

Assessment of the Root Causes of Marine Debris Problem in Lagos State

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Abstract : The continuously growing quantity of very slow degrading litter deliberately discarded into the coastal waters around Lagos as marine debris is obvious. What is not known is how to tackle this problem to reduce its prevalence and impact on the environment, economy and community. To identify ways of tackling the marine debris problem two case study areas (Ikoyi and Victoria Islands of Lagos State) were used to assess the root causes, the threat posed by marine debris in the coastal waters around Lagos and the efficacy of current instruments, programmes and initiatives that address marine debris in the study areas. The following methods were used: (1) Self-completed questionnaires for households and businesses within the study areas; (2) Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders; (3) Observational studies of waste management from collection to disposal and waste management facilities for waste originating from land and maritime sources; (4) Beach surveys and marine debris surveys on shorelines and ports; and (5) Fishing for marine debris. Results of this study identified the following root causes: (1) Indiscriminate human activities and behaviors, and lack of awareness on the part of the main stakeholders and the public of the potential consequences of their actions; (2) Poor solid waste management practices; (3) Lack of strict legal frameworks addressing waste and marine debris problem; and (4) Disposal of non-degradable wastes into domestic sewer system and open streets drains. To effectively tackle marine debris problem in the study areas, adequate, appropriate and cost effective solutions to the above mentioned root causes needs to be identified and effectively transferred for implementation in the study areas.

Keywords : marine debris problem, Lagos state, litter, coastal waters

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