

# Environmental Education: Key to Solving Our Waste Problem

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*Six African young women standing while reading a UNEP leaflet on the hands of one of them*

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**Olumide IDOWU, Co-Founder of [Climate Wednesday](#) and UNISDR Youth Champion for Africa advocates for sustainable education to learn how to manage waste and make a difference in our communities.**

We live in rapidly evolving societies, so why doesn't our environmental sensitization adapt/conform to these changes?"

Williams S. Anarfi explains – environmental education is becoming increasingly important as our lives, cities and priorities change. As our cities become more congested and busy, knowledge of the impact we each have on our surroundings becomes more and more crucial. Equally important however, is our understanding of how we can contribute to protecting the environment around us.

Africa is on the verge of losing its essence and beauty to different forms of degradation especially waste pollution". This is dope; I think you should start your article with this

statement. As we become more urbanized and the spending power of the average African rises, more goods will be consumed leading to even more waste. “The volume of waste generated on our continent is expected to double in the coming years as the size and population of its cities explode.” John Paul.

Apart from the dirty and unsightly look that heaps of wastes are giving to several cities across Africa, poor waste management is closely related to, and largely responsible for, the outbreak of diseases. In addition to its undesirable effects, the mismanagement of our waste has a long-term effect on the handling of Africa’s natural resources in the future. Recycling items like kitchen waste, paper, plastic and metals helps reduce the pollution in our environment.

The enforcement of proper waste management has a strong impact on job creation in Africa. Organizations like [Recycle Points Nigeria](#), [Wecyclers](#), [WASCO](#), [EnviroWaste](#), [WasteMan](#) are some of the few organizations in Africa that are contributing to more job creations and ultimately promoting a more sustainable global environment.

Apparently, more efficient and sustainable approaches to waste management need to be adopted. To ensure this, we need to shift emphasis towards a more localized/community based system, make use of low tech/ low energy systems and most importantly ensure waste minimization. This approach is widely practiced all over the world and very few African companies like afore mentioned have adopted these methods.

- 1. Waste Minimization is an approach that aims to reduce the production of waste through education and the adoption of improved production processes and less wasteful practices.
- 2. Recycling means to separate certain materials within the waste stream and reprocess them. Currently, the recycling of many materials is not financially viable.
- 3. Waste processing is the treatment and recovery (use) of materials or energy from waste through thermal, chemical, or biological means.

A waste management system is a combination of several stages in the flow of materials within a given society. All waste management systems goes through the mining stage, processing, production and consumption stages which involves the final treatment and disposal. I believe that the ultimate goal of waste management efforts should be waste minimization, however, waste processing and waste recycling play an important role in improving production processes and in dealing with ‘waste’ in a manner that is more environmentally and economically beneficial.

For us to make this happen we need to improve the educational sectors in Africa There is an urgent need for us to do more advocate for both young and old. But you know what – The standard of education in many parts of our continent has deteriorated terribly. Poor access to quality education at all levels – from basic primary education to university – is another serious and nagging problem across Africa.

The poor quality of government education and low investment in the education sector has put youths in a state of crisis in many African countries.

Because many Africans understand that education is one of the few bridges out of poverty, millions of poor families on the continent are desperate to find good schools for their children. However, the existing schools and training facilities are unaffordable for many people and are not even enough to cater to the needs of Africa's large and rapidly growing population.

How do we make education more attractive? Does anyone understand why education is crucial for Africa's growth? Should we introduce free education for all or shall we demand a fee from those that can afford it?

I invite you to be part of the solution to the waste management problem in Africa and to help and encourage others. We need to endeavor/strive for sustainable education and proper waste management for all – together we all can make a difference in our different communities.

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