-Bissau faces major waste management challenges, including limited infrastructure, irregular collection, no source separation, minimal recycling, and widespread open dumping and burning. This strategy outlines nine interconnected policies to address these issues and build a more inclusive, sustainable system. Key measures include introducing a deposit return system for plastic bottles; setting standards for waste collection, transport, and disposal; expanding solid waste collection; and banning open burning. Success will rely on community engagement, inclusion of the informal sector, long-term capacity building, sustained investment, cross-sectoral and regional collaboration, private sector involvement, and strong local leadership.

Analysis using Plastic Drawdown and consultation with national stakeholders suggests that together, these strategies could reduce annual plastic pollution into waterways in Guinea-Bissau by 9,750 tonnes (79%) over ten years, as compared to the 2024 BAU scenario. This is highlighted in Figure 10, below.

The following sections explore the potential impact, key considerations, and implementation steps for the 14 policies outlined across these three strategies. Together, these policies form a comprehensive approach to preventing plastic waste at its source, strengthening plastic waste management in Guinea-Bissau, and offering a practical roadmap for impactful action.

Several key enabling initiatives are discussed in Chapter 5 and will be essential to the success of the three strategies. These include:

- Education and youth engagement
- Behaviour change campaigns
- Informal sector inclusion
- Regional cooperation

Strategy 1
640 tonnes (5%)

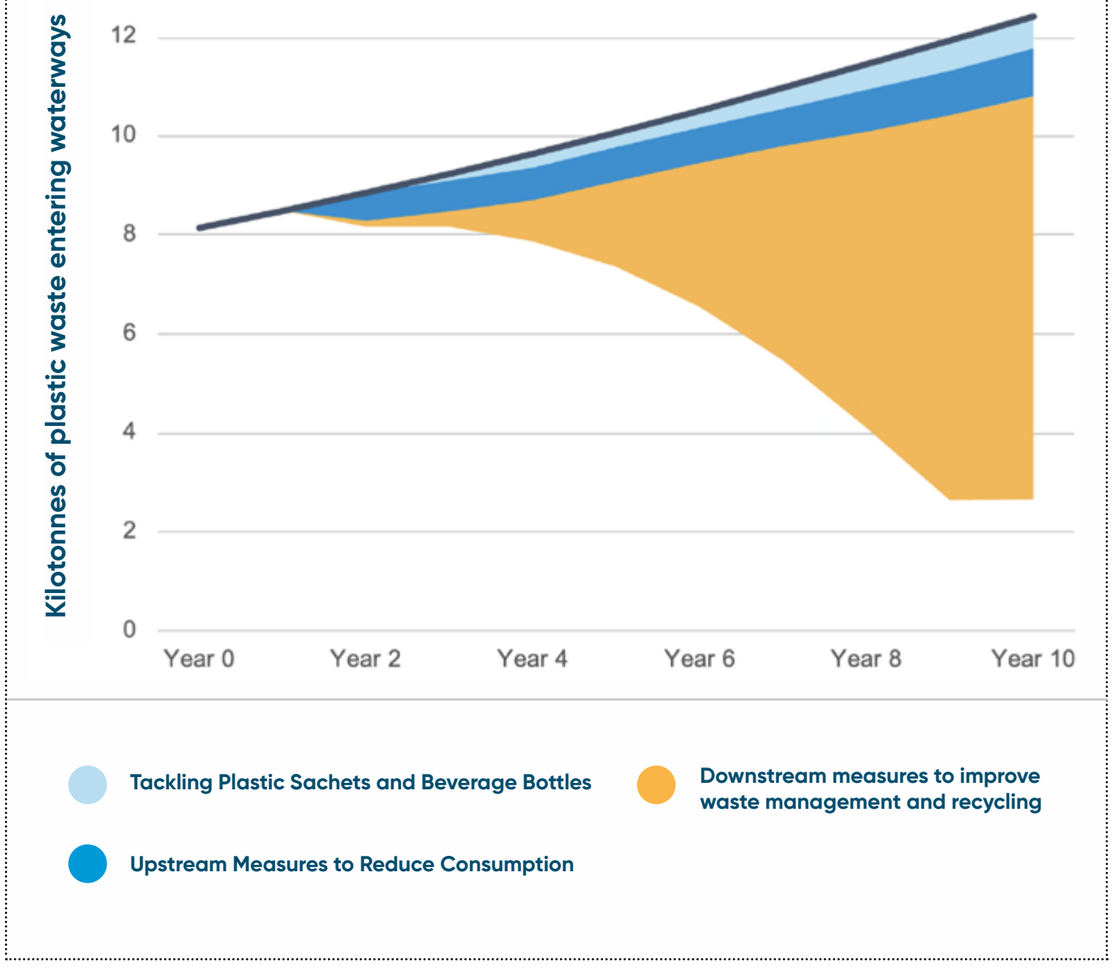
Strategy 2
976 tonnes (8%)

Strategy 3
8,140 tonnes (66%)

ANALYSIS USING PLASTIC DRAWDOWN AND CONSULTATION WITH NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS SUGGESTS THAT TOGETHER, THESE STRATEGIES **COULD REDUCE ANNUAL PLASTIC POLLUTION INTO WATERWAYS IN GUINEA-BISSAU BY 9,750 TONNES (79%) OVER TEN YEARS**

79% OVER TEN YEARS.

Figure 10:
Cumulative impact of the three strategies in this NAP.



4.2

Strategy 1:
Item focus: Tackling plastic beverage bottles and sachets

The focus of Strategy 1 is to support the transition away from single-use water sachets and beverage bottles towards a greater acceptance and adoption of refill.

Water sachets are particularly widely used in Guinea-Bissau due to limited access to safe drinking water. Only 24% of the population has access to safely managed drinking water services (UN-OHCHR, 2025). Water from wells and similar sources is often unsafe because it lacks proper chlorination and disinfection (ibid). Since water sachets are inexpensive, lightweight, and durable, they serve as a convenient option for accessing potable water (UNEP, 2023). However, they are also the most commonly littered plastic item in the country.

Expanding access to safely managed drinking water services is essential to reduce reliance on sachets and single-use bottles and address both the environmental impact of plastic litter and the health risks linked to unsafe water sources.

This strategy uses a combined approach of increasing availability of potable water and refill options whilst promoting behaviour change, from at home to on-the-go and at institutions such as schools, hotels and workplaces. The policies under this strategy received strong support at the stakeholder workshop.

The impact of these policies on both plastic pollution and plastic waste generation is highlighted in Table 5.

Combined, these two policies could reduce annual plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau by approximately 640 tonnes (5%) by 2035, compared to the 2024 business-as-usual scenario. This is shown in Figure 11. They could also prevent the cumulative generation of 3,300 tonnes (3%) of plastic waste by 2035.

COMBINED, THESE TWO POLICIES COULD REDUCE ANNUAL PLASTIC POLLUTION IN GUINEA-BISSAU BY APPROXIMATELY

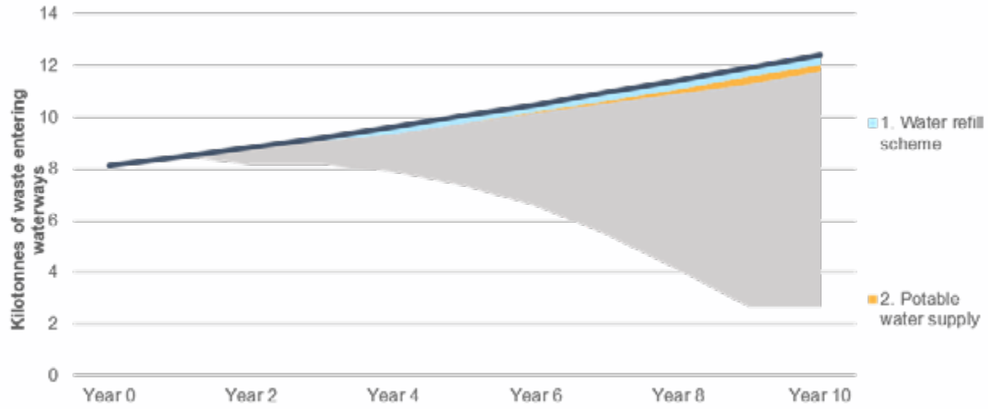
640 TONNES (5%)

BY 2035, COMPARED TO THE 2024 BUSINESS-AS-USUAL SCENARIO.

Table 5:
Plastic pollution reduction potential of strategy 1 policies.
*Compared to business-as-usual quantities of aquatic or marine pollution

Strategy 1 policies	Annual plastic pollution reduction potential* (by year 10)	Cumulative reduction in waste generated (by year 10)
Policy 1.1: Establishing low-cost water refill schemes in markets, transport hubs, and schools.	370 tonnes (3%)	2,400 tonnes (2%)
Policy 1.2: Expanding access to potable water, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas, to reduce reliance on bottled water.	270 tonnes (2%)	850 tonnes (1%)
Strategy total:	640 tonnes (5%)	3,300 tonnes (3%)

Figure 11:
Cumulative impact of Strategy 1



Tackling plastic sachets and beverage bottles

Upstream measures to reduce consumption

Downstream measures to improve waste management and recycling

Policy 1.1:
Water refill scheme

A water refill scheme aims to reduce the reliance on disposable plastic water sachets and bottles.

Water refill stations can be installed in two main contexts:

1. **Institutions** such as such as schools, administrative buildings, hotels, workplaces; and
2. **On-the-go locations** such as public areas including markets, parks, and public transportation hubs

Refill schemes allow citizens access to free or low-cost potable water to fill up reusable containers, such as jugs or bottles. This achieves the dual objectives of sensitising the public on the issue of plastic pollution while encouraging behaviour change towards reusable systems.

In Guinea-Bissau, this policy could prevent approximately 370 tonnes (3%) of plastic pollution per year by 2035.

THIS POLICY COULD PREVENT APPROXIMATELY

370 TONNES (3%)

OF PLASTIC POLLUTION PER YEAR BY 2035.

Key considerations

There is already a considerable work stream focusing on this issue through the SEIA (ASPAAB-Bafata) water infrastructure project. They have delivered projects in Gabú, Bubaque, Bafatá and Mansoa. This work has initiated the focus on water refill, and this policy aims to build on that work.

Stakeholder feedback provided some insight around the poor water quality across the country, and issues relating to unequal distribution and access of the water supply, as well as lack of maintenance. A feasibility study preceding the launch of the water refill scheme will need to determine (based on availability) whether to promote the refill schemes with tap water, filtered water, and/or mineral water. To overcome the potential barrier of public perceptions of tap water, the scheme could start with providing mineral water through large 5-gallon jugs, which can be refilled and reused.

Lack of awareness is also a critical issue. It will be important to raise awareness of the advantages of water refill, as part of a wider, long-term education and behaviour change programme.

It will also be important to set up the system with trained personnel who can champion the scheme for their local community.

Implementation

This policy is identified as a ‘quick win’, given its relatively short design and implementation timescales, to sensitise the public and provide them with an alternative to single-use plastic bottles and sachets.

The initial focus of implementation will be to drive behaviour change towards refill over the use of single-use plastic water bottles and sachets. This will be done through awareness raising and education campaigns.

A demonstration pilot, for example at a school or a network of schools, may be a first step. When designing the pilot, it is important to include appropriate messaging around how water refills at school support and reinforce wider education objectives, in order to increase interest and uptake. This messaging will form part of the wider communications and awareness raising campaign.

Once the pilot project demonstrates success, the scheme will be deployed in highly accessible areas, such as closed environments (hotels, offices, workplaces, and schools) and later, in urban areas with heavy footfall.

Case Study:
Water refill fountains in Senegal

In Dakar, a social project called KAYANN facilitates access to safe drinking water through water refill machines, known as mini-factories, conveniently located in high footfall areas and neighbourhoods.

Customers bring their own bottles to be filled and pay a fee for the amount of water they take. The cost of a litre of water from a KAYNANN water fountain is a quarter of the cost of the same volume of bottled water.

This increases access to high-quality potable water – as the mini-factories have a 10-stage purification process – and reduces single use plastic bottle use and pollution.

Policy 1.2:
Improvements in potable water supply

Key Considerations	Implementation
In the longer term, a priority should be the provision of quality drinking water through the mains water supply, particularly for urban areas, with an initial focus on Bissau. This will require significantly more investment but should be prioritised as part of wider public health strategies. Stakeholder feedback demonstrated a high level of support for this policy. Stakeholders were clear on the abundant nature of water resources, and the need to safely access these as being a fundamental enabler in reducing sachet and bottle use. As a high-cost policy, financing will be critical and this was recognised as a challenge, though there is potential for support from international partners. Public confidence in the quality of tap water can be improved through regular testing, with results published and advertised as part of the behaviour change campaign to encourage water refill. This policy has the potential to prevent approximately 270 tonnes (2%) of plastic pollution per year by 2035.	Stakeholder feedback suggests that there is relatively good access to drinkable water in Bissau households. In this case, the uptake of public water supplies may be less an issue of access, and more an issue of lack of public confidence. Testing and public education campaigns around refill, suggested above, will seek to address this issue. However, there is still work to do to further increase the access of potable water. Further improving access is a longer-term ambition and a large-scale infrastructure project for which significant funding will be required. As the transition away from disposable water sachets and bottles increases, the economic and social impacts on those currently selling these products will need to be recognised and alternatives considered.

Case Study:
Water refill campaigns

On the Greek island of Paros, Common Seas worked with the local water company, DEYAP, to encourage more people to drink tap water.

Activities included:

- Rebranding water refill machines to promote their use
- An island-wide communications campaign, targeted at locals, tourists, and the hospitality sector, to explain the benefits of switching to tap water
- A guide to water filters for locals who prefer to drink filtered tap water

Images: Water supply point on the Greek island of Paros (left). Images of materials from the behavior change campaign (right). Image source: Common Seas.

The project engaged 270,000 people and led to a two-thirds drop in the number of residents who believed that the tap water on Paros was not safe to drink (Common Seas, 2021).

As the transition to abandoning plastic packaging and disposable water bottles increases, it will be necessary to recognize the economic and social impacts on those who currently sell these products and consider alternatives.

4.3

Strategy 2:
Upstream measures to reduce consumption

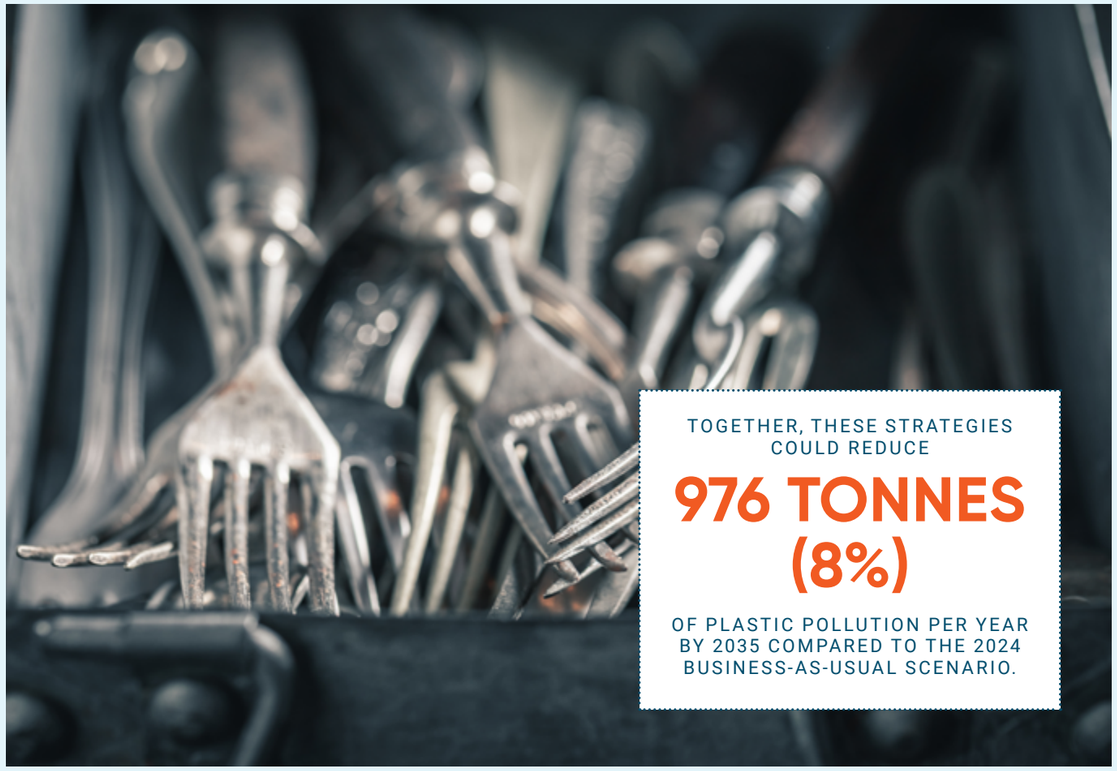
Strategy 2 aims to stop the flow of plastic pollution at source, by reducing the consumption of single-use plastic and the generation of plastic waste.

This strategy comprises three policies:

- **Policy 2.1:** Ban the use of disposable plastic grocery bags. These are a key component of plastic waste in Guinea-Bissau (2.4% of all plastic waste) and can be replaced with reusable alternatives.
- **Policy 2.2:** Promote the use of reusable foodware (plates, cups, cutlery etc.) for eat-in customers at restaurants and other food outlets. This will reduce the use of single-use plastics by dine-in customers.
- **Policy 2.3:** Introduce taxes or levies on single-use plastics to make them less economically advantageous, promote the shift to reusables and reduce single-use plastics leakage into the environment.

The potential impact of these policies on both plastic pollution and plastic waste generation is shown in Table 6, below.

Together, these strategies could reduce 976 tonnes (8%) of plastic pollution per year by 2035 compared to the 2024 business-as-usual scenario. This is shown in Figure 12. They could also prevent the cumulative generation of 6,700 tonnes (6%) of plastic waste by 2035.



TOGETHER, THESE STRATEGIES COULD REDUCE

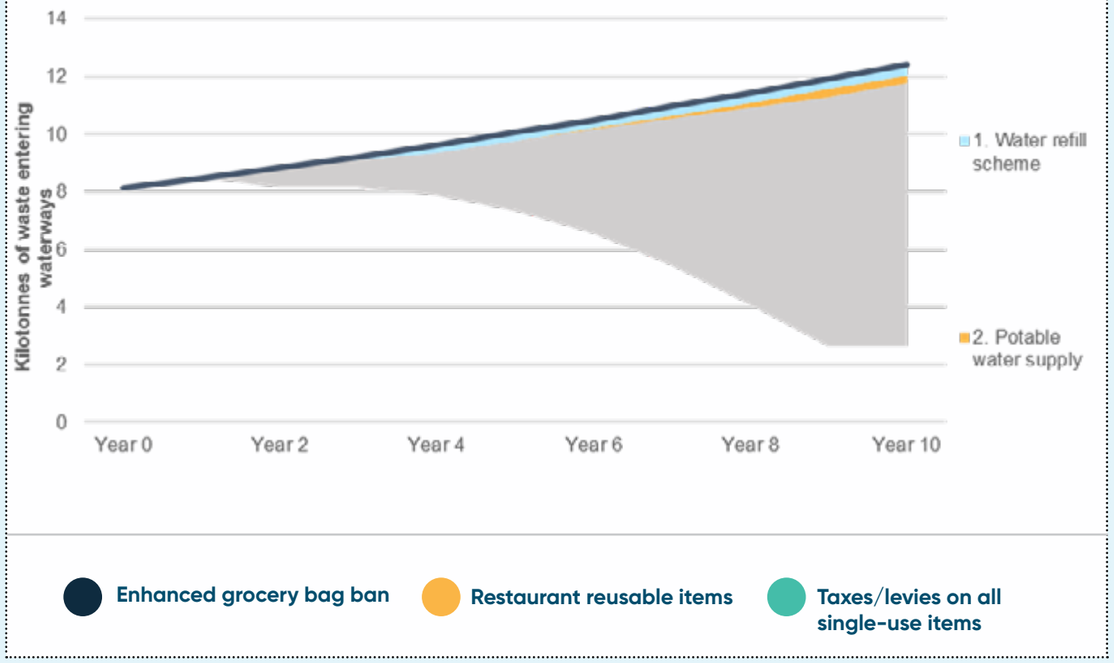
976 TONNES (8%)

OF PLASTIC POLLUTION PER YEAR BY 2035 COMPARED TO THE 2024 BUSINESS-AS-USUAL SCENARIO.

