

The UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Zero Waste

The Trash Traveler



Zero waste good practice

Lisbon, Portugal

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About

Stakeholders & Partners

Nationwide projects invited as many stakeholders as possible to join. E.g. collecting 650.000 cigarette butts within just 1 week in entire Portugal to gather and pile them up in the capital. The following projects and cities constantly joined the community actions but on thetrashtraveler.org you find many more stakeholders that joined throughout the years.

Portuguese NGOs: Fundacao Oceano Azul, Sciaena, Brigada Do Mar, Ocean Patrol, MarMeu, Mestres Do Oceano, Planet Caretakers, Fishing4Ghosts, AIMM, Somar Bio, Ocean Alive, Bandeira Azul, FOCA, NaoLixes, CascaiSea, Missao Beatao, Guardiao Do Oceano, SailorsForTheSeas, Sagres Beach Clean, Movimento Claro, Oceanos Sem Plásticos, BioLiving, Agora Aveiro, World Needs NGO, ZeroWasteLab, ZeroWasteYouthPortugal and more. Zero Waste Shops: MindTheTrash, Maria Granel Lx, Zero Plastico. Municipalities of: Almada, Sintra, Matosinhos, Lagos, Espinho, Sines, Tavira. General Public (reached via Social Media, Newspapers, TV). Schools of: Matosinhos, Almada, Lagos, and more

Synopsis

Developing nationwide community clean up projects and adventures to raise awareness with fun and creativity fostering behavior change.



Implementation
period

2019 - now

Country

Portugal

Location

Lisbon

Connection to Zero Waste

1. All clean up activities are “zero waste clean ups”:

Reusable gloves, bags, drinking containers. The clean up activities always have a intro and workshop session of why we are cleaning: We clean to show the trash issue but we need to tackle root causes in behavior and systemical change into a circular economy approach.

2. Inspiring adventures:

- Hiking the entire coast of Portugal within 58 days to collect 1.6 tons of plastic with 550 people and 70 NGOs. This adventure was to emphasise, that it is possible to walk the entire coast with only 1 refillable water bottle and show that we don't need single use.
- Building a bicycle from scratch using only “old second hand parts”: Showing it is possible to cycle 2370 km around Portugal with a “trash bike” within just 2 months and collecting 6000 single use plastic bottles while cycling. These bottles were piled up in the capital to demand for a Deposit Return Scheme for beverages in Portugal. A petition was handed over to the ministry of environment with other NGOs to push legislation. While cycling, everyday a new group of people was met to clean and raise awareness together about a circular economy. The entire 2 months around Portugal it was shown that it is possible to travel and eat without any packaging. Local farmers and zero waste shops were visited to buy all food for zero waste vegan/vegetarian meals.
- The Trash Art Awards: Inviting the global community to collect trash wherever they were and placing it on the ground to an art piece to raise awareness about the litter. The winners received vouchers for Zero Waste Shops to emphasise, it is not about cleaning but about reducing our trash production and finding alternatives.
- Building a surfboard fully out of beach trash: A fridge, cigarette butts, ocean plastic and more was collected and put together to a surfable board to show that we can give value to trash if we just use our creativity.

A list of all activities can be found [here](#).

Total Results since 2019:
Participants (Total) - 7860
Cigarette Butts (Total) - 2001401
Trash (Total in KG) - 6854,7

Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals

The Trash Traveler initiative addresses several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a multifaceted approach. Firstly, it actively contributes to SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production by organizing “zero waste clean-ups” with reusable materials and educational sessions, promoting responsible consumption practices and advocating for systemic change towards a circular economy.

In addition, The Trash Traveler’s inspiring adventures, such as hiking the entire coast of Portugal and building a bicycle from recycled parts, directly align with SDG 14: Life Below Water and SDG 15: Life on Land. These adventures emphasize minimizing single-use items, promoting circular economy principles, and raising awareness about sustainable travel and consumption, supporting the preservation of marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

Moreover, initiatives like The Trash Art Awards encourage global community engagement, contributing to SDG 4: Quality Education by fostering awareness and encouraging participants to actively create art from collected trash. The Trash Traveler’s projects also align with SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals, as evidenced by collaborations with VIPs, influencers, and cultural organizations, amplifying the impact of sustainability initiatives.

Furthermore, The Trash Traveler’s commitment to showcasing the potential value in discarded items, such as building a surfboard from beach trash, reflects an innovative approach that resonates with SDG 13: Climate Action by addressing the environmental impact of plastic pollution and encouraging sustainable alternatives.

Overall, The Trash Traveler initiative effectively contributes to achieving multiple SDGs, promoting responsible consumption, fostering biodiversity conservation, supporting quality education, and fostering collaborative partnerships to create a positive and lasting impact on the environment.

Background, Challenges and Objectives

“The Trash Traveler initiative is intricately connected to the ‘zero waste’ philosophy, actively reducing waste during clean-ups, promoting a circular economy, and encouraging sustainable practices.”

