

Addressing Marine Litter in the Wider Caribbean Region through Regional and Global Partnerships

United Nations Environment Programme
Caribbean Environment Programme and
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Seventy to eighty-five percent of marine pollution of the Caribbean Sea originates from land-based sources and activities. This is particularly disconcerting in a region that depends heavily on its marine and coastal resources for its economic development, providing livelihood through fisheries, recreation and income to industries such as tourism, manufacturing and agriculture. Marine litter, as well as other forms of pollution of the sea (such as plastics, sewage and chemicals) are an immediate threat to economic growth, human health, food security, livelihoods, as well as habitats. They also negatively impact a country's tourism brand and deteriorate the natural beauty of its marine resources. The mounting concern about the detrimental effects of marine pollution has triggered responses at the global and regional levels to encourage governments to be more proactive in regulating policies that address issues such as solid waste management and the use of single-use plastics and Styrofoam.

The [UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme \(CEP\)](#), which is also the Secretariat of the Cartagena Convention, promotes best practices and shares experiences about the management of solid waste, marine litter and plastics through various platforms. These include participation at regional and international conferences, social media campaigns on reducing the use of plastics, and the development of knowledge products in English, Spanish and French.

The [Cartagena Convention](#) was adopted by countries in the Wider Caribbean in 1983 and is the only legally binding agreement of its kind in the region for the protection of the Caribbean Sea. Through the Convention, governments receive support to control, reduce and prevent marine pollution from all sources. Marine Litter is one of the priority pollutants being targeted for improved management by the Cartagena Convention Secretariat. The Protocol Concerning Pollution from Land-Based Sources and Activities (LBS) of the Cartagena Convention which was signed in 1999 and adopted in 2010, along with the [Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter \(RAPMaLi\) for the Wider Caribbean Region](#) (see below) form the basis for the support provided to countries in the Wider Caribbean and the development and implementation of several marine litter programmes, projects and activities.

I. The Global Partnership on Marine Litter

The [Global Partnership on Marine Litter \(GPML\)](#) was formed in 2012 as a multi-stakeholder partnership which brought international agencies, governments, non-governmental organizations, academia, private sector, civil society and individuals together. GPML supports the Global Partnership on Waste Management and seeks to protect human health and the global environment through the reduction and management of marine litter as its main goal. Participants contribute to the implementation of GPML's activities and share knowledge and experiences on how to reduce marine litter. GPML responds to the recommendations made in the [Manila Declaration](#) and also supports the implementation of the [Honolulu Strategy](#). GPML has 5 nodes that support the work of the partnership at the regional level, one of which serves the Wider Caribbean.

II. The Caribbean Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML-Caribe)

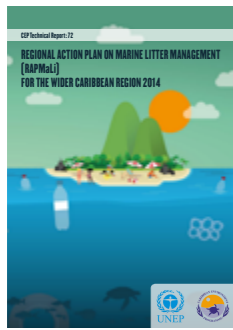


Launched in 2016, the [Caribbean Node](#) is a partnership involving national, regional organizations, governments, research individuals that work together to reduce the quality and impact of marine litter in coastal zones of the Wider Caribbean Region. The Caribbean Node is hosted by the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI), a regional not-for-profit organization, and the Secretariat of the Cartagena Convention.

Over the last 4 years, the Caribbean Node has facilitated number of projects for improving marine litter management in the region focusing on training, outreach, advocacy, resource mobilization and project development while also enhancing partnerships and collaboration. A few of the projects supported include:

PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES	AGENCY/PARTNER	BRIEF OVERVIEW
Investigating the incidence of microplastics in commercially important fish in Grenada (completed)	St. George's University in Grenada, GPML-Caribe	Microplastic ingestion by commercially important species of fish in the Caribbean region.
Developing marine litter reduction strategies for major Caribbean cultural events in Trinidad and Tobago (completed)	IAMovement (NGO) in Trinidad and Tobago, GPML-Caribe	Reduction of marine litter associated with activities during Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago, a major Caribbean cultural event.
Investigating the link between marine litter and mosquito-borne diseases (completed)	All Points Geospatial Consulting in Puerto Rico, GCFI	Focused on marine litter and its relationship to the incidences of mosquito-borne illnesses such as the Chikungunya virus/Chik V in the Caribbean region.
Enhancing the Solid Waste Reduction Project in the Whitehouse and Bluefields communities in Jamaica (Trash Free Waters Initiative) (2019)	Sandals Foundation, National Environment and Planning Agency of Jamaica, UNEP CEP, GPML-Caribe	This was a continuation of the Solid Waste Reduction Project implemented in the Whitehouse and Bluefields communities in Jamaica and included improvements to the waste disposal system, enabled sustainable meal-packaging in schools and the implementation of upcycling opportunities through Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Business Training for the residents of the communities involved in the initial project.
Development of a regional Marine Litter Management Strategy (ongoing)	UNEP CEP, GPML-Caribe	A 5-year strategic outline for Marine Litter Management is being finalized to identify useful priorities for fund-raising efforts. The Strategy will complement the Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter (see below).
Developing an approach to harmonizing marine litter monitoring in the Wider Caribbean Region (ongoing)	UNEP CEP, GPML-Caribe	(see below under cooperation with the OSPAR Convention)
Social media campaigns (2019)	UNEP CEP, GPML-Caribe	Social media campaigns were carried out in 2019 during the entire month of July (#PlasticFreeJuly) and December (#PlasticFreeChristmas) to raise awareness on plastic pollution and encourage the use of alternative products and practices.
Caribbean #CleanSeas Campaign (ongoing)	Caribbean Youth Environment Network, Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development, UNEP CEP, GPML-Caribe, GEF IWeco Project	(see below)
Youth Involvement in the Special Session on Marine Litter held during the 72 nd Annual Conference of the GCFI, the GPML-Caribe Student Awards and Albatross Film Screening (2019)	GPML-Caribe	Sponsorship was provided for the participation of students at the Marine Litter Session at the 72 nd GCFI Conference in the Dominican Republic.

