

Fight Plastic, Save Our Shores

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Plastic pollution is an urgent environmental challenge facing coastal areas, particularly our beaches. On Monday, August 18, at 8:30 AM, students from The State University of Zanzibar (SUZA), together with Mawimbi team and Volunteers at SUZA, conducted a clean-up activity at Kizingo beach. The main objective was to combat plastic waste, which threatens marine life, ecosystems, tourism and human health. This collective sought to address the growing problem of plastic waste along the shoreline.



Fig. 1: Clean-up activity at Kizingo beach

Plastic pollution is not just an eyesore but also a serious ecological and economic threat. The accumulation of waste disrupts marine ecosystems, endangers biodiversity, and negatively affects tourism activity and local livelihoods.

As noted, “Debris or litter accumulation is one of the most severe human-created threats to marine and coastal ecosystems, driven by unsustainable development... compared with other categories of debris such as glass, cloth, and paper” (Nualphan, 2013; Rosevelt et al., 2013).

At Kizingo beach, in collected and analysis of plastic waste revealed that plastic was the most dominant type of litter compared to other categories such as bottles, shoes, rope and sponge foam. This prevalence can be attributed to human activities, as explained by one volunteer member: people often visit the beach for leisure, particularly to drink, but there are no designed facilities for disposing of bottles afterward. This local evidence reflects a broader global challenge, where everyday behaviour contributes to large scale environmental degradation.



Fig. 2: Plastic waste analysis that was collected at Kizingo beach

Furthermore, plastic pollution poses serious threats to tourism and local livelihoods, particularly in coastal regions. It deters visitors and undermines the economic potential of communities that rely heavily on tourism. For example, marine debris on Zanzibar's beaches resulted in an estimated loss of \$13.7 million in tourist spending. On a global scale, economies dependent on tourism suffers billions in annual losses due to plastic pollution (Polynext, 2025). In response, several initiatives have been launched to combat this crisis. Notably, the Global Tourism Plastics initiative was introduced in January 2020 by the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Tourism Organization, in collaboration with

the New Plastics Economy team, aiming to prevent plastic from becoming pollution (Ellen MacArthur Foundation). These efforts underscore the importance of combining global strategies with strong community engagement to effectively tackle plastic pollution.

Addressing marine litter requires a multifaceted and global approach. This includes stronger legislation, improved waste management system and infrastructure, as well as the widespread adoption of circular economy principles to minimize plastic production and improve recycling. Achieving success depends on shared responsibility across governments, private sectors, civil society, and local. However, large-scale strategies alone are not sufficient unless they are complemented by actions at the grassroots level.



Fig. 3: Participated team which combining together in beach combing activity at Kizingo

Nevertheless, awareness campaigns and community-based clean-up activities remain crucial in mitigating the pervasive and increasing threat of plastic pollution. Such initiatives foster environmental stewardship, promote behavioral change, and empower communities to protect marine and coastal ecosystems for future generations.

Beyond the clean-up exercise, our visit to Chako Recycling and upcycling Workshop in Zanzibar offered a different but equally important perspective on plastic pollution. Chako is a local initiative founded by Suleiman, Hellena and Anelles, which focuses on recycling and upcycling hard plastics collected from hotels and restaurants across the island. Instead of

ending up in the ocean or landfills, these plastics are transformed into valuable products such as handwoven baskets, decorative bag holders and hanging lampshades used to beautify homes, restaurants and hotels. This creative transformation demonstrates how waste can be re-imagined as a resource and highlights the role of innovation in addressing environmental challenges.



Fig. 4: Plastic are transformed into valuable products at Chako Zanzibar

Personally, witnessing this process was inspiring. It made me realize that the fight against plastic is not only about removing waste from beaches but also about finding sustainable and creative ways to give discarded materials a second life. Chako's model proves that, environmental conservation can go hand in hand with social and economic benefits, providing employment opportunities while protecting Zanzibar's fragile ecosystems. For example, in 2020, the Green Growth Knowledge Platform profiled Chako as a case study on upcycling waste into opportunity in Zanzibar.

Combining experience of participating in the Kizingo beach clean-up and visiting Chako recycling broadened my understanding of how to tackle plastic pollution effectively. While community clean-up raise awareness and remove immediate waste from the environment, initiatives like Chako offer long term solutions though recycling, upcycling and sustainable innovation. These complementary approaches demonstrate that solving the plastic crisis requires both grassroots action and creative enterprise. Ultimately, addressing plastic

pollution is not simply an environmental duty but also a collective responsibility to safeguard marine life, support community well-being and build a sustainable future.