

NO MORE EMPTY PROMISES

Uganda Brand Audit Report 2022

VOLUME 2

A people's effort to hold corporate polluters accountable!



**#Break
Free
From
Plastic**

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The management of the railway crossing the dumping site at Nambole Stadium area.

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Background of Brand Audits

Brand Audits elevate people's understanding of the structural causes of plastic pollution, gather hard data proving that corporations are responsible for producing excessive amounts of single-use plastic packaging and reveal the disproportionate harm these corporations are causing to vulnerable communities especially the global south at all stages of the plastic lifecycle.

2018, marked the first ever global brand audit which has catalyzed what has now come to be a 5 year long journey. The 2018 brand audit engaged nearly 10,000 volunteers who organized 239 cleanups and brand audit events in 42 countries.

Each year thereafter presented unique achievements, challenges and breakthroughs for brand audit initiatives. In 2019, a record breaking 763,004 pieces of plastic waste were collected.

The global Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 brought about some challenges, despite this over 14,000 volunteers in 55 countries were still able to participate. 2021, was the year of lawsuits, exposing the drivers of climate change and plastic production, and that their expansion threatens the global climate crisis. Also in 2020, [Break Free From Plastic](#) published the [Missing the Mark report](#), unveiling how many corporate plastic pollution projects are actually false solutions.

However, 2022 was the most significant year for brand audits and the global plastic pollution crisis. It marked the 5th Anniversary of the global brand audits, the [2022 Global Brand Audit](#) reveals a remarkable consistency of results; year after year the same Fast Moving Consumer Goods companies including Coca-Cola, Pepsi and Unilever with the largest market share are generating most of the plastics polluting the environment.

The communities and people of Uganda also find themselves within the clutches of top-polluting corporations which served to motivate conducting the first [brand audit in 2021](#) on Lake Victoria, Africa's largest inland freshwater body. 32 companies were exposed with The Coca-Cola Company, Pepsi and Unilever making the top three polluters. 656 items were audited, 49% were food packaging and 11% were personal care products. By material type, 49% of the items audited were PET (Polyethylene) and 22% were HDPE (High-density Polyethylene).

Also toward the end of 2021, End Plastic Pollution Uganda conducted a brand audit on River Rwizi in Mbarara. The results were released in the first ever [Flowing With Plastics Report](#), exposing 56 brands and 32 companies contributing to making River Rwizi Uganda's most visibly damaged river by plastic waste. The top polluting brands were, The Coca-Cola Company, Pepsi, BIDCO Africa as well as Mbarara based companies like Yausafi Ventures and Ice Love Company.

Conducting brand audits has become an annual activity in Uganda with the second major brand audit conducted in 2022, the data has been analyzed in preparation of this report.



1- : Youth from End Plastic Pollution and Green Africa Organization during the 2022 brand audit.



1 - Youth From End Plastic Pollution and Green Campaign Africa Organization during the 2022 brand audit.

The 2022 Brand Audit data analysis.

Plastic packaging is now regarded as the most “convenient” and affordable option and businesses are externalizing all the management costs on the consumers or export unmanageable non-recyclable plastics to the global south in the form of waste colonialism.

The Plastic Pollution crisis in Uganda is on an upward trajectory with a number of corporations exposed by brand audit data expanding the production of plastic products, single-use plastic packaging, and delivery containers. This was not the case before the 2000s, the beverage industry in Uganda made use of glass and metal cans.

The plastic pollution crisis is growing in scale, there must be urgent and ambitious action at all levels to end it. From its production to disposal, plastic contributes to diverse environmental challenges, health impacts and exacerbates the climate crisis.

Plastic pollution crisis is a production crisis, therefore it must be addressed at its source. Corporations should be held accountable for creating widespread havoc in nature and in places where their problematic packaging materials and single-use plastics are ending up.

The 2022 brand audit was led by youth from [End Plastic Pollution Uganda](#), [Green Africa Youth Organization](#), and youth from Bweyogerere Town and waste pickers. It was conducted at a dumping site next to the Mandela National Stadium, Uganda’s major sports ground also known as Nambole stadium.

This dumping site was selected as part of End Plastic Pollution Uganda’s campaign promoting a no-dumping culture and stopping landfills in local communities. At End Plastic Pollution Uganda we believe in building plastic-free communities with emphasis on promoting a no-dumping culture, no more landfills and no burning of plastic waste. There are several illegal dumping sites around Kampala City, these are not only illegal but also are not under supervision or management by local government authorities.

