



# Transforming Marine Wastes into Art: A Case Study of Participatory Environmental Advocacy and Blue Economy Promotion Along Lagos Coastlines

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## Abstract

Marine pollution along Nigeria's coastline is arguably one of the most critical environmental challenges in West Africa, threatening biodiversity, coastal livelihoods and the development of the nation's Blue Economy. Nigerian artists and art institutions have been largely absent from environmental advocacy work, despite the country's 853 kilometres of Atlantic seaboard and its rich tradition of visual culture. This case study chronicles the first phase of a TETFund-sponsored ongoing project titled "Transforming Marine Wastes into Art" implemented by Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH), Lagos, using participatory art practice, community engagement and upcycled marine debris as integrated tools for environmental advocacy and promotion of the Blue Economy. This case study documents the rationale of the project, design, early experience of implementation and community outcomes, based on field activities carried out in three coastal sites (Wave Beach (Elegushi), Gberufun Island (Badagry) and Ilaje Waterfront (Bariga)) between February and April 2026, and baseline survey data collected from 500 respondents. Results

gathered demonstrate tangible progress in community engagement, stakeholder partnerships, and waste plastic collection, with nearly 487 kg of marine debris collected across three locations. The survey results also indicate a significant gap in awareness among members of the coastal community regarding the Blue Economy: only 10% of respondents rated themselves as very familiar with the concept. They also reaffirm strong community support for art-based advocacy approaches (76% agreement) and high latent pro-environmental behavioural intentions. The case study provides the need for transferable lessons for art educators, environmental practitioners, community development workers and policymakers seeking replicable models for integrating creative practice into marine conservation and sustainable development initiatives in Nigerian and African coastal contexts.

## Summary

Lagos has a coastline that sustains millions of people, yet it is also one of the most polluted in Africa. This case study follows the first phase of "Transforming Marine Wastes into Art," a project funded by TETFund and led by Yaba College of Technology,

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*which set out to do something relatively simple but largely untried in Nigeria: use art to make people care about what is happening to their ocean.*

*The project worked across three coastal communities: Wave Beach in Elegushi, Gberufun Island in Badagry, and Ilaje Waterfront in Bariga between February and April 2026. The team collected debris, ran community clean-ups, engaged local and traditional leaders, and surveyed 500 coastal residents to understand what people already knew, felt, and were willing to do.*

*What they found was revealing. Nearly 487 kilograms of marine waste were collected in just three site visits. Yet despite living beside the water, 68% of respondents knew little or nothing about the Blue Economy, the national framework that ties ocean health to jobs and growth. That gap between physical proximity and policy awareness is precisely the problem this project is designed to address. Encouragingly, 76% of respondents believed that art could effectively raise awareness of marine pollution, and many expressed a genuine willingness to change their behaviour.*

*The study ultimately makes the case that when art, community participation, and cultural respect work together, they can reach people in a ways that policy documents and information campaigns cannot.*

**Key Words:** Marine waste; Blue Economy; Participatory art; Environmental advocacy

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background and Rationale**

Nigeria's relationship with its coastline is one of profound contradiction. The country's 853 kilometres of Atlantic coastline sustains millions of livelihoods through artisanal fishing, marine commerce and coastal tourism, but is also among the most polluted along Africa's coast. Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital and one of the most populous cities in Africa, is a case in point. It is a city defined by its proximity to the ocean, but where decades of poor solid waste management have left the beaches and waterfronts under siege by plastic waste, discarded fishing gear and industrial effluents (Ansa & Ndimele, 2020). Globally, more than eight million metric tonnes of plastic are dumped into the ocean every year (Jambeck et al., 2015). Nigeria is one of the major contributors, a direct result of population pressure, rapid

urbanisation and structural failures in the collection and processing of municipal waste, which negatively affects the blue economy (UNEP, 2021).

The Blue Economy is broadly defined as the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, social equity and the preservation of marine ecosystems, and it provides a compelling framework for reimagining Nigeria's relationship with its coastal heritage (Pauli, 2010; Sakhuja, 2015). The Blue Economy, endorsed at the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water), comprises a set of interconnected pillars of ocean-centred development, including fisheries, maritime transport, renewable offshore energy, marine biotechnology and coastal tourism. Braimah (2023) and Olaoti (2024) noted that Nigeria's Blue Economy agenda remains largely at the technical and policy levels. The agenda has not yet penetrated public consciousness or the culture of coastal communities. The communication gap is not simply an information deficit, rather, it is the lack of culturally resonant, that is emotionally engaging the platforms that can turn abstract policy frameworks into a lived community concern.

