Norad

OCEAN REPORT 2024

Making waves plastic-free:

Norway's support for a sustainable ocean
Special edition on combating marine litter

Ocean Report 2024: Making waves plastic-free

Norad
The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

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Coverphoto: **Sören Funk**
Photo: **Rob Barnes** | If sustainably managed, the ocean could produce six times more food globally. →

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Foreword

We cannot have healthy people and a healthy planet without a healthy ocean.

The health and productivity of our ocean is vital to the livelihoods, food security and wellbeing of billions of people. As highlighted by the High-level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, co-chaired by Norway and Palau: *...if sustainably managed, the ocean could produce six times more food globally, generate 40 times more renewable energy than currently, contribute up to 35 % of the necessary greenhouse gas emissions reductions needed by 2050, help lift millions of people out of poverty, and increase economic and environmental resilience. The pressures are intense, but recovery is possible.*

While 2022 was widely termed the 'super year' for the ocean, 2023 continued as another year of great advancement. The adoption of the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ) in New York in June was followed by its signing in the autumn by representatives of more than 80 countries. The High Seas Treaty is a landmark decision and critical step towards conserving ocean biodiversity and reaching the global community's '30×30' target to conserve or protect at least 30 % of terrestrial and ocean areas by 2030.

2023 was also the year when the Norwegian Government presented the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies to the Storting (Norwegian parliament) for consent to ratify. This is the first agreement in the WTO's legal regime to focus on sustainability. It established the first-ever set of global, binding rules for the support that governments provide to their fishing sectors, and prohibits subsidies in cases where there are clear sustainability concerns. With more than 35 % of the world's fish stocks overexploited, this agreement will play a crucial role in reducing the most harmful effects of fisheries subsidies. As of May 2024, 76 WTO members have accepted the agreement, which will enter into force when it has been ratified by 110 WTO members.

Throughout 2023, Norway continued the important work towards realising an international legally binding instrument to eliminate the discharge of plastic pollution. If left unaddressed, plastic pollution into land or water will increase to 49 million tonnes annually by 2040. The need for an ambitious instrument that contains new, effective control measures to prevent leakage of plastic into nature is more crucial than ever. Progress was made at the two intergovernmental negotiation meetings, in Paris in May and Nairobi in November.

We are now approaching the end of the negotiation process, and we all need to come together for our common good. Norway will continue to work actively to promote an ambitious instrument that contains the control measures called for to reduce leakage of ever-increasing volumes of plastic waste into the world's ocean.

This is the fourth report in the series Making Waves: Norway's Support for a Sustainable Ocean, and is a special edition focused on Norwegian support under the development programme to combat marine litter and microplastic during the period 2019–2024. Norway has been a major donor to ocean-related development assistance at the international level for many years. In 2018, Norway was one of the first countries to provide substantial funding to combat marine litter and microplastics. Efforts to combat plastic pollution from large sources in developing countries is a key component of the development programme, and is

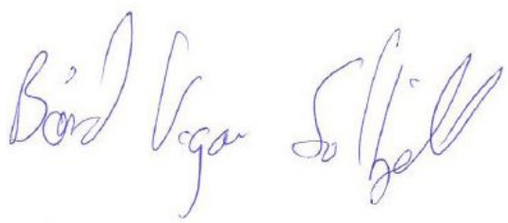
closely aligned with the work of the Ocean Panel. The first phase of the programme is coming to an end in 2024.

This report provides a short overview of the projects Norway has supported and lessons learned in the area of marine litter and microplastics during the programme period. Using examples of hands-on projects, the report offers insight into challenges the world is facing as well as new opportunities that are emerging. The report also presents other Norwegian support to ocean-related development assistance in 2023.

To succeed in ending plastic pollution and achieve sustainable ocean economies, we will need to design new and scalable solutions. Comprehensive policies and sustainable financing solutions are essential. Building on the lessons learned and the progress achieved, Norway will continue to build capacity in its partner countries and work with key actors to boost action and innovation in these important areas.

Espen Barth Eide,
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Anne Beathe Tvinnereim,
Minister of International Development



Bård Vegar Solhjell, Director,
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

1

Current scene: Taking action to combat marine litter

Rapidly increasing plastic production, consumption and inadequate waste management have made plastic pollution one of the most pressing global environmental issues we face today. Every day, plastic leaks into the ocean from thousands of sources all over the world, causing significant harm to the environment, human and ecosystem health, and economies worldwide.

Marine litter challenges were high on the agenda in 2017 as the world watched a visibly sick whale stranded in Sotra on the west coast of Norway. After eating 30 plastic bags, the whale needed to be euthanised. This sent a wave of shock across Norway and the entire world, marking a pivotal moment in the global awareness of marine plastic pollution.

Since then, extensive efforts to solve the plastic pollution problem have been made. The Norwegian Development Programme to Combat Marine Litter and Microplastics was launched in 2018, and was one of the first programmes of its kind. According to an OECD-report, Norway has committed 8 per cent of total grant funding, along with the European Union (20 per cent) Germany (18 per cent) and Japan (9 per cent). The landmark decision in 2022 by the United Nations Environment Assembly, "End Plastic Pollution: Towards an International Legally Binding Instrument", sparked the negotiations of a new global treaty. Norway and Rwanda are co-chairing the High Ambition Coalition to end plastic pollution by 2040.

Results funded by the Norwegian Development Programme's support towards combating marine litter have shown positive progress in many ways. These are summarised in this report into eight categories, seven of which are presented with examples in this report, while the eighth cuts across all the presented themes.

1. Improving plastic waste management and strengthening the informal recycling sector
2. Joining forces for a global agreement to end plastic pollution
3. Fighting illegal waste trade
4. Tackling marine litter from fishing and shipping
5. Mobilising the private sector to fight plastic pollution
6. Reducing plastic through upstream circular solutions
7. Cleaning up
8. Increasing knowledge (not presented)

FIGURE 1

Number of projects and cumulative funds allocated between eight thematic areas where progress was made with Norwegian support.
Total funding in the period until 2023 is NOK 1 440 000, reaching the target 1,6 billion by the end of 2024

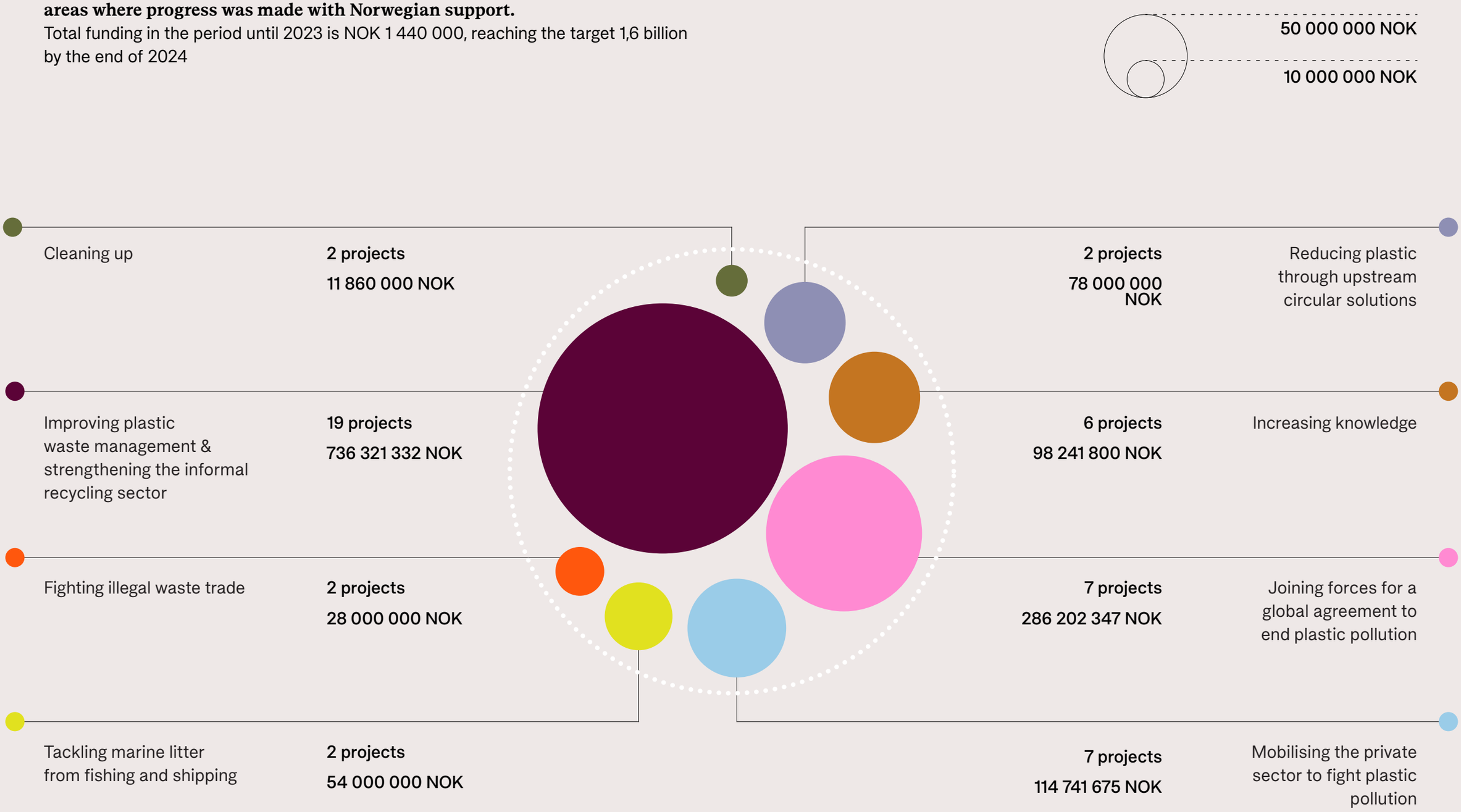


Photo: **Naja Bertolt Jensen**

2

Action works: Key achievements of the Norwegian Development Programme to Combat Marine Litter and Microplastics 2019–2024

The Norwegian Development Programme to Combat Marine Litter and Microplastics is part of Norwegian development aid, and contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 14 on life below water. The geographical focus is countries in Asia with long coastlines and rapidly growing populations and economies, countries in Africa with rapidly growing economies, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that are major receivers of marine litter.

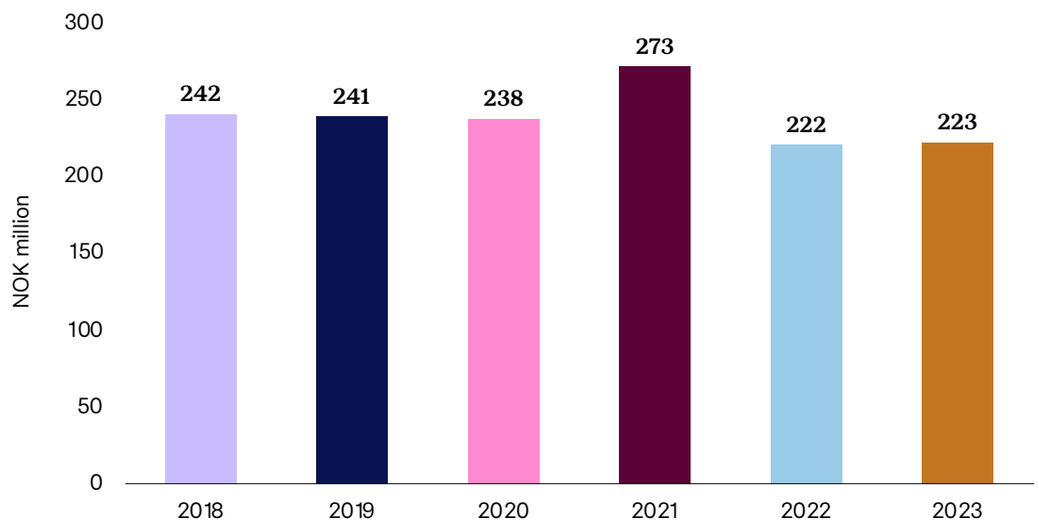
The programme has four outcomes:

1. Improving waste management in partner countries
2. Clean-ups in coastal areas
3. Enhancing private sector engagement
4. Improving global commitments and national and regional policies and means of action

By the end of 2024, Norway will have spent 1.6 billion NOK to Combat Marine Litter and Microplastics. From 2018 to 2023, a total of 1.4 billion NOK was used to fund activities to combat marine litter in developing countries. In total, 67 projects received support in more than 30 countries. The major partners are multilateral institutions, Norwegian and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the private sector in developing countries. Funding for the private sector in developing countries increased significantly in 2023, when new agreements were signed under the call for proposals directed at innovation and entrepreneurship for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

FIGURE 2

Earmarked aid to prevent marine pollution



External review of Norway's Marine Litter Program

In 2023, Norad initiated an external review of the program aimed at combating marine litter and microplastics. The review yielded several key observations:

- The program has likely made moderate-to-large contributions towards its primary goal of preventing and significantly reducing marine pollution.
- The program has made a significant contribution to the process towards a new global agreement to combat marine litter and plastic pollution.
- The portfolio exhibited a good spread of involved stakeholders and targeted benefactors, maintaining a balance in thematic and geographical focus. The program was strongly coherent and well-aligned with the initiatives and priorities of partner countries and other relevant actors.
- At the time of assessment, few partners explicitly targeted private sector performance concerning sustainable production, use, and waste management. The program thus had limited success in mobilizing additional investments and other contributions from development partners and the private sector.
- However, as an early funder in the marine litter sector, Norway has acted as a trailblazer, encouraging other donors to follow suit.
- There is untapped potential in the marine litter program. Specifically, there is potential to increase the focus on countries that generate and export waste, including those where significant production and export of plastic products occur. Additionally, there is room to target interventions further upstream in the waste value chain to tackle plastic pollution at the production stage.