Table 6:
Plastic pollution reduction potential of strategy 2 policies.
*Compared to business-as-usual quantities of aquatic or marine pollution

Strategy 2 policies	Annual plastic pollution reduction potential* (by year 10)	Cumulative reduction in waste generated (by year 10)
Policy 2.1: Enhanced grocery bag ban	810 tonnes (6.5%)	6,100 tonnes (5.5%)
Policy 2.2: Mandating reusable foodware for eat-in customers at restaurants and other food outlets	46 tonnes (0.4%)	320 tonnes (0.3%)
Policy 2.3: in the long term, introducing levies on high-leakage SUPs such as takeaway containers, sachets, and straws	120 tonnes (1%)	450 tonnes (0.4%)
Strategy total:	976 tonnes (8%)	6,700 tonnes (6%)

Figure 12:
Reduction in plastic pollution leaking into waterways under Strategy 2



Policy 2.1:
Enhanced grocery bag ban

Plastic bags account for a notable proportion of Guinea-Bissau's plastic waste (≈4%) and have become a concerning source of pollution globally.

In response, more than 100 countries have introduced legislation aimed at regulating the production, import, or sale of plastic bags, with bans and fees among the most widely adopted policy measures (Papp & Oremus, 2025). More than 30 African countries have enacted legislation to restrict plastic bag use (UNEP, 2018).

Bans are particularly suitable for products that are harmful, non-recyclable, and non- essential. As a policy tool, plastic bag bans can be effective at reducing pollution. For example, they are linked to reductions in the proportion of marine litter made up plastic bags in beach cleans (e.g., Papp & Oremus, 2025).

Such bans may target certain single-use plastic carrier bags at various points in their lifecycle: production, import, distribution, or use. Often, regulations specify a minimum thickness threshold, commonly measured in microns, below which plastic bags are prohibited. In Senegal, for example, there is a ban on all plastic bags under 30 microns (UNEP, 2018).

These bans are often complemented by the promotion of alternatives such as reusable cloth or paper bags.

This policy could reduce plastic pollution by approximately 810 tonnes (6.5%) per year by 2035.

Key considerations

In 2013, the Government of Guinea Bissau enacted Decree Law 16/2013, prohibiting the sale and distribution of plastic bags made from polythene, propylene, and polypropylene. The ban officially came into effect in 2014.

However, enforcement has proven difficult, and plastic bags remain in widespread use despite the legislation. Stakeholders at the workshop held in June 2025 identified a lack of alternatives, fragility at borders and financial constraints of enforcement agencies and consumers, as key challenges to the ban.

Nonetheless, there was strong support for reinstating and reinforcing the existing legislation at the workshop.

Implementation

Decree Law 16/2013 should be revised and strengthened to ensure the law clearly defines the types of plastic bags subject to the ban – including the material type, thickness and permitted use cases. It should also clearly outline the enforcement agencies and responsibilities of those required to comply.

The new law should adopt a phased implementation approach, with clearly defined timelines and targets. This will give businesses time to use up their existing stockpiles of banned plastic bags and allow the public to gradually adjust to the ban.

Kenya and Rwanda have both implemented successful plastic bag bans and engagement with their governments could enable the adoption of best practices. In addition, harmonising the policy with other West African countries – particularly the neighbouring countries of Senegal and Guinea – could help to prevent cross-border trade from undermining national enforcement efforts.

Guinea-Bissau's current challenges enforcing Decree Law 16/2013 demonstrate that greater enforcement measures will be key to successful implementation. These should include:

- **Designating an enforcement authority:** assign a specific government agency or task force with clear responsibilities for enforcing and monitoring the ban. In the medium term, enhance institutional capacity through training and increased resource allocation to support consistent enforcement of the ban. This should target urban areas most affected by plastic bag litter.
- **Increasing inspections and penalties:** conduct regular inspections of retailers, importers, and manufacturers, and apply meaningful penalties for non-compliance.
- **Border-control coordination:** strengthen customs enforcement to avoid cross-border smuggling of plastic bags. As noted above, regional policy alignment could also help to reduce issues of cross-border smuggling.

Public awareness efforts should include nationwide campaigns that explain the plastic bag ban, its environmental impact, and how to comply. Integrating anti-plastic messages into schools and community programs can help shift long-term behaviour, while signage in shops can reinforce the message and promote alternatives.

Access to sustainable, affordable alternatives will also be key. It is particularly important to consider how reusable alternatives can be promoted to avoid the environmental burden simply shifting to other single-use materials. For example, if the plastic bag ban leads to an increased uptake of single-use paper bags, these can also have high carbon footprints and negative associated environmental impacts.This can include water and energy consumption and resource depletion (see for e.g. Civancik-Uslu et al., 2019).

To support the transition to reusable alternatives, the government could incentivise the production and use of reusable bags. This could be delivered through subsidies or tax breaks, partnerships with NGOs and businesses to distribute alternatives, and investment in local manufacturing of sustainable options to boost environmental and economic benefits.

A standard for reusable bags could also be developed. This could:

- Ensure that these bags can be reused a minimum number of times;
- Place restrictions are made on the type and/or the thickness of the material;
- Add requirements for washability throughout its life;
- Ensure recyclability at the end of its life.

Policy 2.2:
Promote reusable items in restaurants and food outlets

Key considerations

Single-use plastic plates, cutlery, and containers are widely used in Guinea-Bissau, particularly in informal food service settings and by street vendors. Vendors and hawkers widely use single-use plastics as their primary packaging material throughout West Africa (Adams et al., 2020). As a result, SUP contributes significantly to plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau.

This policy seeks to promote the use of reusable foodware for eat-in customers at restaurants, fast food establishments, street vendors and other food outlets. This will help to reduce the use of single-use plastic packaging, and the generation of single-use plastic waste, from eat-in settings. In the medium term, the policy will move toward mandating the use of reusable food ware for all eat-in services, ensuring a more sustainable and systemic shift away from disposable materials.

Reliable access to clean water and electricity needed for dishwashing may be challenging for some food service providers. Initial investments in reusable items may also be prohibitive for smaller food businesses. These potential constraints will need to be carefully considered during the development of this policy to ensure hygiene standards are upheld, and that the policy does not negatively impact smaller food businesses.

To ensure this, the policy may initially apply to larger food establishments, for example, those exceeding a minimum number of tables. Smaller vendors could be phased in over time and supported with tailored guidance and incentives, such as grants to purchase reusables. It will be vital for the hospitality and foodservice sectors be key partners in piloting and implementing these measures.

The introduction of taxes or charges on single-use items (discussed in Policy 2.4) would complement this policy by making disposable options less economically advantageous, thereby supporting the shift toward reusables.

Consumer acceptance will also need to be addressed through public education campaigns, as there may be initial resistance to the switch to reusables due, for example, to a perceived reduction in convenience.

Promoting reusable items at eat-in food service settings could reduce plastic pollution by approximately 46 tonnes (0.4%) per year by 2035.

THIS POLICY COULD REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION BY APPROXIMATELY

46 TONNES (.4%)

PER YEAR BY 2035.

Implementation

This policy should begin by consulting key stakeholders, including relevant ministries, hospitality and foodservice sectors. These consultations will gather feedback and identify potential concerns. They will also help to sensitise key target groups and guide key decisions, such as determining the size of food establishments to which this policy will apply.

A legal instrument should then be drafted and enacted to provide legal backing and define enforcement mechanisms. This legal instrument should:

- Specify the size of the establishments the policy applies to (e.g. minimum number of tables or customers served)
- Include a timeline and targets for phased implementation
- Designate the enforcement agencies and outline penalties for non-compliance
- Enable adjustment to be made these elements without requiring new legislation (i.e. be adaptive).

To monitor compliance, the capacity of relevant enforcement agencies will need to be strengthened through technical assistance and training, ensuring these agencies have sufficient human resources and financial capital.

A nationwide public education and awareness campaign should be launched alongside this. The campaign should inform citizens about the following:

- The harms of single-use plastics
- The environmental and health benefits of reusable alternatives
- When the changes will come into place
- The types of restaurants that will be affected

Emphasis should also be placed on communicating the robust sanitation and hygiene practices accompanying their use, to allay any potential concerns.

The policy's timeline should incorporate a procurement timeframe for restaurants to obtain necessary washing infrastructure, reusable foodware and to use up existing single-use plastic stock. Grants could be given to smaller food establishments to offset the cost of reusable foodware and associated washing infrastructure. In addition, food establishments could be encouraged or required to charge a small fee for take-away packaging. This would also create a financial incentive for customers to bring their own containers or to dine-in – further reducing single-use plastic usage.

The regulation could also encourage or allow the use of local and traditional biodegradable alternatives (e.g. cashew tree leaves) in contexts where full reusables are not practical. This will help support local production and innovation in sustainable packaging.

Implementation could take a phased approach, such as starting with pilots in larger restaurants or in urban areas, before rolling the policy out nationwide. This would provide real-world feedback and could help to refine key elements of the policy such as feasible timeframes for using up existing single-use plastics stock, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms and communication approaches.

A monitoring and evaluation framework will also be key to track reductions in single-use plastics use, assess compliance, and inform future policy adjustments.

Case Study:
France bans SUP packaging at restaurants

In 2023, France implemented new legislation requiring all dining establishments with more than 20 seats to offer reusable, washable cups, plates, dishes, and cutlery for customers who dine in. The legislation included workplace canteens, bakery chains, fast-food restaurants, and sushi bars.

The country's 30,000 fast-food outlets collectively serve an estimated 6 million meals annually and previously produced about 180,000 tonnes of waste. They are now required to use reusable packaging (City to Sea, 2024). The rest of the European Union is also banning single-use plastic packaging in cafes and restaurants by 2030.

Policy 2.3:
Introduce taxes or levies on all single use items

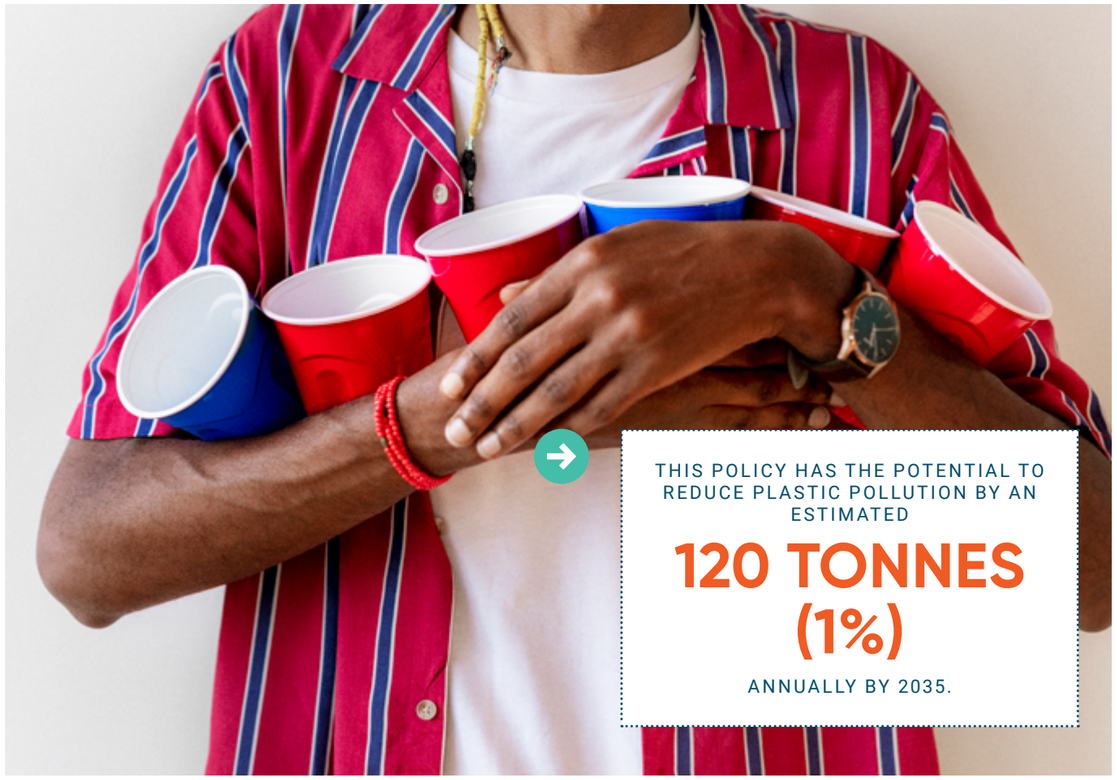
Market-based policy instruments, such as taxes or levies, provide economic incentives to reduce plastic waste generation and pollution and encourage the uptake of reusable or locally produced alternatives.

This policy aims to introduce a targeted charge on high-impact, single-use plastic items that will not be targeted by a ban. Disposable single-serve sachets (including water sachets), plastic cups and plates are widely used and frequently littered, despite their short lifespan. These single-use items contribute significantly to plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau and are rarely recycled. Implementing a successful levy requires careful design that accounts for potential impacts on vulnerable and low-income populations, as well as institutional capacity for effective enforcement, monitoring, and management. Accordingly, this is a long-term policy objective for Guinea-Bissau, allowing time to establish strong foundations.

This policy proposes a mandatory charge on single-use plastic items at the point of sale to reduce unnecessary use and encourage consumers to switch to reusable or more sustainable alternatives. Charges can help to reduce waste generation and littering with minimal disruption to businesses. Evidence from other countries shows that such charges can catalyse a shift toward more sustainable consumption practices (e.g. Homonoff, 2018). More than 50 countries worldwide have taxed or banned single-use plastic goods or specific polymers (OECD, 2021).

For Guinea-Bissau, introducing a charge offers a practical, flexible approach to reducing single-use plastic waste, and can also generate revenue to support waste management efforts.

This policy has the potential to reduce plastic pollution by an estimated 120 tonnes (1%) annually by 2035.



THIS POLICY HAS THE POTENTIAL TO REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION BY AN ESTIMATED

120 TONNES (1%)

ANNUALLY BY 2035.

Key considerations

The long-term timeline for this policy is especially important for the proposed charge on water sachets. These are an important source of potable water, particularly for lower-income households in Guinea-Bissau. To avoid unintended consequences and disproportionately burdening vulnerable groups, water refill schemes (Policy 1.1) and improvements to the potable water supply (Policy 1.2) must be in place before charges are introduced on single-use water sachets.

This long-term timeframe is also essential for building the institutional capacity needed to effectively enforce, monitor, and manage the charge.

By making single-use items more expensive at the point of sale, the policy aims to reduce demand and encourage consumers to adopt reusable alternatives. This policy therefore creates an opportunity to promote and expand the local production of reusable or biodegradable alternatives, such as items made from coconut husk and shell, palm leaves, bamboo or cashew tree byproducts. This could provide new income-generating opportunities for small businesses in Guinea-Bissau.

All proceeds from the charge should be earmarked for improving waste management, and funding public education campaigns to promote the use of reusable products and demonstrate the detrimental impacts of single-use plastics. They should also be used to support local enterprises that produce sustainable alternatives. During the workshop stakeholders raised the difficulty of accessing alternatives, demonstrating a clear need for investment in their development.

The policy should clearly communicate that revenue from the charge is being reinvested in waste management, environmental initiatives, and support for local alternatives – rather than being treated as general government income. This will help to build public trust and support.

Implementation

When designing the policy, the government should consult with key stakeholders – including relevant ministries, plastic importers, retailers, civil society organisations and the informal waste sector. This will help to assess potential impacts and build consensus. These consultations will inform key decisions, including the level of charges to be applied and whether certain single-use plastics, such as medical items, should be exempted.

A legislative framework should then be drafted and enacted to provide legal backing for the charge and define enforcement mechanisms and the use of the revenue. It should:

- Provide a mechanism to regularly update the list of chargeable items
- Allow adjustment of charge rates without needing new legislation
- Enable charges to be applied based on material types (e.g. plastic) or specific product categories

A public awareness and education campaign should be launched in parallel to the drafting of the legal instrument. The campaign should inform citizens about the harms of single-use plastics, the benefits of alternatives, and outline which single-use plastic items are subject to the charge and when this will come into force.

The capacity of relevant enforcement agencies (e.g. Customs), and the agencies responsible for managing the revenue, will need to be strengthened through technical assistance and training. Enterprises producing sustainable alternatives to single-use plastic will also require support to ensure an effective transition.

A phased implementation could help to refine charge levels, enforcement strategies, and communication approaches based on real-world feedback. This could include increasing the items in scope of the charge over time or increasing the charge over time. A monitoring and evaluation framework will also be key to track reductions in single-use plastic use, assess compliance, and inform future policy adjustments.

Case Study:
Fiji's single-use plastic bag charge

Fiji introduced a charge on single-use plastic carrier bags on 1 August 2017. The charge was initially set at $0.10 per bag, but in 2018, the rate was doubled to $0.20 per bag as part of a broader policy decision to raise more funds for environmental initiatives. The levy is collected by retailers at the point of sale, then remitted to the Fiji Revenue & Customs Service. The tax payment is separately itemised on customers' receipts, to increase its visibility to the consumer. Retailers are required to clearly display a notice in their premises, alerting consumers to the levy. The charge was immediately effective, with plastic carrier bag usage falling from 70 million bags in 2010 to below 44 million bags in 2018, soon after the initial introduction of the levy.

Some of the reasons for this success include:

- **Ensuring income is ring-fenced for environmental initiatives:** The income from the levy was to 'directly fund environmental initiatives and programs that protect our natural environment and climate adaptation projects'. This was communicated to the public which generated further trust and buy-in.

- **Awareness raising:** The levy was accompanied by numerous government led awareness raising efforts to ensure the public were informed of the reasons behind the levy, which decreased consumer resistance to the extra charge.

- **Enforcement:** the levy was monitored by inspections done by the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission (FCCC), where if traders were found to be non-compliant, they were given a warning in the first instance, followed by hefty fines or imprisonment for further non-compliance.

The charge was eventually replaced by a ban on plastic bags as part of their phase-out approach to single-use plastic bags. The Fijian population was by this stage accustomed to having regulations on single-use plastic items, making the ban even more successful. Litter prevention officers visited businesses at the beginning of the ban coming into effect, to ensure that the outlets felt supported on the compliance requirements, further cementing buy-in by stakeholders (Fiji Government, 2020).