Art has always been one of the most powerful tools we have as humans to bridge exactly this sort of gap. From the reverence of the ancient Minoans for the sea in a ceramic and fresco tradition to the contemporary environmental installations of Alejandro Durán in Mexico and John Dahlsen in Australia, creative practice has shown a persistent capacity to make environmental realities visible, emotionally accessible and socially actionable (Carelli, 2018; Durán, 2018; Dahlsen, 2015). In Nigeria, however, this potential remains largely unrealised in marine conservation. Historically, Nigerian artists and art institutions have concentrated on heritage preservation and aesthetic production while paying less attention to activist or advocacy engagement (Sorunke & Ndubuisi, 2024). Meanwhile, the rich indigenous visual traditions of the Niger Delta have long drawn on aquatic imagery and symbolism but have not been systematically mobilised for contemporary environmental campaigning (Ndubuisi & Nweke, 2015).

The project, which documents "Transforming Marine Wastes into Art: A Strategic Approach to Enhancing Nigeria's Blue Economy," represents a deliberate, funded institutional effort to close the gap between Nigeria's art-practice community and its environmental advocacy landscape. By transforming beach-collected marine debris into large-scale sculptures depicting endangered marine species,

hosting participatory community workshops, and deploying multimodal exhibitions in prominent public venues, the project seeks simultaneously to remediate coastal environments, educate and mobilise coastal communities, and advance the cultural conditions necessary for Nigeria's Blue Economy to achieve its potential.

## **1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Case Study**

This case study serves three purposes: to provide detailed documentation of the project's design, theoretical foundations, and first-quarter implementation experience. The aim is to create a replicable record for other institutions considering similar initiatives. Second, it analyses the community outcomes, partnership dynamics, and material outcomes of the first three field activities, identifying both successes and challenges to inform project management in complex coastal environments. Third, it presents and interprets the project's baseline survey findings (N=500), contextualising them within the theoretical frameworks that inform the project's intervention logic and drawing implications for the project's subsequent phases. The case study is organised as follows: Section 2 presents the theoretical and conceptual framework. Section 3 will review the relevant literature. The section describes the case study methodology. Section 5 will present the case narrative across the three Q1 field sites. Section 6 reports and analyzes baseline survey findings. Section 7 will discuss transferable lessons, and Section 8 will conclude with reflections on the project's significance and future directions.

## **3. Literature Review**

### **3.1 Marine Pollution and Coastal Communities in Lagos**

Ansa and Ndimele (2020) documented the ecological dimensions of marine pollution in Lagos and how the pollutants are affecting Lagos coastal waters, microplastics, heavy metals, petrochemical residues and their measurable impacts on fish biodiversity, mangrove extent, and the health of estuarine ecosystems. The IUCN (2022) identifies several species found in Nigerian waters as facing an elevated risk of extinction. Some of the species include the sea whale, dolphin, Great hammerhead shark, sea turtle, and sand tiger shark, all of which are targets of the project's sculptural installations. UNEP (2021) situates these local conditions within the global marine pollution crisis and states that plastic waste now contaminates every ocean on Earth, from Arctic ice sheets to deep-sea trenches.

It is worth noting that the coastal communities in Lagos depend on marine fisheries for food as their

primary livelihood. But the socio-economic consequences of pollution are profound. The condition of the coastline has led to a decline in fish stocks, attributable to habitat degradation, thereby directly threatening household incomes and food security for millions of residents (Olaoti, 2024). Meanwhile, the promise of the Blue Economy, including marine tourism revenue that could flow to coastal communities through beach development, dive tourism, and waterfront hospitality, remains unrealised precisely because pollution deters visitors and investors (Braithwaite, 2023).