Also considering the fact that many Uganda’s love sports particularly football, it is not proper for a dumping site to grow next to the national stadium. Sports is a major activity in Uganda, however it has attracted sponsorship from the same brands generating the plastic waste found at a dumping site next to the Nambole sports ground.

Uganda is also gearing up to join other East African Countries (Kenya and Tanzania) to jointly bid for hosting the African Cup of Nations, however with a dumping site next to the major sports ground in the country, it undermines the opportunity to host such a major continental sports event.

Youth from End Plastic Pollution Uganda and Green Africa Youth Organization joined by youth from Bweyogerere Town and local waste from the Nambole dumping site collected a total of 1487 items.

The brand audit found 137 brands produced by 39 parent companies to be responsible for the plastic waste collected. By material type, 673 items were PET bottles, 424 items were HDPE bottles, other items including sachets and baby diapers were 273. Also the audit found 97 unbranded items including plastic footwear and plastic cutlery were found.

The Coca-Cola Company is the biggest plastic polluter with 312 items found, Pepsi is the second biggest plastic polluter with 124 items found, BIDCO Africa comes in third place with 115 items found, Unilever came fourth with 107 items found and Mukwano Industries came in fifth place with 99 items were found to be the leading plastic polluters.

The 2022 brand audit also offered a special focus on items including diapers and sachets and plastic footwear.



SPOTLIGHT ON THE BIGGEST PLASTIC POLLUTERS IN 2022

1. The Coca-Cola Company

The Coca-Cola Company is the biggest plastic polluter in Uganda. 312 items collected during the brand audit belonged to brands part of Coca-Cola family of products.

Coca-Cola has been investing in Africa for 90 years, since 1928 and is present in every African country with 145 bottling facilities. The Coca-Cola Company is using a huge amount of plastic packaging including plastic bottles and plastic wrappers and crates used in delivery of its beverages. The Coca-Cola Company runs a total of 4 production plants manufacturing 13 brands in Uganda.

Globally Per dollar of sales, The Coca-Cola Company uses 3 times as much plastic than Pepsi. The Coca-Cola Company also uses 3 metric tons of plastic a year worldwide, making 200,000 plastic bottles every minute and selling 300 million plastic bottles per day.

The **2021 global brand audit by Break Free From Plastic** found, The Coca-Cola Company produced 2,981,142 metric tons of plastic, this amounts to 14,907,105 metric tons of carbon emissions which is equivalent to 3,241,996 passenger vehicles driven for one year.

In 2018, The Coca-Cola Company invested in expanding their bottling plant in Uganda located at Namanve Industrial area, and installed equipment with manufacturing capacity to a tune of 24,000 bottles an hour. This amounts to 576,000 bottles per day and 4,032,000 million bottles per week.

The other plant located in the western Uganda city of Mbarara, covers 10 hectares of land and has capacity to produce 2 million crates annually.



The Coca-Cola Company is aware that single-use plastic packaging is bad because in 1971, it commissioned a report that compared the environmental cost of different types of packaging. It concluded that if a returnable bottle can make 15 trips before being discarded, it consumes less virgin material than any other packaging. However despite all these findings The Coca-Cola Company continues to use single-use packaging. Despite having the budget, capacity and expertise to create impactful change at scale, The Coca-Cola Company has yet to deliver on their promises.

In 2018, The Coca-Cola Company launched its “world without waste” initiative with promises to address its environmental impact, it promised to make 100% recyclable packaging, collect and recycle every bottle and can sold and use 50% recycled content in packaging by 2030.

However it is barely a few years and this is already failing on all counts, because:

Most of Coca-Cola’s plastic packaging are made from PET, which is considered easiest to recycle. With this, one may think this promise has been achieved however *it is critical to acknowledge that even if something is recyclable it does not mean it will be recycled*. This is the case for Uganda and many other communities in the global south given that there is no recycling infrastructure, and face a high cost of cleanup and waste management.

It should be noted that *less than 10% of all the plastic ever produced globally has been recycled*. Therefore considering lower income countries like Uganda with densely populated urban areas and many remotely located areas it brings up questions like; *how will the products be recycled in every location where Coca-Cola and its family of brands are sold?* Therefore it is misleading for Coca-Cola to claim 100% recyclability.

