

# Flipflopi arrives in Uganda

## About The Flipflopi project

- Flipflopi is the world's first and only 100% recycled plastic sailing dhow built out of plastic picked up in Kenyan beaches and covered in 30,000 discarded flip-flops
- the Flipflopi will be in Uganda for more than a week to bring lakeshore communities and county governments together to address plastic pollution, and has just arrived from Kenya
- Flipflopi is showcasing alternative use of waste plastic and calling for consensus in the 3 lakeshore countries to ban unnecessary single-use plastics
- Lake Victoria, Africa's largest freshwater lake, said to be 'dying' and facing a myriad of environmental challenges that could impact the 40 million people living in the region

Flipflopi, the world's first sailing boat ('dhow') made from 100% recycled plastic, has embarked on a historic expedition by sailing around Africa's largest freshwater ecosystem – Lake Victoria. The voyage aims to send an urgent message to the East Africa community on the need to end the unnecessary single-use plastic scourge that is threatening the region.

Lake Victoria, supporting 40 million East Africans, symbolises the catastrophic effects of human activities and climate change, among other issues, resulting in significant water pollution, which threatens the health and livelihoods of communities.

A recent study estimated that 1 in 5 of the fish in Lake Victoria had ingested plastic. Another study recorded micro-plastics in surface waters in several sites of Lake Victoria. At the heart of the plastic waste problem is the linear 'take-make-dispose' model of consumption, as products are manufactured, bought, used briefly and then thrown away with obvious examples like plastic water and soda bottles and ketchup sachets.

The Flipflopi project showcases alternative uses of plastic waste and the possibilities of circular economy approaches to tackle pollution. The Flipflopi dhow has already spent a week in Kenyan waters and has now arrived in Uganda to bring its positive campaign to help convene communities and policy makers in discussions to help tackle plastic pollution and find new solutions in place of single-use plastics.

The Ministry of Water and Environment's Minister Sam Cheptoris said:

We cannot underscore the damaging effects plastic pollution has on our water bodies. We can and must act and save our environment from unnecessary pollution. The solution starts with all of us and we require a behaviour change of no plastic waste.

The Flipflopi is now making several more stops along the lake including Jinja, Kampala and Entebbe, running events to engage schools, communities, conservationists, business leaders and policymakers in discussions, whilst demonstrating alternate uses of waste plastic and running educational workshops with children in the area.

Ali Skanda, co-founder of the Flipflopi project and builder of the world's first recycled plastic dhow, said:

Flipflopi was built to show the world that it is possible to make valuable materials out of waste plastic, and that single-use plastic really does not make sense. We wanted to come to Lake Victoria to bring the message upstream to where the source of the problem begins, and because the pollution does not know the borders within the water it's so important we tackle this together.

The start of this expedition has exceeded our expectations. County governments in Kenya have made commitments to ban single-use plastic, hundreds of people from the fishing communities have attended events and workshops, and we are now really happy to be for the first-time, heading to our brothers and sisters in Uganda and Tanzania. Together, we hope to bring more awareness to plastic pollution and find innovative solutions that will save Lake Victoria.

The Flipflopi project is supported by several partners including the UK Government, which is committed to supporting countries across the world to protect vital ecosystems through initiatives such as [30by30](#), the forthcoming £500 million Blue Planet Fund and promotion of the [Leaders Pledge for Nature](#), which Uganda has also signed up to.

The British High Commissioner for Uganda, Kate Airey said:

Drawing attention to climate change and plastic pollution has never been so important as right now. As co-hosts for COP 26, the UK Government recognises the clear significance of taking this message from Uganda, East Africa and to the rest of the world. The Flipflopi project is an inspiring example of the urgent need to tackle plastic waste and the huge opportunity for Uganda to shift to a circular economy, that creates new products from waste materials, whilst bringing prosperity to communities, and cleaning our environment.