### **3.2 Art-Based Environmental Advocacy: Global Precedents**

The international literature on environmental art offers numerous precedents directly relevant to the present project. Durán's (2018) "Washed Up" installations transform ocean plastic sorted by colour and country of origin into landscape-scale visual statements about the global geography of consumption; the work has been exhibited across North and Central America and has generated substantial media coverage of coastal pollution issues. In Australia, an artist who specializes in ocean-debris sculptures has catalysed beach-clean-up volunteer movements in several coastal communities. The clean-up action demonstrates art's capacity to convert aesthetic experience into civic action (Dahlsen, 2015). The effect is seen in the underwater sculpture parks created by Jason deCaires Taylor. The parks function as galleries, artificial habitats for marine life, and tourist attractions. These works embodied the Blue Economy's vision for integrating ecological and economic value (Fastcapita.com, 2024).

Gabrys (2014) theorises these practices as instances of "citizen sensing" modes of environmental monitoring and communication that engage non-expert publics as active participants rather than passive recipients of scientific information. Kagan (2011) argues that ecological art constitutes a distinct form of cultural intelligence. Complex environmental art can convey the emotional weight of a crisis in a specific environment better than technical reports and policy documents. Thompson (2018) discusses the psychological effects of engaging with public art, noting that installations promote empathy towards non-human species and a collective sense of purpose for conservation action. The theoretical and empirical supports for art-based advocacy dovetail in validating the foundational premise of the present project.

### **3.3 Participatory Techniques and Community Involvement in Environmental Contexts in Nigeria**

**Participative approaches in the community were widely discussed in the Nigerian literature on community-based environmental interventions.**

Similarly, Ndubuisi and Nweke (2015) reveal that community-conscious programmes that engage communities as active participants rather than passive beneficiaries tend to produce far better results on measures of knowledge retention, attitude change and behaviour modification. Bryan-Wilson et al. (2016) extend this finding internationally, arguing that the embodied, collaborative, and socially embedded nature of participatory art practice makes it uniquely effective at generating the “civic belonging” that underpins collective environmental stewardship.

This case study showcases the relevant role of traditional leadership structures in enabling or constraining community environmental engagement in Nigerian coastal contexts, as several cases show that environmental programmes that bypassed traditional authority structures, focusing exclusively on formal government or NGO partnerships, achieved limited community uptake and poor sustainability of outcomes. Conversely, programmes that secured the endorsement and active participation of community leaders at the design stage consistently outperformed those that did not, a finding with direct implications for the project’s engagement with Gberufun Island’s Baale as documented in this case study.

### **3.4 Music, Soundscape, and Multimodal Communication**

The integration of music and soundscape into the project’s advocacy design draws on an established body of research in environmental communication and in raising awareness within a given community. North and Hargreaves (2008) demonstrate that music functions as an emotional amplifier for associated visual stimuli. Also, music increases both the intensity of affective responses and the durability of associated memories. Nweke and Omaren (2022) combined music and soundscape in a Nigerian environmental exhibition and concluded that combining sculpture with purpose-composed soundscape significantly increases visitor engagement metrics, including dwell time, dialogue initiation, and reported behavioural intention. According to Li and Liu (2023), music is capable of playing a significant role in community sensitization through what they describe as “social resonance.” Their finding is that shared musical and aesthetic experiences strengthen social connections

and build collective efficacy among community members. Such qualities are essential for mobilizing and sustaining collective responses to environmental challenges.

## **Methodology**

### **4.1 Case Study Design**

The transforming Marine Wastes into Art project serves as the main case of this study, which is an embedded single-case study design (Yin, 2018). Within this broader case, three field sites, Wave Beach (Elegushi), Gberufun Island (Badagry), and Ilaje Waterfront (Bariga) are treated as embedded units of analysis. The case study approach was considered particularly suitable because it allows for a detailed examination of processes as they unfold within their real-life settings.

This becomes especially important when trying to understand community collaboration, how fieldwork unfolds on the ground, and how artistic interventions shift and evolve. All of which are deeply tied to local realities that numbers and statistics cannot fully capture (Stake, 1995).

The study leans on what Stake (1995) calls an instrumental case study lens, which means the project is examined not just for what it is in isolation, but for what it can teach us beyond itself. By tracing how the project took shape, how it was carried out, and how different coastal communities actually lived and experienced it, the research seeks to get at something deeper namely, what really makes art-based environmental advocacy land and land meaningfully in Nigeria’s coastal regions

### **4.2 Data Sources**

The case study of this project is based on four primary data sources. The first is participant observation records. From all three Q1 field activities, provide qualitative accounts of community dynamics, engagement quality, logistical challenges, and emergent outcomes not captured in formal reports. Second, the project’s official Q1 progress report prepared for TETFund provides systematic documentation of activities, outputs, and KPI achievement across the reporting period. Third, a structured baseline survey (N=500) administered to respondents from Lagos coastal communities provides quantitative data on Blue Economy awareness, attitudes toward marine pollution, and predispositions toward art-based advocacy. Fourth, stakeholder engagement records, including meeting notes from courtesy visits with traditional leadership, beach management authorities, and community organisations, provide contextual evidence about

partnership development. Data triangulation across these four sources strengthens the validity and reliability of the case study's conclusions (Yin, 2018).

### **4.3 Ethical Considerations**

The ethical guidelines of Yaba College of Technology and the requirements of the TETFund research funding framework were adhered to in carrying out the research. The consent of all survey respondents and interview participants was obtained. Community engagement activities were conducted with the prior knowledge and active endorsement of relevant traditional and formal authorities at each site. All community members, including traditional leaders named in this case study, have provided consent for their identification in research outputs.

## **Results/Findings**

### **Case Narrative: First Quarter Field Activities**

#### **5.1 Wave Beach, Elegushi , 20 February 2026**

The project requires field work, and the first field activity took place at Wave Beach, Elegushi. This site was considered because the beach, which is among the most popular recreational beaches in Lagos, attracts large numbers of visitors from across the city, particularly on weekends. Situated along the busy Victoria Island–Lekki corridor, the beach experiences heavy human activity, making it both a major destination for leisure and a location vulnerable to significant waste accumulation.

The popularity of the Elegushi beach made it possible for the researchers to engage with a diverse urban audience and relate the environmental message of the research. The beach's high visibility and constant flow of visitors made it an ideal setting for drawing attention to the issue of marine waste pollution and showcasing the potential of creative, community-driven responses. By launching the initiative at such a prominent location, the team hoped to raise public awareness while demonstrating how discarded materials could be transformed into meaningful works of art.

During the fieldwork, plastic and nylon waste totaling approximately 198 kilograms were collected, the highest yield of the three Q1 sites, reflecting both the beach's high visitor footfall and the density of plastic bottle and nylon bag waste characteristic of recreational beach environments. The waste product collected for upcycling into artwork included plastic containers (89 kg), nylon bags and plastic film (50 kg). Also, fishing ropes and nets (24 kg), driftwood (16 kg), sea glass and shells (10 kg), and assorted debris (9 kg). In order to make an impact and sustain the lesson learned by the community, a 100-litre waste bin

bearing the TETFund and YABATECH logos was donated to the beach management in recognition of their partnership and as a tangible contribution to ongoing environmental sanitation efforts. Stakeholder engagement with beach management culminated in a signed partnership agreement. The agreement provides the research team with ongoing access to the site and management cooperation for future workshops and exhibitions.

#### **5.2 Gberufun Island, Badagry, 26 February 2026**

The second field activity presented greater logistical complexity. Gberufun is an Island that is only accessible by canoe and boat. The Island is in the Badagry waterway, west of Lagos. It is home to a traditional fishing community presided over by High Chief Samuel Hunpe, the community's Baale. The research team's decision to lead the visit with a formal courtesy call on the Baale before undertaking any environmental activity reflects a deliberate application of the lesson documented in the Nigerian community engagement literature: that traditional authority endorsement is a prerequisite, not a supplement, for genuine community participation (Olaoti, 2024).

High Chief Hunpe warmly received the team. The High Chief expressed strong support of his community towards the project's environmental and cultural dimensions, noting that the community's historical identity as a fishing settlement made marine conservation a matter of direct personal and communal significance. The Chief's endorsement transformed the clean-up activity from an external imposition into a community-sanctioned event, with island residents participating willingly. The team's clean-up jingle was taught and sung while cleaning. The clean-up was conducted at the historic Point of No Return Beach, a site with high historic and cultural significance as the location from which enslaved Africans were transported across the Atlantic, lending the environmental activity a resonant cultural dimension that connected conservation with historical memory and cultural pride.

