

The GLOCEPS

Special Focus

Development

Mitigating Challenges to Kenya's Chemicals and Waste Management

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In brief...

This Special Focus highlights the challenges undermining Kenya's efforts towards effective chemical and waste management. They include budgetary constraints, public awareness, regulatory deficiencies, and cross-border corporation. Notwithstanding initiatives such as the National Waste Management Strategy 2015-2030, the country faces challenges attributed to substantial waste generation, particularly in Nairobi, with low recycling rates exacerbating environmental degradation. In addition, insufficient public awareness often leads to improper disposal practices, especially for hazardous waste. Key recommendations include enhancing enforcement of existing relevant laws, increasing financial resources, conducting comprehensive public awareness campaigns, and strengthening cooperation with neighboring Eastern Africa countries to control illegal waste movement across borders.

In Full...

Kenya, like many other countries worldwide, faces challenges in managing chemicals and waste effectively. The reasons range from rapid urbanization and population growth to insufficient regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms. This is despite the existence of The National Waste Management Strategy 2015-2030 which provides a framework for promoting waste reduction, reuse and recycling. Kenya currently produces 3,000-4,000 tons of waste per day. Nairobi accounts for 2,400 tons with 20% comprising plastic materials. This amounts to between 1.0 to 1.4 million tons of waste per year. Only 8% of this is recycled. These statistics underscore the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address waste management and pollution in the country.

Evidence underscores that lack of adequate resources and weak enforcement mechanisms greatly contribute to the challenges posed by poor chemical and waste management. The test



of resources has rendered the relevant agencies incapable of recruiting staff to police the porous borders, especially between Kenya and Uganda. This, for instance, has been linked to the resurgence of plastic bags in the country. The low budgetary allocation towards the actual waste management practices in Kenya equally hampers waste management programs such as collection, transportation, and disposal. The little funding has left many urban centers with inadequate official dumping sites thus leading to irresponsible open dumping of mixed waste.





Consequently, improper disposal practices prevail, particularly on handling of hazardous waste leaving individuals and neighborhoods exposed to the dangers associated with these materials.

In conclusion, public awareness as well as strengthening enforcement and regulation measures remain key to mitigating Kenya's chemicals and waste management. There is a need for increased collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector to support law enforcement and maximize outreach programs through various communication channels. Lastly, cooperation among Eastern African countries is crucial in effectively combating the transboundary movement of waste.

Likewise, the ineffective implementation of relevant laws such as Section 13 of the Sustainable Waste Management Act, 2022 have hindered efforts to protect Kenya's environment. This statute, for example, mandates producers to bear mandatory extended producer responsibility obligations to reduce pollution and environmental impacts of the products they introduce to the Kenyan market and the waste arising therefrom. However, industries continue to engage in contrary practices, which significantly contribute to environmental degradation due to laxity in law enforcement measures.



Further inquiry reveals that insufficient public awareness, particularly on government regulations, recycling activities, and the effects of hazardous wastes significantly lead to increased environmental degradation and health risks.



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