Flipflopi is just one example of the circular economy in action. In Uganda, the women who set up Reform Africa are turning plastic waste into sustainable and waterproof bags, whilst providing school children in rural areas with bags for free. In Kisumu, CIST Africa are making hand sanitizer from invasive water hyacinth. In Tanzania, a collective of local artisans known as 'Made by Africraft' are introducing youth and the unemployed to developing sustainable

handicrafts to create a livelihood.

Flipflopi arrived in Uganda on 12 March and coincides with Ugandan Water and Environment Week, whose theme this year now includes focus on plastic pollution.

As part of the expedition, the Flipflopi expedition is running a petition calling for a regional ban on single-use plastics. The main event on 20th March 2021 will be graced by Queen of Buganda Nnabageereka Sylvia Nagginda who will be the Guest of Honour. Flipflopi initiative is supported by various partners including the national governments of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, UNEP, The UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), the French Development Agency (AFD) and The European Union (EU).

## **Background information**

### **About Flipflopi**

The Flipflopi project is a circular economy initiative based in East Africa whose vision is a world without single-use plastic. They showcase alternate uses of waste plastic and the viability of a circular economy in Africa through education programmes, Kenyan-based plastic recycling and waste management 'innovation hubs' and advocacy and governance programmes.

### **About UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office**

The UK government through the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office is an official partner of The Flipflopi project. In November, the UK will host the UN climate change conference COP26, in Glasgow with Italy. This will provide an opportunity for the world to commit to urgent climate action on a path to a zero carbon future. The UK is partnering with East Africa to protect the marine environment, including reducing plastic litter, to allow future generations to build back better from COVID-19.

### **About the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE)**

The Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) is the government agency responsible for the sustainable development and management of water and environment resources in Uganda. Recognising the importance of water and environment resources in the country's socio-economic development, MWE through the Water Resources Institute established the annual Uganda Water and Environment Week (UWEWK) in 2018.

UWEWK is an event that seeks to contribute towards the attainment of Sustainable Socio-economic Transformation and achievement of Uganda's National Development Plan and Vision 2040. During this event, sector actors and other stakeholders dialogue and exchange knowledge and experiences on issues related to the sustainable and rational development and management of water and environment resources.

This year's event UWEWK2021, is organised under the theme "Water and Environment security for socio-economic transformation of Uganda". MWE is

partnering with the Flipflopi project to organise the Lake Victoria expedition as part of the UWEWK2021. The expedition is in line with the theme of UWEWK2021 and will help to raise public awareness about plastic pollution, and showcase innovative initiatives for turning plastic waste into wealth.

## **About UNEP**

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global voice on the environment. It provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

Clean Seas Campaign Launched by the United Nations Environment Programme in February 2017, is an initiative that works with governments, businesses and citizens towards the goal of eliminating the use of unnecessary and avoidable plastics and to promote circular economy approaches. In 2021, the campaign is advocating for urgent global action to tackle this environmental crisis from source to sea.

To date, 62 countries from around the world have joined the campaign, making Clean Seas the biggest, most powerful global coalition devoted to ending marine plastic pollution. Commitments by signatory countries now cover more than 60% of the world's coastlines. Many countries have pledged to reduce or eradicate single-use plastics from their societies, or to invest more in national recycling facilities.

## **About The European Union**

The European Union is a political and economic union of 27 Member States. Together, the European Union and its Member States are Uganda's biggest development partner. The European Union supports good governance, rule of law, democracy and human rights in Uganda. The European Union is a key multilateral, development and trade partner of Uganda, working to improve green growth and the investment climate in Uganda to create decent jobs.

## **About the French Development Agency (AFD)**

Agence Française de Développement (AFD) Group is a public financial institution that finances, supports and accelerates transitions towards a more just and sustainable world. As a French overseas aid platform for sustainable development and investment, we and our partners create shared solutions, with and for the people of the global South.

AFD's teams are active in more than 4,000 projects in the field – in the French overseas departments and some 115 countries. They strive to promote health, education and gender equality, and are working to protect common resources – peace, biodiversity and a stable climate.

## **Media resources**

A selection of [images](#) and [video footage](#) are available online.

## **Contact**

For more information or to request for interviews please contact: