



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



## Success Stories

### The green industry is booming in Kinshasa

by Alfred Ntumba



Fabrication de lattes PVC grises au déchets plastiques  
George Sabeloko



Motif de lattes recyclées à Lumina  
Nina MUSEY

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Recent European Union studies show that Kinshasa produces nearly 5,000 metric tons of waste every day, and the collection and recycling operation central to such waste management has grown rapidly in the past decade. Several “green” companies play an active role: in a surge of inspiration and ingenuity these companies create income-generating employment (green economy) and contribute to the government’s efforts to burnish the faded image of Kinshasa, formerly considered to be one of the most beautiful African cities in colonial times.

After a 22-year career at Congo Plast SPRL, a private company that manufactures plastic products, Matthieu Nina Musey and his friends invest their time and expertise in the recycling of plastic waste. In a workshop which they have set up in Kingasani, a district in the suburbs of Kinshasa, capitalizing on opportunities open in the hitherto unknown recycling sector, Matthieu Musey and his team

supply pellets made from recycled plastic waste to many businesses manufacturing PVC tubing and flush mounting boxes sold on the Congolese market.

### **The raw materials**

In their makeshift workshop, the waste, consisting mainly of plastic bottles and packaging, is sorted and washed before being tipped into a granulator to be processed and recycled. Matthieu and his team buy the waste at US \$7 per metric ton from people who collect it from the numerous bins throughout the city, from watercourses, gutters and Kinshasa's local markets.

In the poor district of Kingasani, where people must rely on their own resourcefulness, the collection and sorting of plastic waste is a lifeline for many families.

More and more women have turned to collecting and sorting plastic waste, a commercial activity that is likely to ensure their survival. "We move through the various neighbourhoods looking for plastic waste," many said. From daybreak, ignoring the surrounding filth and foul smells of the rubbish tips, these brave women can be found, without gloves or masks, searching for the raw materials which are "invaluable for their daily survival".

### **The competition**

Congo Salubrité, a Congolese firm specializing in the collection and recycling of organic and hazardous waste, is in Limete, a district some 15 kilometres away from Kingasani. Kankonda Tshikololo, also known as Américain, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the company since its creation in 2007, underwent special training abroad and is considered Kinshasa's undisputed leader in recycling. Congo Salubrité organizes waste collection drives known as the "food for waste" exchanges. As well as being paid the agreed price per kilogram for the waste delivered to the company, the collectors receive a 1.3kg chicken or 1kg of rice as an incentive. Américain Kankonda is delighted to provide employment for Congolese workers while cleaning up the city. "Our staff can boost the economy if they are properly utilized. We take action in order to encourage people to improve waste management, as it can be a source of income," the head of Congo Salubrité explained.

In the factory, the stored waste is processed and then reused to manufacture eco-friendly paving slabs and other valuable goods.

### **Positive impacts**

Not long ago, there were giant rubbish tips in Kinshasa. Those mountains of rubbish have gradually been transformed into green spaces. Waste processing and recycling have boosted "green" jobs and Kinshasa now boasts around ten NGOs which are primarily engaged in clean-up operations. These non-governmental organizations employ mainly unemployed youth, whose hopes are raised by this lucrative activity. Day in, day out, these men and women collect household waste, thus keeping the city's pavements, major roads and sometimes even its drainage systems clean. One such man, Francis Kiangu, explained how he came to be employed in this way. "I couldn't continue to study after primary school because my father didn't have enough money. Then a friend told me that a company was hiring young people to clean-up the city. I decided to sign up there and then. I earn 5,000 Congolese francs a day, and so I can save US \$100 by the end of the month". With that money, Francis hopes to go back to school.

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Eulalie Makela is one of the women working in this industry. At Kin Enviro, an NGO, she is in charge of smartening up Kinshasa by planting trees and lawns. Kin Enviro has cleaned up some public spaces previously buried in refuse – Place Commerciale, a square in Limete, being a case in point. After six months of voluntary work, Kin Enviro has become a privileged partner of the Congolese government. It is now working on improvements along the Boulevard du 30 Juin in the Gombe district. As this NGO's financial resources have increased rapidly, it now employs more than 300 people in Kinshasa.

Although the green industry's input to the national economy has not yet been systematically studied, it opens the door to a range of opportunities for making a sustainable contribution to social and environmental well-being.

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As lead agency for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), UNESCO promotes an education that allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future.

Education for Sustainable Development means including key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning; for example, climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption. It also requires participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behaviour and take action for sustainable development.

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