4.4

Strategy 3:
Downstream measures to improve waste management & recycling

Guinea-Bissau faces critical waste management challenges, including:

- Insufficient infrastructure
- Sparce and irregular collection
- No source segregation
- Limited recycling
- Widespread open dumping and burning

This strategy comprises nine interlinked policies to address these issues and build a more inclusive, sustainable waste management system in Guinea-Bissau. The policies include those targeting improvements to waste management infrastructure and collection:

- **Policy 3.1:** Establish a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for beverage bottles to reduce their leakage into the environment and increase recycling rates
- **Policy 3.2:** Improve waste disposal through improved site management and environmental safeguards
- **Policy 3.3:** Expand solid waste collection, prioritising low-income and peripheral communities through phased roll-outs and public-private partnerships
- **Policy 3.4:** Introduce waste separation at source, starting in urban centres, to support recycling and reduce landfill pressure
- **Policy 3.5:** Improve plastic capture in drainage systems to reduce flooding and marine pollution

As well as regulatory focused measures:

- **Policy 3.6:** Set improved standards for waste collection and transport, focusing on equipment upgrades, worker safety, and service reliability
- **Policy 3.7:** Strengthen regulations and enforcement to reduce littering and illegal dumping, particularly in underserved areas
- **Policy 3.8:** Ban open burning of waste, promoting safer alternatives and public awareness
- **Policy 3.9:** Introduce Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), requiring producers to contribute to waste collection and management costs

Together, these policies emphasise community engagement, informal sector inclusion, and long-term capacity building. Success will depend on sustained investment, cross-sector and regional collaboration, private sector involvement, monitoring and evaluation and strong local leadership.

Consideration should be given to developing a single authority for national waste management planning who would have governance responsibility for this strategy. This might be similar to the Solid Waste Management Coordination Unit (UGC/SONAGED) in Senegal. This would help to ensure a coordinated approach to waste management service development and delivery and that waste management receives appropriate focus. Proposed governance arrangements for this NAP are further discussed in Section 5.4.

The potential impact of these policies is shown in Table 7. Unlike strategies 1 & 2, these downstream policies focus on managing existing plastic waste rather than reducing its generation.

TOGETHER, THE COMBINED IMPACT OF THESE NINE POLICIES IS AN ESTIMATED

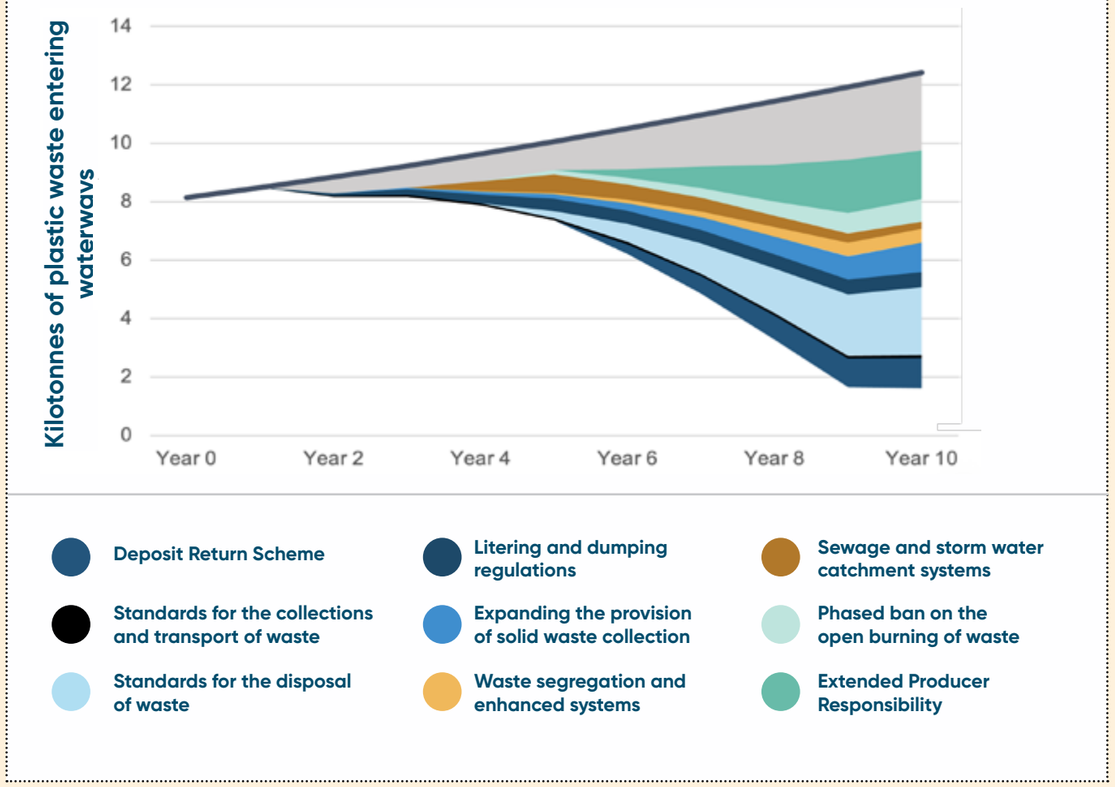
8,140 TONNES (66%)

ANNUAL REDUCTION IN PLASTIC POLLUTION BY 2035, OUTLINED IN FIGURE 15.

Table 7:
Marine plastic pollution reduction potential of strategy 3 policies.
*Compared to business-as-usual quantities of aquatic or marine pollution

Strategy 3 policies	Annual plastic pollution reduction potential* (by year 10)
Policy 3.1: DRS	1,030 tonnes (8%)
Policy 3.2: Improve waste disposal	2,330 tonnes (19%)
Policy 3.3: Expanding solid waste collection	1,000 tonnes (8%)
Policy 3.4: Enhancing separation of recyclables	480 tonnes (4%)
Policy 3.5: Improving capture of plastic pollution in drainage systems	240 tonnes (2%)
Policy 3.6: Improving standards for waste collection and transport	90 tonnes (1%)
Policy 3.7: Regulations and enforcement to reduce littering and dumping	520 tonnes (4%)
Policy 3.8: Banning open burning of waste	770 tonnes (6%)
Policy 3.9: EPR	1,680 tonnes (14%)
Strategy total:	8,140 tonnes (66%)

Figure 13:
Reduction in plastic pollution leaking into waterways under Strategy 3



Policy 3.1:
Deposit return scheme for beverage bottles

Guinea-Bissau generated approximately 1,076 tonnes of single-use plastic bottles in 2024, nearly 7% of all macroplastic waste generated. They are also a major contributor to plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau, representing 10% of plastic items leaking into waterways. As such, tackling single-use plastic bottle consumption and leakage is a key priority.

Under a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), consumers pay a deposit when buying beverages in plastic bottles, which is reimbursed when they return the empty bottles to approved collection points. This motivates consumers to avoid littering, as failing to return the bottle means losing the deposit. It should also encourage consumers to switch to reusable, refillable alternatives.

Under a DRS, discarded bottles that do end up in the environment are more likely to be collected by informal waste pickers, who can redeem the deposit themselves. It is essential to involve informal waste pickers in the design and implementation of the scheme to ensure they are not adversely affected and that the deposit is sufficient to encourage them to collect any littered bottles. This is further discussed in Key considerations section below.

DRS have demonstrated effectiveness in achieving high separate collection rates for plastic bottles. For instance, a recent study in South Africa examined the potential of implementing a DRS for beverage containers and found it could boost collection rates to 90% while creating thousands of jobs (Eunomia, 2024). A DRS thus offers a dual benefit: reducing litter and supplying clean recyclable material to support the development of a recycling industry.

A DRS could reduce plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau by 1,030 tonnes (8.3%) per year by 2035.

Key considerations

Among the various policy options explored, a DRS received the strongest support from key stakeholders during the in-person workshop (see Section 2: Approach). It was viewed as a vital strategy for reducing plastic bottle litter. However, there was recognition that successful implementation would require careful design to account for potential economic and governance challenges.

Senegal introduced an anti-plastic law in 2020 (Law No.2020-04), which includes a provision for establishing a DRS for plastic bottles. Engaging with Senegal and other West African countries that have already introduced DRS initiatives could provide valuable insights to support effective scheme design and implementation.

Plastic bottles are commonly reused in Guinea-Bissau for storing products such as cashew juice and wine. As such, the DRS should be designed to encourage recycling without disrupting these valuable reuse practices. Some key design considerations that could help strike this balance include exempting certain bottle types that are most commonly reused (e.g. large, durable bottles) and allowing long enough return windows (e.g. 6-12 months) so the bottles can be reused a few times before being returned.

Additionally, the deposit level will have to be set at a rate that is high enough to incentivise the collection and return of the plastic beverage bottles, but not so high as to be prohibitive for lower-income consumers.

Another key financial consideration when designing the scheme is how to handle consumers returning and requesting refunds on bottles that did not have deposits paid on them. These are known as historic or legacy plastic bottle waste. Other countries have taken various approaches available to tackling legacy waste, each with their own benefits and drawbacks.

Seed funding can cover the cost of refunds for legacy waste (as was done in the Marshall Islands, described in the case study, below). Legacy bottles can be excluded from the scheme by requiring labels on new in-scope bottles. Alternatively, deposits could be collected for an initial period without issuing refunds, allowing the fund to accumulate sufficient resources to cover the cost of refunding legacy waste.

Crucially, the scheme should be developed in collaboration with the informal waste sector to ensure it does not adversely affect their livelihoods. By involving them directly the DRS could offer more stable and secure job opportunities within the sector. This might include designating them as brokers who collect bottles from households and businesses and return them to designated collection points for payment.

Finally, while this NAP focuses specifically on plastics – and therefore the proposed DRS targets only plastic beverage bottles – the scheme could be expanded in the future. This could include aluminium cans and glass bottles, helping to further boost their collection and recycling rates. These materials are currently among the most widely recycled in Guinea-Bissau (with metal comprising 86.2% and glass 12.6% of recycled materials, according to the 2024 WaCT Study by UN-Habitat). DRS for these items have been successfully operated in other West African countries. For instance, the Gambia successfully ran a DRS for glass bottles for several decades, until the scheme ended following the closure of its main brewery in 2020.

Implementation

The PacWastePlus programme seeks to improve the regional management of waste and pollution in the Pacific region sustainably and cost-effectively. It has developed a comprehensive 21-priority-step pathway to introduce legislation on sustainable financing, such as a DRS.

The pathway includes starts with

- Assessing the need for waste management funding
- Pre-feasibility and feasibility studies
- Public consultation activities
- Seed funding and legacy waste management
- System expansion and improvement

These steps are highlighted in Figure 14 below.

This pathway could be used as an actionable blueprint for developing a successful DRS in Guinea-Bissau.

Designing a well-functioning DRS will take time and considerable effort by the Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action in consultation with relevant ministries and industry stakeholders. Accordingly, this is earmarked as a medium-term policy beginning operation from year 5 (2030), to allow sufficient time for design and set up.

Figure 14:
PacWastePlus' 21-priority-step pathway to introduce legislation on sustainable financing

1. **Identify the need for the legislation**
2. **Pre-feasibility**
3. **Political Support**
4. **Establish a Working Group**
5. **Feasibility Study**
6. **Legislative Assessment**
7. **Consultation**
8. **Confirm Sustainable Finance System Design**
9. **Sustainable Financing Policy**
10. **Legal Drafting**
11. **Consultation**
12. **Political Support**
13. **Confirm System Needs and Expenses**
14. **Legislative Adoption Process**
15. **Customs and Finance System Creation**
16. **Training**
17. **Seed Funding and Legacy Waste Management**
18. **Community & Industry Awareness**
19. **System Implementation**
20. **Monitoring, Evaluation & Auditing**
21. **System Expansion & Improvement**

Case Study:
Seed funding for legacy waste clean-up in the Marshall Islands

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) is a group of coral atolls and islands located in the central Pacific Ocean.

Before launching its Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), the RMI allocated $100,000, obtained from a fishing boat fine, as seed funding to address legacy waste.

This funding was used to:

- Clear legacy waste, funding the collection of approximately 1.66 million cans and bottles
- Build recycling infrastructure, including collection sites and processing facilities
- Engage communities, raising awareness and encouraging participation

However, the legacy waste far exceeded the 1.6 million items covered by the seed funding – the actual number of legacy items refunded was approximately 2.5 million. This meant that un-redeemed deposits had to be used to pay for refunds on the rest of the legacy waste, which resulted in the fund being under great strain in its first year of operation. However, once they had cleared the legacy waste, the fund's balance recovered to a healthier and more consistent level.

The RMI's experience underscores the need to account for pre-existing waste before launching a DRS to ensure financial stability and sustainability.

By initially allocating funds to clear legacy waste, build infrastructure, and engage communities, the RMI successfully kickstarted its scheme. However, it still encountered challenges due to the volume of legacy waste exceeding initial estimates. This highlights the importance of accurately assessing the scale of legacy waste beforehand to prevent financial shortfalls and ensure a smoother transition to a sustainable DRS.

Policy 3.2:
Improve waste disposal

Key considerations

Plastic waste escaping from dumpsites is a significant source of plastic pollution in Guinea Bissau. The landfill site at Safim faces major challenges: it is largely unregulated and is without basic measures such as fencing and covering. This is a particular issue given its proximity to mangroves, resulting in considerable amounts of plastic entering nearby waterways.

For this reason, it would be prudent to identify new disposal locations outside of the waterway catchment zone. The absence of national operating standards and limited technical and financial capacity at the local level contribute to uncontrolled waste disposal. Given Guinea Bissau's rapidly growing population, the pressure on the site at Safim is only going to increase.

In parallel to making improvements to waste management infrastructure, this policy also includes communicating the importance of dumping waste in appropriate areas, and the issues associated with not doing so.

Improving waste disposal has the potential to reduce plastic pollution by approximately 2,330 tonnes (19%) per year by 2035.

IMPROVING WASTE DISPOSAL HAS THE POTENTIAL TO REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION BY APPROXIMATELY

2,330 TONNES (19%)

PER YEAR BY 2035.

Implementation

This policy will involve three key actions:

1. Enhancing conditions at the current dumpsite in Safim
2. Identifying more suitable locations for future dumpsites in less environmentally sensitive areas
3. Running nationwide communication campaigns to raise awareness about appropriate waste disposal practices.

Improvements to the Safim dumpsite should build on the recommendations outlined in UN-Habitat's preliminary study of the site. These include upgrading access infrastructure, installing perimeter fencing, establishing a waste weighing facility, and developing a sorting and recycling centre.

External funding will need to be mobilised to carry out these upgrades. Implementation should be closely aligned with existing projects and initiatives, such as UN-Habitat's Green and Inclusive Cities Programme, to ensure strategic coherence, benefit from technical expertise, and maximise impact.

In the longer term, given the proximity of Safim to sensitive mangrove ecosystems, the site will likely need to be decommissioned or converted into a waste transfer station. New landfill sites will need to be developed in more environmentally appropriate locations, following comprehensive environmental impact assessments.

This process will require substantial capital investment. Financing should be secured through a combination of national and international sources, supported by technical assistance for planning, design, and implementation.

Additionally, effective waste management should be accompanied by widespread public education. National communication campaigns will be essential to promote proper waste disposal practices and build public understanding and support for sustainable waste infrastructure.

Policy 3.3:
Expand solid waste collection

Key considerations

Limited infrastructure and irregular collection services pose significant challenges to Guinea-Bissau's waste management. Even in the capital city, Bissau, many areas lack reliable municipal waste services. As noted in UN-Habitat's 2025 Waste Wise Cities Tool Report for Bissau, Bissau City Council (CMB) collects approximately 66% of the city's waste, but this service is restricted to the downtown area, main avenues, markets, and fairs. Low-income and peripheral neighbourhoods receive little to no collection service, largely due to the CMB's limited operational capacity.

The CMB's waste collection fleet is minimal, consisting of just four dump trucks and one container truck, all of which suffer from mechanical problems caused by long-term use. Additionally, sanitation workers often lack adequate protective equipment when collecting waste or cleaning the streets. Overall, Bissau's municipal administration lacks technical capacity and suffers from a shortage of workforce, which has prevented the development of a functional waste collection system. As a result, capacity building for both the CMB and municipal administration are key considerations for this policy.

Two private operators - Blufu and Limpeza na Comunidade - provide waste collection services to businesses and some households in Bissau who pay monthly fees. Additionally, some areas not covered by CMB are serviced by informal or clandestine collectors, who are known to illegally dump waste, leading to environmental harm.

Outside the capital, collection services are even more limited. Due to the absence of any formal waste collection system, most rural and regional areas rely on informal disposal practices such as open dumping and burning.

Poor infrastructure exacerbates the issue, as only a small portion of roads are paved, and many rural routes become impassable during the rainy season (World Bank, 2019). This further hinders essential services such as waste collection. Therefore, infrastructure development is another critical element of this policy.

Municipal solid waste management (MSWM) operations typically account for a large share of municipal budgets. In Guinea-Bissau, the national government does not subsidise local waste management services, and in Bissau, the CMB generates no direct revenue from MSWM. There is no tipping fee at the Safim dumpsite or collection fee, except in markets. Although households pay a sanitation fee through their water bills, these funds are not transferred to the CMB. Thus, sustainable financing for MSWM is another key consideration.

Expanding solid waste collection could reduce plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau by 1,000 tonnes (8%) per year by 2035.

EXPANDING SOLID WASTE COLLECTION COULD REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION IN GUINEA-BISSAU BY

1,000 TONNES (8%)

PER YEAR BY 2035.

Implementation

Expanding waste collection services in Guinea-Bissau requires a phased and strategic approach, beginning with a comprehensive assessment of current waste management practices and infrastructure. This will help identify service gaps, particularly in underserved urban and rural areas, and inform a targeted expansion strategy.

Strengthening institutional and operational capacity will be essential from the outset of this policy. This is especially important for local councils such as Bissau City Council (CMB), which currently lack the technical expertise and workforce capacity needed to manage waste effectively. Prioritising training programs for municipal staff and sanitation workers should improve service delivery and safety standards.

Infrastructure development is another critical pillar. The waste collection fleet should be rehabilitated and expanded, with a focus on acquiring durable vehicles suited to local conditions. Some existing donor-funded projects in the country, such as Bissau Limpu, are aiming to support the maintenance of existing collection vehicles and contribute to the supply of new ones. Investments in basic infrastructure, such as paved access roads and transfer stations, will also be necessary to ensure reliable service, particularly in rural areas where poor road conditions hinder operations.

Household communication campaigns will be important to inform residents of forthcoming service changes. This will be essential to delivering lasting behavioural change, encouraging sustainable waste disposal practices, and discouraging open burning or illegal dumping.

Formal partnerships with private operators such as Blufu and Limpeza na Comunidade could be used to enhance and scale collection coverage. Community-led initiatives should also be supported as many are effectively in charge of waste management in rural areas. Informal waste collectors can also be integrated into the formal system through training and licensing. The case study below shows how a public-private partnership between informal waste pickers and the municipal government in Pune, India successfully expanded waste collection across the city.

