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## Marine plastic pollution in West Africa – the case of Ivory Coast

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Africa remains the continent with the least information on marine plastic pollution. Since 2022, we have undertaken a series to close this gap in Ivory Coast (West Africa, north of the Gulf of Guinea). The importation of raw primary materials for the plastics industry is projected to reach 1 million tons annually within the next five years. The annual per capita consumption of plastic is approximately 19–21 kg. In 2022, more than 200,000 tons of plastic were being exported to the ocean annually. Local oceanic circulation allows a significant portion of this plastic to end up in the ocean. During the rainy season, the western and eastern coastal regions around Abidjan (a city with 6 million inhabitants and the economic hub of Ivory Coast) are severely affected by plastic waste washing ashore. Littoral fisheries are also severely affected, with local fish species (e.g., *Sardinella* sp.) ingesting microplastics. This poses a significant threat to both public health and food safety in the region. In the ocean, the Ébrié Lagoon is the primary recipient of domestic plastic pollution. Microplastic accumulation within the lagoon has reached concentrations of up to 10,000 pieces per square meter. Plastic recycling, which mainly involves industrial waste, remains a marginal activity. Although a law officially banning the use of plastic bags (except for packaging bags) was introduced in 2013, it has never been implemented due to a lack of explicit political will. The trend, therefore, is for the import of raw materials and the use of plastic products, leading to a worsening pollution crisis. These various authorities struggle to address the issue, largely due to the economic importance of the plastics industry (2% of GDP and over 200,000 jobs). To combat this, a multi-stakeholder approach is being adopted, engaging all stakeholders in civil society, starting with the youngest members—schoolchildren and students. Policymakers must take action to ban single-use plastics and encourage the use of sustainable alternatives. Remediation operations are planned at both local (municipal councils) and national (senate) levels. Donors have also been approached for funding to support these operations. This presentation will highlight the key findings from our research and outline the upcoming action plan.

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