

MID-TERM REVIEW

Project ID:	10547
Project Name:	Reduce marine plastics and plastic pollution in Latin American and Caribbean cities through a circular economy approach
Countr(ies):	Regional, Colombia, Jamaica, Panama
Implementing Agency:	UNEP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. OVERVIEW	3
A. Description	3
B. Key Dates	3
II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES	3
A. Main MTR Findings	3
B. Stakeholder Engagement	4
C. Gender Equality	4
D. Knowledge Management	5
III. CORE INDICATORS	5
IV: CO FINANCING	9
V: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS	12
VI. ANNEX	13

I. Overview

A. Description

Project name

Reduce marine plastics and plastic pollution in Latin American and Caribbean cities through a circular economy approach

Country

Regional, Colombia, Jamaica, Panama

GEF ID

10547

Implementing Agency

UNEP

Executing Entity

Cartagena Convention Secretariat

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

FSP

Objective

Reducing marine plastics and plastic pollution in the Latin America and the Caribbean region by facilitating circular actions at the city level to accelerate the transition to a circular economy, in line with government and business commitments on addressing marine plastics and plastic pollution.

B. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval

6/2/2022

Agency Approval

11/28/2022

Implementation Start

12/22/2022

First Disbursement

1/18/2024

Expected MTR

1/31/2026

MTR Submission

6/30/2026

Actual MTR

6/1/2026

Expected Completion

12/31/2026

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Main MTR Findings

The GEF LAC Circular Cities project has remained highly relevant and strategically well-positioned within national, regional, and global environmental and natural resources management priorities, particularly related to addressing marine plastic pollution using circular economy approaches. Its comprehensive, integrated design is appropriate for addressing the key systemic barriers to transitioning to a circular economy for plastics in the six cities. However, the project design is

complex and over-ambitious for its short duration and available budget as well as the wide disparity among the cities with respect to capacity and on-the-ground realities. This has been compounded by the limited capacity of the CCS/PMU and fiscal and administrative hurdles in the countries and the still-pending agreement with Jamaica in the last year of the project. Prolonged delays in start-up have had major knock-on effects on implementation in the first three years, particularly in the countries.

During the first three years, the project mobilised a wide cross-section of stakeholders along the plastics value chain. Through the delivery of various regional targets in the first three years, stakeholders now have access to information on best practices on relevant policy frameworks and upstream and downstream solutions, with recommendations for adaptation in LAC cities. A major achievement is the launch of the LAC Inter-city Network and its expansion with 7 other LAC cities, which is providing a unique platform for governments and city level officials to collaborate. The strong stakeholder participation in initial consultations with Colombia and Panamá for the Industry Roundtables (IRT) indicates a favourable potential for the involvement of the private sector in circular economy solutions in these countries. However, mechanisms are needed to facilitate greater interaction between the ITR and Inter-city Network and to promote their institutional and financial sustainability.

The project has underperformed with respect to the achievement of the planned targets, outputs, and outcomes, most of which remain to be completed in less than one year, placing the project at high risk. In the face of persistent hurdles and challenges, it is highly unlikely that the project could be successfully completed in the remaining time. Therefore, a no-cost extension of at least 1.5 years (from December 2026) will be necessary for successful completion of the project and avoidance of reputational risk to UNEP and the Executing Partners. To ensure more efficient implementation in the remaining time, project activities need to be better aligned with the capacity and specific circumstances of the cities, which requires the countries/cities to assess and re-scope their activities according to their priorities and on-the-ground situation. Based on the outcome of this exercise, national level targets, workplans, and budgets may need to be modified while ensuring that the planned outcomes and objectives of the GEF LAC Circular Cities project are not compromised.

The overall assessment of the project's performance is 'Moderately Unsatisfactory'.

B. Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is embedded in all four technical project components and is being guided by the project's Stakeholder Analysis and Engagement Plan, Gender Action Plan, Private Sector Engagement Approach, and Communication Strategy. There has been high stakeholder participation in the PSC (including by countries/cities and other implementing partners), City and National Working Groups, Inter-city Network (public sector), and Industry Roundtable consultations (private sector), and other project activities. Involvement of stakeholders in Jamaica has been hampered due to the lack of a signed agreement and associated delay in disbursement of funds and start of implementation in this country. Once the agreement is signed, implementation is expected to be accelerated. Similarly, engagement with other groups (e.g., academia and non-governmental actors) is expected to increase as implementation progresses.