Developing a robust and sustainable financing strategy will also be key to expanding solid waste collection coverage. Initial investments to upgrade infrastructure and equipment are likely to rely on donor funding and/or concessional loans. In the medium-term, cost-recovery could be supported through revised user fees – such as by ensuring that the sanitation fees paid on water bills reach the CMB or introducing additional waste fees that are earmarked for the CMB. In the longer-term, tipping fees could be introduced at the landfill, and EPR could also help to finance sustainable waste collection services.

Case Study:
Leveraging the informal sector to improve solid waste collections in Pune, India

Solid Waste Collection Handling (SWaCH) is a wholly owned workers' cooperative that was developed as a public-private partnership in 2007. In 2008, SWaCH signed a five-year contract with the Pune Municipal Council, which was later renewed for the period 2016–2020. This partnership presented an alternative to the privatisation of waste collection, aligning with Pune's broader goals of developing a waste management system that is operationally, financially, and environmentally sustainable – and inclusive of both workers and residents (GRID-Arendal, 2024).

Today, SWaCH has over 3,900 worker-members (70% of which are women) that provide door-to-door waste collection services in exchange for user fees paid by each household; they sort the waste and drop off nonrecyclables at city-run feeder points. They earn incomes from the user fees and by selling recyclables to local scrap dealers (GRID-Arendal, 2024; WIEGO, 2012).

Due to the SWaCH Cooperative's initiatives, today, 60 MT of waste is diverted away from landfills per day, with up to 85% of the waste generated in the city being recycled or processed, resulting in annual greenhouse gas emission savings of approximately 50,000 tonnes of CO_2 (Centre for Public Impact, 2021). The city also saves approximately 12.5 million USD each year through the waste collection services provided by SwaCh, compared to the collection costs of private contractors (GRID-Arendal, 2024).

Policy 3.4:
Enhance separation of recyclables

Key considerations

In Bissau, some informal waste pickers are actively recovering valuable recyclable materials from the Safim dumpsite. However, to strengthen Guinea-Bissau's recycling industry and ensure a larger, higher-quality supply of recyclables, it is essential to separate plastics and other key waste streams – such as metals and paper – at the source. This includes in homes, businesses, or public institutions.

This practice, known as source separation, significantly improves the quality of recyclable materials. Unlike mixed (co-mingled) waste, source-separated materials are generally cleaner and less contaminated, making them more suitable for recycling and often commanding higher market prices. Facilities that process source-separated waste also benefit from simpler and more cost-effective sorting technologies, reducing operational expenses and improving overall system efficiency.

Although not the primary focus of this plastic-focused NAP, separating organic materials, such as food waste, from the general waste stream and directing them to composting is also important. Doing so enhances the quality of recyclable materials, produces valuable compost, and reduces the volume of residual waste sent to landfill

Introducing source segregation should be done in close partnership with informal recyclers. Excluding them, while shifting collection to municipal councils or private operators, risks undermining the effectiveness of segregation efforts, as many valuable recyclables are likely to be collected and sold by waste pickers before reaching the formal system. Integrating informal waste pickers into the formal recycling sector by acknowledging their contributions, utilising their expertise, offering support, and improving their working conditions would greatly enhance the overall efficiency and impact of the waste value chain.

Creating, and identifying existing national and regional markets for a wider range of recyclable materials will also be crucial for making source separation effective in Guinea-Bissau. When more materials have value, this will help to ensure that separated materials are actually collected, processed, and reused, rather than ending up in landfills or the environment.

Source separation should also be linked to viable processing and treatment infrastructure. Guinea-Bissau currently lacks domestic recycling and treatment facilities, with most recyclable materials sent to Senegal for processing. The country faces significant financial, technical and logistical barriers to establishing and sustaining such infrastructure locally.

To address this, Guinea-Bissau could benefit from strengthening regional cooperation, particularly with neighbouring countries such as Senegal that already possess recycling infrastructure. By leveraging existing regional capacity, Guinea-Bissau can avoid the high costs of building standalone facilities and instead work toward shared solutions that promote economies of scale and improve the overall efficiency of the recycling value chain.

Such collaboration could include formal agreements for cross-border waste processing, joint investment in regional recycling hubs, and harmonised standards for recyclable materials. These efforts would not only make source separation more viable but also accelerate the development of a circular economy in the region.

There are also opportunities to support existing local private sector recycling initiatives, especially where infrastructure already exists. Lessons from existing recycling and waste recovery initiatives in Guinea-Bissau should be sought - such as "Casaco Construções", which produces blocks from glass bottles.

In the long term, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) (see Section 4.4.8) can provide sustainable funding for source segregation and broader recycling and waste management initiatives. Developing EPR in close collaboration with the informal sector will be crucial. If done well, this can support the gradual formalisation of informal workers.

EPR frameworks are widely used to finance and strengthen local recycling systems. However, in countries such as Guinea-Bissau, where solid waste management infrastructure is still limited, parallel investments will likely also be needed. Strong public-private partnerships will remain key for success (Consumer Goods Forum, 2025).

Implementation

This policy should adopt a phased implementation approach, beginning with pilot programmes in urban and peri-urban areas, including the capital, Bissau. These pilots will serve to test and refine operational models prior to broader deployment. This phased approach is particularly critical given the limited baseline of municipal waste collection services in Guinea-Bissau. Substantial infrastructure and service delivery improvements will be required not only for the collection of source-separated recyclables but also for general waste collection (see Section 4.4.4).

The pilot initiative in Bissau could be operationalised within the neighbourhoods currently targeted by the Bissau Limpu programme (2025–2029), specifically Militar, Cuntum, Granja de Pessubé, Bandim, and Belém. These areas already benefit from investments in waste management infrastructure, technical support to informal recycling actors, and public awareness campaigns focused on repair, recycling, and reuse. Leveraging these existing interventions provides an opportunity to introduce and evaluate source separation practices in contexts where foundational systems and community engagement mechanisms are already being established. Synergies should also be sought with other similar programmes throughout Guinea-Bissau.

Core components of the pilot programmes should include the provision of dedicated containers for the separation of recyclable materials, and the clear identification of target material streams. If Guinea-Bissau adopts a regional waste-processing strategy, it will be necessary to align material types and quality standards with neighbouring countries such as Senegal to facilitate cross-border compatibility. Public awareness and education initiatives will be critical to fostering sustained behavioural change, alongside continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to support adaptive management of the system.

Effective engagement with regional partners and private sector stakeholders will be essential to ensure access to processing and treatment infrastructure, and end markets. Given the substantial capital investment required to establish a national processing network, the strategy should prioritise leveraging and optimising existing regional facilities to ensure cost-efficiency and operational feasibility during the initial phases of implementation. In the longer-term, partnerships could help to support the development of local recycling capacity and end-markets for recycled materials. Additionally, once EPR is introduced in Guinea-Bissau, it is expected to emerge as a central, sustainable funding mechanism for source separation as well as the country's broader recycling and waste management framework.

Policy 3.5:
Improve capture of plastic pollution in drainage systems

Key considerations	Implementation
Throughout Guinea-Bissau – and especially in the densely populated capital – plastic waste is frequently discarded directly into open drains or carried there by wind and rain. The problem is so widespread in Bissau that some drains have reportedly been covered in an attempt to curb this practice, though many open drains remain. These drainage systems often discharge directly into rivers, mangroves, and the ocean, serving as significant conduits for plastic pollution to enter aquatic ecosystems. Plastic blocking these drainage channels exacerbates flooding. This issue is expected to intensify, as climate change is projected to increase both the frequency and severity of flooding events in Guinea-Bissau (World Bank, 2024). Few drainage channels in Guinea-Bissau are equipped with nets or barriers to trap the litter that enters them. While the CMB carries out limited street cleaning in certain central areas of Bissau, these efforts are under-resourced. Outside the capital, formal street cleaning is generally not believed to take place. Accordingly, installing traps and nets in drainage channels could significantly reduce leakage of plastic pollution into the aquatic environment, and alleviate flooding, particularly in high-risk urban areas. However, sufficient resources will need to be allocated to operating and maintaining these capture systems for these benefits to be realised.	To determine the optimal locations for installing nets and traps, research should first identify hotspots for plastic litter and leakage. By strategically placing litter traps in areas with the highest accumulation of waste, the system's efficiency can be significantly enhanced, leading to a greater volume of litter captured (see case study below for further details on the importance of hotspot targeting). Where applicable, pilot programs incorporating nature-based solutions, such as vegetated swales, should also be explored. These can provide multiple benefits, including enhancing wildlife habitats, improving water quality, and reducing flood risk. They often also require lower upfront and maintenance costs than hard infrastructure. Capacity building will also be essential, including institutional strengthening and providing the necessary human and financial resources to the local authorities tasked with maintaining these systems. Maintenance efforts can be further supported by integrating them with disaster risk management strategies and forming partnerships with NGOs. A robust monitoring and evaluation framework should be established to track the performance and impact of the litter capture systems over time. This includes collecting data on litter volumes, and maintenance frequency. Monitoring and evaluation should inform adaptive management, enabling continuous improvement of the systems and supporting evidence-based decision-making for future scaling or replication. Finally, community awareness campaigns should emphasise the importance of reducing littering and keeping drains free from debris to, among other benefits, mitigate flooding and prevent litter from entering the marine environment.

IMPROVING THE CAPTURE OF PLASTIC POLLUTION IN DRAINAGE SYSTEMS COULD REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION BY

240 TONNES (2%)

PER YEAR BY 2030.

Case Study:
Litter traps in Cape Town, South Africa

In Cape Town, South Africa, there are 107 litter traps that are managed by the local municipality. Between 2021-2022, the University of Cape Town undertook a research project to investigate the effectiveness of these litter interception devices – including booms, nets and traps – in reducing plastic pollution in Cape Town's rivers (Maclean et al., 2023).

The study focused on three diverse areas: Newlands (high-income), Steenberg (middle-income), and Ocean View (low-income), capturing over 35,000 litter items (132 kg) during short sampling windows. Plastic made up the majority of the intercepted waste (77% by number), dominated by single-use packaging.

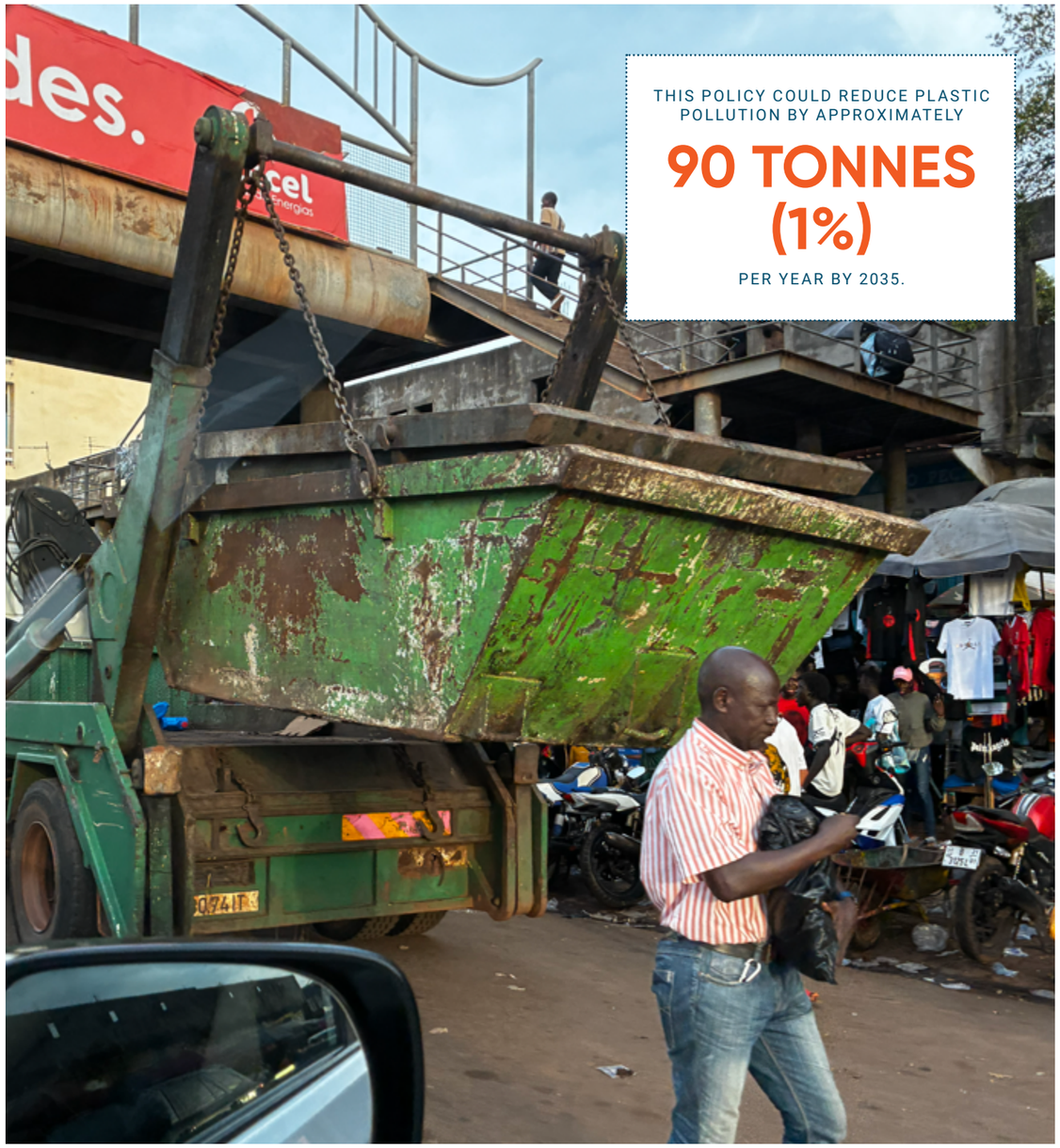
The most effective site, Marina Da Gama in Steenberg, demonstrated how combining booms and downstream nets significantly improves collection, with nets capturing three times more litter than the boom alone.

The study also found that the distribution of current litter traps in the city is poorly correlated to the catchments receiving the largest litter weight, thereby helping to identify key areas for future trap installations. Indeed, hotspot targeting is important, with a separate study in New Zealand finding that litter traps in 9 high-traffic drains captured over 50% of total debris (Enviropod, 2021).

While some municipal devices were poorly maintained, community-led and NGO-managed traps often performed better, highlighting the value of partnerships. Challenges such as theft, vandalism, and limited recycling opportunities remain, but the study shows that litter traps, when well-placed and maintained, can play a meaningful role in preventing land-based litter from reaching the sea.

Policy 3.6:
Improve standards for waste collection and transport

This policy aims to reduce leakage of plastic items at various points in the waste management system by enhancing the standards for collection and transport of plastic waste. It could include improving the containment of waste while it is waiting to be collected, mandating the use of covers or nets over receptacles when they are set out for collection, and as well as increasing the quantity of bins. Alternatively, it may require bins with lids at communal drop-off points and in public spaces. More enclosed or covered vehicles is also essential to prevent plastic loss during transit.



Key considerations

In Bissau, where the waste collection system is focused, stakeholder feedback suggested that poor waste collection standards present environmental health risks. There is an overall lack of equipment for waste collection, meaning that waste collectors are doing the best job possible, but under challenging conditions. There is also an opportunity to train collection staff and improving the standards of collection. Stakeholder feedback suggested there was also a hope to increase capacity, creating employment opportunities.

Plastic leakage frequently occurs due to four common reasons:

- Lack of container capacity leading to piles of uncovered waste
- Open or poorly maintained bins
- Irregular servicing
- The use of uncovered or unsuitable vehicles for transporting waste

During handling and transit, waste is often lost to the environment, especially in areas with high wind or rainfall. Financial and technical constraints limit the ability of local authorities to upgrade these systems, making targeted, practical interventions even more important.

Implementation

This policy will prioritise improvements to waste containment at the point of collection, with a focus on providing communities with secure, well-designed bins. Covered or lidded bins will be provided to accessible households and placed at communal drop-off points, street litter bins, and public areas such as markets and schools. These will help prevent plastic from being scattered by wind or animals. Communal bins will be regularly monitored for overflow to ensure timely servicing and prevent spills from entering surrounding areas.

On the transportation side, measures will focus on ensuring that waste is properly secured during loading, unloading, and transit. Vehicles used for waste transport will be required to use tarpaulins or enclosed bodies to prevent plastic loss on the way to transfer stations or disposal sites.

It will be important to align not only the city council's waste collection service with these standards, but to also private waste collectors and the informal sector. Together, these actions will help reduce plastic leakage across key points in the collection and transport chain.

A specific Waste Management Authority should be developed within Bissau City Council, to lead on the development of clear service standards and implementation of these standards, as well as the other downstream measures. Having dedicated resource and expertise will strengthen the capacity and is a key enabler for this policy.

Policy 3.7:
Regulations and enforcement to reduce littering & dumping

Key considerations

This policy addresses the widespread issues of littering and dumping of waste. Local stakeholders explained that in Bissau there are certain areas where waste is dumped. Even when the areas are cleared, people continue to dump their waste. These practices account for 66% of leakage and are the most visible sources of plastic pollution.

Insufficient placement of waste bins in public spaces is thought to be a key cause. This policy will address this issue by deploying bins in public places alongside a widespread communications campaign. In addition, this policy will introduce littering and dumping regulations and subsequent enforcement through community engagement, public reporting, wardens, and fines. The aim is to ensure that waste is properly disposed of and not abandoned in the environment. This will target both small-scale dumping and littering at the household level and any larger infractions by businesses.

Littering and dumping are widespread in both urban and rural areas across Guinea Bissau. It is driven by a lack of waste management services, lack of regulation and a general lack of public understanding of the issues it creates.

While public education campaigns are essential for raising awareness, this report recommends they are paired with penalties to change entrenched behaviours. Financial deterrents, such as fines to deter littering and dumping, and better access to reliable waste services are central to the success of this policy.

Enforcement roles at the local and municipal levels are often poorly defined and under-resourced. However, there are opportunities to improve enforcement by integrating it with other public services, such as public health, and by leveraging mobile technology to support reporting, data collection, and community accountability.

Regulations and enforcement to reduce littering and dumping could reduce plastic pollution by approximately 520 tonnes (4.2%) per year by 2035.

Implementation

The implementation of this policy will begin with building a comprehensive understanding of littering and dumping hotspots through surveys. An important first step will therefore be to designate and train litter wardens to identify the dumping and littering hotspots, engage with residents and, once enforcement begins, to apply fines where necessary.

Enforcement should follow a phased approach, starting with community education, progressing to on-the-spot fines for repeat or serious offences. These actions could be supported by the development of a whistle-blower reporting system to enable community members to report illegal dumping.

Local stakeholders have noted the shortage of bins as a key barrier to preventing littering and dumping. Bin placement and servicing schedules should be carefully planned to ensure visibility, accessibility, and regular maintenance.

REGULATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT TO REDUCE LITTERING & DUMPING COULD REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION BY APPROXIMATELY

520 TONNES (4.2%)

PER YEAR BY 2035.

Policy 3.8:
Ban open burning of waste

BANNING THE OPEN BURNING OF WASTE COULD REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION IN GUINEA-BISSAU BY

770 TONNES (6%)

PER YEAR BY 2035.

Key considerations

Open burning of waste is prevalent in both urban and rural areas of Guinea-Bissau. Driven in large part by a lack of waste management services, it is used as a disposal method for nearly half of the country's solid waste. Open burning is not limited to household practices; waste collected by the local council in Bissau and transported to the Safim dumpsite is also routinely burned.

