

Plastic waste as building blocks for the future

Investing in a cleaner environment, job creation, and education



Due to the significant waste problem and the shortage of schools in Ivory Coast, UNICEF and its partners launched a unique and innovative program. Women from poorer communities collect plastic waste, which is then recycled into building blocks for classrooms. Thanks in part to the support of several Dutch donors, since the beginning of 2019, we have been able to build 359 classrooms, giving approximately 17,950 children access to education.

These results are a concrete reflection of UNICEF's approach to the market for recycled plastic waste in Côte d'Ivoire. Our commitment to constructing new classrooms to improve access to quality education for children will not only lead to more educated individuals but also lift women out of poverty while helping to keep our planet clean.

4 GOALS WE SET:

- 1. Classroom Construction:** We are contributing to the construction of 528 classrooms in areas with a shortage of schools, all made from recycled plastic. With funds from the Netherlands, at least two schools, totaling five classrooms, will be built. Each classroom will be equipped with educational materials.
- 2. Teacher Training and School Facilities:** With support from the Netherlands, we are training at least 135 teachers to improve their pedagogical skills. Additionally, we are providing 16 schools with toilets and water points.
- 3. Access to Education:** We are giving 25,000 children access to education. The five classrooms built with support from the Netherlands will provide access to 250 children.
- 4. Development of New Prototypes:** Since January 2023, we have been contributing to the development of new prototypes made from recycled waste from Côte d'Ivoire.

4 RESULTS WE ACHIEVED:

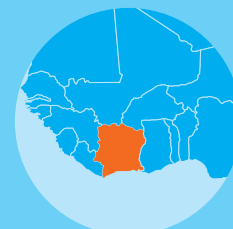
- 1. Classroom Construction:** As of the beginning of 2019, a total of 359 classrooms have been built. Currently, 60 classrooms are under construction, including the 5 classrooms funded by the Netherlands. It is expected that 96 classrooms will be completed by the end of the year. In total, approximately 3,200 tons of plastic waste have been recycled through these efforts.
- 2. Teacher Training and School Facilities:** UNICEF has trained 70 of the 135 teachers in improving their pedagogical skills.
- 3. Access to Education:** To date, around 17,950 children have received access to education.
- 4. Development of New Prototypes:** Several new prototypes made from recycled plastic waste have been developed, including a school bench. The design of the school bench is currently under review.

Meanwhile, we have also completed one of our goals: training 150 women in collecting, safely storing, and processing plastic waste. The training also includes crucial skills such as cooperation, communication, and entrepreneurship. These women receive a fair price for their work, enabling them to build a new future for their families. The training is now provided by our partner who operates the recycling plant.

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COTE d'IVOIRE

COUNTRY INFORMATION



26 MILLION
inhabitants



13 MILLION CHILDREN
or 50 percent of the population



Almost
1 in 10
children dies before the age of 5



1.5 MILLION
children and youth do not go to school



What we have achieved

Construction of New Classrooms

In the past six months, UNICEF and its partners have completed the construction of 60 new classrooms using plastic building blocks. The total number of classrooms built now stands at 359, which means 67% of the overall goal has been achieved. Approximately 3,200 tons of plastic waste have been recycled and processed into building blocks at the recycling plant in Abidjan.

Quality Education (SDG4), Environmentally Conscious Children, and Involved Parents

To improve the quality of education, UNICEF has trained 70 teachers in the past six months, focusing on their pedagogical skills and teaching methods for reading, writing, and arithmetic. Additionally, UNICEF has provided educational kits that teach children about the environmental impact of plastic waste. Integrating topics such as climate and environment into the curriculum is a key part of the program, as environmentally conscious children grow into environmentally conscious adults. This is crucial for a clean and healthy future in Côte d'Ivoire.

Engaged Communities

In the past six months, UNICEF organized various informational sessions for parents to increase their commitment to sending their children to school. We aim to help parents understand the importance of education by highlighting its positive impact on their children's future. Furthermore, we involve communities and parents in the construction of classrooms. The relatively simple construction process using plastic building blocks allows us to train community members to assist in the building, which enhances their dedication to their children's education.

The Innovation Dossier

UNICEF and its partners have developed several new prototypes made from recycled plastic waste. Currently, final adjustments are being made to a school bench made from plastic waste. This model is pending approval from the Ministry of Education. Once approved, the school benches can be produced on a larger scale, enabling UNICEF to purchase them and initiate a pilot phase.

The Challenges

Construction companies in Côte d'Ivoire are very busy, which sometimes causes delays in building new classrooms. Many of the construction companies UNICEF works with have recently hired new staff. UNICEF and its partners are training this new staff in classroom construction to better address these challenges.



Koné Siaka, 55 years old, is the president of the parents' association at Tchèbakro School in southwestern Côte d'Ivoire. Siaka says, "I am very happy that we finally have a school in our village. As president of the parents' council, I had to request assistance from the local community at certain times during the construction of the classrooms. The local community has been very supportive, available, and involved in the creation of these classrooms."

The children were also highly motivated to attend their first lessons in these classrooms built with recycled plastic bricks. "I am convinced that the results will improve," says Siaka. "The village lifestyle will change because it is clear that this school will produce well-educated individuals."

Involving the local community in the construction of the plastic classrooms is a key part of the project, aimed at creating and ensuring ownership and engagement.

Future Plans

In the upcoming period, UNICEF will focus on completing the construction of new classrooms. We will also prioritize the installation of water points and toilets at the schools, as good access to clean water, sanitary facilities, and hygiene is crucial for academic success.

Additionally, UNICEF expects the evaluation process for the newly developed prototypes, such as school benches, to be completed soon. Once UNICEF can initiate a pilot phase with these new products, the market for recycled waste in Côte d'Ivoire can be further stimulated, and the positive effects can continue to benefit the community.