FIGURE 3

Funding of activities to combat marine litter and microplastic per country

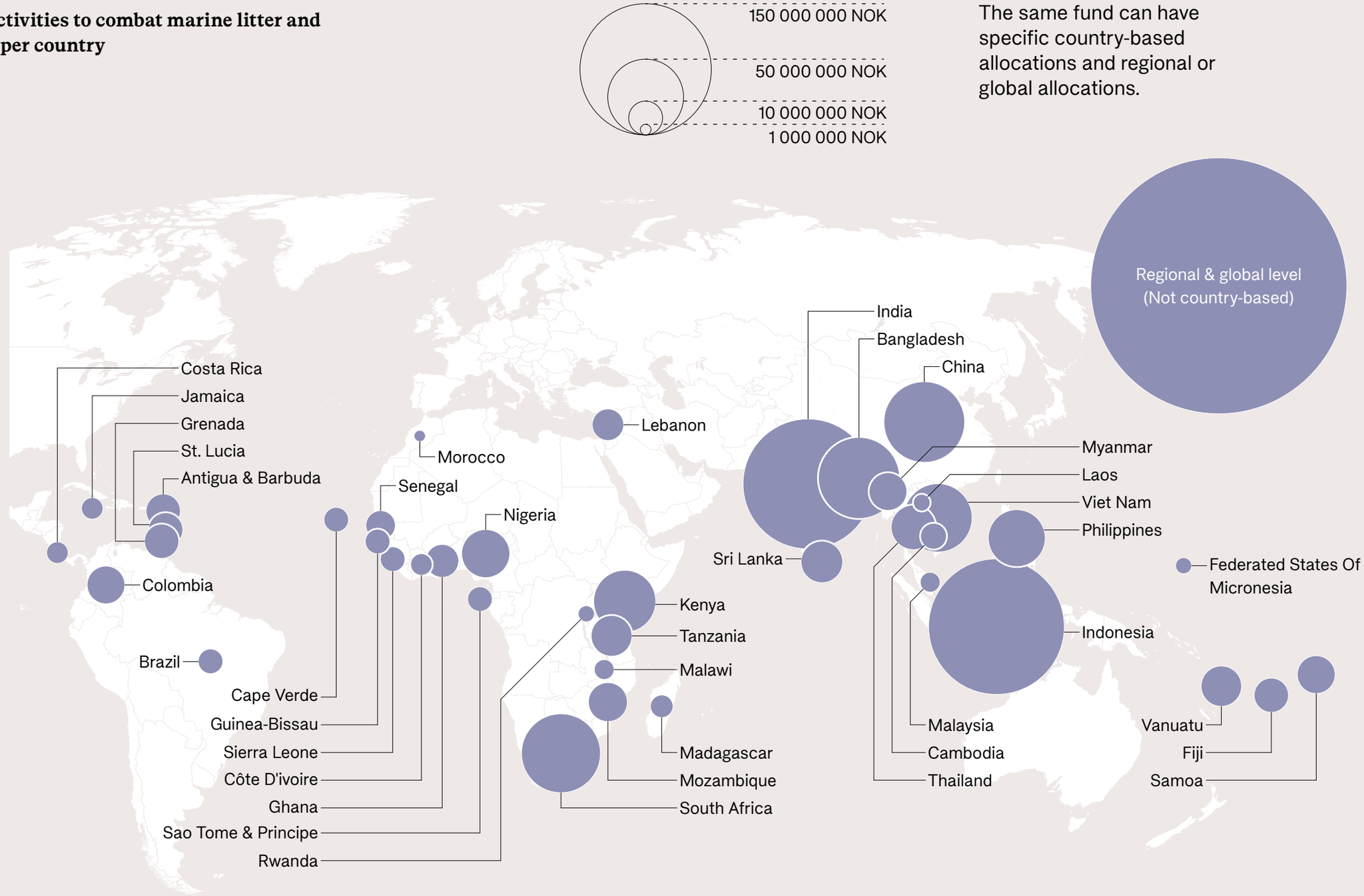
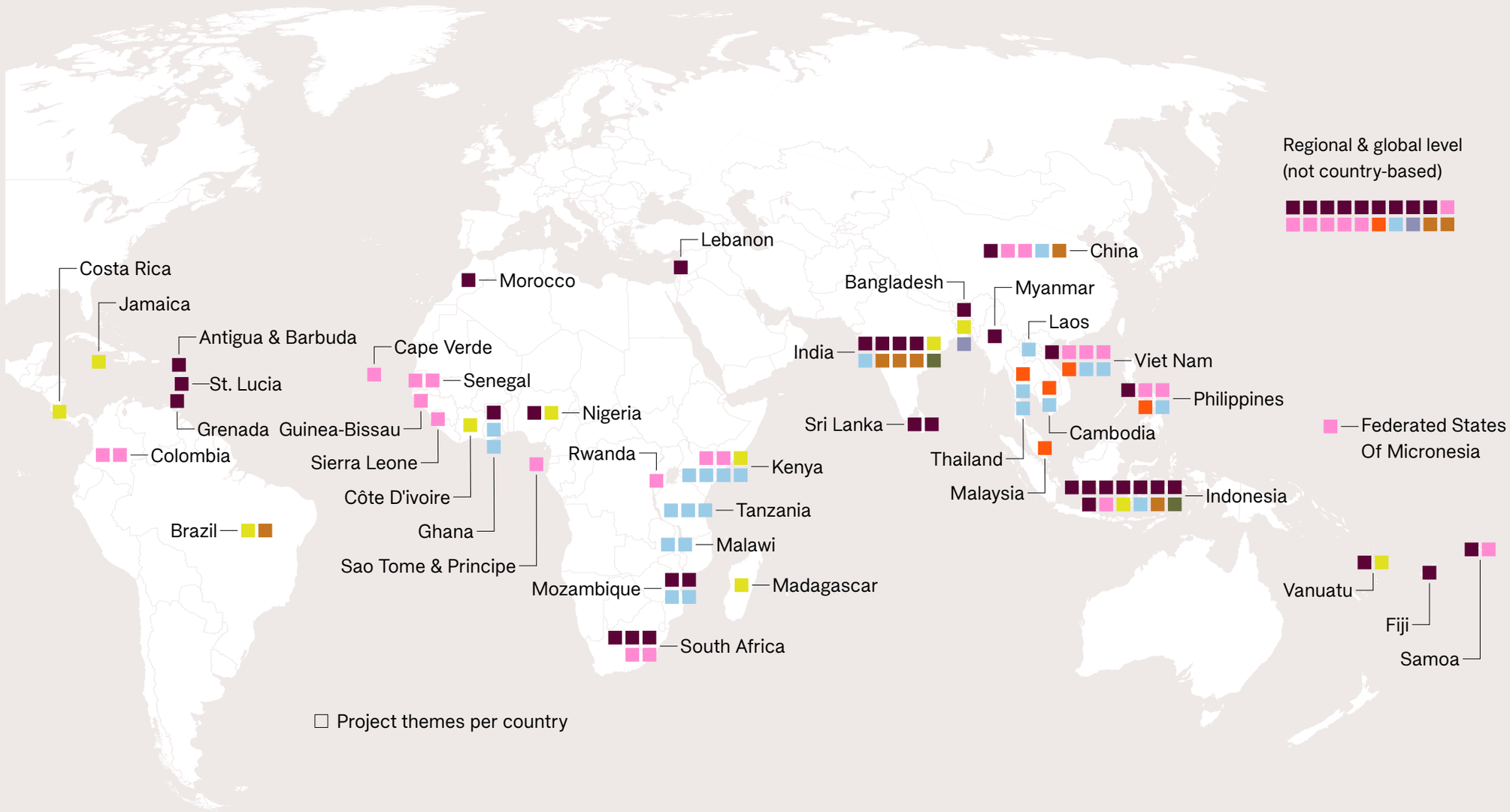


FIGURE 4

Overview of thematic focus areas per country

The same fund can have specific country-based allocations and regional or global allocations.



3

Seven stories of combating marine litter and plastic pollution

1. Improving plastic waste management and strengthening the informal recycling sector

Minimum 2 billion people across the world lack access to waste collection[1], resulting in waste leaking to the environment and impacts on human health. Improved access to efficient and safe waste management is needed, alongside inclusion and empowerment of the informal recycling sector.

Proper waste management collection and treatment facilities are expensive. Limited public budgets and lack of effective national and local policies in many countries means they struggle to compete with cheaper, improper disposal methods, including informal landfills and dumping of waste in nature. Plastic consumption and the resulting waste have increased at such a speed that infrastructure in many countries cannot keep up, and the design of many plastic products limits their recyclability and reuse.

Result highlights:

Supporting and including the informal recycling sector

The informal recycling sector is estimated to account for a staggering 58 per cent of global plastic waste collection and recycling. Informal waste pickers have an indisputable role in preventing plastic pollution, but face a range of challenges including unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, low or irregular incomes, social exclusion, and lack of recognition. It is vital to ensure that waste pickers have a seat at the table in efforts to end plastic pollution, including in the plastic treaty negotiations.[2]

One example of efforts to support and include the informal sector is through the work of the NGO Tearfund, supported by Norway. Along with the International Alliance of Waste Pickers, Tearfund has contributed to a section of the draft treaty text devoted to a just transition, clearly referencing waste pickers as well as ensuring that their interests are reflected in sections on extended producer responsibility (EPR), waste management, finance and the treaty principles.

1 UNEP, *Beyond an Age of Waste: Turning Rubbish into a Resource. Global Waste Management Outlook 2024* (Nairobi: UNEP, 2024).

2 Maria Tsakona, Ieva Ručevska, Sonia Maria Dias and Delila Khaled, *A Seat at the Table: The Role of the Informal Recycling Sector in Plastic Pollution Reduction, and Recommended Policy Changes* (Arendal: GRID-Arendal, 2022).

Tearfund established the Fair Circularity Initiative to ensure that human rights of workers within the informal recycling sector are respected and their critical role in circular value chains is recognised. Launched by the Coca-Cola Company, PepsiCo, Unilever and Nestlé, and convened by Tearfund, more companies are now committing to adopting the Fair Circularity Principles.

Photo: **WWF Indonesia**

Policies and waste management plans: India and Indonesia

India and Indonesia have set ambitious targets to reduce plastic pollution, and have taken impressive measures to improve waste management. A major share of Norwegian funding to combat marine litter is allocated to contribute to these ambitions.

India's rapid economic growth and urbanisation have led to a surge in consumption of plastic products, especially packaging. Waste management systems are inadequate to deal with the rising levels of plastic waste resulting in widespread plastic pollution, much of which finds its way into rivers and marine ecosystems.

The Centre for Science and Environment in New Delhi supported 37 cities in three north-eastern states of India (Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland) to develop and implement by-laws for source segregation of waste, impose door-to-door collection tariffs, and enforce penalties for non-compliance with the by-laws. The project has mainstreamed circular economy principles in alignment with national policies, and provided recommendations and research-based evidence for policy guidance.

The India-Norway Cooperation Project on Capacity Building for Reducing Plastic and Chemical Pollution in India (INOPOL) project, led by the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA), addresses the interlinked challenges of marine litter, microplastics and persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in India. NIVA and local partners have built capacity to monitor, manage and reduce plastic pollution in India, specifically in Gujarat state. They have produced knowledge on plastic waste and chemical pollution, and strengthened monitoring capacity of research institutions and central, state and local governments through targeted training events, stakeholder engagement, publications and awareness-raising activities. The data and scientific outlook produced have helped design solutions to combat marine litter.