However, it is now widely recognised that open burning of waste has detrimental impacts on both public health and the environment (see section 1.3.3). Accordingly, there is a need to ban this harmful practice in Guinea-Bissau.

The ban should be paired with penalties, such as fines, to change this entrenched behaviour. However, enforcement roles at the local and municipal level in Guinea-Bissau are poorly defined and under-resourced, with public authorities often lacking the personnel, training, and mandate to implement regulations. Capacity constraints are further challenged by the remoteness of many of Guinea-Bissau's rural communities, which makes regular monitoring and enforcement logistically difficult. Oversight and evaluation of public policies are also reportedly limited by the very low capacity of the national statistical system (UN-Habitat, 2024). Thus, enhancing enforcement and monitoring capacity will be key to the success of this policy.

Reliable access to waste collection services will also be key to the policy's success. The ban should be implemented gradually, aligned with the expansion of waste management coverage. Without accessible alternatives for waste disposal, there is a significant risk that this policy will not succeed.

Banning the open burning of waste could reduce plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau by 770 tonnes (6%) per year by 2035.

Implementation

To implement a ban on open burning in Guinea-Bissau, the process should begin by drafting clear legislation that defines prohibited practices, outlines penalties, and assigns enforcement responsibilities. This should be followed by a nationwide public education campaign. This campaign should aim to:

- Sensitise the public about the health and environmental risks of open burning
- Promote collection services as a safer alternative
- Inform the public about the forthcoming penalties for continued burning of municipal solid waste

Local leaders and community groups can play a key role in spreading awareness and encouraging compliance.

Once the public has been sensitised, enforcement – such as on-the-spot fines for repeat or serious offences – should be phased in gradually, starting in areas where reliable waste management is already in place.

Building the capacity of local authorities will be crucial. This should include support through training, technical assistance, and staffing for enforcement agencies. Enforcement can be strengthened by integrating it with other public services, such as public health initiatives. The legislation should clearly specify which agencies are responsible for enforcing the ban.

These actions could be supported by the development of a whistleblower reporting system to enable community members to report illegal open burning. In American Samoa, for example, citizens can contact the Samoa Environmental Protection Agency to report open burning through their Facebook page.

Monitoring and evaluation systems should also be established to track compliance.

Case Study:
Tackling open waste burning in the Maldives

In 2019, Common Seas implemented Plastic Drawdown in the Republic of the Maldives by the invitation of the government. Plastic Drawdown was used to develop a phase out strategy of problematic plastics for the archipelago (Royle et al., 2022). Based on this strategy, the government announced a ban on certain single-use plastics in 2021.

In the same year, the Maldives also banned the open burning of waste on Thilafushi, an artificial island that has served as the country's main landfill since 1992. The ban was introduced in response to growing concerns over toxic smoke plumes caused by the uncontrolled burning of waste, which posed serious environmental and public health risks. Poor waste handling practices on Thilafushi, especially open burning, also threatened two of the Maldives' most vital economic sectors: tourism and fisheries (Volborth, 2023).

The ban has been coupled with efforts to strengthen waste management, including community sensitisation to minimise single-use plastic usage and the establishment of regional waste treatment systems (WHO, 2023).

In 2023, researchers from Duke University in the United States used artificial intelligence to analyse satellite images across the island nation. Their goal was to detect smoke plumes and evaluate the impact of the 2021 ban. The study confirmed that the ban had been successfully enforced, with satellite data showing a significant reduction in smoke plumes since its implementation (Scott et al., 2023).

Policy 3.9:
Introduce Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

This policy introduces an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme that shifts responsibility for the collection, recycling, and safe disposal of single-use packaging to producers, importers, and brand owners. Currently, the costs of managing this waste fall largely on local governments and communities, while producers have limited responsibility for the end-of-life management of their products.

At its most basic, EPR requires producers, brand owners and/or importers to finance systems to collect and recycle their packaging. However, if used in a more ambitious way, EPR can also be used to promote waste reduction, reuse and refill. It can incentivise producers to redesign products and delivery systems to minimise the quantity of – or entirely avoid - waste generated at end of life. In this sense, EPR can be applied as an instrument to stimulate innovation as part of a transition to a circular economy.

It is important to note, however, that a packaging EPR alone cannot fund Guinea-Bissau's entire waste management system. Packaging typically only constitutes an average of 20% of solid waste in low-and-middle-income countries (Consumer Goods Forum, 2025). As packaging EPR funds should be ring-fenced for investment into the collection and recycling of packaging materials, other investments in waste management infrastructure and systems will be needed alongside packaging EPR.

Implementing an EPR scheme in Guinea-Bissau would align with international best practices and help build a more sustainable and accountable packaging sector. **With strong regulation and stakeholder collaboration, it could divert 1680 tonnes (14%) of packaging waste from the environment per year by 2035.**

Key considerations	Implementation
Implementing an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme in Guinea-Bissau will be a complex and long-term undertaking. EPR systems require strong regulatory frameworks, effective enforcement mechanisms, and coordination among multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, producers, importers, waste managers, and the informal sector. Given the country's current infrastructure and institutional capacity, this policy will need to be introduced gradually, with careful planning, capacity-building, and stakeholder engagement to ensure its success and sustainability. A national EPR scheme could be developed in Guinea-Bissau with an initial focus on packaging. Inclusion of other non-packaging items containing plastic could also be considered over time, for instance, electrical appliances, tires, end-of-life vehicles, furniture, textiles, paint and coatings. Advanced fee modulation approaches should also be considered, which apply different levels of EPR fees to different items, to reflect differences in their environmental impact and recyclability. The fees paid by producers, or importers, should cover the full costs of collection, sorting, recycling, litter cleanup, and responsible disposal of end-of-life packaging. This will help to fund policies 3.4 and 3.5. It will also be important to consider how to integrate informal waste pickers into the EPR scheme, so that it benefits, rather than negatively impacts them. They are currently the key actors engaging in recycling activities in Guinea-Bissau and could provide a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the scheme. It is vital that they are not excluded from the system, nor loose access to the materials they depend on for their livelihoods. See the case study below for how Nigeria's EPR scheme has actively sought to engage the informal sector.	A stakeholder group should first be developed to lead on the governance structures and design of the EPR scheme. Early engagement with, and capacity building of, the private sector regarding the design and benefits of a successful EPR scheme will be key to increase buy-in. It will also be key to involve informal waste workers, environmental associations as well as consumer associations to ensure that all stakeholders' concerns across the plastics value chain are considered in the design of the scheme. The scheme should be governed by a dedicated Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO), overseen by a government regulator to ensure transparency and fairness. It is essential to audit the PRO to ensure proper management, and producers selling products within the country to ensure they are signed up to the scheme and paying the required fees. Mandatory labelling on packaging is one approach to help provide information on whether the producer has joined the PRO (thereby helping to keep track of free riders) and whether the packaging is recyclable. This helps consumers to dispose of packaging correctly and contributes to improving recycling rates The scheme should be evaluated regularly to ensure the scope of products and packaging are up to date, whether the need for any exemptions has changed or not, and whether the level of any targets needs to be adjusted. Evaluation and improvements should be made at least every three to five years.

Case Study:
Inclusion of informal sector in Nigeria's EPR system

In Nigeria, the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework has actively integrated the informal sector, particularly in electronic and plastic waste management.

Through initiatives led by the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) and partners such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Extended Producer Responsibility Organisation of Nigeria (EPRON), informal waste collectors have received training, safety equipment, and access to formal recycling networks.

The 2019-2023 Circular Economy project for electronics, for instance, specifically targeted informal e-waste workers for inclusion, while the 2025 launch of the Waste Marketplace Nigeria platform aims to digitally onboard 10,000 informal recyclers – enhancing their livelihoods and formally recognising their contributions to the waste value chain (UNEP, 2023; Olugbode, 2025).

4.5 Roadmap to tackle plastic pollution

Under a business-as-usual (BAU) scenario, where no action is taken, plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau is expected to increase by 59% between 2024 and 2035. Cumulatively, over 119,000 tonnes of plastic waste is expected to leak into Guinea-Bissau's waterways over this period.

To prevent this, the Government of Guinea-Bissau has laid out this National Action Plan, comprised of three key strategies and 14 policy interventions that can reduce plastic pollution by 79% over 10 years, relative to the 2024 BAU scenario. This is equivalent to preventing 9,800 tonnes of plastic leaking into Guinea-Bissau's waterways annually by Year 10.

Achieving this ambitious reduction will require coordinated action by government and stakeholders across the plastics value chain.

The roadmap outlines the major steps to delivering the NAP. Each stage of work – from policy design to post-implementation – is illustrated along with key milestones.

4.6 Stages of work

The roadmap describes distinct stages of work, from policy design through to post-implementation. Actions in each stage will differ by policy, described in detail in the accompanying appendix.

Design stage

This may involve a legislative review to understand the legal framework for implementing the policy. This should involve supporting research and a feasibility study to review the policy considerations, and the early stage of the consultation process. As part of this process, key stakeholders should be defined, and the feasibility study results should be presented to them. The policy design should be scoped and refined, and an impact assessment undertaken, along with ongoing stakeholder consultation. Governance arrangements should also be defined.

Pre-implementation stage

This involves any testing, trials, or demonstration projects. Public consultation should be undertaken during this stage, if required. An implementation plan should be developed, and practical and logistical set-up arrangements put in place such as:

- Policy operator
- Infrastructure
- Reporting
- Training
- Enforcement measures

A public awareness campaign and communication strategy should also be launched to drive behaviour change at the community level.

Implementation

This is the point at which the policy should be rolled out. In some cases, this may be a phased approach.

Post-implementation

This stage is intentionally blank in the roadmap and accompanying annexes, as actions should be defined according to monitoring and review work. As such, this stage should involve monitoring the policy effectiveness and ongoing review of policy design. Policy specifics may be amended based on findings, or supporting measures introduced. In some cases, the policy scope may be extended over time.

It is important to note that the institutional and governance framework for this NAP should be established before the outlined stages of work and timeline presented below. This is necessary preparatory work to establish the ways of working, outline the roles and responsibilities, and establish targets and goals needed to drive action. This is covered in the next section titled 'Governance Arrangements'.

See **Figure 15** for full policy roadmap.

4.7 Timeline

SHORT TERM:
PREPARATION, IMPLEMENTATION OF QUICK WINS AND FOUNDATIONAL POLICIES

In the short-term (year 1-2), Guinea-Bissau will prioritise establishing the governance structures necessary for the effective implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP), engaging the public, and launching foundational policies and quick wins. This stage is designed to raise awareness and build the groundwork for the long-term systemic changes required for the NAP's success.

In the first year, the emphasis will be on setting up the core systems and governance structures that will guide the NAP's rollout. This includes developing a comprehensive financing strategy and clearly assigning responsibilities to relevant government departments for each component of the plan. These roles will be formalized within the NAP's overall governance framework (see the Governance Arrangements section for further detail).

Capacity building for key government departments will also be a priority in the first year, laying the groundwork for effective implementation. Ongoing capacity strengthening will be essential throughout the NAP's implementation, as the policy measures become increasingly complex, progressing from quick wins (such as reinstating the plastic bag ban) through to infrastructure investments and the introduction of fiscal instruments.

Once the core systems, governance arrangements and initial financing sources have been identified, a nationwide public engagement campaign should be launched to start shifting public attitudes around plastic use and pollution. This behaviour change initiative will inform citizens about the negative impacts of plastic waste and highlight the government's commitment to addressing the issue. It will help prepare the public for the upcoming measures outlined in the NAP (see the Behaviour Change Campaign section for more information).

Several quick-win actions should also be implemented during this period. These include strengthening the existing plastic bag ban through updated legislation, enhanced enforcement capacity, and public awareness efforts. Additionally, the first water refill stations should be piloted and deployed, supported by educational campaigns encouraging the public to choose refill options over single-use plastic bottles and sachets. This period will also include a phased introduction of reusable foodware in dine-in food establishments.

Key foundational waste management policies should be introduced early on. These include the development of standards for waste collection and transport, as well as regulations addressing littering and illegal dumping. These measures will provide the basis for broader initiatives proposed in the NAP.

Finally, this phase should initiate the design and pre-implementation stages for improving the potable water supply, waste segregation and recycling, and the phased expansion of solid waste collection, beginning with a comprehensive assessment of existing solid waste management practices and infrastructure. This will inform targeted infrastructure and service development efforts to support more effective and inclusive water provision and waste collection systems nationwide.

Key activities:

- Formalising the NAP governance framework
- Developing a financing roadmap
- Public awareness campaign
- Reviving and enforcing the plastic bag ban
- Developing standards for waste collection and transport
- Developing regulations on littering and illegal dumping
- Rolling out first water refill points
- Phased roll out of reusable foodware at dine-in food establishments
- Phased expansion of waste collection services

MEDIUM TERM: IMPLEMENTING KEY POLICIES AND PREPARING FOR LONG-TERM IMPACT

During the medium term (years 3-4), key infrastructure projects should move into full implementation, including the improvement of potable water supply systems – a critical step in reducing reliance on single-use plastic sachets and bottles. In parallel, implementation should begin for newly developed standards for the disposal of waste, including basic improvements to Safim landfill. Phased rollout of waste segregation and recycling systems should also start to support more sustainable materials management. The expansion of solid waste collection services, which began in the short term, should continue and reach broader coverage during this period – a critical step ahead of the phased ban on the open-burning of waste.

Regulatory progress will advance as the government undertakes stakeholder consultations and phased implementation of the ban on the open burning of waste. Additionally, efforts to capture plastic pollution in stormwater and drainage systems should begin, addressing a key source of plastic leakage into waterways.

This phase should also see the design and pre-implementation phases for the Deposit Return Scheme, Extended Producer Responsibility and taxes/levies on single use items. These will involve stakeholder consultations and feasibility studies.

It should also involve the beginning of post-implementation monitoring for early policies and pilot projects introduced in Years 1–2. These reviews will help assess impact, identify lessons learned, and refine the implementation of more complex measures set to roll out in the long term. Collectively, the activities in this period will solidify the foundations for sustained impact and ensure Guinea-Bissau is on track to meet its plastic pollution reduction goals.

Key activities:

- Improvements in the potable water supply
- Implementation of standards for the disposal of waste
- Expansion of solid waste collection services
- Phased implementation of the ban on open-burning of waste
- Capturing plastic pollution in drainage systems
- Design and pre-implementation of the DRS, EPR and SUP tax
- Monitoring of the water refill scheme, enhanced grocery bag ban, reusable foodware pilots and standards for waste collection and transport

LONG TERM: EVALUATION AND LEVELLING UP

In the long-term phase (year 5 onwards), Guinea-Bissau should focus on the full-scale implementation of systemic policies and market-based instruments. These are essential for achieving sustained reductions in plastic pollution, but require extensive preparation and infrastructure development to be successfully implemented.

Three major policy instruments should be rolled out during this period:

1. The Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) – following the earlier feasibility study and stakeholder consultations. This system will incentivise consumers to return plastic bottles for recycling, significantly reducing litter and boosting recovery rates for PET plastic.
2. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme – building on earlier stakeholder engagement and feasibility studies, the long term should see the full implementation of an EPR scheme, requiring producers and importers to take responsibility for the plastic packaging they place on the market. This will shift the financial and operational burden of waste management upstream, driving reductions in plastic waste generation and improving recycling outcomes.
3. Taxes and levies on single-use plastics (SUPs) - should be implemented to further discourage their production and consumption.

On the waste management side, efforts to expand solid waste collection coverage and improve source segregation and recycling systems will continue to expand. Additionally, following the feasibility studies and assessments conducted in the medium-term, the implementation of large-scale landfill upgrades and the remediation of high-risk dumpsites should begin. This will focus on reducing plastic leakage from unmanaged disposal sites, improving environmental safeguards, and protecting local communities.

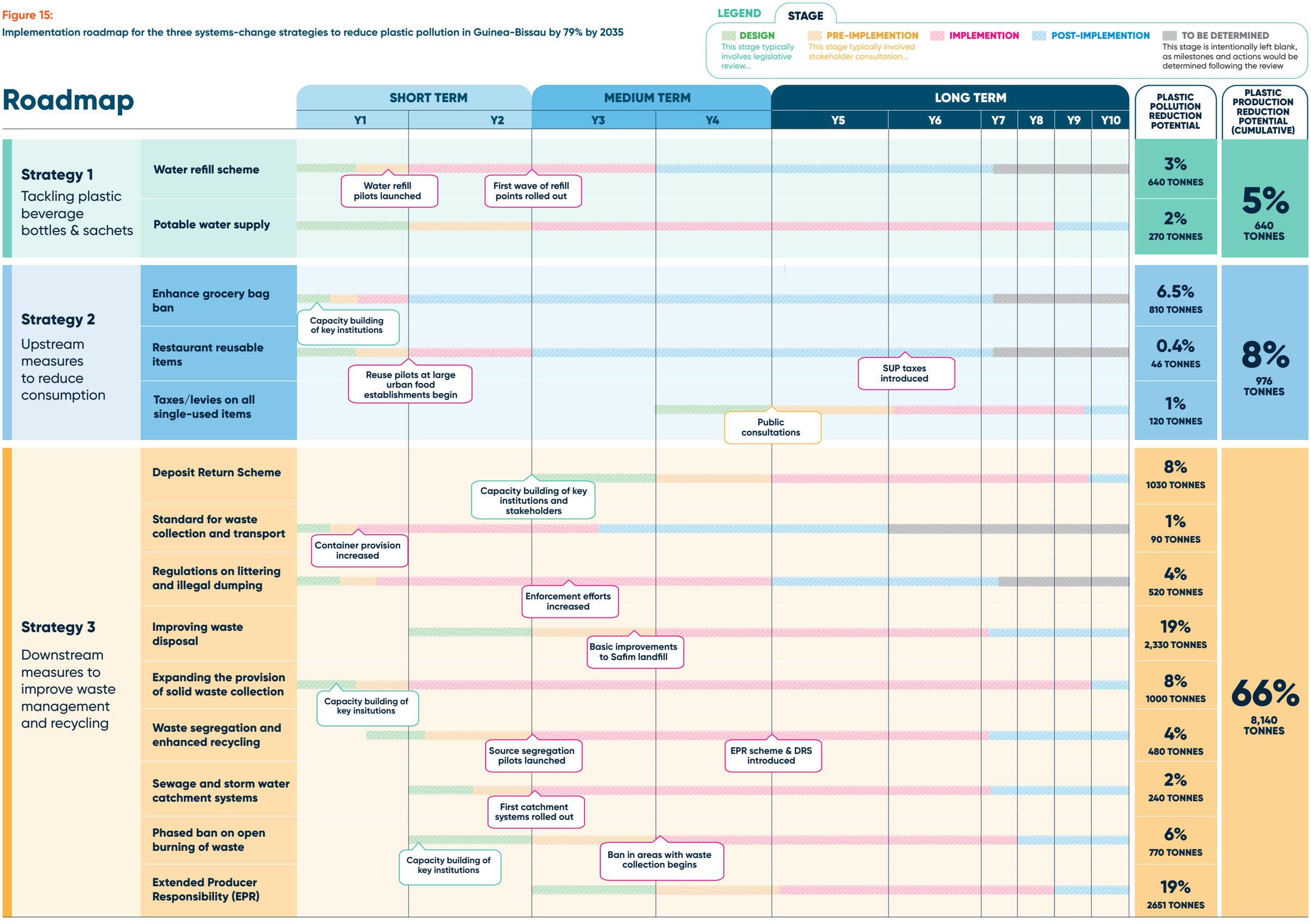
A key focus of the long term should be monitoring and evaluating the policies implemented during the short and (where possible) medium term. This stage should involve monitoring the effectiveness of policies. It should also involve ongoing review of policy design and assessing behaviour change and policy effectiveness through measuring of reduction in plastic leakage and number of open dumpsites.

