

GOVERNING PLASTICS NETWORK - POLICY BRIEF

COUNTRY: Jamaica

Date of presentation:

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Presented to:

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Project Information

The Governing Plastics Network is a project jointly created by the University of Nairobi in Kenya and the University of Surrey in the UK.

Funding partners: UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and the UKRI/GCRF, AHRC, EPSRC and UGPN.

Project Objectives: To help national partners to improve plastic pollution governance by identifying best practices on communication strategies and governance structures.

Key activities: 1) Map key national stakeholders and identify the most influential. 2) Analyse key stakeholder communication strategies and how they have affected the country's governance. 3) Analyse the country's governance frameworks relating to single use plastic and identify opportunities for improvement.

Global Project Results

Diagnostic: Despite the advanced legal frameworks in single use plastic there are two main implementation problems: 1) Cultural adherence 2) Law enforcement.

Successful cases: The project identified two types of campaigns that work well: 1) National/regional entrepreneurs that have become key plastic celebrities; 2) international NGOs that define local/global messages focused on refusing plastics and promoting alternative entrepreneurship ideas.

Implications for policy and recommendations:

- Establish a network of key plastic ambassadors (including NGOs and key entrepreneurs)
- Work on local but unified messages related to refusing plastics, promoting a shift to a circular economy and the possibilities of using alternatives to plastics.
- Support key symbolic material: involve civil society and artist in creating a new anti-plastic symbology.

National Project Results

Diagnostic:

Most of the work on plastic waste to date has focused on assessing and mapping impacts and remedial activities such as beach clean-ups, which are important but do not address the supply chain nor attempt to understand the attitude and behaviour of the end consumer. The problem will only be resolved by changing behaviour to eliminate non-essential use of plastics and switch to less harmful alternatives, especially for Single Use Plastic (SUP) which makes a disproportionate contribution to plastic waste. None of the previous initiatives in Jamaica involved any attempt to understand the attitudes and beliefs regarding plastic. For example, there are quite widely-held beliefs in Jamaica about food contamination and poisoning that reinforce the view that plastic wrapping is the best way to keep food clean and that pre-packaged items are safer (especially where children are concerned)

The Jamaica study therefore examined the attitudes and behaviour of teachers and parents/guardians in four school communities as a step towards building collective ownership of SUP towards reducing the use of SUP.

The study established baseline knowledge about attitudes and behaviour in four Jamaican primary schools. It examined the attitude of teachers and parents towards SUPs and used cluster analysis to segment them based on attitude. The results identified the heterogeneous nature of groups within the same population and highlighted the need for behavioural change interventions tailored to these groups. This research contributes towards the design of strategic interventions that will build a sense of collective ownership of the SUP problem and motivate effective changes in behaviour to minimise the use of SUPs in Jamaica

Successful cases:

1. Wisynco

A private company and major player in the manufacturing sector being the country's leading manufacturer and distributor of Styrofoam and plastic straws. As a responsible corporate citizen, Wisynco, through its Wisynco Eco arm has continuously promoted recycling in Jamaica. Since its inception in 2016 Wisynco Eco has worked to heighten the public's awareness and support of recycling with a focus on what to recycle, where to recycle and the importance of recycling. Since its inception, the company annually engages over 200,000 persons and collected over 40 million bottles. It does so through four primary activities which target different categories of the population:

- a. **Eco Troopers:** Guided by the principle that change should first begin within, the company established Eco

Troopers, who are staff volunteers, who are not only innovators in their work lives but also committed to the environment. Internally, they lead the charge to increase environmental awareness among staff members both at work and at home. Within the local communities, the Eco Troopers lead recycling initiatives at beach clean-ups and help communities and customers to establish recycling facilities in their local areas. Local press coverage of the Troopers at work can be seen here: [Wisynco's ECO Troopers on recycle mission | News | Jamaica Gleaner \(jamaica-gleaner.com\)](#)

