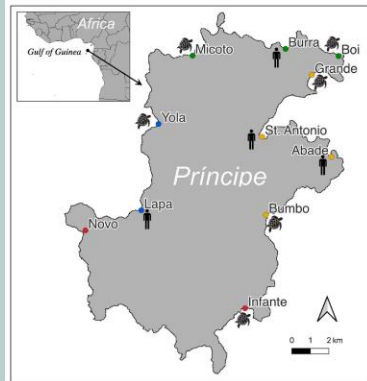


## Príncipe – An island wide effort to tackle plastic pollution

### Overview

Fundação Príncipe, is a conservation NGO on Príncipe Island in São Tomé and Príncipe, on the Atlantic coast of Central Africa.

Príncipe is impacted by plastic debris washing ashore. Plus, the island lacks resources to deal with local waste. Fundação Príncipe addresses threats to the marine ecosystem for the benefit of communities and biodiversity.



Credit: Fundação Príncipe

*“We urgently need to stop plastics being imported, move towards a refill system, and find local recycling options for legacy plastics washed ashore, those are the only ways to clean our island and regenerate nature.”* - Estrela Matilde, former Executive Director of Fundação Príncipe

### Local solutions

#### Plastic pollution monitoring:

- Mapped and quantified plastic pollution and aggregation within areas used by sea turtles in Príncipe, and **published** the findings.
- Tracked marine plastic pollution movements off West Africa using **GPS trackers on bottles**, providing nascent information on the sources and flow of marine debris in the region.

#### Government engagement:

- Fundação Príncipe’s research was used to inform a legal framework development.
- Engaged with the local government and a new regional decree was drafted to regulate and eventually eliminate the import of single-use plastics in Príncipe.

#### Community engagement, education & enterprises:

Conducted business training to community-led social enterprises, including over 20 women. Four business models have been developed, all re-purposing plastic waste.

#### Baseline data collection and behavioural change:

Baseline data and a social consumption survey helped identify measures needed to reduce plastic use, including a plastic packaging tax and banning certain single-use plastics.

### Key successes

#### Community-led business enterprises:

Established functional enterprises focused on repurposing marine plastic pollution.

#### Enhanced sea turtle conservation:

Achieved through participatory plastic reduction efforts in Príncipe island.

## Recommendations for the Plastics Treaty

1. Strengthen the treaty language to better support and protect biodiversity
2. Prioritise upstream solutions to reduce use of single-use plastics
3. Prioritise a system change to a reuse/refill model that is accessible and appropriate for local and remote communities
4. Detoxify plastics to protect human and environmental health, and simplify end-of-life processing
5. Establish a robust EPR system to hold companies responsible for their waste

## Local impact of plastic pollution

Like many remote island communities, Príncipe is impacted by high plastic pollution accumulation from non-local and local sources. Common plastic debris include plastic bags, bottles, fishing gear, shoes and sandals:

- **Species:** Príncipe is a critical breeding, foraging, and nesting area for four threatened sea turtle species. Turtles are threatened by plastic pollution in the water and on nesting beaches.
- **Ecosystems:** Príncipe's coastal and marine ecosystems are at risk from plastic pollution, which regularly washes up on the beaches.
- **Livelihoods:** Community livelihoods, particularly fishing, are impacted by plastic pollution. Plastic pollution also acts as a deterrent to tourists.

## Future project ambitions

**Mandate a regional decree in Príncipe to regulate imports of single-use plastics:** Continue working with the government to achieve a 50% reduction of plastic bottle imports and approve a new Regional Law to reduce island-wide plastic consumption.

**Continue to monitor and analyse the sources and flow of plastic debris washing ashore, as well as local plastic consumption.**

**Behavioural change - Move towards a refill system for cooking oil:** Cooking oil bottles, imported from the E.U., represent a major source of plastic pollution and a key item to target to reduce single-use plastic waste.

**Increase local, waste-based sustainable enterprises:** Double the number of business enterprises that use at least 20% of plastic debris washed ashore in their products, with a focus on women-led initiatives.



Credit: Northern Rangelands Trust

*“Plastic pollution on Príncipe island contributes to the imbalance of our biodiversity and the extinction of some of our key species. That’s why we need to move away from the take-make-dispose plastic model.”*  
– Cileine, Fundação Príncipe, field assistant



Credit: Camilla Prisca Paraiso

## Lessons learnt

### Key lessons:

- Projects monitoring plastic pollution quantities are key in evaluating the success of reduction activities.
- Community education and involvement is an essential foundation on which to build support.
- Conversations and engagement with communities has impact, as evidenced by a goods supplier on Príncipe already selling cooking oil in bulk/refill, under their own initiative. Inspired by his success, others have begun to implement similar models, and gradually change the supply chain.
- Although behavioural change takes time, it gains momentum with each step. Here, the process of documenting the harmful impacts of plastic pollution on biodiversity and communities of Príncipe has begun and serves as an important foundation for future action.

### Challenges:

- Engagement with government
- Change and progress is slow
- Systemic change away from imported single-use plastics and towards refill systems

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