



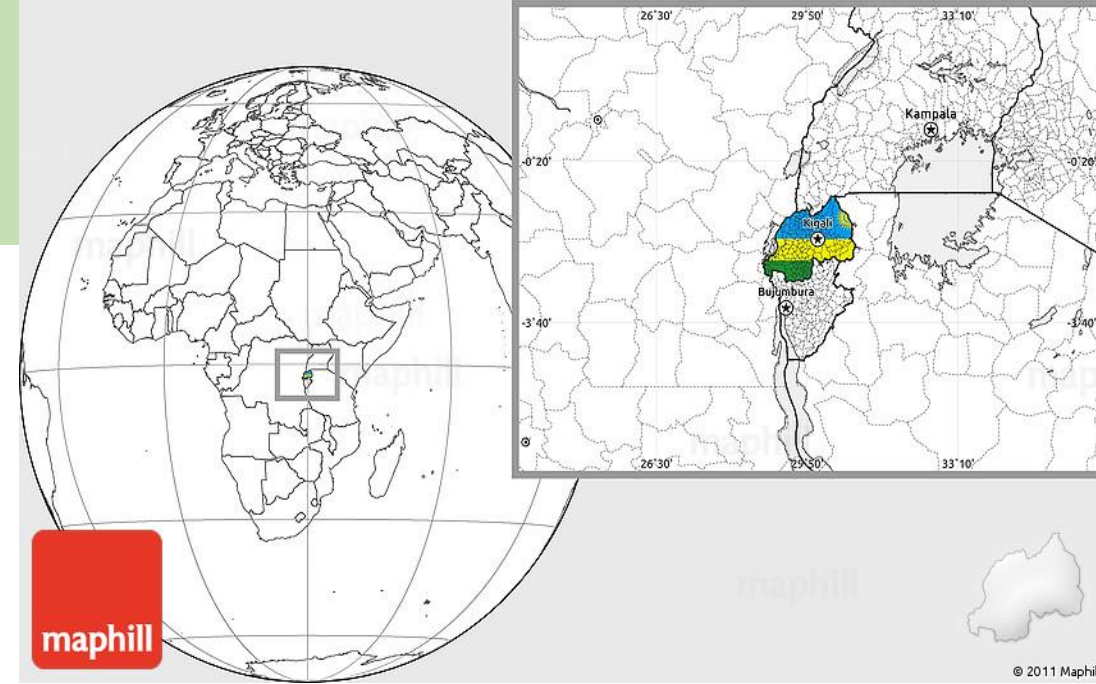
Solutions to tackle plastic waste

The Rwandan experience

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About Rwanda

- Rwanda is a landlocked country, in Eastern-central Africa, also known as "The Land of a Thousand Hills"
- 12 Million people on 26,338 km², >450 people/km².
- Borders: Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and DRC.
- Kigali City population is 1.2 Million
- 4 official languages, Kinyarwanda, English, French and Swahili.
- 4 National Parks: Akagera Park 1934. Nyungwe 2004, Volcanoes Park 1925 (home to the Mountain Gorillas), and recently Gishwati Park.



Statistics

We have produced more plastic in the last 10 years than we did in the whole of last century



1950:

50 million tons of plastic



2008:

245 million tons of plastic

Almost 1/2 of the plastic we use is used **just once** and then thrown away



Shoppers worldwide use approximately **500,000,000,000** single-use plastic bags annually

That's about **1 million bags every minute** across the globe or **150 bags every year** for every person on earth



If you joined them end to end, the bags would circumnavigate the globe **4,200 times**



It takes just **4 family shopping trips** to accumulate **60 shopping bags**



A plastic bag has an average working life of **15 minutes**



Only **1 in 5** plastic water bottles are recycled



Americans throw away **35 billion** plastic water bottles every year

Background

In 1980s: Plastics started invading Rwanda. Even for a small purchase, a plastic bag was offered.

2003: Ministry on charge of Environment assessed the problem of plastic in Rwanda.

- Alarming observations on negative impacts of plastic wastes in Rwanda (on sanitation and general cleanliness, human health, agriculture productivity, water drainage systems, cattle health, air quality, water quality, etc.)

2004: Government decision to ban plastic shopping bags, starting with countrywide awareness raising to educate people on the side effects of the plastics.

August 2004: Ministerial Instruction on the use and manufacturing of plastic bags in Rwanda. Banned shopping bags of <60 microns.

2008: Law N°57/2008 of 10/09/2008 relating to the prohibition of manufacturing, importation, use and sale of polythene bags in Rwanda. Extended to all packaging plastics. Law has penalties provisions.

Measures taken

- Countrywide and permanent sensitization and awareness raising using various channels, mainly community works, media campaigns (TV, radio and print), trainings, school environmental clubs, environmental committees, etc.
- Involving all different stakeholders (Private Sector, Revenue Authorities, Local Governments, Standards Bureau, Security Organs,.....)
- Strict control at the borders and all country's entry points
- Regular enforcement inspections
- Exceptional and necessary use of plastics allowed on well defined products.

Where are we now?

- The public is well aware of the negative effects of the plastics and willingly comply. *Some resistance at the beginning.*
- Rwanda is cleaner and environmental conditions improved (*Kigali awarded as the cleanest City in Africa*)
- New and environmental friendly alternatives now in use and widely adopted (*paper bags, more durable and multiple use bags*).
- Jobs created for manufacture of alternatives (*most of the plastic materials were imported while most of alternatives are locally made*).
- The Rwandan experience **inspires other countries.**
- The success a **national pride** to which every Rwandan feels a player





Recycling

- Not easy to achieve a 100% country free from plastics.
- The Reduce, Reuse and Recycle principle applied through recycling plastics collected by the enforcement across the country.
- Collected Plastics recycled into other usable and permitted materials (*tubing, garbage bags, construction and agriculture materials*) by authorized industries.
- Recycling created other green jobs.
- Recycling as an option to reduce but not an ultimate solution.



Challenges

- Neighbouring countries with no ban of plastics poses a threat while countries are promoting free movement of people and goods.
- Some alternatives still expensive compared to plastics.
- Illegal business opportunity in the smuggle of banned plastics.
- Pressure by the business lobby and some industrialists
- Speculations and unfairness on alternatives (many appellations hard to verify; biodegradable, compostable, degradable, oxo-biodegradable, etc.)

Next steps

- The challenge Rwanda faces today is not plastic bags, but extends to all plastics especially "single use plastics".
- As we continue to enforce and strengthen the our ban, the country is now tackling single use plastics (Plastic bottles, cups, plates, cutlery).
- Review of the plastics ban law to control single use plastics is at an advanced stage.
- Investing in reusable alternative, like water dispensers, jugs and glasses is not only good for the environment, but also cost effective.



Lesson to share

- Public sensitization and information sharing are paramount.
- The population is always ready to embrace such a positive policy as long as they are well sensitized and Governments are consistent.
- Political will is vital.
- Involvement of all stakeholders is very key (public, private, industries, population, customs, etc.).
- Use of many plastics has no particular addition to our everyday life. We can easily and better live without them. It only requires mind change and the courage to start. Alternatives exist and mind change can lead to outstanding results in the shortest period.



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