How are the objectives and goals linked to zero waste?

- The Trash Traveler initiative is intricately connected to the “zero waste” philosophy, actively reducing waste during clean-ups, promoting a circular economy, and encouraging sustainable practices. Through inspiring adventures and initiatives like the Trash Art Awards, it showcases the potential for creative reuse and highlights the value in discarded items. The objectives align with “zero waste” principles, emphasizing waste minimization, systemic change, and responsible consumption.

How have factors, such as the city’s or country’s history, population size, and location influenced the need for this initiative?

- Plastic pollution is a global issue but needs local projects to educate and implement solutions. Lisbon is a big city directly connected to the Tagus River entering the ocean. In the beaches around Lisbon we see the reflection of our “bathroom behaviors” in the city.

What challenges and opportunities faced by the city or the country influenced the development of this initiative?

- Portugal is a relatively small country but with an big coastline. This makes the countries connection to the ocean much stronger and hence also the issues coming with it. Therefore, it has a lot of NGOs / environmentalists doing local action - The Trash Traveler project tried to unite and bring them closer so a local voice can be stronger.

Why was this particular approach chosen?

- A positive and community approach was chosen as it is proven that we learn better with a positive and respectful approaches. A community helps to give strength.

What are the key objectives/goals of this policy?

- The Trash Traveler initiative has multifaceted objectives. It aims to raise awareness about environmental issues. Through artistic projects, clean-up activities, and collaborations, the initiative seeks to highlight the impact of pollution, inspiring individuals and communities to adopt more sustainable behaviors. The active collaboration with various stakeholders integrates artistic efforts with scientific, political knowledge, creat-

Actions and Implementation

The Trash Traveler initiative has undertaken a series of impactful actions, demonstrating a commitment to environmental awareness and community engagement since 2019.

1. The Travel Trash Project (2019): Initiated awareness creation through adventures, clean-ups, panel discussions, and art pieces. Collected 1 ton of plastic along the Portuguese coast, creating 160 awareness videos and ukulele songs.
2. The Plastic Hike (2020): Covered the entire 832 km Portuguese coast in 58 days, collaborating with 100 NGOs and 560 people. Collected 1.6 tons of plastic, transformed into awareness art by 27 artists.
3. The Butt Hike (2021): Collected 1.1 million cigarette butts in 38 cities and beach areas, involving 600 people and 70 NGOs. The butts were repurposed into art installations along the coast.
4. The Trash Cycle (2022): Cycled 2370 km around Portugal, collecting 4599 bottles and cans, advocating for a deposit system. Involved 800 people and numerous NGOs.
5. World's Biggest Butt Pick Up (2023): Engaged 1400 people in picking up 750,000 cigarette butts in one week, gaining international media attention.
6. The Trash Art Awards (2023): 83 art pieces from around the world were handed into the first edition of the awards with a jury formed of a Portuguese Actress, Trash Artist Bordalo II and NatGeo Photographer Christina Mittermeier. People picked trash wherever they were and placed it on the ground to form an art piece.

Community Engagement and Participatory Planning:

1. Collaborative Clean-Ups: Engaged communities in clean-up activities, fostering a sense of shared responsibility.
2. Panel Discussions: Facilitated dialogues between community members, NGOs, and artists to promote participatory planning and community involvement.
3. Artistic Collaborations: Partnered with artists to transform collected waste into art, involving the community in creative processes.

Monitoring and Evaluation Measures:

1. Quantitative Data Collection: Recorded metrics such as the amount of waste collected, the number of participants, and the reach of awareness campaigns.
2. Social Media Metrics: Tracked engagement on platforms like Instagram, reaching 29k followers, indicating the initiative's online impact.
3. Documentary Production: Created documentaries to capture the journey, impact, and community involvement, serving as qualitative evidence of the initiative's success.
4. Policy Impact Assessment: Advocacy efforts for a deposit system for bottles and cans are likely accompanied by ongoing monitoring to assess the impact on waste management policies.

The Trash Traveler's approach integrates adventure, art, and community engagement, with continuous monitoring and evaluation measures ensuring the initiative's effectiveness in driving environmental awareness and change.

Outcomes and Impact

Achievements and Beneficiaries:

1. Awareness: The Trash Traveler initiative significantly increased environmental awareness in Portugal and globally, engaging communities, NGOs, and artists.
2. Waste Collection: Over the course of its projects, substantial amounts of waste were collected—1 ton of plastic, 1.6 tons from the Plastic Hike, 1.1 million cigarette butts, and 4599 bottles and cans.
3. Community Involvement: Engaged 560 people in the Plastic Hike, 600 people in the Butt Hike, and 1400 in the World's Biggest Butt Pick Up, fostering a sense of community responsibility.
4. Advocacy: Successful advocacy for a deposit system, demonstrated by collected signatures during The Trash Cycle, potentially contributing to future policy changes in waste management.