III. Caribbean Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter (RAPMaLi)



First adopted in 2010 as a regional policy response to the growing concerns of litter accumulation in the Caribbean Sea, the [Regional Action Plan for Marine Litter \(RAPMaLi\)](#) for the Wider Caribbean was updated and further endorsed by Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention in

2014. It serves as a comprehensive toolkit to assist countries of the WCR to adopt a range of practices for reducing the negative impacts of solid waste, marine litter and plastics. The Secretariat has mobilized financial resources to assist Governments in implementing elements of the action plan. Of the 26 Contracting Parties to the Cartagena Convention, 15 have ratified the LBS Protocol and all have endorsed the Regional Marine Litter Action Plan. A Regional Marine Litter Strategy is under development through the GPML-Caribe to complement the plan.

Countries such as Guyana, Barbados and Saint Lucia have received support to improve their national marine litter and solid waste management policies and legislation, expand monitoring and assessment programmes, and enhance their public awareness, education and outreach activities. GPML-Caribe continues to support regional Governments in implementing priority national and regional actions identified in the RAPMaLi.

IV. Global #CleanSeas Campaign



The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched the #CleanSeas Campaign in February 2017. Its main goal is to engage governments, the public, civil society, and the private sector in the fight against marine plastic litter. The campaign addresses the root-cause of marine litter by targeting the production and consumption of non-recoverable and single-use plastics. More importantly, the #CleanSeas campaign aims to highlight the scale of the problem and encourage individual and collective action.

Within the first year of the #CleanSeas Campaign, 10 Countries from the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR) (all Contracting Parties to the LBS Protocol), made commitments to eliminate marine litter. The WCR accounts for more than 60% of the world's coastlines.

V. Regional #CleanSeas Campaign

In 2019, a Regional Clean Seas Campaign was launched for the WCR with support from the Global Partnership for Marine Litter Management (GPML). [The Caribbean Node of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter \(GPML Caribe\)](#), facilitated this new campaign.

The campaign built on the annual International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) activities with support from the Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN). Through the campaign, capacity-building support was provided to various stakeholders on outreach, advocacy, resource mobilization and the development of new project proposals for reducing marine litter and plastics.

The Caribbean #CleanSeas Campaign was initially launched in October 2019 in Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and St Kitts and Nevis and later in Grenada and St Vincent and the Grenadines in November 2019. Efforts are ongoing to expand the campaign to the rest of the WCR in 2020.

The cleanup activities conducted as part of the campaign were used to field test a harmonized marine litter monitoring methodology which



was developed through the Node at the end of 2018. [The Caribbean Breaking Up with Plastics video](#) developed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (GEF-IWEco) Project was launched as part of the campaign. The project is co-executed by the Cartagena Convention Secretariat and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA).

VI. The Trash Free Waters International Initiative in the WCR (2016-2019)



The Cartagena Convention Secretariat with financial support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and in partnership with the Peace Corps, UNEP's Regional Office for Latin America and its Caribbean Sub-Regional Office, the Governments of Jamaica and Panama, and other local partners implemented activities to reduce and prevent land-based trash from entering watersheds, coastal waters, and the marine environment in Jamaica and Panama.

Based on the project's successes, additional resources were mobilized by the GPML-Caribe for additional activities in Jamaica to improve the waste disposal system, enable sustainable meal-packaging in schools and

implement upcycling opportunities through Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Business Training for the residents of the communities involved in the initial project.

Pilot Project in Jamaica [Solid Waste Reduction, Westmoreland, Jamaica]:

Scope: 200 garbage bins distributed across 40 locations in the Whitehouse and Bluefields Communities in Jamaica



Public Awareness Campaigns: 3,445 persons were targeted through outreach activities - 2,400 students and 1,045 adults

Compost: 2,500 lbs of compost generated



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Upcycling Workshop: 20 residents trained in composting and in jewellery-making using items collected from the sea.