Debris collection at Gberufun Island yielded approximately 143 kilograms, lower than Elegushi in volume but higher in the proportion of fishing-related materials ropes, nets, and driftwood characteristic of an artisanal fishing economy. This material composition is of particular artistic value: fishing ropes and nets feature prominently in the sculptural designs as symbols of entanglement, directly referencing one of the primary threats faced by the endangered marine species the installations will depict. A branded 100-litre waste bin was donated to

the community. The challenges encountered at Gberufun water-only access, limited prior exposure to formal environmental programmes, and the need to navigate traditional protocol are well documented in the project's Q1 report as lessons for future remote-site engagement.

### **5.3 Ilaje Waterfront, Bariga, 4 April 2026**

The third Q1 field activity introduced an element that distinguished it significantly from the other two. The clean-up was simultaneously done with the performance of artist Jelili Atiku, whose live environmental art performance ran concurrently with the waterfront clean-up. Ilaje is a densely populated informal waterfront settlement on the Lagos Lagoon in Bariga. The community is characterised by very high population density, proximity to domestic waste streams, and significant accumulation of nylon bags from household consumption. The presence of Atiku's performance, which engaged environmental themes through movement, sound, and interaction with the community, created a powerful demonstration of the project's core thesis: that art and environmental action are not separate activities but mutually reinforcing dimensions of a single social practice.

The combined effect of the performance, the clean-up, and the jingle generated considerable community energy. Residents who had not been pre-recruited as participants stopped to engage with both the clean-up and the artistic activity, with several expressing spontaneous interest in participating in subsequent workshops. Community discussions initiated during the event engaged explicitly with the relationship between environmental sanitation and economic development, precisely the Blue Economy conceptual bridge the project aims to build, suggesting that the community possessed existing conceptual resources for linking environmental quality to livelihood outcomes that the project could activate and amplify.

Marine waste collection at Ilaje yielded approximately 146 kilograms. The waste is dominated by nylon bags (51 kg) and plastic containers (44 kg), consistent with the site's household waste exposure. A branded waste bin was donated to the community. Partnerships were established with neighbourhood leadership structures and with residents who expressed interest in participating in the workshop. The site's environmental assessment identified Ilaje as one of the most severely polluted waterfronts in the study, with waste accumulation across multiple surface and subsurface layers, requiring sustained, multi-visit remediation—a challenge noted in the Q1 report and factored into subsequent site-visit planning.

### **5.4 Aggregate Quarter 1 (Q1) Outcomes**

Across the three Q1 sites, the project achieved the following aggregate outcomes. A total of approximately 487 kilograms of marine debris was collected — 48.7% of the 1,000-kilogram SMART objective target — from three of the five planned sites, with two further sites (Tarkwa Bay and Ibeju Beach) projected to yield 172 and 156 kilograms, respectively, in Q2, bringing projected total collection to 1,115 kilograms, exceeding the target by 12%. Branded waste bins were donated to all three sites. The donation of the waste bins is to instill the project's environmental message in each community's material infrastructure. The advocacy jingle was successfully introduced and adopted at all three sites. Formal partnerships were established with beach management authorities, traditional leadership structures, and community organisations.

## **6. BASELINE SURVEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **6.1 Respondent Profile**

The baseline survey (N=500) was administered to respondents drawn from Lagos coastal communities across the five planned project sites and surrounding areas. The sample was near-gender-balanced (48% male, 47% female, 5% other/prefer not to say). The largest age cohort was 26–35 years (35%), followed by 36–50 years (24%) and 18–25 years (28%). Educational attainment was relatively high, with 42% holding tertiary qualifications (OND/HND/BSc) and 16% holding postgraduate degrees a profile consistent with the mixed residential and commercial character of Lagos coastal communities. Approximately 50% of respondents maintained regular or residential relationships with the Lagos coastline.

### **6.2 Blue Economy Awareness**

The survey's most significant finding concerns the profound deficit in awareness of the Blue Economy among the respondent population. Only 10% of respondents described themselves as very familiar with the Blue Economy concept. 30% reported no familiarity at all, and 38% described themselves as only slightly familiar. Cumulatively, 68% of respondents had little or no prior engagement with the concept. This figure validates the project's advocacy rationale and aligns with Braimah's (2023) documentation of the Blue Economy's limited penetration into Nigerian public discourse. This gap is particularly striking given that the majority of respondents live or work in proximity to the coastline, suggesting that physical proximity to marine environments does not, in itself, generate engagement with the conceptual and policy framework of the Blue

Economy.

### **6.3 Marine Pollution Perceptions**

Despite the limited awareness of the Blue Economy by the members of the coastal community, respondents expressed strong concern about marine pollution. A mean concern score of 4.01 out of 5 on a Likert scale confirms that coastal pollution is a significant source of anxiety across the study population. Sixty percent of respondents rated the current state of Lagos beaches as poor or very poor a perception consistent with the environmental conditions documented at the project's field sites. These findings illustrate the gap that the project's conceptual framework is designed to close: communities are aware of and concerned about marine pollution but lack the conceptual vocabulary and institutional connections to translate that concern into engagement with the Blue Economy's constructive, opportunity-oriented agenda.

### **6.4 Attitudes Toward Art-Based Advocacy**

Survey responses on the role of art in environmental advocacy were among the most theoretically significant findings. 76% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that art installations can effectively raise public awareness of marine pollution. Seventy-two percent agreed that combining music and soundscapes with visual installations strengthens environmental messaging. These endorsements are particularly notable given that 60% of respondents reported no prior exposure to environmental art exhibitions demonstrating that positive attitudes toward art-based advocacy are not merely a function of prior experience with such work but rather reflect an intuitive recognition of art's communicative power. This finding aligns with Thompson's (2018) observation that public art generates empathic responses even among audiences encountering environmental art for the first time.

### **6.5 Community Participation and Behavioural Intentions**

Only 30% of respondents had previously participated in a beach clean-up, yet 52% of those who had not done so expressed willingness to participate in the future. This gap between prior participation and expressed intention indicates a substantial reservoir of latent civic engagement a community in the contemplation-to-preparation transition of the BCM that the project's workshops and co-creation activities are positioned to activate. Regarding broader behavioural intentions, 72% indicated a willingness to reduce single-use plastic consumption, 60% expressed a willingness to participate in future clean-ups, and 68% planned to share marine conservation information with their social networks. 82% expressed support for

replicating the project model in other Nigerian coastal regions, providing a strong community mandate for the project's scalability objectives.

## **7. Discussion: Transferable Lessons**

### **7.1 Traditional Leadership as an Entry Point, Not a Courtesy**

The experience at Gberufun Island offers perhaps the most transferable lesson of the Q1 activities. The decision to begin the Gberufun fieldwork with a courtesy visit to the Baale of the community, to High Chief Samuel Hunpe, before starting environmental activity was a cultural protocol that determined the character of the activity on the Island. The Baale's endorsement transformed the research team from external visitors into community-authorised actors. The new status of the team facilitated the quality of community participation that would have been difficult or impossible to achieve. For art educators, environmental practitioners, and researchers seeking to replicate the project's model in other Nigerian or African coastal contexts, this lesson needs to be emphasised: traditional leadership engagement should be built into the project's architecture from the outset, not added as a diplomatic afterthought.

### **7.2 The Advocacy Jingle as a Scalable Communication Tool**

The enthusiasm with which the advocacy jingle was adopted across all three field sites including at Gberufun Island, where prior exposure to formal environmental programmes was minimal speaks to the power of music as a community communication tool in contexts where literacy levels, media access, and engagement with written environmental materials may be limited. The jingle's repetitive structure ensures that the conservation message survives beyond the field work by the team, continuing to circulate through communities via oral tradition long after the departure of the research team. The jingle serves as a low-cost, high-retention advocacy instrument with clear scalability potential across diverse coastal communities, and warrants further documentation and development as a replicable component of community environmental engagement programmes.

### **7.3 Art Performance as Community Activation**

The presence of Jelili Atiku in Ilaje demonstrated that art generally is a strong tool that can activate community mechanisms in environmental fieldwork contexts. The aesthetically compelling performance of Atiku, alongside the practical clean-up activity, attracted attention from community members

who might not have engaged in a clean-up on their own, extending the project's community reach beyond its recruited volunteer base. For project designers considering similar initiatives, the lesson is clear: environmental fieldwork need not be limited to technical remediation activities. Integrating artistic practice into the fieldwork itself not only into the subsequent exhibition phase can significantly amplify community engagement and, in real time, demonstrate the project's thesis about the relationship between art and environmental action.