Based on the findings, the government will adjust and strengthen policies where needed. For example, by widening the scope of bans and charges to include additional products or categories of plastics as appropriate.

Key activities:

- Implement the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)
- Launch Extended Responsibility (EPR) scheme for plastic packaging
- Introduce taxes and levies on single-use plastics
- Expand solid waste collections and source segregation
- Implement significant landfill upgrades and dumpsite remediation
- Conduct monitoring and evaluation
- Adjust and strengthen policies based on M&E findings

Figure 15:
Implementation roadmap for the three systems-change strategies to reduce plastic pollution in Guinea-Bissau by 79% by 2035



5

Turning theory into action: Implementing the National Action Plan

Image: iStock (Damian Pankowiec)

5.1 Governance arrangements

Clear leadership and ownership of the National Action Plan will be critical for its successful delivery.

The **Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action**, through the Competent Environmental Assessment Authority **(AAAC)**, will have overall responsibility for leading the implementation of the National Action Plan.

Plastic pollution is a cross-cutting issue, and successful delivery of the plan will require the active engagement of a broad range of ministries, institutions, and civil society actors.

The existing **National Committee to Combat Plastic Pollution**, established through this project, will serve as the steering group for the National Action Plan. The Committee currently includes 14 institutional members from across government and civil society, enabling it to draw upon diverse expertise and ensure coordinated implementation. As part of the implementation, this committee will be expanded and formalised, potentially through statutory recognition, to include other key sectors such as customs, trade, finance, and local governance.

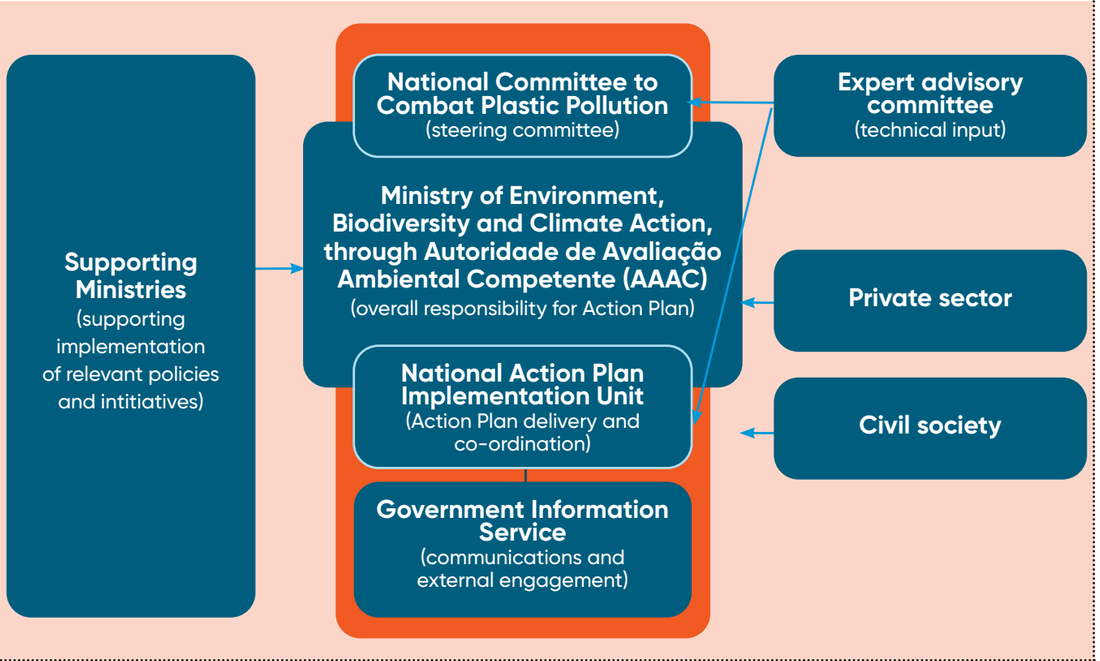
The Committee will be responsible for reviewing and endorsing key outputs and decisions related to the NAP, including its final approval, and for guiding its implementation.

A **National Action Plan Implementation Unit,** hosted by the AAAC, will be established to coordinate delivery of the Plan. The Implementation Unit will have three main roles:

1. Facilitating coordination of the National Committee to Combat Plastic Pollution, including scheduling and organising meetings, and preparing and distributing relevant documentation.
2. Coordinating and managing the full range of activities necessary to implement the National Action Plan, such as commissioning technical studies and implementing pilot projects.
3. Monitoring and evaluating (M&E) the implementation of the NAP in accordance with the monitoring & evaluation plan.

The figure below illustrates the overall governance arrangements for implementing the National Action Plan. The table summarises key government stakeholders and their suggested roles in delivering this. These roles will be validated and updated as the plan moves into implementation.

Figure 16:
Summary of governance arrangements



5.2 Roles in delivering the NAP

Table 8:
Summary of government actors and their proposed roles in delivering the National Action Plan

Institution	Main role in delivering the National Action Plan
Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action (via AAAC)	Overall responsibility for leading and coordinating the implementation of the National Action Plan. Host of the NAP Implementation Unit.
Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government	Ensures the decentralised coordination and local implementation of the actions foreseen in the Plan, promoting the integration of the goals for combating plastic pollution into territorial and municipal development policies and plans. The ministry will guarantee the implementation of the measures at the local level – an institutional and operational point between the Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action and the regional, municipal and community administrations.
Bissau City Council and regional and sectoral administrations	Overall responsibility for plastic management and monitoring of laws banning plastics at the local level.
National Committee to Combat Plastic Pollution	Steering group for the National Action Plan. Provides oversight, reviews key deliverables, and supports coordination between sectors. Will be formalised and expanded to include Customs, Finance, Trade, and other strategic actors.
National Action Plan Implementation Unit (hosted at AAAC)	Coordinates all implementation activities: convening meetings, preparing documents, commissioning studies, implementing pilot projects, and leading monitoring and evaluation efforts.
Ministry of Economy and Finance	Supports the design of economic instruments and incentives related to the NAP. Manages revenue flows from taxes, levies, or subsidies related to plastics.
Ministry of Commerce and Industry	Key role in regulatory enforcement of bans, product standards, and EPR schemes. Liaises with manufacturers and importers.
Ministry of Public Health / National Institute of Public Health (INASA)	Partner in addressing health-related impacts of plastic pollution. Supports risk communication and hygiene aspects of refill and reuse schemes.
Directorate of Environmental Health and Public Hygiene Services	Supports implementation of safe waste management protocols. Liaises with public health entities on the impact of plastic leakage in urban and rural areas.
Directorate-General for Forests and Fauna / IBAP	Ensures alignment of the NAP with biodiversity conservation goals. Assesses impacts of plastic on protected areas and wildlife.
General Directorate of Water Resources	Supports efforts to reduce plastic leakage into water systems. Key partner in monitoring microplastics in rivers and groundwater.
General Directorate of Territorial Planning and Administration	Key actor in implementation at the municipal level, including waste segregation, landfill management, and urban planning integration.

Waste and Chemical Products Centre	Provides technical expertise on safe disposal, hazardous plastics, and chemical additives. Ensures alignment with Basel Convention requirements.
National Civil Society Movement for Peace and Development	Represents grassroots and civil society perspectives. Ensures community engagement and accountability mechanisms in implementation.
National Institute of Studies and Research	Supports baseline studies, impact assessments, and research needed to inform and adjust implementation pathways.
National Maritime and Port Institute	Supports regulation and monitoring of marine plastic pollution. Engages with ports and shipping industries on plastic waste management.
Customs Authority	Key partner in implementing import regulations, enforcing bans on targeted items, and tracking transboundary plastic flows.
IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)	National implementation partner supporting technical coordination, research, stakeholder engagement and the mobilisation of funds to implement the NAP.
Development partners (e.g. UN agencies, bilateral donors, NGOs)	Support infrastructure, capacity-building, policy development, and pilot project implementation. May also contribute to financing and technical assistance.

5.3 Financing

Tackling plastic pollution will require investment in resources, technical capacity, and infrastructure. Some of the policies identified in this NAP can be implemented at relatively low cost (e.g. an enhanced ban on plastic bags) while others will require substantial investment in both capital infrastructure and on-going operation (e.g. improvements in potable water supply). The financial sustainability of the range of initiatives is also critical to ensure that the action plan has a long-term and permanent impact on reducing plastic pollution.

A clear financing plan should be developed for each key policy, identifying needs in terms of coordination and technical capacity, and capital and operational finance. Existing capacity will be assessed in the government departments and agencies that will be responsible for delivery of each element of the National Action Plan (see institutional arrangements above).

As well as considering existing and future government capacity, there are a range of sources of technical assistance and finance that can be used to help develop and implement the National Action Plan. These include:

1. **Technical support from international agencies and NGOs**: This National Action Plan has been prepared with the support of the international social enterprise, Common Seas. Other key partners on the issue of plastic pollution and related themes include:
   a. European Union
   b. UN-HABITAT
   c. IUCN
   d. Acra
   e. The World Bank

   It will be important to work closely with these organisations to explore potential financing opportunities, avoid duplication of effort and ensure that input and support provide by these different agencies is integrated to deliver maximum benefit and impact.

   There may also be potential to explore collaboration on this issue with other partners such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) (e.g. through their Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) and GEF Full-Sized Projects (FSP)), and other international organisations that provide grants and assistance on these issues. This could help deliver new infrastructure, support with behaviour change campaigns and test new approaches to tackling single-use plastics in line with the objectives of this NAP.

2. **Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs):** There may be scope for Guinea-Bissau to approach other multilateral development banks for loans or grants specifically designated for environmental projects, including those aimed at addressing plastic pollution. This might include:
   a. African Development Bank (AfDB) (such as through their African Development Fund (ADF))
   b. Africa Climate Change Fund (ACCF)
   c. Green Climate Fund (GCF)

3. **Climate Funds:** Climate funds, such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Adaptation Fund provide financial support to developing countries to address climate change-related challenges. This include plastic pollution mitigation measures that contribute to environmental sustainability.

   Collaboration with business and civil society: There is scope to collaborate with key business sectors in Guinea-Bissau to jointly deliver key elements of the National Action Plan, particularly the beverages and hospitality sectors to build a more circular economy. This will help to provide positive environmental outcomes and support businesses in addressing key corporate social responsibility aims.

4. **Extended Producer Responsibility** has the potential in the long-term to offer a basis for providing operational finance for improved waste management and recycling. The policy would provide a mechanism by which producers help to create operational finance for collecting and recycling the products they place on the market.

   This is a well-established approach used to help fund waste management and recycling in many parts of the world. The proposed Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for plastic bottles could potentially generate revenue from unclaimed deposits to fund waste management programs and support recycling initiatives. Please see Strategy 3 (policy 3.2) for more information.

5. **Upcoming financial support through Global Plastics Treaty.** Actions covered under the 'medium-' and 'long-term' roadmap of this NAP could be supported by financing through the upcoming international Global Plastics Treaty. The treaty is still in the process of being negotiated, after discussions at INC5.2 failed to reach agreement. However, it is likely that any future agreement will include measures for financing country-level action to meet treaty obligations and help tackle plastic pollution.

6. **Other international agreements.** Guinea-Bissau may also be able to leverage other international agreements and conventions related to environmental protection, such as the Basel Convention or the Stockholm Convention. While these international environmental treaties do not provide direct funding, they can indirectly support funding for projects related to their respective mandates. The conventions also encourage collaboration among governments, international organisations, civil society, and the private sector. Through these partnerships and collaborative initiatives, funding opportunities may arise for projects related to the conventions.

Finally, the designation of the Bijagós Archipelago as a UNESCO World Heritage Site may also provide opportunities for Guinea Bissau to identify financial support and technical assistance to implement elements of the NAP. Tackling plastics pollution in Guinea Bissau is essential to protecting the sensitive ecosystems of the islands.

5.4 Monitoring & evaluation

The Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action, through the Competent Environmental Assessment Authority (AAAC), will have overall responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the National Action Plan. A detailed Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan will be developed at the start of the implementation phase.

The M&E plan will guide tracking of progress, identify challenges, and inform course correction. It will also ensure that the National Committee to Combat Plastic Pollution and other key stakeholders are equipped with timely and relevant data to assess effectiveness and accountability.

Key elements of the M&E Plan will include:

- Defining indicators and time-bound targets for each policy action in the NAP.
- Identifying a reliable data source for each indicator, including government departments, community monitoring, and civil society networks.
- Developing a reporting and review schedule, with clear milestones for internal and external assessments.
- Assigning roles for data collection and verification, including surveys, waste audits, and periodic waste composition analysis.
- Planning a comprehensive review of the National Action Plan in Year Five, with updates as needed based on evidence and stakeholder input.

The M&E plan will be coordinated and implemented by the National Action Plan Implementation Unit, housed at the AAAC. This unit will collect, manage, and analyse data and report progress against targets.

To ensure a robust and inclusive M&E process, the Implementation Unit will work closely with a range of stakeholders who hold relevant data or field-level knowledge. These include:

- Customs Authority – to provide data on plastic imports and product inflows
- Ministry of Commerce and Industry – to track packaging production and compliance with bans or Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)
- Local governments and municipal waste operators – to provide data on collection, disposal, leakage, and infrastructure capacity
- Ministry of Public Health / INASA – for data on health impacts and hygiene risks related to plastic exposure
- Development partners – for technical assistance, independent evaluations, and capacity-building in monitoring approaches
- National Institute of Studies and Research – to support survey design, behavioural data collection, and impact assessments

Structure of Indicators:

Monitoring will be structured using three tiers of indicators:

Tier 1 – National plastic pollution reduction target: A high-level target to reduce plastic pollution compared to a Business as Usual (BaU) scenario. This target will be assessed periodically assessed using tools such as Plastic Drawdown to estimate total leakage to the environment.

Tier 2 – Flow-based indicators: To align with the three main plastic pollution pathways in Guinea-Bissau:

1. Materials escaping the formal waste management system (leaks during collection and transport),
2. Direct releases into the environment (from littering, illegal dumping, or open burning), and
3. Plastics entering surface water and wastewater systems (through drains, informal pipes, and urban runoff).

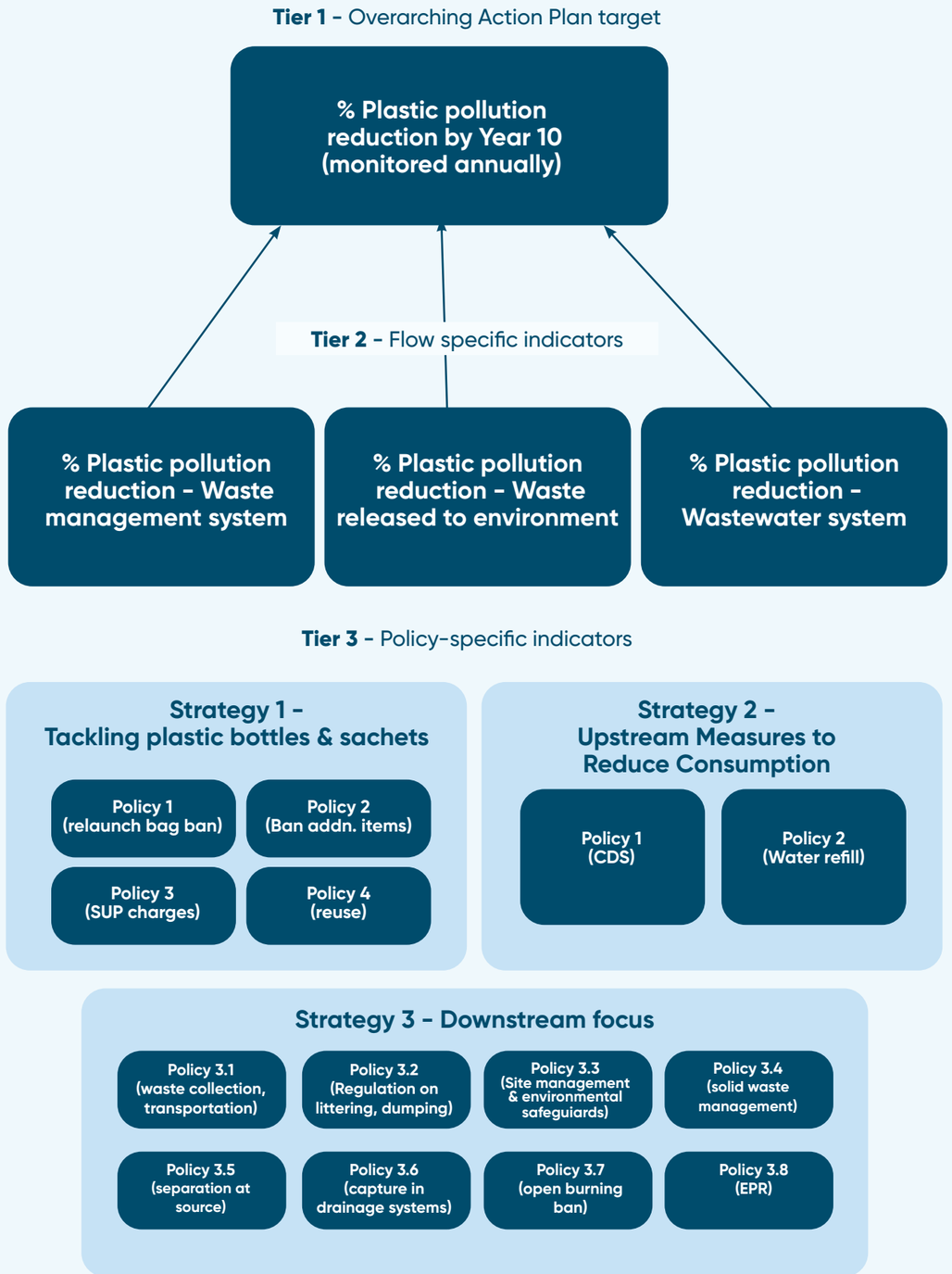
Each flow will be tracked using a combination of waste composition studies, litter surveys and citizen science monitoring, wastewater quality monitoring, and behavioural and infrastructure data.

Tier 3 – Policy implementation indicators: Each policy under the NAP will include specific outputs and outcomes. Indicators will assess implementation progress (e.g. enforcement of bans, roll-out of reuse systems), participation (e.g. uptake by households or businesses), and early outcomes (e.g. changes in plastic waste volumes).

Reporting and Review

The NAP Implementation Unit will produce annual M&E reports, summarising progress across indicators, supported by input from technical partners and ministries. These reports will be submitted to the National Committee to Combat Plastic Pollution, which will provide technical and strategic feedback. A comprehensive review of the National Action Plan will be conducted in year five. Based on findings, the plan will be updated as necessary to remain relevant, evidence-driven, and achievable.