C. Gender Equality

The project's strategic priorities related to gender are: 1) increase women's involvement across the plastics value chain; 2) enhance gender equality in decision making and leadership; and 3) improve women's economic empowerment. Among the measures taken to ensure that gender is adequately addressed are preparation of a gender guidance note/gender action plan, a communication strategy that includes a section on Gender and Social Inclusion and contracting a gender and social inclusion expert. The project will foster inclusive participation through targeted capacity-building and supporting women entrepreneurs in promoting the circularity of their businesses. The project results framework contains several gender-sensitive indicators and targets, and tracking of these as well as of the GEB indicator on gender and the gender action plan indicators will be facilitated by the gender expert and M&E specialist (latter to be hired).

D. Knowledge Management

The project has hired a communications consultant and prepared a communication strategy, which is being adapted for use in each participating country, as well as a gender action plan and private sector engagement plan. However, their implementation needs to be accelerated to optimise use of the remaining time. Key target audiences have been identified based on a stakeholder analysis. However, the communication strategy is yet to be fully implemented. The first version of the project website has been established (<https://www.unep.org/cep/projects/circular-cities-beyond-plastics>) but content has been limited due to low delivery owing to delayed implementation in the project countries. Two important platforms for communication and sharing of information and experiences on circular economy for plastics are the Inter-city Network (which has been launched) and the Industry Roundtables. Communication materials produced include a project fact sheet, press releases, promotional video on IW:Learn, articles in UNEP and CCS newsletters, PowerPoint presentations, and a webinar series 'Accelerating the Circular Economy of Plastics in Cities' through the project's Inter-city Network. Lessons learned are documented in the annual PIR reports and case studies as well as best practices will emerge as implementation progresses.

Communication and public awareness activities are expected to be ramped up with implementation of the communications strategy and acceleration of activities in the countries.

III. Core Indicators

Indicator 5 Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (excluding protected areas)

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 5.1 Fisheries under third-party certification incorporating biodiversity considerations

Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)

Type/name of the third-party certification

Indicator 5.2 Large Marine Ecosystems with reduced pollution and hypoxia

Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)

LME at PIF	LME at CEO Endorsement	LME at MTR	LME at TE

Indicator 5.3 Marine OECMs supported

Name of the OECMs	WDPA-ID	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (direct)				
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (indirect)	3000	9382		

Indicator 6.1 Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided in the AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (direct)				
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting				
Duration of accounting				

Indicator 6.2 Emissions Avoided Outside AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) Sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (direct)				
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (indirect)	3,000	9,382	0	
Anticipated start year of accounting	2021	2022	2023	
Duration of accounting	4	4	3	

Indicator 6.3 Energy Saved (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Total Target Benefit	Energy (MJ) (At PIF)	Energy (MJ) (At CEO Endorsement)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at MTR)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at TE)
Target Energy Saved (MJ)				

Indicator 6.4 Increase in Installed Renewable Energy Capacity per Technology (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Technology	Capacity (MW) (Expected at PIF)	Capacity (MW) (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at MTR)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at TE)
------------	---------------------------------	---	---------------------------------	--------------------------------

Indicator 7 Shared water ecosystems under new or improved cooperative management

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Shared water Ecosystem	Caribbean sea, Pacific Central American Coastal	Caribbean sea, Pacific Central American Coastal	Caribbean sea, Pacific Central American Coastal	
Count	2	2	2	0

Indicator 7.1 Level of Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Program (TDA/SAP) formulation and implementation (scale of 1 to 4; see Guidance)

Shared Water Ecosystem	Rating (Expected at PIF)	Rating (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Rating (Achieved at MTR)	Rating (Achieved at TE)
------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------

Indicator 7.2 Level of Regional Legal Agreements and Regional management institution(s) (RMI) to support its implementation (scale of 1 to 4; see Guidance)

Shared Water Ecosystem	Rating (Expected at PIF)	Rating (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Rating (Achieved at MTR)	Rating (Achieved at TE)
------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------

Indicator 7.3 Level of National/Local reforms and active participation of Inter-Ministerial Committees (IMC; scale 1 to 4; See Guidance)