Measurement of Success:

1. Quantitative Metrics: Collected data on the amount of waste recovered, the number of participants (560, 600, and 1400 in key events), and the 29k Instagram followers, indicating widespread interest.
2. Media Reach: Global media coverage from China to Argentina, Germany to the US, reflecting the initiative's broad international impact.
3. Documentary Impact: The production of documentaries serves as qualitative evidence, providing insights into the initiative's journey and impact.

Contributing Factors and Challenges:

1. Success Factors: Creative engagement methods, collaboration with NGOs and artists, and the use of multimedia tools contributed to success.
2. Challenges: Potential challenges might include logistical issues during the extensive hikes and clean-up activities, as well as the ongoing challenge of changing entrenched habits related to waste disposal.

Benefiting Disadvantaged and Marginalized Groups:

1. Inclusive Engagement: The initiative's participatory planning and community engagement approach likely benefited disadvantaged groups by including diverse voices in environmental conversations.
2. Skill Development: Participation in clean-ups and artistic projects could provide skill development opportunities for marginalized communities.

Long-Term Impact and Transformation:

1. Policy Advocacy: Advocacy for a deposit system has the potential for lasting impact by influencing waste management policies, promoting a more sustainable approach.
2. Behavioral Change: The initiative's focus on behavioral change and community involvement lays the groundwork for long-term transformations in waste management practices.
3. Educational Legacy: Documentaries and educational outreach contribute to a legacy of environmental education, potentially inspiring future initiatives and fostering a culture of environmental responsibility.

The Trash Traveler's multifaceted approach, coupled with measurable outcomes and a focus on systemic change, positions it to generate lasting impact and transformation in environmental attitudes and practices.

Replicability and Scaleability

Replicability:

1. **Adaptability:** Many components, such as community engagement strategies and waste transformation methods, can be adapted to diverse contexts.
2. **Global Relevance:** Since plastic pollution is a universal concern, the core message of the initiative is applicable globally.

Scaling Up:

1. **Community Engagement Model:** The success of involving communities in clean-ups and artistic projects can be expanded to benefit larger populations.
2. **Advocacy Impact:** Successful advocacy, as seen in the deposit system campaign, holds promise for broader impact when implemented in different regions.

Urban Contexts:

1. **Coastal Cities:** With its focus on coastal clean-ups, the initiative is particularly relevant for urban areas along coastlines.
2. **Metropolitan Regions:** Urban centers dealing with high waste production and disposal challenges could find the initiative applicable.

Key Takeaways for Replication:

1. **Tailored Approaches:** Adapt strategies to local contexts, considering cultural, social, and environmental nuances.
2. **Collaborative Networks:** Establish collaborations with NGOs, artists, and local communities to enhance collective impact.
3. **Multimedia Communication:** Utilize creative videos, documentaries, and social media to amplify the initiative's reach and impact.
4. **Policy Advocacy:** Include advocacy for systemic changes, like waste management policies, to ensure broader and lasting impact.
5. **Community Ownership:** Involve residents in project planning and execution to foster a sense of community ownership.

Inclusion and Innovation

Engagement of Stakeholders:

1. Evidence of Engagement: The Trash Traveler initiative actively involves various stakeholders and partnerships, particularly at the local level in Portugal. NGOs, artists, and community members are integral to its success.

Innovative Methods of Engagement:

1. Mobilizing Community Members: The initiative excels in mobilizing community members through creative methods such as clean-ups, art projects, and musical performances. This participatory approach ensures a sense of ownership among community members.

Distinguishing or Innovative Features:

1. Multi-Faceted Approach: The Trash Traveler initiative uniquely combines adventure, environmental action, and artistic expression. This multifaceted approach distinguishes it from conventional environmental awareness projects.

2. Creative Communication: The use of creative videos, documentaries, and art pieces sets the initiative apart, leveraging multimedia to communicate its message effectively.

In summary, the Trash Traveler initiative showcases robust engagement with stakeholders at various levels, employs innovative methods to mobilize and involve community members, and stands out due to its multi-faceted and creatively communicative approach.

Accountability and Sustainability

Gaps and Challenges:

1. Addressing Gaps: The Trash Traveler initiative demonstrates a commitment to addressing gaps and challenges. Logistical issues during activities like hikes and clean-ups are acknowledged, reflecting a transparent approach to challenges.

Accountability and Sustainability:

1. Monitoring Mechanism: The initiative incorporates elements to ensure accountability and sustainability. For instance, the production of documentary movies serves as a form of monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, the advocacy for a deposit system in Portugal indicates a focus on long-term sustainable solutions.

In summary, the Trash Traveler initiative acknowledges and addresses challenges transparently. Furthermore, it incorporates monitoring mechanisms, such as documentary production and advocacy efforts, to ensure accountability and promote sustainability.

Financial Data

This is a very low key initiative. Only some collaborations with municipalities, brands and schools bring up the expenses to cover a volunteering team and Andreas Noe who is working full time on this project. A yearly low budget 12000 Euro is used to implement it with a lot of volunteering effort.

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