Figure 17:
Suggested targets for monitoring and evaluation arrangements



5.5 Dissemination

Effective dissemination of Guinea-Bissau's National Action Plan (NAP) is essential for its success. A range of stakeholder groups should be meaningfully engaged to raise awareness, build trust, and mobilise action.

Citizens: The public should be informed about the impacts of plastic pollution, the government's planned response, and the role individuals can play. Dissemination will involve community dialogues, media campaigns (radio, social media, local television), informal environmental education and integration into school curricula in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

Engagement with traditional authorities, youth networks (e.g. RENAJ), women, religious leaders, and civil society organisations will ensure broad reach, particularly to rural communities and marginalised groups. Public messaging should be mindful of the impacts on low-income and vulnerable populations, using accessible language and formats.

Private sector: Early and ongoing engagement with the private sector will ensure businesses understand their responsibilities and are supported to transition toward sustainable packaging and circular practices. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in collaboration with local chambers of commerce, will use multiple communication channels, including workshops, trade networks, radio, and direct outreach to ensure businesses of all sizes are included. Particular attention will be given to MSMEs and importers of single-use plastic goods.

Civil society, community-based, and Indigenous organisations: Local NGOs and community organisations such as Tiniguena, Palmeirinha, and ACRA, or the communitarian radio network along with IUCN, will play a key role in communicating the NAP and facilitating grassroots participation. These actors are essential for maintaining public dialogue, reaching marginalised populations, and co-delivering community-based solutions. Continued collaboration will ensure the NAP is responsive to community needs and realities.

Public sector: The Ministry of Environment, through the NAP Implementation Unit, will work with other government departments, municipal authorities, and technical agencies to promote cross-sectoral coordination. Key actors such as the Customs Authority, Ministry of Health, local governments, and waste service providers should be supported to understand and act on their respective roles under the NAP.

Regional and international dissemination: Sharing Guinea-Bissau's experience and progress regionally and globally will contribute to international learning and support implementation of the forthcoming Global Plastics Treaty. Development partners and international NGOs (such as IUCN) can support this through knowledge exchange, South-South cooperation, and regional fora.

5.6 Enabling measures for change

Behaviour change campaign

Tackling plastic pollution will require major changes to the way plastic is used, managed, and valued in Guinea-Bissau. The success of this plan's implementation is heavily dependent on changing behaviours around consumption and disposal of plastics.

A general national awareness campaign should be launched to build public understanding of the scale of the plastic pollution challenge and why it matters for health, biodiversity, and livelihoods. This campaign should provide a unifying narrative, encouraging all sectors of society – households, schools, markets, businesses, and institutions, to see themselves as part of the solution.

Alongside this, each policy intervention within the NAP should be supported by targeted behaviour-change components. These will deliver practical, solution-focused messages (e.g. "return your bottle for deposit," "bring your reusable bag," "separate organics from plastics") designed to make new practices both desirable and achievable.

The Behaviour Change Campaign should be developed during the early implementation phase of the NAP. It should be informed by stakeholder mapping to ensure that different audiences, such as households, informal workers, vendors, and government agencies – receive targeted, culturally appropriate messaging at the right time and in the right way. Public communication should go beyond describing the plastic pollution problem: it should provide practical solutions, repeat key messages, and make behaviour change both desirable and achievable.

In Guinea-Bissau, behaviour change is most effective when rooted in community structures, cultural traditions, and local leadership. Traditional authorities (including Régulos and village elders), religious leaders, and women's associations play a vital role in shaping norms and can act as trusted messengers in their communities.

Culturally grounded methods, such as storytelling, street theatre, drumming, dance, and music are already used in health and civic campaigns and can be powerfully leveraged in the plastic pollution context. The Carnival of Bissau, one of the largest and most celebrated public gatherings in the country, offers an important platform for high-visibility awareness efforts. Environmental messages embedded in the parade themes, costumes, and performances could reach thousands of people, reinforcing key messages in an engaging and inclusive format.

Several local organisations have demonstrated leadership in community engagement and can help drive behaviour change under this plan. These include:

- Palmeirinha, a nationally recognised environmental education organisation affiliated with IUCN, known for its community outreach and youth engagement activities
- Tiniguena, which supports sustainable livelihoods and creative environmental leadership in rural areas
- **REMUME (Rede de Mulheres Mediadoras),** a respected network of women mediators active in conflict resolution, which also engages in awareness and dialogue at the grassroots level
- Rasta Turpesa, a youth movement with social and cultural influence, particularly among urban and coastal youth, known for community solidarity and potential as agents of change
- **ODZH (Organisation for the Defence of Wetlands),** which supports environmental protection initiatives including plastic cleanups and education in ecologically sensitive areas

These groups, alongside others such as Homem Novo, represent a broad base of civil society and grassroots actors that can be mobilised to support awareness efforts, peer education, and local ownership of solutions.

Municipal councils, national and regional government agencies, and development partners will need to work in close coordination with these actors to co-develop and deliver inclusive, well-targeted campaigns. Community-based radio, mobile awareness caravans, school clubs, and informal community meetings in local languages can all be used to reach the diverse populations across Guinea-Bissau's archipelagic and rural geography.

Education and youth action

Children and young people make up a significant portion of Guinea-Bissau's population, approximately 43% are under the age of 15 (UNICEF Guinea-Bissau, 2023). However, only 27% of children complete primary school, with even lower completion rates for girls, rural populations, and poorer communities (World Bank, 2018). These challenges present an urgent need to equip young people with knowledge and skills to engage in social and environmental issues, including plastic pollution.

To support this, an education programme should be designed and implemented to integrate plastic pollution awareness into the school system, giving learners practical tools to become agents of change in their communities. The programme should also support teacher training and involve youth-led outreach in households and neighbourhoods to better reach out-of-school children.

One recent example is the Captain Fanplastic initiative, delivered in partnership with Palmeirinha, a local NGO known for its environmental education work. Supported by the World Bank and the Indian Ocean Commission, the project engaged 15 primary schools across diverse regions including Bissau, Bafatá, Gabú, São Domingos, Buba, and the Bijagós islands (e.g., Bolama, Bubaque, Orango Grande, Canhabaque, Formosa, Uno). Through creative storytelling, classroom modules, and hands-on clean-up actions, the programme reached 1,779 learners (970 boys and 809 girls) between May and June 2023.

Despite its success, the initiative highlighted several challenges, particularly a lack of waste management infrastructure in schools, which limits the effectiveness and longevity of educational interventions. Palmeirinha also noted difficulties in extending awareness beyond the classroom into the wider community, despite efforts via local radio and handcrafted materials.

Another initiative is Bissau Limpu (Menos Resíduos, Mais Oportunidades) currently implemented (2021-2027) under the EU-funded Green and Inclusive Cities programme and led by ACRA in collaboration with RENAJ, Mani Tese, POLIMI, and ISF. This initiative spans five pilot neighbourhoods: Militar, Cuntum, Granja de Pessubé, Bandim, and Belém. With a reach including approximately 1,550 youth (50% young women) across 10 schools, the programme emphasises:

- Environmental education
- Community campaigns (such as cleaning championships)
- Competitions on recycling
- Technical training for municipal staff and waste entrepreneurs

The NAP will build on these experiences by supporting a cohesive national strategy for education and youth leadership. First, plastic pollution and sustainability topics should be integrated into school curricula, starting with pilot modules drawn from Captain Fanplastic's Waste Warrior and Ocean Hero frameworks, and Plastic Clever Schools, a Common Seas flagship programme run in collaboration with Kids Against Plastic. These should be adapted for the Guinea-Bissau context and implemented through trained educators, with the support of local NGOs and school networks. Educational materials should be made available in Portuguese and national languages, ensuring accessibility.

Second, schools should be supported to link their activities with local waste management efforts, such as neighbourhood cleanups and community awareness campaigns. However, current programmes show that waste collection from schools is largely absent. This gap should be addressed by mapping existing practices as part of the baseline, while also piloting models that connect schools to neighbourhood and municipal systems.

Third, youth organisations and CSOs, including RENAJ, Tiniguena, Palmeirinha, and local art collectives should be engaged to co-lead education efforts in both formal and informal learning settings. These partnerships will ensure that girls, out-of-school youth, and students in remote areas are fully included. Community and cultural events should also be used to extend learning into festivals, public gatherings, and social media.

Finally, schools should be supported with infrastructure upgrades, such as bins, signage, and composting tools. These will be introduced in tandem with local collection and recycling initiatives, so that positive habits formed in the classroom can be maintained in practice. A dedicated behaviour change campaign should also be integrated into the roadmap, amplifying education efforts through peer-to-peer outreach, media, and household-level messaging.

> Children and young people make up a significant portion of Guinea-Bissau's population, **approximately 43% are under the age of 15** (UNICEF Guinea-Bissau, 2023).

Tackling socio-economic impacts, and ensuring a just transition

As Guinea-Bissau transitions toward a circular economy, it is essential to ensure that the benefits of change are distributed fairly, and that no group is left behind. Many of the strategies proposed in this plan, such as bans on specific plastic products or formalisation of the waste sector, could create unintended consequences for vulnerable groups. These include women, children, informal waste workers, Indigenous communities, market vendors, and low-income consumers. A just transition requires anticipating these risks and putting in place safeguards, support systems, and participatory processes.

Women

Women in Guinea-Bissau often play key roles in plastic-related value chains, as producers of alternative products, as waste collectors and vendors, and as managers of household waste. However, they face structural barriers, including limited access to land, education, finance, and public decision-making. The implementation should ensure that women's perspectives are central in designing and implementing policies. Support will be provided for female entrepreneurs to enter markets for reusable or biodegradable products, and women's groups will be engaged in awareness and capacity-building activities.

Informal waste sector

The informal waste economy is a major employer in Guinea-Bissau, particularly in urban areas such as Bissau. Visits to the Safim landfill site revealed dangerous and unregulated working conditions, the presence of children, exposure to open waste burning, and the absence of fencing or protective equipment.

Around the world, informal waste workers provide essential services in recovery and recycling, often with limited recognition or protection. Guinea-Bissau is no exception: the informal waste sector plays a vital role in reducing plastic waste, but workers frequently face unsafe conditions and have limited access to rights, services, and decision-making processes. Structural barriers, such as limited access to land, education, finance, and public decision-making further entrench their marginalisation.

To support a just transition to a circular economy under this NAP, actions should include recognition and integration of the essential services of waste pickers, while ensuring fair compensation for their work. Integration efforts should also focus on providing waste pickers with access to capacity development and training, ID registration, and the development of cooperative business models. This approach will help to provide waste pickers with better working conditions, opportunities for advancement in value chains and planning processes, fair remuneration and social protection. This aligns with the priorities of organisations representing waste pickers, including the International Alliance of Waste Pickers and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing & Organizing (WIEGO), and ensures that integration remains supportive, not punitive.

Child protection and education policies must be strictly enforced to ensure children are in schools, not landfills. Improvements to landfill site safety should prioritise the installation of perimeter fencing, the prohibition of open waste burning, and the provision of protective equipment for all workers. In parallel, social protection measures, such as access to healthcare and education should also be promoted.

The NAP will also seek to strengthen the visibility and recognition of waste pickers as environmental stewards through awareness and education campaigns. These efforts will take time, as shifting deep-rooted stigmas and social biases will require sustained engagement with communities, schools, and the wider public. Building recognition and changing perceptions should therefore be pursued gradually, alongside improvements in working conditions and livelihoods.

It will build on lessons from the Bissau Limpu project, which includes training and technical support to informal collectors and the creation of an Inclusive and Participatory Recycling Platform for MSMEs and small waste actors.

Women in Guinea-Bissau often play key roles in plastic-related value chains, as producers of alternative products, as waste collectors and vendors, and as managers of household waste.

Image: iStock (gaborbasch)

> Market vendors, particularly women, rely heavily on cheap, disposable plastic packaging to serve low-income customers.

Indigenous communities

The Bijagós Archipelago, recently recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (July 2025), is home to Guinea-Bissau's most prominent Indigenous communities. These communities rely on coastal ecosystems for food, livelihoods, and cultural continuity. This makes them especially vulnerable to plastic pollution, which damages mangroves, contaminates marine food chains, and interrupts traditional practices.

These same communities maintain strong cultural and economic ties to the environment. Many use traditional materials such as woven baskets, gourds, and palm leaf packaging. However, these communities often lack basic waste services and are disproportionately affected by plastic pollution, which threatens both livelihoods and cultural heritage.

This NAP will ensure that Indigenous communities are fully consulted in programme design and will support the revitalisation of traditional alternatives to plastic. Cultural knowledge and natural-fibre products should be recognised as valuable assets in building a circular economy. At the same time, illegal dumping in ecologically sensitive Indigenous territories should be monitored and addressed as a priority.

Market vendors

Markets such as Bandim in Bissau are economic lifelines for many families. However, the use of single-use sachets and thin plastic packaging is widespread and used to sell small quantities of daily essentials such as cooking oil, cold drinks, rice, and spices.

Market vendors, particularly women, rely heavily on cheap, disposable plastic packaging to serve low-income customers. These vendors are vulnerable to disruptions caused by bans or levies, especially if affordable alternatives are unavailable. To support a fair transition, vendors should be engaged early in the policy process and supported through training, information, and pilot schemes. Innovations such as discount systems for reusable containers and partnerships with local producers of biodegradable packaging should be explored.

Low-income consumers

Plastic sachets, single-use containers, and bottled water offer convenience at a low sticker price, which makes them appealing for low-income consumers in Guinea-Bissau who have low weekly earnings and therefore typically purchase goods in small quantities daily. However, these items come with long-term environmental costs. Bans or charges on such products should therefore be introduced gradually, with grace periods and awareness campaigns to ease the transition. Community feedback mechanisms will help ensure interventions reflect lived realities. Affordable alternatives should be made available through schools, markets, and cooperatives, alongside support for reuse models such as container return schemes. Engaging community leaders in co-designing solutions will be key to ensuring uptake and equity.

Environmental justice and inclusive governance

To ensure the NAP advances environmental justice, a community-led research process should be undertaken to better understand how plastic pollution affects health, education, gender equality, and livelihoods, particularly within marginalised communities. The design of policies should be participatory, involving youth networks such as RENAJ, women's associations, Indigenous leaders, informal sector workers, and NGOs such as Palmeirinha, Tiniguena, and ACRA. Training and capacity-building should be provided to both government officials and grassroots actors to address power imbalances and support sustained collaboration. Public education campaigns should also recognise and celebrate the vital role of waste pickers and Indigenous communities as frontline defenders of environmental health and champions of circular practices.

Final remarks

This National Action Plan sets out a bold and optimistic vision for Guinea-Bissau to tackle plastic pollution over the next decade. It provides a clear and practical roadmap for reducing plastic waste, at a time when countries around the world are striving to build more sustainable, resilient economies.

The plan reflects Guinea-Bissau's ambition to protect its unique biodiversity, safeguard public health, and ensure the wellbeing of its people through a just and inclusive transition. It recognises the importance of protecting the blue economy, preserving the health of oceans, rivers, and mangrove ecosystems that support livelihoods, food security, and climate resilience, while contributing to the global effort to deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

By implementing the three priority strategies outlined in this Plan, Guinea-Bissau has the potential to reduce plastic pollution by 79% by 2035. Achieving this will require coordinated and inclusive governance, upstream and downstream measures, and sustained engagement from all sectors of society.

This plan is the result of collective action by government, civil society, private sector, and development partners, brought together by Common Seas and funded by the UK's Sustainable Blue Economies Programme. It is grounded in data, informed by local realities, and driven by a shared vision of change.

Guinea-Bissau now joins other nations in demonstrating leadership toward a global solution to plastic pollution, aligning national priorities with regional and international commitments, including the future Global Plastics Treaty.

The path forward will require political will and investment, but the cost of inaction is far greater. Decisive action today will lead to a cleaner environment, stronger communities, and a more peaceful, just, and prosperous future for all Bissau-Guineans.

This plan marks a turning point in Guinea-Bissau's journey to end plastic pollution – an expression of commitment to leave a lasting legacy of opportunity and dignity for future generations.

Image: iStock (EyeEm Mobile GmbH)

Acknowledgements

Common Seas CIC
Ministry of Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Action
With support from **Jean-Louis Sanka** from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Guinea-Bissau and **Dr Welena da Silva**, Director General, Competent Environmental Assessment Authority (AAAC) in Guinea-Bissau

Technical Steering Committee

Ernesto Higino Correia,
National Civil Society Movement for Peace and Development

Fred Fernando Cabi,
General Environmental Inspection

Natenaram R. A. Cabral,
National Maritime and Port Institute

Tumbalo G. Bamba,
Institute of Biodiversity and Protected Areas

Julio Agostinho Gomes Sumhap,
Coastal Planning Office

Flavien F. Nanque,
National Institute of Studies and Research

Cristina Lopes Falcão,
Competent Environmental Assessment Authority

Ramalho Cubaba,
General Directorate of Territorial Planning

William N. Ialá,
General Directorate of Water Resources

Osvaldina da Silva,
General Inspectorate of Territorial Administration

Per Infali Cassamá,
Waste and Chemical Products Center

Wilsa da Silva,
Directorate of Environmental Health and Public Hygiene services – Ministry of Health

Fernando Gomes Intchama,
National Institute of Public Health (INASA)

Grezelena Silva,
Directorate-General for Forests and Wildlife

UK International Development

This work was supported by funding from the UK Government through UK International Development.

Common Seas is partnering with five Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to develop National Action Plans to tackle plastic pollution. This critical funding allows us to develop and scale an approach tailored to the unique challenges and needs of SIDS, which are disproportionately affected by the plastic crisis.

The project supports partner governments to radically reduce ocean plastic in their countries over the course of ten years and contribute to a sustainable blue economy.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the UK government's official policies.

For more information, please visit: sbe-platform.org.uk/about#sbe-programme

Image sourcing:
Unless otherwise stated, all photos have been sourced from stock image websites and have been credited where required. Images sourced from: iStock.com, Unsplash.com, Pexels.com, Envato.com.

Company No.: 08524506

Image: iStock (Tiago_Fernandez)

References

Adams, I., et al. (2020). Policies to reduce single-use plastic marine pollution in West Africa. Marine Policy, 116, 103928. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2020.103928

Anokye, K., et al. (2024). A systematic review of the impacts of open burning and open dumping of waste in Ghana: A way forward for sustainable waste management. Cleaner Waste Systems, 8, 1000152. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clwas.2024.100152

Chavance, P. (2004). Towards reconstructing half a century of change in West African fisheries. pp. 113-132 In Chavance P, Ba M, Gascuel D, Vakily JM and Pauly D (eds.), Pêcheries maritimes, écosystèmes et societés en Afrique de l'ouest. Un demi-siècle de changement. Actes du symposium international Dakar — Sénégal — 24-28 juin 2002. Collection des Rapports de recherche halieutique ACP-UE 15 (1) Bruxelles.

City to Sea. (2024). The EU is banning single-use plasitc in cafes. It's our #TIMETOKETCHUP. Retrieved from https://www.citytosea.org.uk/single-use-plastic-ban-in-dine-in-settings/

Civancik-Uslu, D., Puig, R., Hauschild, M., & Fullana-i-Palmer, P. (2019). Science of the Total Environment, 685, 621-630. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2019.05.372

Consumer Goods Forum. (2025). Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for Packaging: Design and implementation in low-and-middle-income countries. Retrieved from https://www.theconsumergoodsforum.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/EPR-for-Packaging-in-Low-and-Middle-Income-Countries-2025.pdf

Diop, E.S. (2010). Guinea Bissau. In: Bird, E.C.F. (eds) Encyclopedia of the World's Coastal Landforms. Springer, Dordrecht. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/rwe/10.1007/978-1-4020-8639-7_164

Eunomia. (2024). Researching a Deposit Return System for South Africa. Retrieved from: https://eunomia.eco/insights/researching-a-deposit-return-system-for-south-africa/#:~:text=New%20research%20by%20Eunomia%20and,feedback%20on%20DRS%20design%20options.