#### **7.4 Matching Material Collection Strategy to Site Characteristics**

The different material profiles documented across the three Q1 sites plastic bottles and nylon bags dominant at Elegushi, fishing ropes and driftwood proportionally significant at Gberufun, nylon bags from household sources dominant at Ilaje point to the importance of site-specific collection strategies. For the sculptural production phase, this material diversity is an artistic resource: sculptures can be designed to incorporate materials characteristic of the community where they will ultimately be exhibited, strengthening the artwork's site-specific resonance and local ownership. This insight should inform the planning of Q2 clean-up activities at Tarkwa Bay (with a dominance of fishing ropes, given its proximity to Lagos Harbour) and Ibeju Beach (with a dominance of household plastics, reflecting the Ibeju-Lekki corridor's residential growth).

### **8, Conclusion**

#### **8.1 Discussion: Transferable Lessons And Recommendations For Implementation**

The first-quarter field activities generated not only empirical findings but a set of actionable recommendations grounded in lived implementation experience. These recommendations are addressed specifically to practitioners, policymakers, and institutional partners seeking to replicate or scale the project model and are organised around the collaborative structures that each recommendation requires to move from principle to practice.

#### **8.2 Formalising Traditional Leadership as a Structural Partner, Not a Ceremonial Contact**

The experience at Gberufun Island demonstrated conclusively that the endorsement of the community's Baale in the person of Chief Samuel Hunpe was an operational avenue for meaningful community participation. However, the lesson extends well beyond protocol. What Gberufun revealed is that traditional leadership structures represent an underutilised governance layer with the legitimacy,

reach, and moral authority to mobilise coastal communities in ways that neither government agencies nor NGOs can replicate independently.

In order to move this project from field observation to systemic practice, there is need for the implementing institutions to pursue a tripartite collaboration with the Lagos State Council of Obas and Chiefs, the National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), and local government area administrations at each target site. This collaboration should result in the formalisation of traditional leaders as project co-conveners, not simply recipients of courtesy visits, with defined roles in community mobilisation, conflict resolution, and the sustainability of environmental practices after project completion. NICO, whose mandate explicitly includes the integration of cultural institutions into national development programmes, is particularly well positioned to provide the institutional bridge between traditional governance structures and the formal research and policy environment. Other art institutions that are implementing similar projects should seek and sign memoranda of understanding with traditional councils at the project design stage, including provisions for joint ownership of project outputs, recognition of community contributions in all public communications, and structured pathways for community leaders to participate in the exhibitions and public dialogues that follow field activities.

#### **8.3 Scaling the Advocacy Jingle Through National and Community Broadcasting Infrastructure**

The adoption of the advocacy jingle across all three Q1 field sites, including at Gberufun Island where engagement with formal environmental programmes had previously been minimal, establishes music as the project's most immediately scalable communication instrument. The jingle's oral transmission properties mean that it continues circulating in communities through informal social networks long after the research team has departed. This is a significant asset that the project has not yet fully mobilised through structured distribution channels.

To realise the jingle's full advocacy potential, the project team should pursue a formal partnership with the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and with Lagos State's community radio stations, particularly those with demonstrated reach into coastal and waterfront settlements. A collaboration with the Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON) could enable the jingle's integration into public service announcement slots across multiple radio and

television platforms. At the community level, partnerships with local market associations, boat operators' unions, and artisanal fishers' cooperatives should be formalised to ensure the jingle is introduced and reinforced through the social networks most relevant to coastal livelihoods. The Federal Ministry of Environment's public awareness directorate offers a further collaboration opportunity, particularly given the alignment between the project's advocacy agenda and the ministry's obligations under Nigeria's commitments to Sustainable Development Goal 14. Exploring co-branding of the jingle under the ministry's public communication framework would significantly increase its reach and institutional legitimacy, while reducing replication costs for future implementing institutions.

#### **8.4 Institutionalizing Art Performance as a Component of Environmental Fieldwork Through Cultural Agency Partnerships**

The Ilaje Waterfront activity demonstrated that the presence of artist Jelili Atiku's live performance transformed a community clean-up into a public cultural event capable of attracting spontaneous participation from residents who had not been pre-recruited. This finding carries significant implications for how environmental fieldwork is designed and resourced. The conventional model of environmental remediation, which separates awareness creation from practical clean-up activities and treats artistic engagement as a downstream exhibition phase, is less effective than an integrated model in which artistic performance and environmental action occur simultaneously and in public.