Since 2002, The Coca-Cola Company owns a recycling plant in Kampala, Uganda, the Plastics Recycling Industries initiative, however the plant has not operated to full capacity since Coca-Cola cannot collect enough of the material. *The question here is, who is going to collect the plastic for recycling?*

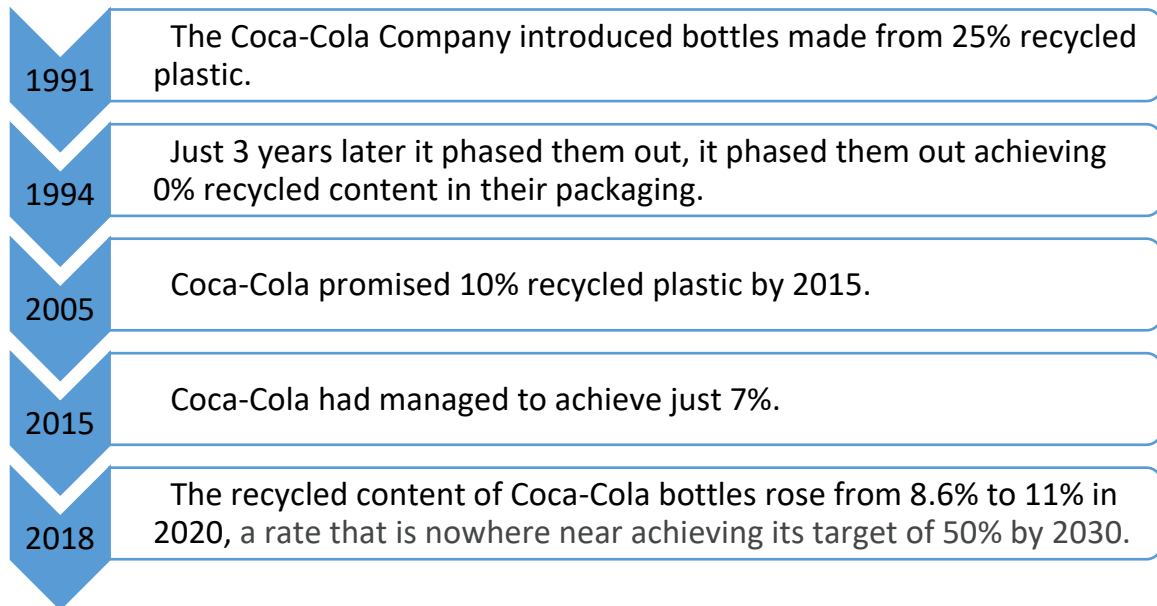
Also the promise to use 50% recycled content in packaging by 2030 seems like The Coca-Cola Company would be in position to reduce the amount of virgin plastic it needs by “half”, making all its packaging viable for recovery everywhere.

However by 2018, the recycled content of Coca-Cola bottles rose from 8.6% to just 11.55% in 2020. It is very clear that at this rate, unless urgent and ambitious measures are immediately implemented, The

Coca-Cola Company will definitely fall short of the 50% target because this will be 32% recycled content by 2030.

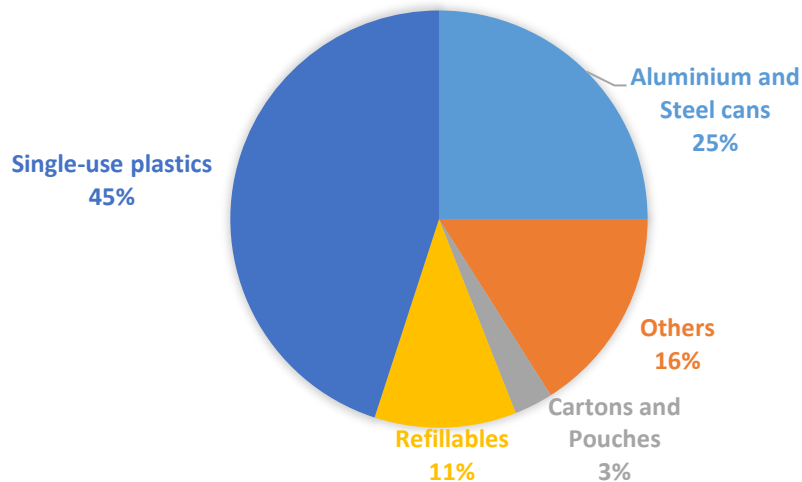


A timeline of broken promises by The Coca-Cola Company.



Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0010zxs> or via <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/science-environment-59017151> - BBC Documentary on Coca-Cola's 100 Billion Bottle Problem.

PERCENTAGE MATERIAL USE BY THE COCA-COLA COMPANY BY 2022



Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0010zxs> or via <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/science-environment-59017151> - BBC Documentary on Coca-Cola's 100 Billion Bottle Problem.

2. Pepsi

Pepsi comes in at Uganda's 2nd top plastic polluter for the second year in a row and continues to package and deliver its beverages in single use plastics. Apart from its large family of carbonated soft drinks, the company has expanded into packaging drinking water.

In 2009, Pepsi Uganda increased its production capacity by 80% investing about USD \$13 million dollars (UGX 26 billion) and installing a modern German made machinery making 40,000 bottles per hour. This amounts to 960,000 bottles per day which is 6,720,000 million bottles per week, giving Pepsi capacity to produce 22 million cases per year in Uganda.

In 2022 Pepsi agreed to a time bound goal to reduce delivery of its beverages in single-use plastics and avoid reaching 200 billion plastic bottles by 2030.

However despite this promise, In Uganda Pepsi is building capacity to produce more plastics with construction underway for a new plant in Kakungulu, Wakiso District to be opened in 2023. This will

make 116,000 bottles per hour, with 80,000 bottles packaging carbonated soft drinks, and 36,000 water bottles. This amounts to 2,784,000 million bottles per hour which is 19,488,000 bottles per week.



3. BIDCO Africa

BIDCO Africa is the 3rd biggest polluter in Uganda for the year 2022.

Overtime BIDCO Africa has won over the local and regional markets to become one of the largest and fastest growing manufacturers of consumer goods in East Africa. BIDCO Africa manufactures edible oils and fats, hygiene and personal care and of recent food and beverage brands.

In 2017, BIDCO Africa released an environmental policy, through which the company promised to be committed to implementing an environmental management system to advance the company's impacts on human health and the environment.

Under this policy, BIDCO Africa's goals are to ensure;

- Protection of human health and the environment.
- Comply with laws and regulations.
- Minimize with laws and regulations.
- Minimize resource consumption.

- Ensure that manufacturing, marketing and distribution activities, products and services are appropriate to nature and have no adverse impacts on human health and the environment.

However, BIDCO Africa is contributing a significant amount of plastic waste resulting in diverse negative impacts in Uganda, putting at risk human health and damaging the environment.

To make matters worse, BIDCO Africa chose to establish its own standards to comply with. However it is time for BIDCO Africa to consider investing in a transition to reduce its ever increasing plastic footprint.





6- Youth from End Plastic Pollution and Green Africa Organization during the 2022 brand audit.



4. Mukwano Industries

“Mukwano” which translates as friendship has become a household name common among many locals, its origins in Uganda date back as far as 1910.

Many people joke around the fact that it is common to find Mukwano products in almost every home across Uganda. However this should no longer be taken as a mere joke because the 2022 brand audit found Mukwano Industries to be the 5th biggest plastic polluter in Uganda with a far reaching plastic footprint.

Mukwano Industries is trading 200 products across 17 countries in the East and Central African region as well as in Europe and Asia. These include Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Sudan, Rwanda, Mauritius, Thailand, Switzerland and India.

Mukwano Industries produces a wide range of Fast Moving Consumer Goods ranging from domestic and industrial plastics, laundry, toilet soils, edible oils and fats. Mukwano Industries also manifests its core production strengths in production of plastics.

Mukwano Industries also owns another plastic manufacturing company under the brand Eagle Rock Plastics which manufactures 150 industrial and domestic use items.

In addition to Mukwano’s Industries’ contribution to the plastic pollution problem, the company is on record for causing other diverse negative environmental impacts in local communities.

Mukwano runs a huge manufacturing plant situated in the middle of Kampala City which emits dangerous fumes lowering the city’s air quality.

In 2012, officials from Kampala Capital City Authority did routine checks on the Mukwano factory on grounds of emitting dark smoke and fumes to the public as well as discharge chemical liquid effluent and sewage into a public storm water drainage system. At this point it is critical that Mukwano Industries takes urgent action to address its negative environmental impact.



Spotlight on problematic plastic waste.

During the 2022 brand audit, a special focus was given to items including baby diapers, sachets and plastic footwear. During the 2022 brand audit, End Plastic Pollution Uganda offered a short training for participants on how to identify sachets.



8 - Participants learning how to record data on sachets during the 2022 brand audit.