Afroz Shah is a leading Indian environmental activist and lawyer from Mumbai. He is best known for organising the world's largest beach clean-up, which has grown into a movement inspiring people around the world to clean up their surroundings. Through the Afroz Shah Foundation, many community-driven projects are running in Mumbai to tackle the "last mile problem", in which food and other products are packaged in multilayer or single-use plastics, creating large amounts of unnecessary and problematic plastic waste. One example includes the Femme Freedom Project, a campaign to educate local populations about menstrual waste, along with free distribution of reusable menstrual cups. Another is the Vegetable Power project, through which the Afroz Shah Foundation sells fruits and vegetables without plastic packaging, while educating communities in Mumbai about the problem of plastic packaging. In 2022, this project reached 5,000 people, with the aim of reaching 15,000 people and introducing an app to reach even more. The Foundation has also set up plastic-free shops to sell commodities like masalas (spice mixes) in plastic-free packaging.

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Combating marine litter and the spread of microplastics has also become a priority for Indonesia. The Government has declared a National Action Plan aiming to reduce marine litter by 70 per cent by 2025.

The programme has supported efforts by Waste Norway and SystemIQ to improve municipal waste management systems and practices in the regency of Banyuwangi, East Java. Banyuwangi is known for its beautiful beaches and abundant wildlife. However, a baseline study conducted by the Clean Oceans through Clean Communities (CLOCC) project, led by Waste Norway, highlighted that 78 per cent of the 853 tonnes of waste generated daily in Banyuwangi was leaking into the environment through burial, burning, and disposal on land or in water bodies. The CLOCC project has developed a sustainable waste management system in Banyuwangi, aiming to transform it into a litter-free tourist destination by 2040. Through a collaborative effort with local authorities, CLOCC has fostered an inclusive approach by engaging government, private sector and civil society stakeholders, ensuring long-term local support. A waste masterplan was launched in January 2024, and has been handed over to the Banyuwangi regency to take action locally.

Photo: **Afroz Shah Foundation**

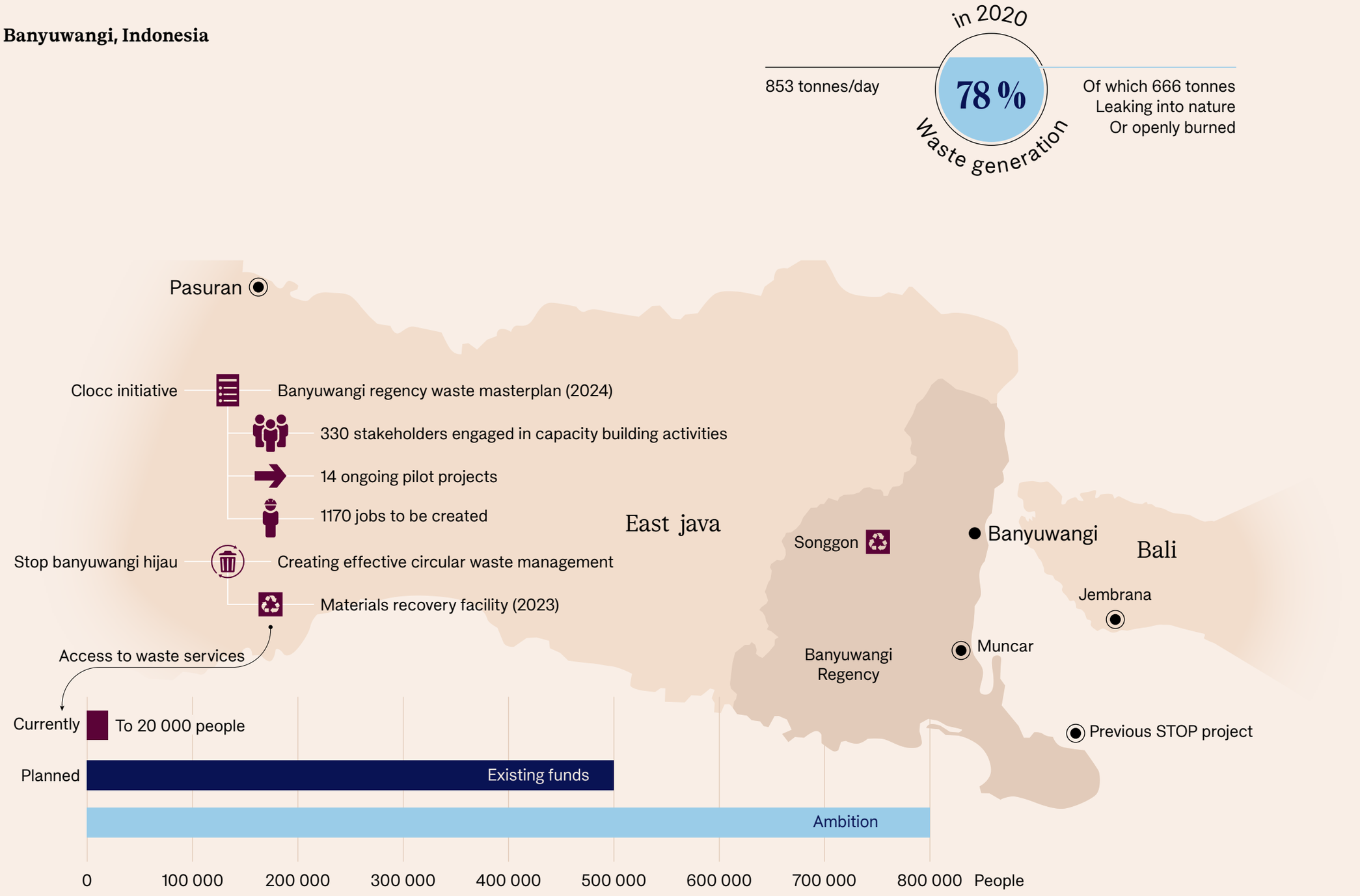
The Stop Waste Go Circular (STOP) project led by SystemIQ also takes place in Banyuwangi in the three cities of Muncar, Pasuruan and Jembrana. Muncar is a fishing village with approximately 130,000 inhabitants, that has no organised system for waste management. The city is located downstream from four rivers, and plastic bags, bottles, toys and other waste literally cover the beach. The project builds effective circular waste management systems using a system enabler approach, meaning that they are building the systems together with local governments over several years before stepping back to let the systems be operated locally. After nearly four years of operating on the ground in each location, project STOP has handed over operations in Muncar, Pasuruan and Jembrana. So far, the project has provided waste collection to almost 400,000 people, created 300 full-time jobs and collected more than 60,000 tonnes of waste.

The project has evolved into STOP Banyuwangi Hijau, the first phase of which is also part-funded by Norway. It aims to be the first waste collection and sorting programme in Indonesia at the regency level. The programme has opened a large-scale materials recovery facility and launched initial service rollouts. The facility is already providing access to waste services to 20,000 people in 13 villages, and aims to reach 800,000 more.

The key lessons learned from efforts in India and Indonesia is that combating marine litter begins on land, with long-term, participatory approaches to policies, plans and implementation of sustainable waste management systems. Local awareness, enthusiasm and commitment are key. Any commitment must be based in national and local policies, and sustainable financing solutions must be implemented to cover the added costs.

FIGURE 5

Key results in Banyuwangi, Indonesia



INDONESIA

Muncar is a fishing village with approximately 130,000 inhabitants, that has no organised system for waste management. The city is located downstream from four rivers, and plastic bags, bottles, toys and other waste literally cover the beach.

Photo: **Avfall Norge CLOCC Project**

Photo: **Avfall Norge CLOCC Project**

2. Joining forces for a global agreement to end plastic pollution

Engagement of all countries and stakeholder groups is key for effective and inclusive global policies and instruments to end plastic pollution.

It was a historic moment when the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi, March 2022 (UNEA 5.2), formally committed to develop an international legally binding agreement by the end of 2024 to end plastic pollution. The success of the negotiations relies on countries having equal opportunities to participate and making sure that the views of key stakeholder groups are heard and included.

Result highlights:

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is a strong advocate for an ambitious legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution. The WWF No Plastics in Nature project, supported by Norway, has strengthened government commitments for the plastics treaty and EPR commitments by Governments and consumer goods companies. It has also built civil society coalitions, mobilised businesses, and prepared technical reports and resources for the global treaty. WWF has enhanced understanding of the issue of plastic pollution in Africa and identified options to address it. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment in August 2023 resulted in an ambitious policy messaging using recommendations from WWF, specifically that the global treaty needs to "eliminate the most harmful and high-risk plastic categories".

The plastic waste amendments under the Basel Convention regulate the transboundary movement of plastic waste. Activities supported by Norway by the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions have contributed to the effective implementation of these amendments by providing technical assistance through the Plastic Waste Partnership Pilot Projects and Small Grants Programme on Plastic Waste. In Ghana and Sri Lanka, a plastic waste inventory toolkit was developed and completed, and training of customs on the enforcement of the plastic waste amendments was conducted. Recommendations on environmentally sound management (ESM) were developed, consultations with policy makers organised, and several pilot projects to demonstrate ESM were conducted, including collection of waste fishing nets in Ghana.

