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CLEAN CITIES, BLUE OCEAN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

KEY FACTS

- 350+** informal and open dumpsites
- 25%** of households aren't served by waste collection services
- Approximately **7,000** tons of waste are generated in the DR each day

THE CHALLENGE

Currently, waste in the Dominican Republic (DR) is deposited in over 350 informal and open dump sites. The condition of these sites presents a range of serious environmental and human health concerns, including environmental degradation due to improper containment of plastics and other waste, water contamination from unlined dump sites, and air pollution resulting from gasses that emanate from the waste and landfill fires sparked by spontaneous combustion. Beyond the dump sites, the country's waste management challenges are further perpetuated by limited waste collection services, a lack of coordinated resources for community engagement and behavior change, and an absence of a national legal framework to establish action plans, regulations, or enforceable policies.

On the DR's northeastern coast, the Samaná peninsula and its large, semi-enclosed bay are facing the impacts of these challenges. Citizens living near disposal sites are being exposed to toxic fumes and contaminated water sources; the island's biodiversity, including the more than 1,500 humpback whales who inhabit Samaná Bay between December and March, is facing serious impacts from the waste leaking into the bay and the Atlantic Ocean; and nationally significant economies—particularly tourism—are being threatened.

The **passage of a national law for solid waste management, enhanced infrastructure, and strengthened markets for recycled and reusable products are critical** if the DR is to shift to a more robust waste collection, recycling, and disposal system that can reduce environmental leakage and preserve the country's environmental resources.

OUR APPROACH

To address these challenges, USAID's Clean Cities, Blue Ocean (CCBO) program offers **state-of-the-art international technical expertise and sustainable, locally-led solutions through its local grants program**. CCBO seeks to develop, test, and implement new models that promote the 3Rs and enhance solid waste management (SWM); facilitate partnerships and investment around key needs, such as infrastructure; and strengthen local systems to build the nation's resiliency and self-reliance. CCBO seeks to learn from and expand on the success of proven initiatives by local government, non-governmental organizations, and other international donors and development agencies.

CCBO's engagement in the DR comes at a pivotal time for progress on plastic pollution, with increasing volumes of plastic entering the ocean and mounting instances of toxic landfill fires. To eliminate and mitigate the effects of these conditions, CCBO's four guiding objectives are to:

- **Promote 3R practices and strengthen local and regional markets** for recycled plastics;
- **Build social and behavior change** for 3R's and sustainable SWM;
- **Increase capacity and effective governance** for SWM and recycling systems; and
- **Facilitate public-private partnerships** and multi-stakeholder alliances to bolster the program's impact, scalability, and sustainability.

Informal waste collectors (IWCs), of which a large portion are women, play a significant role in SWM. Through waste collection and sorting, they divert waste away from landfills and contribute to communities' local economies, public health and safety, and environments. Despite their critical roles, they are commonly underrepresented, face poor working conditions and social stigmas, and women working in the sector earn far less than their male counterparts. Across its approach and activities, CCBO works to support and enhance the livelihoods of IWCs, as well as advance women's economic empowerment as part of the Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) Initiative by improving social and economic

conditions that impede women’s ability to work successfully in SWM and recycling jobs.

ENGAGEMENT SITES

In the DR, CCBO is piloting solutions to stop the flow of plastic pollution to Samaná Bay and the Atlantic Ocean through work in **Samaná Province**. Solid waste from the Samaná Peninsula currently enters the Samaná Bay and Atlantic Ocean from multiple point sources within and outside the peninsula. Plastic from rice production along the Yuna River flows into Samaná Bay through the municipality of Sanchez; household waste is deposited directly into streams and rivers in the towns of Samaná, Las Terrenas, and Sanchez; heavy rains carry trash from the hilltops of Samaná to low-lying areas in Sanchez; and trash left by beachgoers in Las Galeras, Las Terrenas, and Samaná is captured by high tides. A waste monitoring system does not exist to measure the overall impact, but the coastline provides ample evidence of a nonfunctioning system that is contributing to the global influx of ocean plastic pollution.

ACTIVITIES

CCBO will help the municipalities of Samaná Province to design and implement holistic, watershed-specific strategies that address each step in the waste value chain—from production to its end use—prioritizing the most inclusive, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable solutions. In the first year of the project, CCBO will:

- Work together with the plastics industry and municipal recycling efforts (including waste pickers and recyclers) to **implement inclusive local SWM policies, strengthen markets, and advocate for the passage of the DR’s new National SWM Law** (Initiative No. 06625-2016-20202-CD);
- Conduct critical **site-level research** to understand Samaná’s specific challenges in SWM and enforcement, behavior change, and barriers to private sector investment;
- **Award grants** to local partners to begin implementing effective, locally-led solutions to achieve program objectives; and
- Provide **additional technical assistance and capacity building** support using international and local program staff.



IWCs play an important role in the waste stream, sifting recyclable items out of waste bound for landfills. Credit: CCBO/Jon Angin

ABOUT CLEAN CITIES, BLUE OCEAN

USAID’s Clean Cities, Blue Ocean is a five-year global program (2019-2024) to combat ocean plastic pollution. CCBO is the Agency’s flagship program on ocean plastic pollution, working at the global level and in specific, rapidly urbanizing focal countries to target ocean plastics directly at their source. The program is implemented by Tetra Tech, in partnership with a consortium of organizations that include the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), The Manoff Group, and Ocean Conservancy. Other partners include national and local government, members of the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and local women’s and youth organizations.

Sources:

The World Bank, Marine Pollution in the Caribbean: Not a Minute to Waste, 2019.

Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources, United Nations Development Program, National Implementation Plan of the Stockholm Convention in the Dominican Republic, 2008.



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