

# **Marine Litter Reduction Strategies for Major Cultural Events in the Caribbean — A Pilot Study on Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago**

## **Estrategias de Reducción de los Desechos Marinos para los Principales Eventos Culturales en el Caribe — Un Estudio Piloto sobre Carnaval en Trinidad y Tobago**

## **Les Stratégies Marines de Réduction des Déchets pour les Grands Événements Culturels dans le Caraïbes — Une Étude Pilote sur Carnaval à Trinité-et-Tobago**

NAKITA POON KONG<sup>1\*</sup> and EMMA DOYLE<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*IA Movement, 40 A La Estancia Drive Diego Martin, Trinidad & Tobago. \*[nakita.poonkong@gmail.com](mailto:nakita.poonkong@gmail.com)*

<sup>2</sup>*GCFI, 6510 Carrizo Fall Court, Houston, Texas 77041 USA.*

### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

The Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI) and UNEP's Regional Coordinating Unit for the Caribbean (CAR/RCU), are co-hosting a Regional Node for the for the Global Partnership on Marine Litter (GPML) in the Wider Caribbean Region (WCR). The purpose of the GPML node is in part to identify opportunities to support marine litter reduction and deterrence activities in the region. Although this project is not one of the projects to be implemented under the Small Scale Funding Agreement between GCFI and UNEP, this concept note has been developed with a view for possible future funding opportunities. It can be seen as a framework for green events.

Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago attracts thousands of people to the country annually, and significant amounts of plastic and glass waste from food and beverage consumption is generated as a result. Due to poor waste management, these single-use items are disposed at dumpsites but a lot of this ends up in the ocean. This pilot study aims to reduce marine litter through the use of effective communication strategies and economic incentives for stakeholders involved in the Carnival business.

In order to achieve this, a needs assessment was conducted by gathering existing information on waste management and identifying key stakeholders. These were event organizers, relevant government authorities, Carnival promoters and business owners with businesses centered around Carnival events.

It was discovered that in 2015, a pilot study by a local non-governmental organization was undertaken at a Carnival concert in Trinidad, where recycling bins were placed throughout the event to encourage patrons to separate waste. A small quantity of recyclable material was sorted and it was determined that in order to be effective, the concert organisers had to reduce the amount of single use items at the event.

Further to this finding, the concept note focused on identifying a marine litter celebrity champion to assist with the implementation of a communication strategy, targeted to specific stakeholders to build awareness of marine litter. Carnival celebrities have local corporate sponsors that brand the majority of these events through memorabilia such as bandanas, cups, and t-shirts. There is an opportunity to explore solutions to reduce the amount of waste generated during Carnival, for example by implementing reusable cups as an alternative to single use plastic bottles, and the use of water-stations. Through a consultation process with key stakeholders to discuss current waste management practices and regional best practices, you could then identify possible marine litter reduction strategies associated with these Carnival events.

The determined communications strategy objectives and outcomes from the implementation process can be used as a monitoring and evaluation method. This would be a short-term evaluation using key stakeholders' feedback on whether there is a shift in the level of awareness on marine litter and its implications. The findings of this pilot study can be used as a source of information for event organizers, for a reduction of plastic and glass use, recommend best practices on creating a communications strategy for on-land waste reduction, and monitoring and evaluation pre and post-event.

The adoption of these best practices to reduce marine litter can also be shared through a targeted outreach program. On a larger scale, a conference on entertainment and sustainability could be held in order to discuss the greening of events in the Caribbean region. This pilot study can be replicated as there are similar events held every year, such as Carnivals on other islands, music, and sporting events that already show interest in achieving greater environmental sustainability.

**KEYWORDS:** Marine, litter, reduction, strategies, Carnival