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Mombasa Plastics Prize Stakeholders Forum with the finalists. Photo credit: Swahilipot

KENYA

MOMBASA PLASTICS PRIZE

The Mombasa Plastics Prize sought to encourage innovation and awareness among aspiring entrepreneurs and leaders in Mombasa County by inspiring the development of solutions that tackle ocean plastic waste mismanagement within informal settlements. With high rates of plastic pollution, the Kenyan coast is a place where innovation can be particularly impactful. Mombasa generates approximately 120 tons of plastic waste every day, of which only 5 percent is recycled. A significant portion of this waste is dumped into the ocean. This program invited young adults (ages 18-25) living in Mombasa County to help tackle this problem. The prize, funded by USAID and the Government of Canada, was managed by Challenge Works in close collaboration with a range of organizations working across the innovation ecosystem in Mombasa County.

OUR WORK

The prize, which ran from September 2022 to May 2023, supported 57 ambitious and creative aspiring entrepreneurs to help tackle the challenge of plastic waste mismanagement. The program included four phases:

SUBMISSIONS AND OUTREACH

Submissions were open from Sept. 20-Nov. 8, 2022, during which time extensive outreach took place across Mombasa. This included online activities, such as social media posts and radio features. This also included offline activities, such as information sessions across Mombasa's informal settlements, in partnership with local youth groups.

ASSESSMENT AND JUDGING

The submissions were evaluated by a team of assessors and an expert judging panel to select the finalists. Judging criteria included creativity and innovation, a clear interest in addressing plastic waste, and a strong commitment to the program.

FINALIST ACTIVITIES

In January, the 57 finalists were grouped into 14 teams and began developing their ideas during the first hackathon in Mombasa – an event that included training sessions, idea generation, business planning, and prototype development guidance. In March, the teams were brought to Nairobi for a second hackathon and to present their ideas at the Afri-Plastics Challenge Summit. Between these formal in-person hack events, the youth received expert coaching and mentorship from Kenyan organizations in the plastic management sphere, as well as support from the Mombasa County Government. All teams were awarded seed funding to help test and develop their ideas.

AWARDS AND PRIZES

In May 2023, the top three teams received cash prizes worth a total of \$60,000 USD, with the winning team taking home \$30,000 for their innovative idea to build school eco-desks out of plastic waste from informal settlements. Six to nine of the teams will have the opportunity to formalize their ideas into businesses in the upcoming Mombasa Plastics Incubator Program, expected to begin July 2023.

RAISING AWARENESS OF OCEAN PLASTIC POLLUTION IN KENYA

In June 2022, Administrator Samantha Power announced the launch of USAID's Save Our Seas Initiative to tackle ocean plastic pollution in 14 key countries and regions. Under this initiative, USAID/Kenya is supporting the implementation of Kenya's plastic policies, awareness raising, and private sector partnerships. Through its engagement of 57 youth entrepreneurs in Mombasa, the government, and plastic management organizations, the Mombasa Plastics Prize is raising awareness about the impact of ocean plastic pollution and supporting the development of viable, locally led solutions.

BUDGET:

USD \$486,000 USAID
USD \$250,000 Global Affairs Canada

DURATION: September 2022 - May 2023

ACTIVITY LOCATIONS: Mombasa

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER

Challenge Works

CO-DONOR

Global Affairs Canada

KEY PARTNERS

- Swahilipot Hub
- Proportion
- Brandspark PR

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