

## **Addressing lost and abandoned fishing gear at global scale: An introduction to the Global Ghost Gear Initiative**

### **Abordando los artes de pesca perdidos y abandonados a escala mundial: una introducción a la Iniciativa Global Ghost Gear**

### **Lutter contre les engins de pêche perdus et abandonnés à l'échelle mondiale: une introduction à la Global Ghost Gear Initiative**

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#### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

The Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) is the only cross-sectoral alliance dedicated to solving the problem of abandoned, lost, or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) – widely referred to as “ghost gear” – around the world. The GGGI brings together more than 100 stakeholder groups, including 17 national governments as well as representatives from civil society, the private sector, public agencies, academia, intergovernmental organizations, and others from across the fishing industry to tackle ghost gear at a global scale. Since its founding in 2015, the GGGI has worked to implement a wide variety of preventative, mitigative and remediating approaches to ghost gear, shaping fisheries management policy and building the evidence base around the prevalence and impact of this threat.

‘Ghost gear’ is the common name for abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). Since fishing gear is designed to intentionally capture marine life, “ghost gear” is considered the most harmful form of marine debris (Wilcox et al., 2016). Much of it is made of modern plastics that can last up to 600 years in the ocean, continuing to capture and kill marine life and impacting on fish stocks, and damage the marine environment for much of its lifespan. An estimated 5-30% of global fish populations (depending on fishery and geography) are killed by ghost gear every year, making ghost gear a major threat to global food security, coastal communities, and fisher livelihoods (Scheld et al., 2016).

GGGI’s approach to ALDFG is threefold: 1) Build evidence 2) Define best practice and inform policy, and 3) Catalyze and replicate solutions. This holistic approach influences all of our work.

In order to build the evidence base on ALDFG, GGGI has created an online data portal, which is currently the world’s largest repository of ALDFG records. Data is provided by partners around the globe, and is supported by GGGI’s Gear Reporter app, which is available for free on both the iTunes and Android app stores. This portal is building a clearer picture of the ghost gear problem worldwide, and it provides partners with a uniform methodology for tracking and reporting information related to gear loss and retrieval. Our initiative regularly collaborates with globally recognized teams of experts such as GESAMP, CSIRO, The Hawaii Pacific University, and UN Agencies.

In 2017, the GGGI developed the Best Practice Framework for the Management of Fishing Gear, which has been adopted by a range of seafood companies, and in national and regional marine litter and fisheries management action plans (Huntington, 2015). The document identifies ten major stakeholder groups, from fishers to non-governmental organizations and gear manufacturers and lays out the strategies each group can conduct to prevent, mitigate and remediate lost and abandoned fishing gear. We have hosted a number of in-person workshops and online trainings, some in collaboration with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO), to familiarize communities around the world with the strategies for effectively combatting ADLFG.

In addition to the on-the-ground work conducted by our member organizations, GGGI has implemented solutions projects in more than a dozen countries. GGGI focuses on projects which can be scaled around the world. Whether trialing innovative technologies for tracking fishing gear, developing a gill net recycling scheme or researching port reception facilities, GGGI works to identify key actors and the best approach for addressing lost and abandoned gear in each community. Our work spans the globe to make meaningful change in places like the Gulf of Maine, Panama City and Vanuatu.

Currently the GGGI is working in the Caribbean region helping to incorporate best management practices to prevent gear loss into fisher insurance for hurricane events; trialing innovative fishing gear tracking technologies to aid the retrieval of lost gear; conducting capacity building efforts on best gear management practices; performing “hotspot” mapping using trialed and tested predictive models to locate areas with high levels of gear loss and/or accumulation; and facilitating gear recovery where possible. The project will be expanded to additional Caribbean countries in 2021 through collaboration with GCFI and CRFM.

**KEYWORDS:** St. Vincent and the Grenadines, cetaceans, ecotoxicology, human health, small-scale fisheries

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