Developing an approach to harmonizing marine litter monitoring in the Wider Caribbean Region (ongoing)

Social media campaigns (2019)

Caribbean #CleanSeas Campaign (ongoing)

Youth Involvement in the Special Session on Marine Litter held during the 72nd Annual Conference of the GCFI, the GPML-Caribe Student Awards and Albatross Film Screening (2019)

Pilot Project in Panama [Partnership for Marine Litter: Juan Diaz Community]



Public Awareness: 450 students from 4 schools educated on trash reduction

Public Awareness (Commercial Institutions): members of the public benefit from capacity building on proper waste separation



Volunteer training: 10 volunteers trained on the 3 Rs and sensitization of the Juan Diaz River trap being established to help the local community

Water Quality assessment: students trained in testing water quality

VII. Cooperation between the OSPAR & Cartagena Conventions



The [OSPAR Convention for the North East Atlantic](#) and the [Cartagena Convention Secretariat](#) agreed in June 2017 to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (#OceanAction17198).

Through this cooperation, funds were mobilized in 2018 from the Governments of Sweden and the Netherlands to support marine litter activities in the Wider Caribbean Region. During 2019, the GCFI and the Cartagena Convention Secretariat completed a report for harmonized monitoring of marine litter including plastics pollution and initiated the development of a new Regional Marine Litter and Plastics Reduction Strategy. The harmonizing approach to monitoring marine litter allows for engagement with citizens for monitoring while ensuring good quality data collection, cost effective and efficient means of harmonizing data collection and maximizing litter removal on certain pre-selected sites.

VIII. Feasibility Study on Port Reception Facilities in Caribbean SIDS



The Secretariat, through the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency, Information and Training Centre (RAC REMPEITC Caribe), its Regional Activity Centre for the Oil Spills Protocol, collaborated with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) on the

completion of a detailed assessment of Port Reception Facilities in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The outcomes of this report complement other strategies for improving management of ship generated wastes, including plastics, and cargo residues within the Wider Caribbean Region, and contribute to efforts towards improving the ability of Caribbean States to effectively fulfil their obligations under MARPOL, or to accede to MARPOL where a State is not already a Party. The regional [report of that analysis](#) completed in May 2018 is available on the RAC's website.

IX. Regional State of the

Convention Area Report

The [State of the Convention Area \(SOCAR\) report](#) (2020) provides a regional quantitative assessment of the state of the marine environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, with respect to land-based sources of pollution. This report incorporates the Driver-Pressure-State-Impact-Response (DPSIR) framework, which describes the interactions between human society and the environment. This report facilitates informed regional or country-level decisions on addressing such sources of pollution and provides quantitative data on solid waste and microplastics levels in the WCR.

X. Status of Plastics and Styrofoam bans in the Wider Caribbean Region

Over the last 5 years, many regional Governments have banned or restricted the use of Styrofoam

Major barriers to combatting marine litter and plastics

- Lack of harmonized monitoring for Marine Litter at national and regional levels;
- Lack of appropriate national and regional data bases and information management systems for solid waste, marine litter and plastics;
- Lack of detailed data on the characterization of solid waste including information on plastics leakage to the marine environment;
- Lack of effective policy, regulatory and enforcement frameworks for plastics within the waste stream;
- Lack of appropriate business cases to encourage private sector investment in waste and plastic recycling.

and single-use plastics. A report on the [Status of Plastics and Styrofoam bans in the Wider Caribbean Region](#) was finalized in 2019 by the Secretariat to highlight the ongoing efforts and lessons learned. This will assist in future efforts to regulate the production and use of single-use

plastics and other persistent material. This report is complemented by an [interactive map](#) of the status of the bans on plastic bags and Styrofoam in the WCR.

XI. Collaborative Publications

[Marine Pollution in the Caribbean: Not a Minute to Waste](#)

[Regional Seas Follow up and Review of the Ocean Related Sustainable Development Goals](#)

[Regional Seas Follow up and Review of the Ocean Related Sustainable Development Goals](#)

XII. Planned Activities: 2020-2021

- Launch of Phase III of the project on *Capacity Building Related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements in African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries* to strengthen multilateral environmental agreements with specific activities in the area of solid waste and plastics management. Activities include the design and implementation of at least four community-based projects with a focus on plastic reduction, reuse and recycling.
- The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), through its Caribbean Sub-Regional Office and the Convention Secretariat, based in Jamaica, launched a partnership in 2020 that will have as one of its first outputs, the development of a Compendium showcasing regional and national initiatives and best practices in solid waste management.

XIII. Project Proposals

Lead Entity	Project Proposals/ Concepts
UNEP, UNEP CEP	A Draft Concept is under development for submission to the Global Environment Facility for a regional project to reduce plastic pollution through the improved Management of Plastics in Latin American and Caribbean Cities.
UNEP CEP, GCFI, the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI)	A proposal was developed through GPML-Caribe and in collaboration with the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) to minimize the occurrence and impact of Abandoned, Lost and Discarded Fishing Gear through the assessment of port reception facilities, new technologies, data collection and promotion of best practices including peer-peer exchanges at regional and global levels.
UNEP, UNEP CEP, The Nature Conservancy	A project Concept is being developed to strengthen Blue Economy opportunities in the Caribbean for sustainable coastal and marine management.



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