



PRINCIPLE 03

# Recycling and Zero Waste



**Plastic pollution is one of the major environmental challenges of our time, and tourism has an important role to play in contributing to the solution on a global level. The short answer to the challenge is to firstly turn off the tap, and secondly ensure recycling of the plastic that is already in our global value chains.**

With tourism and coastal societies closely connected in Sri Lanka, the sector has a huge opportunity to both limit waste from operations, and contribute to increased recycling and clean up the natural environment.

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# Importance and impact to business in the short and long term

An efficient plan for reducing, re-using and recycling of plastics will not only cut costs within your operations but also contribute to the well-being of the environment and your community. Limiting the use of plastic products reduces the risk of it later being able to contaminate the forests, roads, beaches and the sea, giving the community a higher standard of well-being as well as visitors having a positive impression of the destination you have set out to be a representative of.

Plastics can be devastating to wild and human life. Macro, micro and nano plastics that contaminate the environment get consumed by fish, birds and many land-living creatures such as elephants, ultimately killing them from the inside (IKHAPP). Even the food on your plate can contain these micro and nano plastics which, if consumed in large amounts, can have negative health-effects on humans as well.



# Your contribution has an impact

A majority of Sri Lanka is still missing proper communal waste management, so until those mechanisms are in place the most crucial steps are made individually or collectively with others. In Sri Lanka a viable solution is to implement a zero plastics-plan, where the first step is to reduce your plastic consumption. This will contribute to reducing the stress on land based and marine life, leaving more natural areas less degraded by human activity as well as creating the necessary conditions for human well-being.

The national goals for phasing out plastic articles include reducing production and consumption of such products by 80% by 2025 (CCET). Stay ahead of the curve and contribute to this goal by serving as an inspiration to the community and other businesses. Help the community to succeed and they will support you back. Building a network and relationship with your community will inspire others to help out, increasing the effectiveness of the work and building a stronger community.



# What can we do as an SME?

## 01 Reduce

It is estimated that a majority of marine plastic litter comes from consumer packaging such as single-use bottles, bags, food containers etc. In Sri Lanka a viable solution is to implement a zero plastics-plan, many plastic products can easily be substituted for better options. Some low hanging fruits you can start with are single-use items such as:

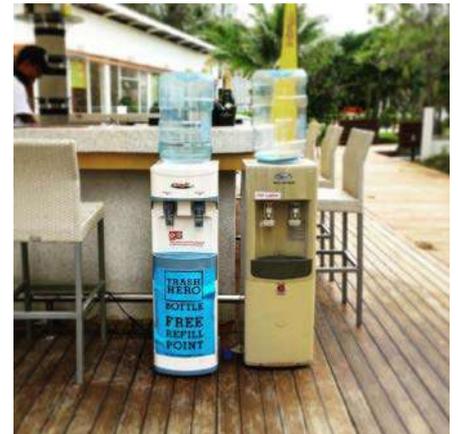
- Buy from local farmers or retailers and encourage the avoidance of single use plastic
- Encourage visitors to stop using single-use-items during their trip and avoid offering such items.
- Straws: replace plastic with paper straws or cease using them entirely. Instead of PET- bottles, buy glass bottles which can be recycled.
- Instead of buying water in single bottles, buy bulk canisters which use less resources for the container.

## 02 Reuse

Implement a circular model in your company where you reuse tools and utensils. For example, instead of serving bottled water, invest in a filtration system and encourage visitors to bring their own recyclable water bottle to fill.

Encourage travelers to invest in a reusable water bottle instead of buying a new plastic bottle each time. The organisation 'Trash Hero' challenges companies and travelers alike to reduce single-use water bottles by providing high quality stainless steel bottles which can be sold by your business for a small profit. Any traveler with the Trash Hero bottle can later refill them for free at your establishment or any other business connected to the project.

Replace plastic grocery bags with textile bags, easy to make yourselves from second hand fabrics. Can also be sold to guests or lent out so that they themselves reduce their need for plastic bags.



## 03 Recycle

Make it easy for visitors to recycle their waste at your establishment, set up recycling vessels which clearly indicate which type of waste goes into which bin. Color-coordinated bins, symbols for what type of waste and notes encouraging the visitor to contribute to your goal. This helps with sorting and may prevent landfills and devastation of land.

# 04

## Old waste = New uses

Waste doesn't only have to be reused, recycled or disposed of. Old things can find new uses through upcycling with some creative thinking.

Plastic and metal containers can be used as seedling nurseries for your garden or for fresh herbs in the kitchen or placed on tables in the dining hall.

