



# Saving the Beaches of Kenya

*by Duncan Gregory*

**Our Kenyan coast is a tropical paradise stained by the scourge of plastics, brought in by the tide and discarded by tourists: a local reflection of a global epidemic. This plastic menace has grown over recent decades to become the eyesore and environmental hazard we see today. It reflects an alarming increase in single-use plastics - bottles, containers, cups and straws - with little planning for collection and recycling.**

In response, Yul Wenger, owner of Yul's Aquadrom on Bamburi Beach, has set out to show what his business can do to help tackle this plastic plague, by approaching the challenge from both ends: minimizing the use of plastics, while attempting to recycle the rubbish that's already there.

When Yul's started 30 years ago. It was a small business with plastic tables and meals for less than a dollar! Nowadays it's the 'go-to' place on the North Coast providing a range of fine foods. Yul acknowledges his successful enterprise is part of the plastics problem. Thus, his response.

At the input end single-use plastic has been scrapped, in favour of recyclable or biodegradable items: drinks only available in glass, with ice-cream cups and straws made from paper or corn starch. It's taken time to re-organise, but Yul is convinced that the future of his restaurant – and the environment it relies on – is dependent on such actions.

At the other extreme our environmentally conscious owner has built a rubbish collection unit and introduced an inspirational scheme, whereby patrons take a wicker basket to fill with rubbish and on return (with a full bag) receive a free ice-cream. What a great way to create awareness!



*Heike and Yul Wenger with their new litter collection unit*

These brilliant ideas need replication, so I ask about the response from *businesses along the beachfront*.

*“Not great,” He replies. “They’re interested in making money, not saving the environment. But if each hotel or restaurant had a litter collection unit – perhaps one every 100 metres - it could make an enormous difference.”*

I began to think about teenager, Greta Thunberg, pushing for environmental action on a global scale, while here in Kenya Yul is doing the same at the local level. Each striving to help bring about a more sustainable world. Yul, like Greta, is a change-maker, and Kenya can only benefit from his example.



*Image: Duncan Gregory*

# **Saving the beaches of Kenya for our children**