Photo: **IISD/ENB - Kiara Worth** | Art installation 'Turn off the Plastic Tap' by Benjamin Von Wong

3. Fighting illegal waste trade

Illegal waste trade and trafficking is responsible for transporting large amounts of problematic waste, including plastics, to developing countries. Combating such a crime needs multinational and multilevel agency cooperation and stricter controls.

Many partner countries have significant challenges with illegal waste trade and trafficking, shouldering most of the burden of this problem as destination countries for the waste.[3] Since 2018, awareness of this problem has increased, leading to stricter international and national regulations on waste trade. The amendment of the Basel Convention on controlling transboundary movements and disposal of hazardous waste is the most prominent example, prohibiting exports of hazardous waste from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) members. However, illegal trade of waste is still often hard to detect, investigate and prosecute.

Result highlights:

The identification, repatriation and destruction of hazardous waste is a large cost to customs administrations and the global supply chain. Since May 2020, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Customs Organization (UNODC-WCO) Container Control Programme (CCP) under UNODC's Passenger and Cargo Border Team (PCBT) has been supporting Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam in countering illegal trafficking of plastic and hazardous waste. Through providing trainings and mentorship to Port Control Units in the five countries, the project has helped in the identification of more than 100,000 tonnes of plastic and other hazardous waste by PCBT-supported Port Control Units. Around 35,000 tonnes of plastic, household, metal and electronic hazardous waste was repatriated from Southeast Asian countries during 2022/23.

3 UNODC, "Explainer: What is waste trafficking?", no date. Available at www.unodc.org/unodc/frontpage/2024/March/explainer_-what-is-waste-trafficking.html (accessed 30 May 2024).

Transboundary movement of hazardous waste in Southeast Asia 2022/23

Photo: **Bangkok Post**
Royal Thai Customs inspect five containers storing 130 tonnes of hazardous waste at the port of Laem Chabang, Thailand, July 2022. Source: https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2356551/firm-told-to-repatriate-illegal-waste

In July 2022, Royal Thai Customs at Laem Chabang port in Thailand intercepted a 130-tonne shipment of hazardous waste. Imported as paper scrap from Australia, 30 per cent of the shipment was contaminated with face masks, sachets of medicine and food packaging. This is hazardous waste under Thai national legislation and the Basel Convention. Royal Thai Customs, in cooperation with Thailand's environmental authority, repatriated the shipment to Australia in October 2022. The shipment was apparently re-exported from Australia to Indonesia a few months later.

The detection by Royal Thai Customs highlights the effective training strategy of UNODC CCP and PCBT for operational front-line officers to disrupt trafficking of hazardous waste and other illicit goods. The Australian Border Force reviewed shipment records, which led to a referral to the environmental authority in Australia. Follow-up investigations could lead to a very rare hazardous waste transboundary movement prosecution, and set a precedent for future action against companies dumping hazardous waste in other countries.

Photo: **UNODC PCBT**

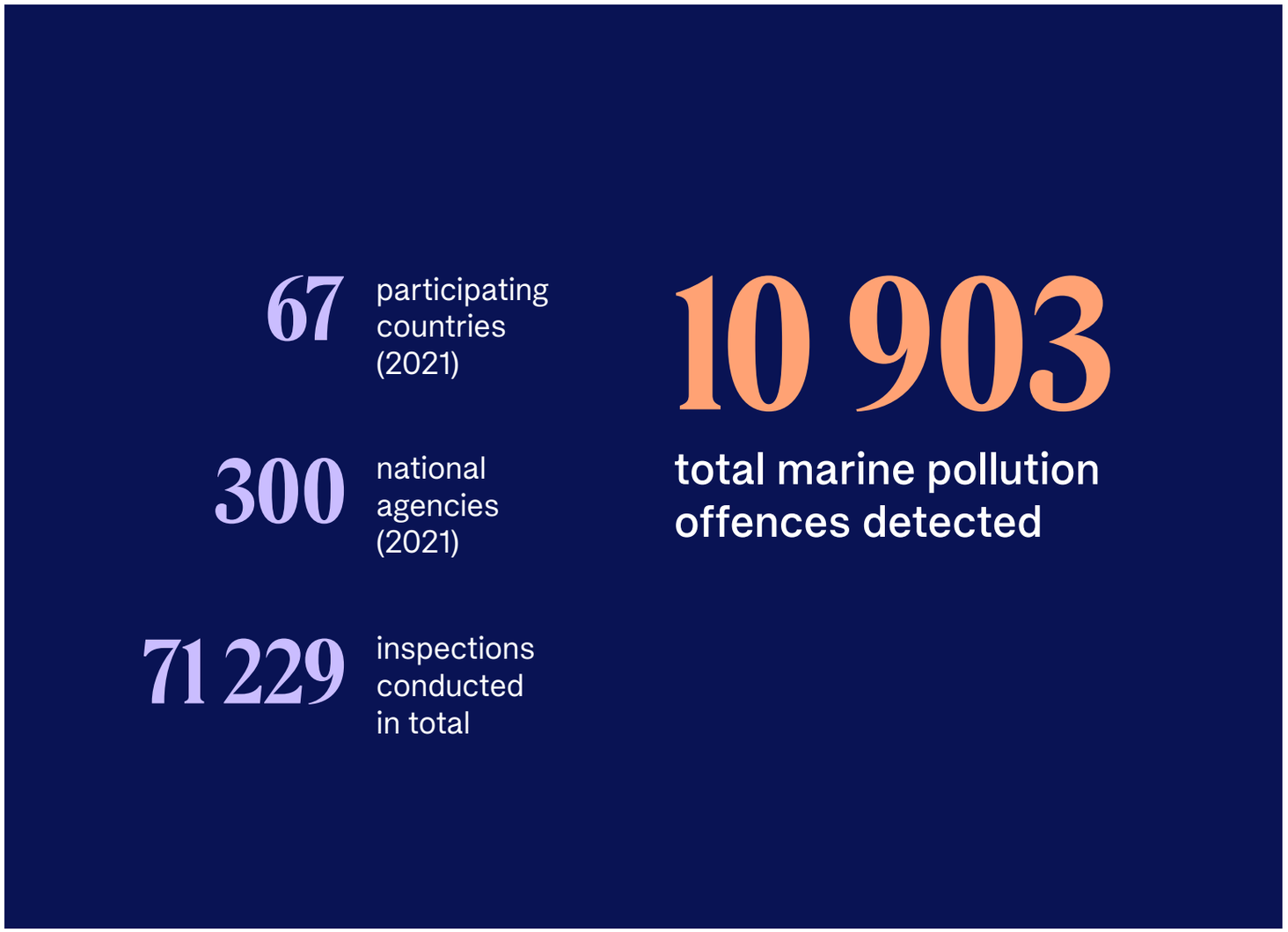
Through the Marine Pollution Enforcement project, INTERPOL has coordinated international law enforcement operations against maritime pollution and waste trafficking offenders. It has also supported and facilitated inter-agency collaboration at the national level, and raised awareness of marine pollution crimes in domestic law enforcement agencies in countries across the world. The project organised three "30 Days at Sea" operations, conducting inspections at sea and in inland waterways, coastal areas and ports to detect marine pollution and waste trafficking violations.

According to INTERPOL, over the course of the project, there has been a shift in criminal offences reported, where countries which initially focused on pollution at sea in the first operation in 2018, reported more cases linked to plastics and waste trafficking in the second and third operations in 2019 and 2020/21.

The focus on waste trafficking in the second and third operation of the 30 Days at Sea also highlighted the involvement of organised crime groups in pollution and related crimes. This makes investigations more complex and impactful.

FIGURE 6

Data: INTERPOL



4. Tackling marine litter from fishing and shipping

A significant amount of marine plastic litter comes from sea-based activities, like fishing, aquaculture, shipping and tourism. Marine litter from sea-based sources, particularly ghost fishing gear, causes significant harm to marine life.

Marine animals, such as seabirds, turtles, fishes and whales, suffer and die as they mistake plastic litter for food. They can also get entangled in discarded or lost fishing gear (known as ghost fishing gear) which can continue to catch animals for years after entering the marine environment. Preventing and reducing marine litter from sea-based sources is therefore crucial to protect our ocean from harm.

Result highlights:

In 2020, Norway together with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched the GloLitter Partnership project to prevent and reduce marine plastic litter from the maritime and fisheries sectors in 30 developing countries. This was the first global project tackling this issue as a joint effort, and the first collaboration of IMO and FAO on this topic. Several international conventions and voluntary instruments address sea-based sources of marine litter. The partnership seeks to address the fact that many countries have not integrated these frameworks on a national level, and implementation and enforcement are key challenges.