Diapers

Diapers are some of the most important baby accessories used in Uganda, however diapers are part of a large family of single-use baby care products with a terrifying environmental impact. Due to the complex layering construction diapers can retain feces and urine while helping to keep baby's clean and dry.

Globally, the average diaper use stands at 4 diapers per day, in Uganda some households make use of 2 diapers a day.

The use of disposable diapers for babies is associated with various health concerns as diaper manufacturers ignore calls to disclose exact chemical composition in diapers.

Therefore it is important to understand the composition, habits and practices of diapers for robust usage, Diapers may contain different chemicals including; phychlorodibenzo-p-dioxins (also called PCDDs and CDDs).

The 2022 brand audit discovered imported diapers from brands including Cussons, Johnsons, Always, Softcare, Pampers, Huggies, Molfix. It is no excuse that these may contain a number of toxic compounds.

Phthalates are a group of chemicals used in making plastics durable, these are non-covalently bound to polymers used in diapers. Therefore when a diaper is in direct contact with external genitals of infants and toddlers for several months to years, there are high chances of phthalates entering their bodies through dermal absorption. Phthalates disrupt the endocrine system and can cause multiple ailments such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and reproductive disorders.

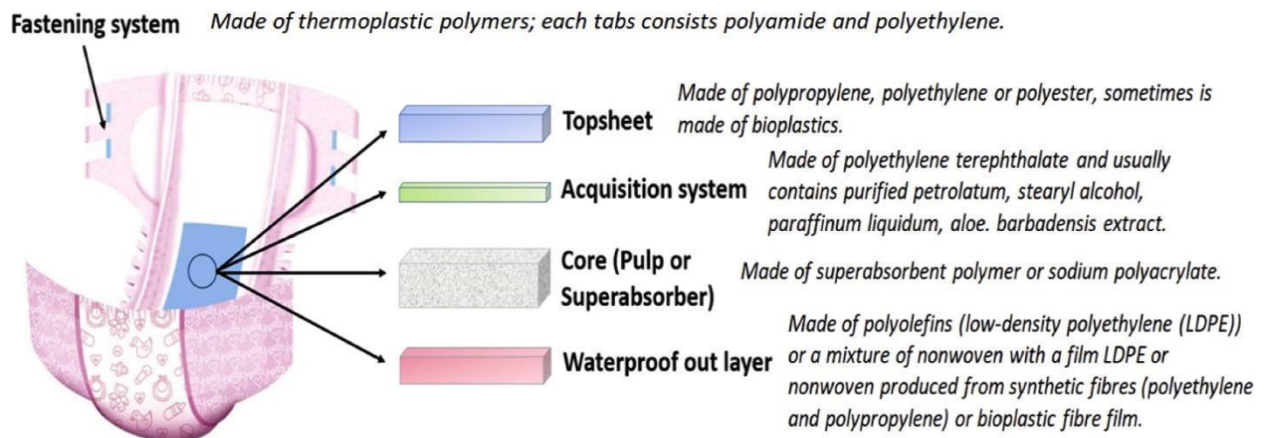


Image Source: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165993621002314>

2. Plastic footwear

There are several adverse environmental impacts as a result of plastic footwear, every year, more than 20 billion shoes are manufactured. The manufacturing of plastic footwear is responsible for 1.4% of greenhouse gas emissions globally. A pair of sneakers generates 30 pounds of carbon emissions, which can keep a 100-watt bulb on for a week.

In Uganda, almost every pair of used shoes ends up in landfill or is dumped somewhere in the community. This plastic footwear will take up to a thousand years to break down.

It is difficult to identify the companies that produce plastic footwear, the items found during the 2022 brand audit were all unbranded.



9 - Joyce Gwokyalya, a youth leader at End Plastic Pollution with a group of youth volunteers from Bweyogerere recording data about Plastic footwear found during the 2022 brand audit.

In Uganda, plastic wear has become the most widely sold, fashionable, and attractive footwear. This type of shoe which is locally known as “Nigiina” is now considered versatile for casual non-formal dressing and very convenient to own. Its low density polyethylene gives plastic footwear a gloss and softness. Many people are under the misconception that plastic footwear like “Nigiina” are made of rubber because texture seems as if they are rubber.

However plastic footwear like “Nigiina” are made of a material known as croslite, which comprises chemicals that contain elements of plastic. It belongs to a group of products made with materials including ethylene-vinyl acetate (EVA), a copolymer and is processed as a thermoplastic material.

