

Winners of the Afri-Plastics Challenge 2023

Challenge Works and the Government of Canada announced the nine winners of the Afri-Plastics Challenge at the annual summit held in Nairobi, Kenya last week. £4.1m (CA\$6.7m) has been awarded to innovators with scalable innovations that tackle plastic waste in Africa and reduce the volume of pollution making its way to the ocean.



Kenya's Chemolex, creators of Biopactic, a biodegradable alternative to plastic made from invasive water hyacinths that grow aggressively in Lake Victoria. Image source: [@Challenge_Works on Twitter](#).

£1m has been awarded to Togo's Green Industry Plast (GIP-Togo) – a recycling business that helps households earn a living through waste plastic collection. GIP-Togo then sorts, shreds, cleans and bags the shredded plastic to be used again, including in ecological paving slabs.

Kenya's Chemolex has won £750,000 to scale production of Biopactic, a biodegradable alternative to plastic made from invasive water hyacinths that grow aggressively in Lake Victoria. The next generation material can completely replace single use plastic in food and product packaging – not only reducing plastic pollution, but dealing with an invasive plant impacting Kenya's marine ecosystem too.

£500,000 has been won by Mega Gas in Kenya which converts waste plastic into an affordable cooking gas for people living on less than US\$1 a day. It uses a thermal cracking process that creates no emissions, residue or pollution to turn plastic pollution, such as polythene, into a fuel for rural families.

Other winners of the Afri-Plastic Challenge are:

- Chanja Datti (Nigeria) – awarded £750,000 – based in Abuja, it converts collected recyclable waste into commercially viable products. It collects, sorts and bails plastic before selling it on to manufacturers.

- EcoCoCo Homecare (Kenya) – awarded £250,000 – it has developed alternatives to plastic homeware products that use fibres from coconut husks left over from coconut oil production, including scouring pads, scrubbing brushes and brooms.
- Toto Safi (Rwanda) – awarded £100,000 – a diapers-on-demand service which makes sustainable cloth diapers a realistic alternative to single-use plastic-based nappies. Through its app, parents can order clean and sterilised nappies at an affordable cost, while used nappies are taken away to be cleaned.
- Catharina Natang (Cameroon) – awarded £250,000 – training fashion designers in Africa to make sustainable choices in the textiles they use and understand plant-based alternatives to polymer-based materials.
- Ukwenza VR (Kenya) – awarded £250,000 – uses virtual reality to explain the journey of a piece of plastic after it is dumped, including the damage it does to local environments, to persuade people to make different choices around plastic consumption and disposal.
- Baus Taka Enterprise (Kenya) – awarded £250,000 – developed a mobile app to encourage people to segregate their plastic waste – through competitions it offers cash rewards and points that can be redeemed for medical services in partnership with health clinics.



Afri-Plastics Summit 2023: Ensuring gender empowerment for women in waste management

Shan Raddcliffe 16 Mar 2023



Tris Dyson, managing director, Challenge Works said: “11 million tonnes of plastic waste enter the ocean each year. It is a disaster for the environment and for communities reliant on healthy seas. The winners of the Afri-Plastics Challenge are putting African innovation at the heart of solving this global problem.”

Christopher Thornley, Canada's High Commissioner in Nairobi said: “The winners of the Afri-Plastics Challenge show there is a way forward for establishing a successful circular economy for plastic waste, with innovations capable of changing how we all use and dispose of plastic – not only in Africa but around the world.”

Launched in July 2021, the Afri-Plastics Challenge received 1,141 entries from innovators across sub-Saharan Africa. The 40 most promising teams were backed with an additional £4.8m of seed funding, grants and support to develop solutions to increase plastic recycling rates, reduce volumes of plastic waste, and influence behaviour change ahead of today's announcement.



Mega Gas in Kenya converts waste plastic into an affordable cooking gas. Image source: [@Challenge_Works on Twitter](#)

The successful innovations developed through the Afri-Plastics Challenge have paved the way to revolutionise Africa's approach to reducing the reliance on plastic. They are also supporting the empowerment of women and girls by creating economic opportunities for women. 60% of entries that made it to the final 40 were women-led.

The Afri-Plastics Challenge is designed and delivered by UK innovation prize experts Challenge Works and funded by the Government of Canada. It is an element of the \$100-million Marine Litter Mitigation Fund announced by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at the G7 Leaders' Summit in Charlevoix in June 2018.

Innovators focused on recycling solutions reported a 113% increase in monthly collecting and processing during the prize. In the long-term, the development and scaling of the innovators' solutions will lead to the creation of new, sustainable local enterprises, creating alternatives to single-use plastics and improving collection and processing of waste.

For more about the winners, visit afri-plastics.challenges.org

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>