Shared Water Ecosystem	Rating (Expected at PIF)	Rating (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Rating (Achieved at MTR)	Rating (Achieved at TE)
Caribbean sea	2	2	1	
Pacific Central American Coastal	2	2	1	

Indicator 7.4 Level of engagement in IWLEARN through participation and delivery of key products(scale 1 to 4; see Guidance)

Shared Water Ecosystem	Rating (Expected at PIF)	Rating (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Rating (Achieved at MTR)	Rating (Achieved at TE)
Caribbean sea	2	2	2	
Pacific Central American Coastal	2	2	2	

Indicator 9 Chemicals of global concern and their waste reduced

Metric Tons (Expected at PIF)	Metric Tons (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Metric Tons (Achieved at MTR)	Metric Tons (Achieved at TE)
0.00	54.90	0.00	0.00

Indicator 9.1 Solid and liquid Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) removed or disposed (POPs type)

POPs type	Metric Tons (Expected at PIF)	Metric Tons (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Metric Tons (Achieved at MTR)	Metric Tons (Achieved at TE)
Hexabromocyclododecane (HBCDD)		14.00	0.00	
Decabromodiphenyl ether (commercial mixture, c-decaBDE)		40.90	0.00	

Indicator 9.2 Quantity of mercury reduced (metric tons)

Metric Tons (Expected at PIF)	Metric Tons (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Metric Tons (Achieved at MTR)	Metric Tons (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 9.3 Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) Reduced/Phased out (metric tons)

Metric Tons (Expected at PIF)	Metric Tons (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Metric Tons (Achieved at MTR)	Metric Tons (Achieved at TE)

--	--	--	--

Indicator 9.4 Number of countries with legislation and policy implemented to control chemicals and waste (Use this sub-indicator in addition to one of the sub-indicators 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 if applicable)

Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 9.5 Number of low-chemical/non-chemical systems implemented, particularly in food production, manufacturing and cities (Use this sub-indicator in addition to one of the sub-indicators 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 if applicable)

Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 9.6 POPs/Mercury containing materials and products directly avoided

Metric Tons (Expected at PIF)	Metric Tons (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Metric Tons (Achieved at MTR)	Metric Tons (Achieved at TE)
	1,200.00	0.00	

Indicator 9.7 Highly Hazardous Pesticides eliminated

Metric Tons (Expected at PIF)	Metric Tons (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Metric Tons (Achieved at MTR)	Metric Tons (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 9.8 Avoided residual plastic waste

Metric Tons (Expected at PIF)	Metric Tons (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Metric Tons (Achieved at MTR)	Metric Tons (Achieved at TE)
		0.00	

Indicator 10 Persistent organic pollutants to air reduced

Grams of toxic equivalent gTEQ (Expected at PIF)	Grams of toxic equivalent gTEQ (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Grams of toxic equivalent gTEQ (Achieved at MTR)	Grams of toxic equivalent gTEQ (Achieved at TE)
	1.16	0.00	

Indicator 10.1 Number of countries with legislation and policy implemented to control emissions of POPs to air (Use this sub-indicator in addition to Core Indicator 10 if applicable)

Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 10.2 Number of emission control technologies/practices implemented (Use this sub-indicator in addition to Core Indicator 10 if applicable)

Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	513,834	559,306	5,000	
Male	342,556	430,856	5,000	
Total	856,390	990,162	10,000	0

IV: Co Financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Anticipated at CEO(\$)	Materialized at MTR(\$)
GEF Agency	UNEP	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	3,163,860.00	
GEF Agency	UNEP	Grant	Investment mobilized	8,546,201.00	
Recipient Country Government	Mayor of Cartagena	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,643,840.00	2,460,812.00
Recipient Country Government	Mayor of Barranquilla	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	262,734.00	322,734.00
Recipient Country Government	EPA Cartagena (urban environmental authority)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,151,405.00	
Recipient Country Government	SENA Regional Bolivar	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	12,900.00	