Therefore, the project supports legal, institutional and policy reforms in the partner countries, and working to increase the institutional capacity of port state control, raise awareness within the fisheries and shipping sectors, and strengthen the engagement with the private sector.

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A key component of the project has been the development of National Action Plans for fisheries and shipping in the GloLitter lead partner countries. Here, Costa Rica has been a frontrunner to develop a National Action Plan to combat sea-based sources of marine litter. Costa Rica also hosted the Central America Regional Task Force. Through co-funding by IMO, Norway and Saudi Arabia, the Central American countries under GloLitter and other selected countries are currently developing a Regional Action Plan.

Since the establishment of the GloLitter project, other donors are joining in. In 2023, the Republic of Korea announced the RegLitter project, which will address similar challenges in East Asia, building on GloLitter.

Photo: **WWF**

5. Mobilising the private sector to fight plastic pollution

Low value or non-recyclable plastic is costly to collect and manage, and a major source of plastic litter in rivers and the ocean. Innovation and entrepreneurship in plastic recycling and plastic waste create opportunities for creative circular solutions in the plastic value chain.

A major challenge of plastic waste management is that many types of plastic waste are not profitable to collect and manage, and without effective and enforceable policies much of this waste ends up in rivers and oceans. Innovation and entrepreneurship can help solve this plastic problem. Several partners focused on the private sector, for example through work on solid waste management, EPR and other solutions.

Results highlights:

Extended producer responsibility

Managing the increasing volumes of plastic waste is a major burden and cost for municipalities and taxpayers. With EPR, responsibility is shifted to producers, who are made responsible for financing the collection, recycling and treatment of their products when they become waste. Many countries, including Norway, have implemented policies on EPR for plastic waste. Implementation on EPR systems in developing countries is still in its infancy, and there is limited experience in this context. While EPR in theory is an implementation of the polluter pays principle, experience shows that implementation in practice is more complex, and must be part of a larger set of policy instruments and effective systems for waste management.[4] EPR systems have large public administration costs, and need to be designed for their contexts to be effective.

WWF has supported the global discussion on EPR, engaged national Governments and businesses on the adoption of mandatory EPR, and worked on recognising and organising the informal recycling sector in Kenya, the Philippines and China. For example, WWF-Kenya, as member of a national technical EPR committee, helped ensure the integration of formal and informal waste pickers into the draft EPR regulations.

4 OECD, *"Extended producer responsibility: Basic facts and key principles. Policy perspectives"*, OECD Environment Policy Paper No. 41 (Paris: OECD, 2024).

Increase private sector financing and investments

The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) developed a private sector initiative in 2023 aiming at innovation and entrepreneurship in sub-Saharan Africa, explicitly on private sector performance. This initiative cuts across several thematic areas: food security, blue economy, marine litter, renewable energy and climate adaptation. The aim is to encourage and stimulate incubators, accelerators and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) investment funds that will move knowledge and private capital for startups and SMEs. Measures with banks/financial organisations that can scale up innovations and improve access to credit for SMEs can reduce risks. This will strengthen investment-ready projects and stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship within these thematic areas.

Norad provided a first-loss facility with Equity Bank, the largest bank in east Africa, and the African Guarantee Fund. It is for SMEs with innovative new solutions within recycling and waste management, and potential for scaling up. This will also create more bankable projects. Norad also entered into an agreement with Village Capital, an incubator/accelerator with a train-the-trainee approach.

Photo: **SINTEF OPTOCE Project**

They will mobilise private capital for entrepreneurs and train local entrepreneurial support organisations and climate-focused startups in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania. More agreements with incubators and accelerators under this initiative are under development, and will be concluded in 2024.

Co-processing; using plastic waste in an innovative circular solution

Non-recyclable plastic waste is a major source of pollution in partner countries. The Foundation for Industrial and Technical Research (SINTEF) pilot tested an innovative solution to this waste by using it as fuel in the cement industry. Pilots have been conducted in China, India, Thailand and Viet Nam. Using plastic waste as fuel is reducing the use of coal and increasing treatment capacity, and thus reducing plastic waste entering the ocean.

The five countries in the project produce 75 per cent of the world's cement using coal as fuel, and generate around 217,000 tonnes of plastic waste every day. All have insufficient waste management infrastructure and treatment capacities.

The project has considerably increased the capacity for treatment of non-recyclable plastic waste in a cost-effective way within the frame of a circular economy. Various types of non-recyclable plastic waste were pilot tested as fuel in cement plants in all four countries, demonstrating the feasibility of this technology. Combined, the pilot-tested cement plants will prevent at least 100,000 tonnes of plastic waste from reaching the ocean every year, and reduce the consumption of coal by at least 100,000 tonnes. This technology can also indirectly reduce carbon dioxide emissions, through reducing the need for establishing new waste depots and waste burning facilities.

6. Reducing plastic through upstream circular solutions

Most plastic waste in rivers and the ocean is nearly impossible to recycle, and inefficient to treat. Upstream solutions to reduce plastic production, use and promote circularity and sustainable alternatives are needed to reduce plastic pollution.

Single-use plastics represent approximately 36 per cent of plastic production.[5] While its rapid growth has led to the implementation of bans, restrictions and voluntary measures for some products, there is still a need to strengthen policies, identify new solutions, raise awareness and strengthen institutional capacity for upstream solutions.

Results highlights:

Reducing single-use plastics

In Sierra Leone, the growth of plastic pollution threatens not only public health and fisheries, but also other economic sectors such as tourism. PROBLUE, a multi-donor trust fund administered by the World Bank, supported a pilot activity and raised awareness to reduce single-use plastics in Sierra Leone.

1. The project worked with hotels to identify and reduce the use of specific plastic products, and engaged partners in a policy dialogue through a public-private forum called the Plastic Leadership Platform, chaired by the Ministry of Finance in Sierra Leone.
2. Awareness of the scale of the plastics problem was raised, and the Plastics and Single-Use Plastics Policy was passed by the Ministry of Environment, as well as a green taxonomy. The "Go Circular" programme for hotels was formally expanded, and helped participating enterprises calculate their single-use plastic footprint, and identify how to remove or swap items. Alternative suppliers were connected to hoteliers, creating markets for products like recycled textile laundry bags, bamboo cutlery and large water dispensers to replace small plastic bottles.

5 UNEP, *"Our planet is choking on plastic"*, no date. Available at www.unep.org/interactives/beat-plastic-pollution/ (accessed 30 May 2024).

“In my perspective, I believe we can shift away from single-use plastic packaging for amenities like shampoos and soaps in two steps. The first is to convince hotels and restaurants to use refillable dispensers, and the second is to also convince them to shift towards local suppliers, such as local cosmetic manufacturers, as a way to ensure they have a constant supply to refill their dispensers."

– Haja Dalanda Massally,
owner and formulator, Shea & More Natural

Photo: **Srikanth Mannepuri**

Photo: **Afroz Shah Foundation**

7. Cleaning up

Millions of tonnes of plastic waste are already in the environment, particularly along rivers, coastlines and in the ocean. Cleaning up legacy waste will restore the environment and clean beaches and coastal areas, enabling income from tourism and fisheries. Clean-up also creates awareness and fosters behaviour change.

Results highlights:

The Afroz Shah Foundation has worked with tackling waste and clean-ups at three stages: the pre-litter, litter and post-litter stages. The cleaning of legacy waste is an important part of the work of the Afroz Shah foundation. In Mumbai, India, legacy waste is cleaned from beaches, the River Mithi and its banks, ecologically fragile mangroves and the ocean by boats. Through these initiatives, more than 120 million kilograms of legacy waste, including plastics, were removed from nature.

Waste management is crucial to avoid plastic pollution reaching marine environments in the first place. The Afroz Shah Foundation has also focused on creating and improving waste management systems. Training communities to handle plastic and household waste properly has resulted in 57 million pieces (400 tonnes) of plastic items prevented from entering nature and/or landfills, and sent for recycling.

