

REINFORCING THE FIGHT AGAINST PLASTIC POLLUTION IN SENEGAL

PRACTICAL LEVERS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE LEGISLATION

FRONT: OBSERVATIONS AND URGENCY

- **An ongoing emergency in Senegal**

Despite the 2020 law, single-use plastics remain omnipresent, with recycling rates only reaching 10-15%.

- **An ambitious, but poorly enforced law**

Some decrees missing, insufficient monitoring, inaccessible alternatives and a disconnect with the informal sector limit its efficacy.

KEY FACTS

- **Proven African solutions exist**

Rwanda, Kenya and South Africa clearly show that a gradual and inclusive approach works.

- **5 priority levers for Senegal**

Effective application of the law, strengthened controls, local alternatives and citizen mobilization.

250 000 tons

of plastic waste per year

Only 10-15 %

recycled

5 million

plastic bags per day

Single-use plastics in senegal: an ambitious law whose application needs rebuilding

THE PLASTIC EMERGENCY IN SENEGAL

5 million plastic bags are used every day in Senegal.

Up to 250,000 tons of plastic waste are generated every year, of which less than 15% is recycled.

Despite the 2020 law banning single-use plastic, it continues to invade Senegal's streets, markets, beaches and ecosystems. The challenge is no longer to ban more, but to enforce better, using tools that suit the reality of Senegal...

WHY THE 2020 LAW IS NOT ENOUGH

The 2020 plastics law in Senegal marked major progress in the fight against plastic pollution, through its ban on single-use plastic, the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), deposits on bottles, taxation and a ban on the import and export of plastic waste. However, 5 years later, its impact on the ground is still limited.

FOCUS

INFORMAL WASTE COLLECTORS: AN INVISIBLE PILLAR OF PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT

In Senegal, the collection and sorting of plastic waste relies heavily on informal collectors, who are key, but unrecognised, players in the chain.

- They ensure the collection, sorting and re-sale of recyclable plastics.
- Their work is precarious and lacks both legal status and social protection.
- Their contribution remains invisible in official statistics, even though they are the primary link in recycling.
- Ignoring these actors is to undermine any plastics policy.
- Integrating them, however, especially in consultations, is a lever for environmental, social and economic efficacy

Key obstacles identified:

- **Bans only partially enforced**

→ Local manufacture (of water sachets and packaging) is still permitted.

- **Decrees for enforcement are missing**

→ EPR, bottle deposits and the obligation to integrate recycling content for packaging have never been made operational.

- **Insufficient and poorly equipped monitoring**

→ Lack of human resources, technical tools and institutional coordination.

- **Lack of affordable local alternatives**

→ Imported solutions that are costly for retailers.

- **Low public awareness**

→ Lack of public knowledge about the environmental and health challenges of plastics.

5 PRIORITIES FOR STRENGTHENING PLASTICS LEGISLATION

1. Moving from theoretical to effective enforcement

- Publish, without delay, the missing decrees for enforcement.
 - Introduce clear moratoria and transition periods.
- ▶ Lesson from Rwanda/Kenya: clarity and progressive enforcement strengthen adherence.

2. Strengthen control where it matters

- Increase the number of enforcement agencies (customs, police, local authorities, etc.).
 - Target strategic entry points (borders, ports, markets). Forbid the use of single-use plastics in protected areas (parks, beaches).
- ▶ Lesson from Rwanda/Kenya: visible controls + sanctions applied = dissuasive effect.

FOCUS

WATER SACHETS: A SOCIAL, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE

In Senegal, drinking water is widely consumed from plastic sachets, which are cheaper than bottles and readily available, especially for low-income urban populations.

- 7,000 tons of water sachets are produced annually.
- Almost all of them end up in the environment due to a lack of appropriate collection systems.
- Introducing a ban without any immediate alternative would pose a major social and health risk.

→ **Any effective plastics policy in Senegal must therefore specifically address the problem of water sachets, as well as providing access to water, an ecological transition and economic support**

- Raise public awareness of the economic and ecological benefits of re-usable water bottles
- Promote re-usable water bottles at capped prices
- Deploy public water fountains and mobile refilling points using large, returnable bottles
- Retraining of water-sachet sellers for employment at re-filling points

3. Deploy progressive and incentivised Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

- Launch a period of voluntary EPR, prior to making it mandatory.
 - Register all producers and impose a six-monthly declaration of flows.
 - Fully integrate the informal waste collectors:
 - legal recognition
 - minimum prices on the plastic waste they sell
 - digital tools (e.g. BanQu)
 - professional development fund financed by the EPR
 - Integrate plastic credits as a complementary mechanism to EPR:
 - financing for certified collection and recycling projects
 - support for the local economy
- ▶ Lesson from South Africa: EPR provides sustainable structure to the recycling chain.
- ▶ Lesson from Kenya: economic instruments are more effective when they leverage private finance and empower local stakeholders on the ground.

4. Develop local, accessible and affordable alternatives

- Tax exemptions for manufacturing equipment.
 - Subsidized access to industrial zones.
 - Price caps imposed on alternatives.
- ▶ Lesson from Rwanda: active support for alternatives and support for economic stakeholders encourages rapid transition to plastic-free products.

5. Anchor sustainable cultural change

- Create a citizens' monthly Day of the Environment, inspired by the Umuganda.
 - Multi-media awareness building:
 - community radios
 - street theatre
 - social media, with implication of artists and influencers
- Greater environmental education at school from the earliest years.
- Lesson from Rwanda and South Africa: intensive and ongoing community awareness-building activities provide fertile ground for the effective enforcement of environmental legislation.

FROM FIGHTING PLASTIC TO CREATING VALUE

Effectively fighting the employment of single-use plastic is a strategic investment that yields practical benefits: better quality of life, local job creation and strengthened resilience for the country.

Environment

- Less plastic waste in the cities, rivers and oceans
- Less flooding, more fertile soil and protection of biodiversity on the land and at sea

Economy

- Structuring of a local circular economy
- Creation of green jobs
- A fall in the public costs of waste management

Health

- Less exposure to toxic fumes and other dangerous substances
- Improved living conditions in vulnerable neighbourhoods

Act now

Senegal already has an ambitious legal framework.

The challenge today is **to make it enforceable, inclusive and capable of having a real impact.**

The experience in some African countries shows that another model is possible, one that is:

- **more effective**
- **more socially equitable**
- **and creates economic value**

Strengthening the law on plastics in Senegal today means investing in a country that will be cleaner, healthier and more resilient tomorrow.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

This summary is based on research conducted for a Master's thesis

by Charlotte De Nys (ICHEC Brussels Management School, 2025), entitled:

How to reinforce application of the 2020 law on plastics to effectively reduce single-use plastic waste in Senegal. A comparative study.

The complete thesis contains the detailed analyses, comparative methodology and scientific references used for the research.



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