Plastic is often found in outsoles as well as synthetic leathers and coated fabrics for a shoe’s upper.

Uganda has also entered the shoe manufacturing industry with the opening of a new industrial park in Kapeeka, the sector has already attracted investment from Chinese businesses.

With plastic footwear increasingly adding to Uganda's plastic pollution problem, there should be strict regulations put in place to keep shoes out of landfills.

3. Sachets



Sachets are small sealed pouches or packets containing a small quantity of something commonly used for cooking oils, detergent, foods, personal care products and much more. Plastic sachets are made of multiple layers of plastic aluminum to serve only once and they are nearly impossible to recycle.

Sachets are widely perceived as affordable, convenient and indispensable, but only because costs are externalized.

The 2022 Brand Audit exposes companies including Unilever, Mukwano Industries, BIDCO Africa and Harris International packaging products in single serve sachets.

During the brand audit sachets branded Omo, Ariel, Nescafe, Royco, and Blue Band were found. Also a number of imported goods packaged in sachets with brands including Unilever and Wrigley's P.K chewing gum from Kenya that were found.



For decades, Unilever is dumping huge amounts of goods on the Ugandan market packaged in plastic, however instead of investing in reuse and refill systems, Unilever have been promoting sachet as pro-poor while slowly poisoning local communities. Unilever claims that in several markets, plastic sachets allow low-income consumers an opportunity to buy small amounts of products which they would otherwise not be able to afford. Unilever makes 58% of its revenue from emerging markets including Uganda which faces a plastic pollution crisis however the company has failed to uphold its commitment of reducing the amount of plastic packaging needed for its products. Unilever claims that 3.4 billion people in 190 countries use its brands every day.

Unilever admits that sachets are difficult to deal with and has learnt that there are no easy solutions. Among its promises is to halve the amount of virgin plastic used in packaging, to collect and process more of its packaging and design to ensure 100% by 2025. However from 2018 to date, Unilever has managed to only reduce its virgin plastic footprint by around 16%, from 712,000 tons to 599,000 tons. This is 113,000 for a period of over 3 years and at this rate its means that Unilever will not achieve its reduction goal of 100,000 per year by 2025.



14- Participants learning how to record data on sachets during the 2022 brand audit.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Recommendations for Corporations.

- **REVEAL** the full extent of their plastic footprint.

The plastic pollution crisis is a plastic production crisis, therefore it must be addressed by capping production. To measure progress on reducing plastic, companies first need to know how much they are making. They need to share that data publicly. Companies must be transparent about the number of units of plastic packaging they produce. In addition, the same companies must account for and disclose the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the production, management and disposal of their plastic products and packaging.

- **REDUCE** amounts of plastic produced.

It is time for companies to drastically reduce their plastic use and set clear, measurable targets that are tracked publicly.

- **REDESIGN** their packaging to be reusable and plastic free.

To really cut plastic use companies should find alternative ways to deliver their products without single-use plastic. Companies need to redesign their business models so as to focus on **REUSE** and **REFILL** systems and invest in making them safe, affordable and accessible to all.

2. Recommendations to government of Uganda.

- It is very important for the government to hold corporate polluters accountable for their pollution, voluntary commitments are failing therefore there has to be strong legislation. Therefore it is time for mandatory obligations. The government should enforce the Extended Producer Responsibility by requiring producers to finance, and often manage the collecting or disposal of their packaging.
- This report comes at a time when governments are negotiating a legally binding, international agreement on plastics. However it is important for the global plastics treaty to deliver policies that significantly reduce plastic production and hold corporations accountable for the plastic pollution crisis.
- Government must move to ensure no new plastic production capacity and commit to zero targets, with increased ambition towards a truly non-toxic circular economy. This will require the Ugandan government to rethink its decision on the development of the Oil and Petrochemical industry to manufacture plastics.
<https://www.climatechangenews.com/2022/03/14/plastics-resolution-tees-up-battle-over-oil-industrys-plan-b/>
- Invest in waste reduction measures and zero-waste systems. Align this with national climate action plans, including reuse-based alternative product delivery systems. This means that the government should end new fossil-fuel subsidies in the venture to manufacture plastics nor favor waste to energy incineration and other false waste management solutions like plastic

credits, firing in coal-fired power plants, co-processing in cement kilns, and chemical recycling, to protect human health and the environment.

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2022 Uganda Brand Audit Report