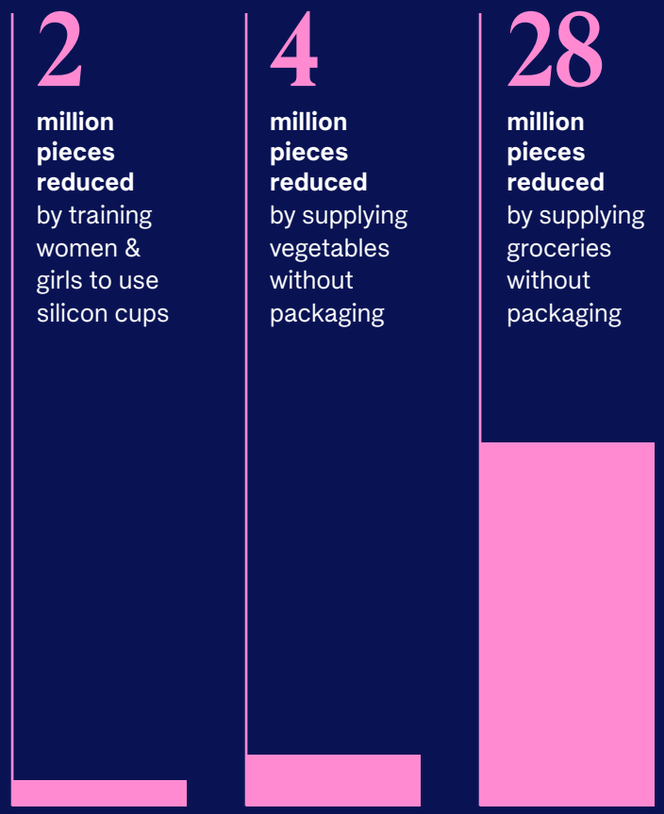
Photo: **WWF**

FIGURE 7

Outcomes from the project by Afroz Shah Foundation

Pre-litter stage → Reduction

Reduction of single use plastic



Litter stage → Recycling

By training communities to handle plastic and house hold waste on a daily basis

57 million pieces

400 tonnes of plastic sent for recycling

Post-litter stage → Cleaning

Cleaning of plastic waste

- Beach clean-up: 77 000 000 kgs
- Mangroves clean-up: 20 000 000 kgs
- Ocean clean-up by boats: 16 000 000 kgs
- River Mithi clean-up: 6 000 000 kgs
- Spot clean-up: 1 000 000 kgs

4

Towards ending plastic pollution: Still more work to be done.

We owe it to future generations and the environment to take urgent action to solve the plastic pollution problem. We all need to come together so that 2024 will be the year when the world agrees on an ambitious new global treaty to end plastic pollution.

Significant progress has been made in the last five years, and the momentum will hopefully build further from here, in the way of improved plastic waste management, strengthening the informal recycling sector, building capacity in global negotiation processes, engaging the private sector and supporting innovative SMEs, fighting the illegal waste trade, and reducing marine litter from fisheries and shipping.

Major investments are still needed to expand waste management infrastructure and operations. To continue moving ahead, we will need sustainable financing solutions for collection and management of plastic waste in partner countries. These could include taxes, fees, subsidies, EPR models, plastic credit, bonds and so on, guided by the polluter pays principle. The private sector must be part of (financing) the solution, to encourage innovative enterprises to succeed, and catalyse substantial investments in infrastructure for the collection, recycling and treatment of waste.

These solutions will need stronger national regulatory frameworks, capacity-building within different sectors, and implementation in countries around the world.

By encouraging new, effective and innovative ideas now, the future for plastics can realistically include “turning off the plastic tap”. We have seen impressive action from collaborations and cooperations around the world, of which this report presents a fraction of the highlights. But from cleaning up to turning off the tap, work remains to be done.

Photo: **Naja Bertolt Jensen**

5

More than marine litter: Norwegian support for ocean-related development assistance in 2023 - Numbers and outcomes

Many developing countries have the potential for economic and social development through sustainable blue growth.

The High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy (the Ocean Panel) is a unique initiative of currently 18 serving world leaders. Co-chaired by Norway and Palau, the Ocean Panel represents nations with diverse oceanic, economic and political perspectives. Their goal is to realise the mission of sustainably managing 100 per cent of the ocean area under national jurisdictions. Established in September 2018, the Ocean Panel collaborates with Governments, businesses, financial institutions, the scientific community, and civil society to catalyse and scale up bold, pragmatic solutions for a sustainable ocean economy, where effective protection, sustainable production and equitable prosperity go hand in hand. In 2023, Norway continued to develop bilateral ocean programmes with Mozambique and Indonesia.

FIGURE 8

Norwegian support for ocean-related development assistance in brief.

988 million NOK

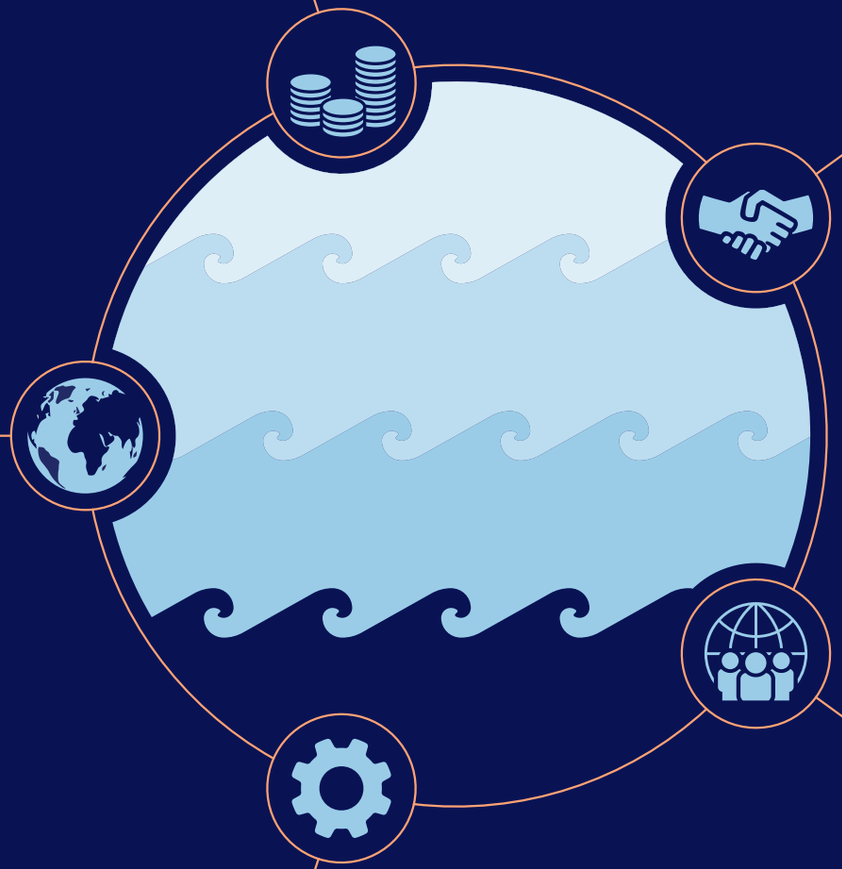
988 million NOK (2.2% of earmarked ODA) went to ocean-related activities in 2023.

23 countries

A total of 23 countries received country-specific ocean-related ODA in 2023.

139 active projects

Approximately 139 projects received funding during 2023.



41% to multilateral partners

Less than half of Norwegian ocean-related ODA was channeled through multilateral partners, such as the United Nations and the World Bank.

15 Norwegian institutions

More than 15 Norwegian institutions contributed with their technical expertise to partner countries on ocean- and fisheries related partnerships in 2023.

Norway's official development assistance (ODA) includes three ocean programmes: Ocean for Development, Fish for Development and the Programme to Combat Marine Litter. Ocean-related ODA has recently increased, and was 988 million NOK in 2023. However, ocean-related ODA as percentage of the total allocated ODA has decreased since 2021.

In 2023, most assistance was channelled through multilateral organisations and NGOs. Ocean-related ODA in the private sector of developing countries increased to 12 per cent in 2023. This was due to the new initiative towards innovation and entrepreneurship in blue economy, food security, marine litter, renewable energy and climate adaptation in sub-Saharan Africa.

FIGURE 9

Ocean-related ODA, 2018-2023.

