



Mercy Ochieng Odhiambo, national UN Volunteer Community Specialist with UN-Habitat, at a dumpsite in Nairobi to meet with waste pickers and hear about their challenges.

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## UN Volunteers with UN-Habitat help communities overcome the waste management crisis in Africa

UN-Habitat's vision of "a better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world" is bold and ambitious. The agency works with partners to build inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities. UN Volunteers Mercy Ochieng Odhiambo and Shiho Jinno are helping communities in Kenya overcome the waste management crisis. Their focus is particularly on the impoverished in urban centres, who are directly affected when waste is discarded and burnt on city streets. Not only does this lead to air pollution, disease and health issues; it also increases poverty and inequality.

UN Volunteer Shiho Jinno (Japan) and national UN Volunteer Mercy Ochieng Odhiambo serve under UN-Habitat's Waste Management Initiative, which aims to create a safe and healthy environment for all and ensure that no one is left behind in the process.

Shiho is a Waste Management Officer, while Merci is a Community Specialist. Both UN Volunteers engage with [Waste Wise Cities](#) and the [African Clean Cities Platform](#) (ACCP),

where more than 120 African cities have joined together to improve the Municipal Solid Waste Management system by 2030.

The volunteers have assisted with the [Waste Wise Cities Tool](#) in 18 cities in 13 African countries so far. This tool is a rapid assessment and monitoring methodology based on SDG Indicator 11.6.1, namely the proportion of urban solid waste regularly collected and with adequate final discharge out of total urban solid waste generated, by cities.

In addition, they supported these cities in identifying policy and infrastructure investment gaps through the survey and developing projects for sustainable municipal solid waste management.

Shiho and Mercy's contributions to help waste management crisis are manifold. To respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, they developed a [project](#) to set up five handwashing stations and to distribute personal protective equipment (PPEs), such as face masks and protective gloves, in Dandora dumpsite. This site is surrounded by low-income households in Nairobi and accommodates a large number of waste pickers.

UNEP, African Member Cities and the private sector for waste management practitioners organized five waste webinar series. So far, about 300 participants attended these series in 2022.

Additionally, Shiho and Mercy supported the team in organizing the [Third ACCP Assembly](#), an official side event of [TICAD 8](#). Almost 566 people joined this event, including all ACCP member countries and cities, and adopted the [Tunis Action Guidance](#), which will guide the planning of activities over the next three years.

Through ongoing activities, the volunteers are raising awareness on the [willingness to pay for waste collection services](#), and further education on core topics for the waste management crisis, such as plastic pollution and open waste burning.

“ Mercy and Shiho have been instrumental in implementing relevant activities under our waste management initiatives, and flexibly respond to different work demands and requests. Building on their experiences, they successfully supported efficient operations. --Nao Takeuchi, Human Settlement Officer with UNEP and the supervisor of Mercy and Shiho

Mercy assists the team in gaining a realistic picture of waste management in low- and middle-income settlements. Shiho is involved in technical and external communications with the relevant departments and organizations.

"I feel privileged to visit communities and learn about people's experiences, collect information and promote our initiative," Mercy shares. "I can contribute my knowledge and expertise in waste management and am encouraged to deliver more tangible results on the ground," Shiho complements.



 East and Southern Africa

• urban waste • Inequality • plastic waste reduction • Japan

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation](#) [SDG 10: Reduced inequalities](#) [SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)