Private Sector	XICLO	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	1,400,000.00	360,000.00
Private Sector	XICLO	Grant	Investment mobilized	2,100,000.00	
Private Sector	Trashforma	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	400,000.00	325,000.00
Private Sector	Trashforma	Grant	Investment mobilized	810,000.00	
Private Sector	Bliss Earth Recycling Panamá	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	570,000.00	
Private Sector	Bliss Earth Recycling Panamá	Grant	Investment mobilized	500,000.00	
Private Sector	Algramo	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	640,730.00	
Private Sector	Algramo	Grant	Investment mobilized	2,475,000.00	
Private Sector	Pepsi Cola	Grant	Investment mobilized	1,000.00	
Private Sector	LeafSync	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	268,000.00	277,500.00
Private Sector	LeafSync	Grant	Investment mobilized	100,000.00	100,000.00
Other	Alliance to End Plastic Waste	Other	Investment mobilized	820,000.00	655,167.00
Other	GPAP	Other	Investment mobilized	835,000.00	421,842.00
Other	GPAP	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	83,500.00	83,500.00
Other	CEMPRE	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	34,014.00	

Other	CEMPRE	Other	Investment mobilized	114,703.00	
Other	EcoComputo	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	90,000.00	
Other	EcoComputo	Other	Investment mobilized	30,000.00	
Other	INVEMAR	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	605,603.00	
Other	INVEMAR	Other	Investment mobilized	200,000.00	
Other	Fundacion de Accion Social por Panama	Other	Investment mobilized	105,368.00	25,929.00
Other	Botellas de amor	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	138,500.00	24,000.00
Other	Botellas de amor	Other	Investment mobilized	138,500.00	114,500.00
Recipient Country Government	Waste Agency of Panama (Autoridad de Aseo)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	4,000,000.00	
Other	Recycling Partners Jamaica	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	560,000.00	
Other	Recycling Partners Jamaica	Other	Investment mobilized	1,310,000.00	
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development Colombia	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	256,313.00	101,355.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Environment Panama	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	175,200.00	83,660.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Environment Panama	Public Investment	Investment mobilized	430,890.00	43,574.00

Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Housing, Urban Renewal, Environment and Climate Change Jamaica	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	167,652.00	
Recipient Country Government	National Environment and Planning Agency Jamaica	Public Investment	Investment mobilized	368,210.00	125.00
Recipient Country Government	National Environment and Planning Agency Jamaica	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	56,644.00	
Other	Ancon	Other	Investment mobilized	167,271.00	33,800.00
Other	Ancon	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	210,972.00	30,000.00
Other	BRS	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	463,230.00	463,230.00
Private Sector					
Private Sector					
Total Co-financing				35,407,240.00	527,030.00

Comments

Co-finance realized amounts to only US\$5,926,728 of the US\$35,407,240 committed at design phase (17%) (2025 PIR report). The low level is due to, among others, changes that occurred between the time that the co-finance commitments were made (2022) and the start of implementation (projects on which co-finance was based are no longer operational, and delayed start of implementation in Jamaica. Re-engaging these partners and identifying new sources of co-finance will be necessary during the remaining life of the project, for example, by a) working with the national IPs, many of whom have strong relationships with relevant actors on the ground, to facilitate re-introduction discussions where relevant, b) leverage UNEP LACO (through the current consultant coordinating the Inter-city Network) to facilitate re-introduction conversations where relationships exist, particularly in the context of Colombia and Panamá.

V: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
	Medium/Moderate	Medium/Moderate	

Measures to address identified risks and impacts

During the project design stage, environmental and social risks and impacts were identified in accordance with UNEP's Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework, and an environmental and social safeguards management plan developed with respect to the Safeguards Standards triggered by the project. Three Standards were of moderate risk - Climate Change and Disaster Risks; Community Health, Safety and Security; and Labor and working conditions. In developing solutions to plastic pollution, the project will take climate change and disaster risks, particularly related to flooding, into account. It is expected that the sustainable production of plastics and sound plastic waste management will lead to increased resilience against climate change impacts. In addition, decreased plastic pollution will reduce areas of stagnant water and hence breeding sites for disease vectors such as mosquitoes. Recruitment of local project staff by the Executing Agency will be aligned with national labour laws and international commitments. The overall ESS risk classification is Medium/Moderate (2024 and 2025 PIR reports).

VI. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category	Prefix	Title
M and E Document	Mid-term Review (MTR)	10547 - LAC Circular Cities_Final MTR report
Project Supporting Document	ESS Supporting Document	marine CE LAC PRC SRIF