Implementing this model at scale requires collaboration with the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), and other state arts councils, particularly the Lagos State Council for Arts and Culture (LSCAC), which has an existing mandate to deploy artists in public engagement contexts. A formal partnership framework between NCAC, LSCAC, and art institutions implementing environmental projects would enable the systematic identification and deployment of performance artists as community engagement specialists embedded within environmental fieldwork teams, rather than as occasional invited contributors. The Goethe-Institut Lagos, the British Council Nigeria, and the French Institute (Institut Français) in Nigeria each maintain artist development programmes with environmental and social themes and represent potential co-funding partners for the performance integration component. University fine arts departments across Nigeria's coastal states could formalise environmental

performance residencies within their community engagement programmes, in partnership with state environmental protection agencies, creating a pipeline of trained practitioner-advocates equipped to operate simultaneously as artists and environmental fieldworkers.

#### **8.5 Developing Site-Specific Material Collection Protocols Through Collaboration with Waste Management Authorities**

The different waste material profiles documented across the three Q1 sites, plastic bottles and nylon bags dominant at Elegushi, fishing ropes and driftwood proportionally significant at Gberufun, and household nylon bags dominant at Ilaje, point to the practical and artistic value of site-specific collection strategies. Beyond their implications for sculptural design, these material profiles also provide actionable intelligence about the sources and pathways of marine pollution at each site. This intelligence is directly relevant to waste management authorities and should be shared with them in structured formats rather than remaining within the project's internal reporting systems.

The project team should formalise a data-sharing and co-implementation agreement with the Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA) and with the Lagos State Ministry of Environment and Water Resources. Under this agreement, the project's site-level material data could inform LAWMA's waste stream characterisation and collection routing for coastal areas, while LAWMA's operational infrastructure, including vehicles, collection points, and community waste officers, could support the project's debris collection activities, significantly increasing collection volumes and reducing logistical costs. At the national level, collaboration with the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) would also enable the field data of the project, which will contribute to Nigeria's national marine litter monitoring framework, elevating the project's evidence base from a case study record to a component of national environmental surveillance.

Pre-activity coordination with LAWMA's coastal operations unit should be built into site planning timelines of subsequent project phases at Tarkwa Bay and Ibeju Beach. The pre-activity will ensure that the project's collection activities are complementary, rather than parallel to, the authority's existing coastal sanitation schedule.

## 8.6 Translating Community Behavioural Intention Into Sustained Practice Through Policy and Private Sector Engagement

The baseline of the finding of the survey, which shows that 72% of the respondents expressed willingness to reduce single-use plastic consumption, while 82% supported replicating the project model nationally. The number represents a substantial reservoir of community goodwill. However, this goodwill risks remaining inert without structured channels for activation. Translating behavioural intention into sustained practice requires that the project functions as an advocacy intervention and a connector between motivated community members and the institutional and commercial partners who can provide the conditions, resources, and incentives for sustained pro-environmental behaviour.

Concretely, this means pursuing a collaboration with the Consumer Protection Council of Nigeria (CPC) and with the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) to develop community-accessible information on plastic reduction alternatives and to support advocacy for stronger enforcement of Nigeria's single-use plastic regulations in coastal markets and retail environments. In the private sector, there are Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies operating in Lagos. Many of these (FMCG) have published plastic reduction commitments under pressure from international investors and they represent potential partners for community-level plastic take-back schemes that could be co-designed with project beneficiaries and piloted at the project's field sites. The Bank of Industry's Green Finance initiative and the Central Bank of Nigeria's Sustainable Finance Principles provide a policy and financing framework within which the project's Blue Economy advocacy could be connected to accessible community-level economic incentives. Such businesses can be preferential credit terms for coastal small businesses that adopt verified environmental practices. Finally, in collaboration with the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), the project should develop a framework for embedding the Blue Economy and art-based environmental advocacy into the curricula of coastal universities and polytechnics, ensuring that the next generation of professionals entering Nigeria's marine economy sector does so with the environmental literacy and creative advocacy capacity that the project is building in communities today.

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