Homonoff, T. (2018). Can Small Incentives Have Large Effects? The Impact of Taxes Versus Bonuses on Disposable Bag Use. American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, 10, (4), 177-210. Retrieved from: https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/pol.20150261

Intchama, J., Belhabib, D., & Jumpe, R. (2018). Assessing Guinea-Bissau's legal and illegal unreported and unregulated fisheries and the surveillance efforts to tackle them. Sec. Marine Fisheries, Aquaculture and Living Resources, 5. https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2018.00079

IOC SWIOFish2/AIODIS project. (2021). Prevention, Reduction and Control of Marine Plastic Pollution in African and Indian Ocean Developing Island States (AIODIS). Retrieved from https://www.commissionoceanindien.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Report3_Reduction-of-MPP_EN-FINAL.pdf

IOC. (2023). Plastic Pollution in African and Indian Ocean Developing Island States (AIODIS). Retrieved from https://www.commissionoceanindien.org/en/prevention-reduction-and-control-of-marine-plastic-pollution-in-african-and-indian-ocean-developing-island-states-aiodis/

International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN). (2024). Plastic and Gender: Exploring the intersection. Retrieved from https://ipen.org/news/plastic-and-gender-exploring-intersection

ISS African Futures & AUDA-NEPAD. (2024). Guinea-Bissau. Retrieved from https://futures.issafrica.org/geographic/countries/guinea-bissau/

Muposhi, A., Mpinganjira, M., & Wait, M. (2021). Considerations, benefits and unintended consequences of banning plastic shopping bags for environmental sustainability: a systematic literature review. Waste Management Resources, 20, 40(3): 248-261. https://doi.org/10.1177/0734242X211003965

Nantungey, F., & Kharlamova, M.D. (2024). Analysis of the MSW Management System in Bissau, Republic of Guinea-Bissau, in Light of Sustainable Development Goals. RUDN Journal of Ecology and Life Safety, 32, (4), 385-399. Retrieved from: https://journals.rudn.ru/ecology/article/view/42520#:~:text=Based%20on%20the%20analysis%2C%20facts,the%20city%20council%20of%20Bissau.

Nielsen TD, Holmberg K, Stripple, J. (2019). Need a bag? A review of public policies on plastic carrier bags: Where, how and to what effect? Waste Management, 87: 428–440. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wasman.2019.02.025

Ocean Conservancy. (2023). What is a Nurdle? Retrieved from https://oceanconservancy.org/blog/2023/08/10/what-nurdle/

OECD. (2021). Preventing single-use plastic waste: Implications of different policy approaches. OECD Environment Working Papers No. 182. Retrieved from: https://www.actu-environnement.com/media/pdf/news-38416-rapport-plastiques-ocde.pdf

Olugbode, M. (2025). Digital Marketplace for Waste. In This Day Newspaper. Retrieved from https://www.thisdaylive.com/2025/06/03/circular-economy-nesrea-set-to-unveil-digital-marketplace-for-waste/

Osman, A.I., Farrell, C., Al-Muhtaseb, A.H. et al. (2020). Pyrolysis kinetic modelling of abundant plastic waste (PET) and in-situ emission monitoring. Environ Sci Eur 32, 112. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-020-00390-x

Papp, A., & Oremus, K. (2025). Plastic bag bans and fees reduce harmful bag litter on shorelines. Environmental Policy, 388, 6753. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adp9274

UNEP. (2023). Nigeria turns the tide on electronic waste. Retrieved from https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/nigeria-turns-tide-electronic-waste

UNEP. (2023). The rarely told story of the widely used water sachets. Retrieved from https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/rarely-told-story-widely-used-water-sachets

UNEP. (2018). Legal limits on single-use plastic and microplastics: A global review of national laws and regulations. Retrieved from: https://globalplasticshub.org/technical-resource/10476

UNEP. (n.d.). Fashion's tiny hidden secret. Retrieved from https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/fashions-tiny-hidden-secret#:~:text=About%2060%20per%20cent%20of,to%20five%20millimetres%20in%20size.

UN-Habitat, Bissau City Council & African Clean Cities Platform. (2025). Waste Wise Cities Tool: Application in Bissau, Guinea-Bissau. Final Report: February 2025.

UN-HROHC (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner). (2025). Guinea Bissau must urgently prioritise water and sanitation, says Special Rapporteur. Retrieved from https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/03/guinea-bissau-must-urgently-prioritise-water-and-sanitation-says-special#:~:text=GENEVA%20%E2%80%93%20The%20Government%20of%20Guinea,must%20be%20a%20top%20priority.

Velis, C., & Cook, E. (2021). Mismanagement of plastic waste through open burning with emphasis on the Global South: A systematic review of risks to occupational and public health. Environmental Science & Technology, 55, 11, 7186-7207. https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.est.0c08536

Went, A., et al. (2021). Are children in female-headed households at a disadvantage? An analysis of immunization coverage and stunting prevalence: in 95 low-and middle-income households. SSM Population Health, 15:100888. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100888

WHO. (2024). Guinea-Bissau – Health data overview for the Republic of Guinea-Bissau. Retrieved from https://data.who.int/countries/624#:~:text=Overall%20Population%20over%20time&text=In%20Guinea%2DBissau%2C%20the%20current,60%25%20to%203%2C438%2C608%20by%202050.

World Bank. (2018). International Development Association Project Appraisal Document on Proposed Grants from the International Development Association in the Amount of SDR 7.5 Million and From the Global Partnership for Education Fund in the Amount of US$4.3 Million to the Republic of Guinea-Bissau to the Republic of Guinea-Bissau For the Quality Education For All Project. Retrieved from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/752911533267062349/pdf/GUINEA-BISSAU-PAD-07122018.pdf

World Bank. (2019). Guinea-Bissau – Rural Transport Project (P161923): Combined Project Information Documents/ Integrated Safeguards Datasheet (PID/ISDS). Retrieved from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/187711554511321590/Project-Information-Document-Integrated-Safeguards-Data-Sheet-Guinea-Bissau-Rural-Transport-Project-P161923.docx

World Bank. (2020). Strengthening Capacity of Country System for Environmental and Social Management – Guinea-Bissau. Retrieved from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/214021577680568163/pdf/Guinea-Bissau-Strengthening-Capacity-of-Country-System-for-Environmental-and-Social-Management.pdf

World Bank. (2023a). Senegal: National overview of plastics life cycle, governance, and initiatives. Retrieved from https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e4843623ab084ce3875aa08618ce1885

World Bank. (2023b). Systematic Country Diagnostic Update for Guinea-Bissau: Addressing fragility for sustained poverty reduction and shared prosperity. Retrieved from https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099110323163018763/bosib0f7d3f3e401e0a2a3015c9e962aff5

World Bank. (2023c). Escaping the Low-Growth Trap: Guinea-Bissau Country Economic Memorandum. Retrieved from https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/473261604385132681/pdf/Guinea-Bissau-Country-Economic-Memorandum-Escaping-the-Low-Growth-Trap.pdf

World Bank. (2024). Guinea-Bissau: World Bank Group Country Climate and Development Report. Retrieved from https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/guineabissau/publication/guinea-bissau-country-climate-and-development-report

World Population Review. (2025). Guinea-Bissau Cities by Population 2025. Retrieved from https://worldpopulationreview.com/cities/guinea-bissau

WWF. (2021). Plastics: The cost to society, environment and the economy. Retrieved from https://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/press_releases/?3507866/These-costs-for-plastic-produced-in-2040-will-rise-to-US71-trillion-unless-urgent-action-is-taken

UNICEF. (2023). Guinea-Bissau Building a better future for the children of GUINEA-BISSAU. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/guineabissau/media/3201/file/Unicef%20Guinea-Bissau%20Annual%20Report%202023.pdf

Appendices

Appendix A Plastic policies & regulations

Presently, no overarching laws pertaining to plastic waste management exist in Guinea-Bissau (World Bank, 2023). However, in 2013 the government enacted a ban on the use, manufacture, importation and sale of plastic bags through Decree Law 16/2013.50.

There are also other environmental laws in Guinea-Bissau that broadly relate to waste management, which are outlined in the table below which has been adapted from the World Bank's (2023) *Strengthening Capacity of County System for Environmental and Social Management – Guinea-Bissau, report.*

Table A.0.1

Subject	Laws and decrees	Notes
Environmental Management Plan	Decree nº 3/2004, approving the National Environmental Plan	This Decree approved the National Environmental Management Plan and National Strategy and Action Plan for the Conservation of Biodiversity. It aims to contribute to the country's sustainable socio-economic development, and to support the search for solutions to guarantee food security, eradicate poverty, and control pollution, among other challenges.
Environmental Framework Law	Law nº 1/2011, 2nd of March	This law establishes the legal basis for sustainable environmental use and management – including provisions for solid waste management and energy generation from solid waste – promoting the protection, preservation, and conservation of the environment. It defines key concepts, principles, and policies related to environmental management. The law also establishes an Environmental Fund to support environmental protection initiatives.
Environmental Fund	Decree nº 6/2017, 28th of June	A fund created to promote the protection of national natural resources and the environment, dedicated to promote policies, plans, programmes, projects and other activities aimed at the protection, conservation and preservation of natural and environmental resources. This Fund also includes those activities aimed at preventing or rehabilitating damages produced in the environment, and contributing to national sustainable development.
Environmental Inspection	Decree nº 10/2017, 28th of June	Defines the procedures for Environmental Inspection, sanctions, fines, among others. This would include assessing and enforcing regulations related to waste disposal and handling.
Protected Areas Law	Decree-law nº 5A/2011, 1st of March	While the Protected Areas Law in Guinea-Bissau does not explicitly discuss waste management, it is part of a broader legal framework that aims to protect and conserve the environment, including its biodiversity and natural resources. It defines the protection of fauna, flora and ecosystems inside protected areas.

In recent years, the Government of Guinea-Bissau has also demonstrated political will and commitment to environmental protection and nature conservation by signing and ratifying international conventions and protocols (World Bank, 2020). Those most related to plastic waste management include:

- The Convention for the Cooperation in the Protection and Development of Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region – Abidjan Convention, which they ratified in 2011.
- The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, which they ratified in 2005; and
- The Rotterdam Convention on Trade in Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides, which they ratified in 2008.

The Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdictions Agreement (High Seas Treaty) – ratified by Guinea-Bissau on 9th June 2025, and which will come into effect on January 17th 2026.

Guinea-Bissau has also identified key marine and terrestrial ecosystems as vital to the country's development strategy, granting legal protection to 26% of its territory by designating these areas as protected zones for nature conservation (ibid.).

Appendix B The Plastic Drawdown tool

The Plastic Drawdown tool considers the flow of plastic waste throughout a country. The overall flow diagram which represents the model is very large. The following sequential figures break down the structure of the model to guide a new user through it.

Figure B.0.1:
High-level diagram of the Plastic Drawdown tool

Figure B.0.2:
Components of the main Managed Waste flow (outlined in green)

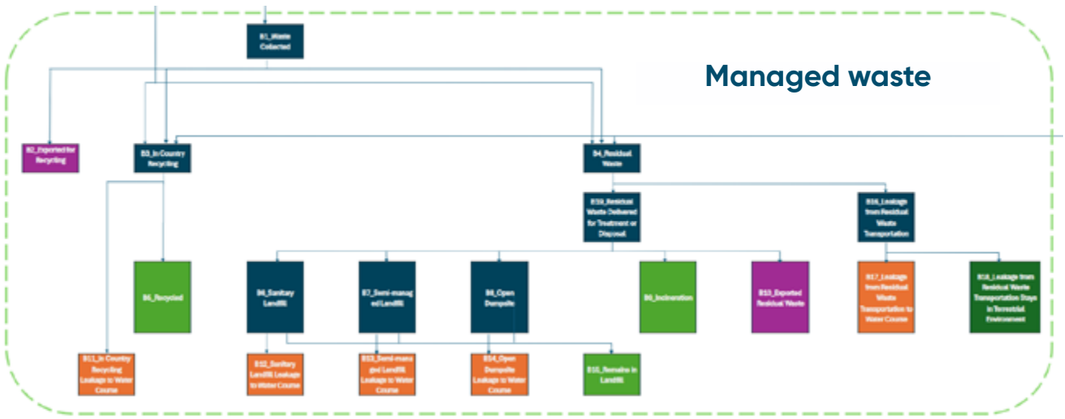


Figure B.0.3:
Components of the main Mis-managed Waste flow (outlined in blue)

Figure B.0.4:
Detailed Surface Water Drain flow (which links to 'D1' in the Mismanaged Waste flow outlined in blue)

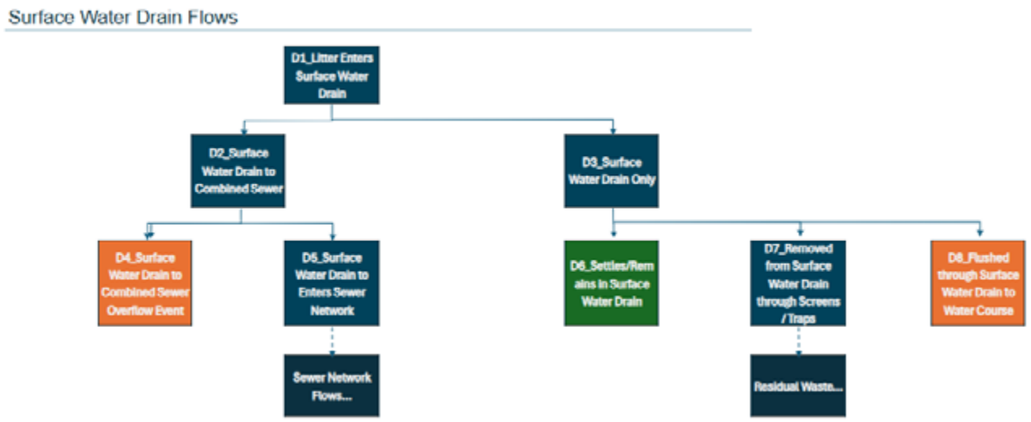


Figure B.0.5:
Detailed Building Waste Pipe flow (which links to 'C3' in the Mismanaged Waste flow outlined in blue)

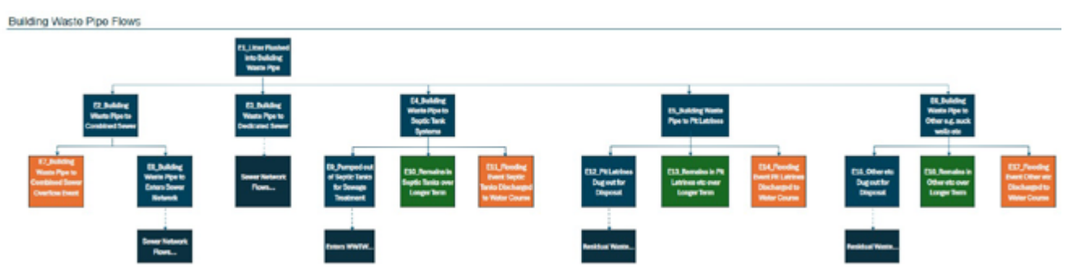
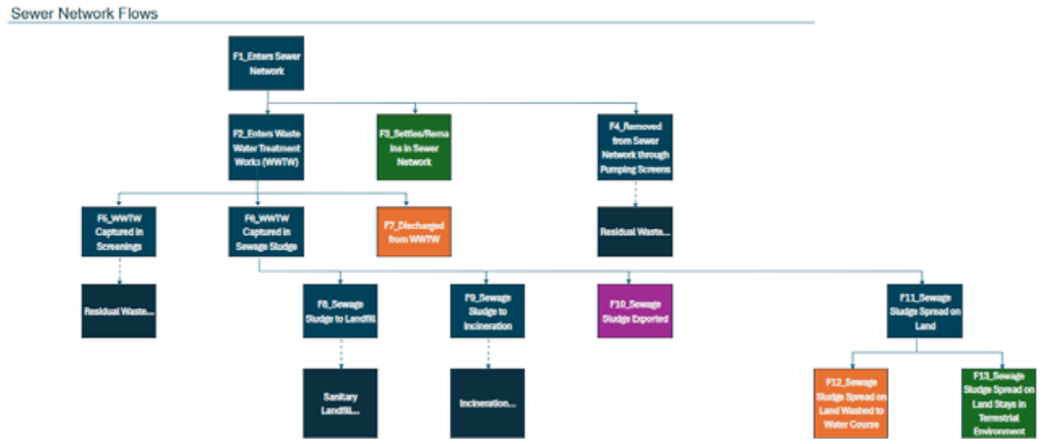


Figure B.0.6:
Detailed Sewer Network flow (which has inputs from both the Building Waste Pipe flow & Surface Water Drain flow)



Appendix C: Plastic item generation

Item or grouping	2024
Beverage Bottles (Plastic) >500ml	1,098
Beverage Bottles (Plastic) <500ml	969
Other Plastic Bottles (oil, bleach, etc.)	1,034
Bottle Caps (Plastic)	210
Lids (Plastic)	65
Take Out/Away Containers (Foam)	69
Take Out/Away Containers (Plastic)	136
Single serve sachets (food)	335
Single serve sachets (non-food)	1,967
Food Wrappers (candy, chips, etc.)	375
Other Plastic Bags	640
Grocery Bags (Plastic)	730
Straws, Stirrers	59
Cups, Plates (Plastic)	196
Forks, Knives, Spoons	97
Cups, Plates (Foam)	86
Diapers	1
Condoms	5
Wet wipes	2
Sanitary pads	1
Cigarette Butts	31
Balloons	2
Fishing gear	64

Appendix D: Plastic item ocean leakage

Item or grouping	2024 (tonnees)
Beverage Bottles (Plastic) >500ml	437.5
Beverage Bottles (Plastic) <500ml	386.0
Other Plastic Bottles (oil, bleach, etc.)	412.2
Bottle Caps (Plastic)	83.7
Lids (Plastic)	25.8
Take Out/Away Containers (Foam)	27.5
Take Out/Away Containers (Plastic)	54.1
Single serve sachets (food)	133.5
Single serve sachets (non-food)	935.9
Food Wrappers (candy, chips, etc.)	149.5
Other Plastic Bags	255.2
Grocery Bags (Plastic)	291.1
Straws, Stirrers	23.6
Cups, Plates (Plastic)	78.1
Forks, Knives, Spoons	38.6
Cups, Plates (Foam)	34.3
Diapers	0.5
Condoms	2.3
Wet wipes	0.9
Sanitary pads	0.5
Cigarette Butts	12.3
Balloons	0.7
Fishing gear	21.8

Image: iStock (Tiago_Hernandez)

Common Seas

UK International Development
Partnership | Progress | Prosperity

GOVERNO DA GUINÉ BISSAU
MINISTÉRIO DO AMBIENTE, BIODIVERSIDADE E AÇÃO CLIMÁTICA