- b. **Eco Club:** The aim of this program is to increase awareness and actions towards recycling and plastic bottle recovery in local schools. It is designed to inform students about recycling/waste management best practices, support environmental awareness in the schools and surrounding communities and create fun and exciting ways for students, teachers and the community to recycle. An example of this program can be seen here [Wisynco ECO and AISK partner to launch recycle cage | Loop Jamaica \(loopnews.com\)](#)
- c. **Recycle Me:** This initiative focuses on highlighting the multiple uses of plastic once it is recovered. This focuses on the need to create a closed loop for plastic and encourages the return of plastic to convenient locations during National Environment Awareness Week, which is held annually during the first week of June. The company's communication strategy included images as can be seen here: <https://www.facebook.com/Wisynco/photos/recycle-with-us-and-get-rewards-join-the-recycleme-team-with-your-plastics-this-10155115045147183/>; https://www.facebook.com/Wisynco/photos/recycle-with-us-and-get-rewards-join-the-recycleme-team-with-your-plastics-this-10155076193312183
- d. **Recycle Challenge:** This challenge targeted corporate entities as a way of increasing their awareness and assisting them to become more mindful about the environment and deliberate about recycling. This is done through staff engagement, sensitization, and collections incentives, which could ultimately lead to the formation of new habits. The launch of this challenge was covered by the local press here: [Wisynco promotes recycling | News | Jamaica Gleaner \(jamaica-gleaner.com\)](#)

2. **Senator Matthew Samuda:** Senator Samuda is an advocate for environmental sustainability who launched a campaign that led to the introduction of Jamaica's plastic ban which took effect on January 1, 2019. The legislative process which Mr. Samuda tool, began three years prior when on October 7, 2016, the Senate approved

a private member's motion by Mr. Samuda which proposed a ban on the use of Styrofoam containers and plastic bags locally. This culminated in the Trade (Plastic Packaging Materials Prohibition) Order of 2018 and The Natural Resources Conservation Authority (Plastic Packaging Materials Prohibition) Order of 2018.

The ban is on the importation, manufacture, distribution and use of single-use plastic bags; expanded polystyrene foam (Styrofoam); and plastic drinking straws. The first phase took effect in January 2019 and focused primarily on reducing the importation of these items.

The second phase took effect on January 1, 2020 and expanded to include a complete ban on Styrofoam. The third phase addressed the importation of plastic straws attached to juice boxes and drink pouches and took effect this year (2021). A Forbes interview with Mr. Samuda about the process can be found here [Banning Plastic: How Jamaica Moved To Save Its Environment \(forbes.com\)](https://www.forbes.com)

The introduction of the ban had the following positive results:

- Some plastic bag manufacturers switched to making paper bags or products that are outside of the banned criteria. Some textile companies started the manufacture of reusable bags, for example, Crimson Dawn Manufacturing.
- The formal trade has completely switched from the use of Styrofoam boxes and straws.
- The implementation of a Deposit Refund Scheme (DRS) through Recycling Partners of Jamaica. The goal is to achieve a 33% recovery rate of Polyethylene terephthalate (PET) and High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) bottles in 2021.

Implications for policy and recommendations:

- Building collective ownership to solve the problem of SUP pollution requires all the stakeholders to play their part; which demands an understanding of the groups involved. The Jamaican study highlighted the heterogeneous nature of groups in the same small communities in very similar environments, and thereby underscored the need for responses that are carefully tailored. There has to be a conscious and organised integration of attitudinal variables into the analysis and formulation of policy initiatives.
- While there is on-going research, and policy and legislative mechanisms are being introduced, there is very little empirical evidence on the attitudes and behaviours of the population towards SUPs and even less among the school population, which is an important contributor to plastic pollution. Given how much SUPs waste is

produced in schools, particularly as food and beverage cartons, packages and wraps, straws and plastic cutlery, this particular group should not be ignored. It is not just that school snacks and meals are a major source of SUP pollution, it is also important to see children as major change agents in society, partly because both good and bad patterns of behaviour tend to be formed at school, and partly because many children are more environmentally aware than their parents and may influence their family to change.

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