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TOPIC: IF I COULD INVENT SOMETHING NEW

Imagine a world where the simple act of throwing away a bottle could change the fate of our planet. In Nigeria, unmanaged plastic waste clogs our drains, pollutes our rivers, and endangers our health. According to the World Bank, Nigeria is the 10th largest producer of unmanaged plastics. The need for innovative solutions has never been more urgent. As a young student witnessing the harmful impact of plastic waste firsthand, I am inspired to share my thoughts on the **Smart Recycling Bin**.

In the Ketu area of Lagos where I live, I often see plastic waste like bottles, bags, and wrappers scattered around. This waste makes our streets dirty and harms the environment. Many plastic items are carelessly discarded and end up in landfills or rivers, taking hundreds of years to decompose

This reminds me of a horrible experience I had which made me realize the urgency of proper waste management. On 16th July 2023, the clouds gathered all morning, it was dark and heavy, as if ready to unleash their wrath. By midday, the rain began to pour persistently, turning the streets of Lagos into rivers. At first, my older brother and I watched from our windows as the water levels rose slowly. But soon, the drains were overwhelmed with plastic waste—bottles, bags, and wrappers clogging the flow of water. Within hours, our neighbourhood was submerged. The water rose so quickly that many homes, including ours, were flooded. We had to rush to move our belongings to higher ground, but it was too late.

I remember the commotion clearly, the sound of water rushing through the streets, the shouts of neighbours trying to help each other, and the sight of children and elderly people climbing to their roofs to avoid the rising waters. The floodwater was filled with plastic waste, floating around and blocking the drains. Our family was trapped on the second floor, watching helplessly as the water level inched closer. The stench of the floodwater mixed with decaying waste was unbearable. Mosquitoes and other pests were everywhere. It was a terrifying experience, and it made me understand how plastic waste can directly harm people's lives.

Having had this unpleasant experience, if I could invent something new, it would be a Smart Recycling Bin. It will manage waste better and make recycling easier by properly sorting recyclable materials. It will use simple technology to sort and compact recyclables like plastics, metals, and paper automatically. The sensors will detect waste types, ensuring proper sorting. This bin will educate people about recycling's importance with displays in English and local languages. It will be user-friendly and have a reward system gives cash for trash. Solar-powered, it will work without electricity. Placing these bins in public areas throughout Nigeria will reduce plastic waste pollution and have a positive impact on climate change.