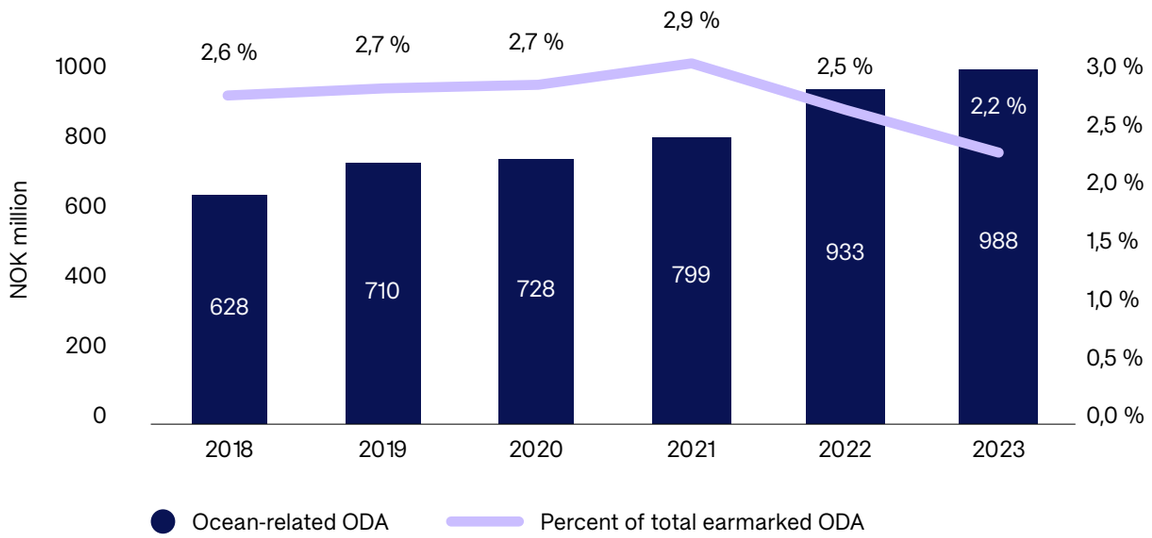
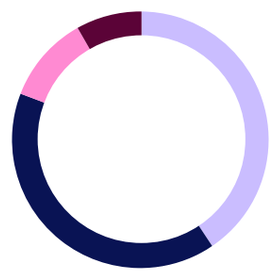
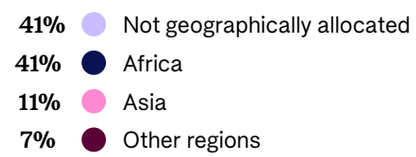


FIGURE 10

Ocean-related aid and regions, 2023.





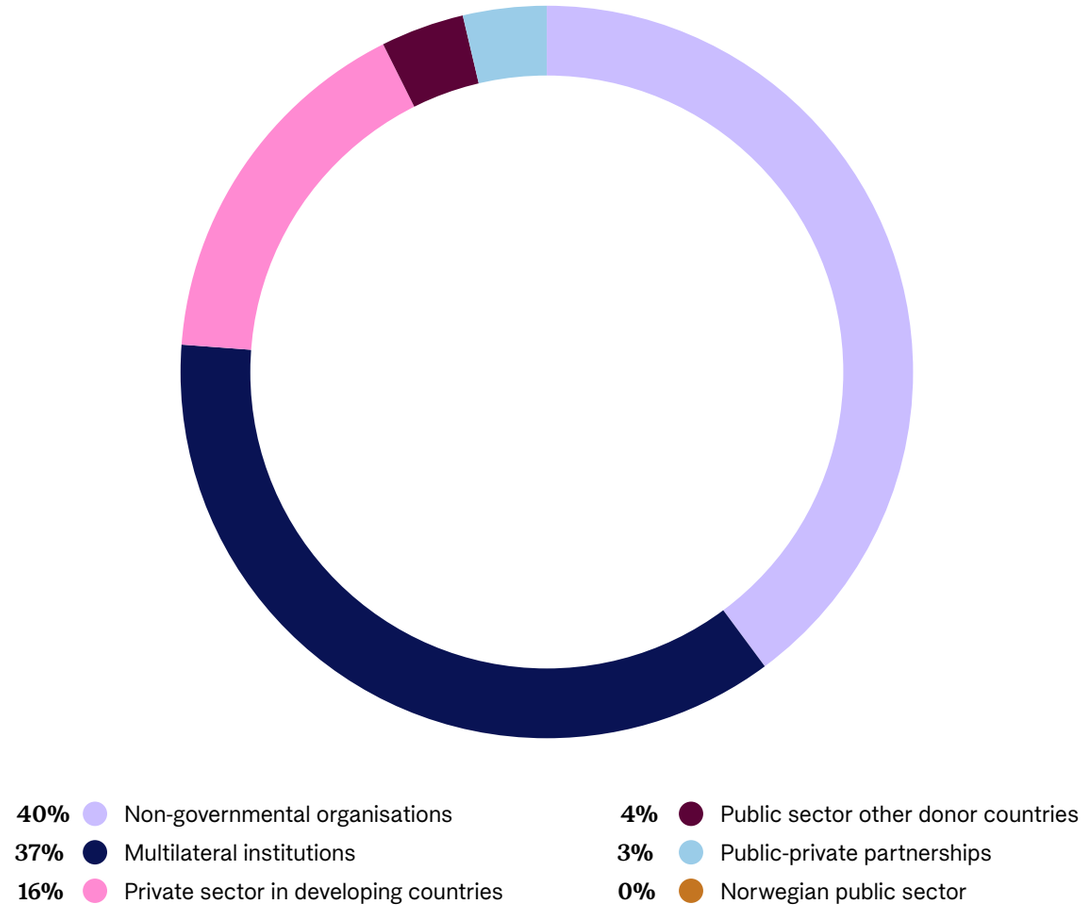
Of the geographically allocated aid, the majority was allocated to Africa (41 per cent), followed by Asia (11 per cent). Some of the top allocated countries to receive ODA in 2023 were Ghana (28 million NOK), Colombia (27 million NOK), Mozambique (22 million NOK), India (20 million NOK) and Indonesia (19 million NOK).

Targeting marine litter

Development aid for the Programme to Combat Marine Litter and Microplastic has been relatively stable during the last five years. In 2023, funding of NOK 223 million was allocated to the programme.

FIGURE 11

Development aid to combat marine litter by type of partner, 2023.



Ocean for Development programme

The Ocean for Development programme was launched in 2019 to complement the programmes on Fish for Development and combating marine litter. It focuses on sustainable, equitable and inclusive ocean economy. The programme builds the competence and capacity of authorities in cooperating countries to enforce the sustainable ocean management framework, and ensure that strong institutions, predictable and fair framework conditions, and enforcement will foster sustainable private sector development, job creation and food security.

Ocean accounting and blue carbon: Collaborating on ocean accounting and blue carbon requires an interdisciplinary approach, and several stakeholders have been involved in both Indonesia and Norway. Norway supported the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALAS), drawing on its experience in responsive programmes in the law of the sea. The project supports countries to identify and address capacity gaps, and consequently enables them to address strategically important and time-sensitive ocean governance issues. Norway is also one of the major donors to the World Bank's PROBLUE programme.

Sustainable economy and food security: Climate change, overfishing and ocean habitat destruction have weakened many crucial fish stocks. Small-scale fisheries play a key role in food security for a significant portion of the global population. With expanded Norwegian support to the Blue Action Fund in 2023, the fund has financed 191 conservation processes in developing countries, covering a total area of 380,693 km². Local participation is essential to ensure that protected areas preserve culture, employment and food security. A total of 520,458 affected individuals have so far been involved in the planning of these areas. In 2023, PROBLUE supported 31 guidelines, plans and regulations for sustainable blue economy development. A total of 44 countries have strengthened their commitment to developing their maritime industries.

The Fish for Development programme

The Fish for Development programme supports partner countries to ensure sustainable fisheries and ecosystems through increased knowledge and better framework conditions. The programme draws on Norway's extensive experience in fisheries and aquaculture. The main partner countries are Colombia, Cuba, Ghana, Sri Lanka and Sudan.

For more than 40 years, the Eco-system Approach to Fisheries (EAF)-Nansen Programme has been a flagship programme for coastal developing countries to assess and manage their fisheries. Norad has been collaborating with FAO and the Institute of Marine Research in Bergen for implementation of the programme.

In 2023 Norway granted a new phase of the EAF-Nansen programme with approximately 100 million USD from 2023 to 2028. According to FAO statistics, there have been measurable improvements in the average fish stock status indicator in the partner countries within the programme period, indicating that the various efforts are contributing to more sustainable fisheries management.

Norway supports WorldFish and partners in sub-Saharan Africa to develop sustainable fish feed and improve aquatic animal health, for instance, working with small-scale fish farmers on developing and scaling sustainable fish feeds. Their work on aquatic animal health has strengthened research capacity and biosecurity governance in Ghana and Kenya.

Combating fisheries crime

Fish stocks are being depleted globally, making fish a valuable commodity. Organised criminal groups are increasingly turning to illegal fishing, threatening food security and the stability of coastal nations. Norway's support to the UNODC FishNET has improved skills and capacity in legislation, law enforcement, and fisheries management. With Norwegian support to improve fisheries intelligence, efforts against large-scale illegal fishing by the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea Member States have intensified, including Nigeria's recent ratification of the Port State Measures Agreement.