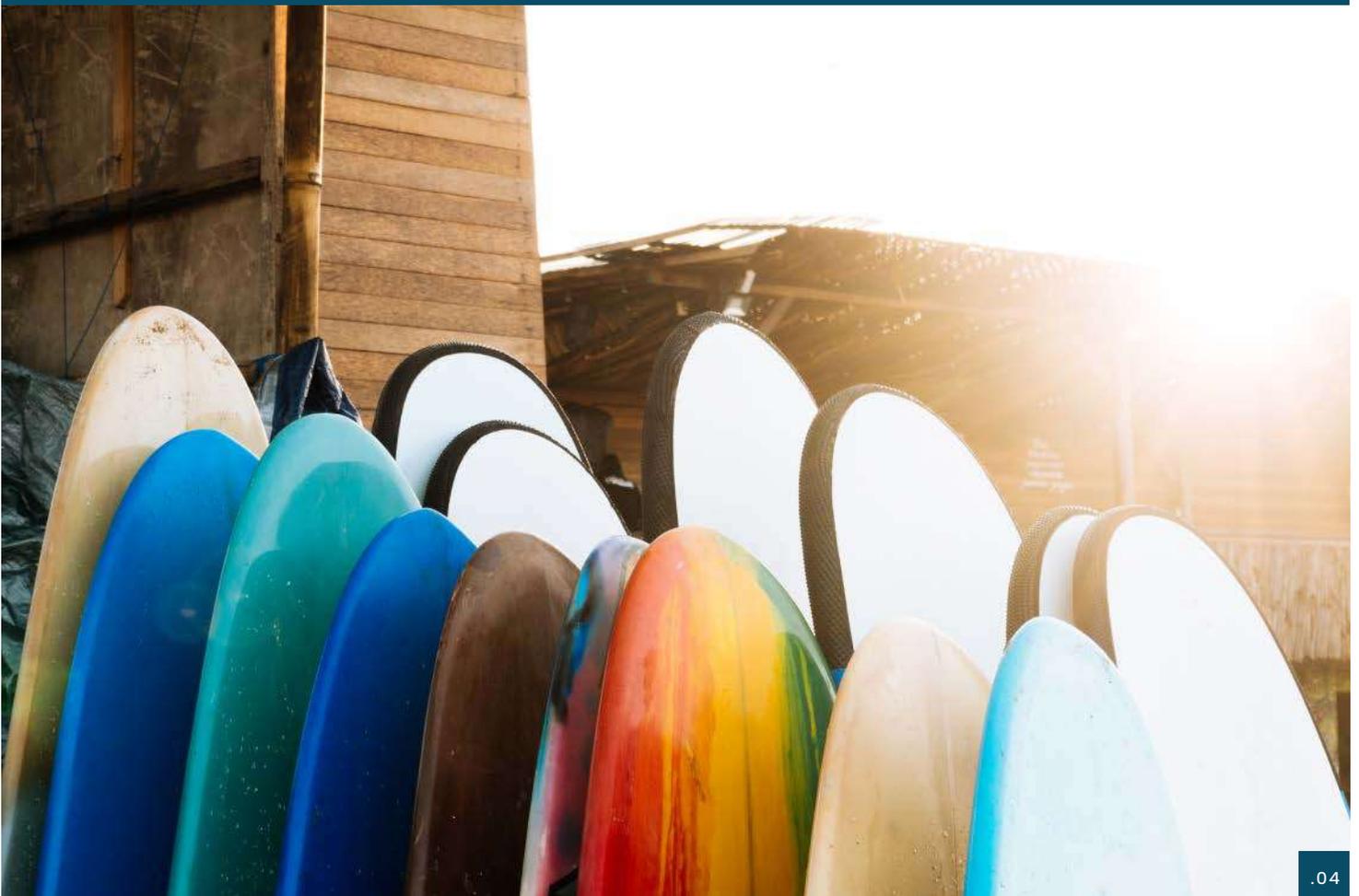
Use old construction materials such as concrete, metal and wood to build unique furniture. A layer of paint and you have yourself a one of a kind bench or table that will stand as a pillar to your resolution to uphold a zero waste business model.



## What do we have to do as an industry?

### Final disposal

Use the municipal recycling scheme for waste you can't recycle yourself. This option is still underdeveloped in Sri Lanka but national strategies plan to triple this capacity in the coming years. Other options can be found through collaborating with businesses. The cement industry, for example, can use energy from incineration of waste to fuel their production.



# How can you influence others?

## 01 Purchasing power

Use your purchasing power to encourage suppliers to offer products which are not sold in plastic containers. This will reduce the demand and amount of plastic available for purchasing by other consumers as well.

## 02 Help develop the infrastructure

Burning waste is harmful for the lungs and the soil, getting your waste to a municipal recycling station should be considered a priority. If your municipality doesn't have a common recycling station, show your support to legislators to establish one. Do so and you serve as an inspiration for others as well as promoting your journey towards sustainability in the tourism industry and in Sri Lanka as a whole.

## 03 Speak up

Make sure to inform both guests and your local community about your zero waste plan on plastics. This could open up for collaborations or opportunities to increase the recycling rates or find alternative recycling solutions. Report to the public on the progress you have made and lessons you have learned. This could also influence or help advocate for policy development for national recycling systems and waste reduction plans.

## 04 Clean up what is already there

Coordinate beach clean-ups. Engage the visitor in making their visit to the beach a fulfilling experience. Research says beach cleaning as a recreational activity can lead to increased place attachment and invite new visitors to your local beach (Power, 2021).

## 05 Expand your plastic handprint

Having a plastic handprint means you do things outside the area of your own direct control to have a positive impact. For example, this could be that you influence the choices the travelers make on their holiday, that they might take with them home or to other destinations.

## Influence your guests and make your practice travel the world

The experiences that guests take with them can influence their behavior far beyond Sri Lanka. Especially beach-cleaning efforts have a tendency to be adopted for behavioural change. This can be encouraged by providing guests with bags to collect plastics on their morning walk or during a day at the beach. Hotels can even incentivize this by rewarding the returning a full bag and measure this impact over time.

# Local Best Practices Case Study

## The Global Tourism Plastics Initiative

The tourism industry had united behind a global initiative with concrete and actionable commitments by 2025. The initiative has 6 primary goals:

1. Eliminate problematic or unnecessary plastic packaging and items;
2. Take action to move from single-use to reuse models or reusable alternatives;
3. Engage the value chain to move towards 100% of plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable or compostable;
4. Take action to increase the amount of recycled content across all plastic packaging and items used;
5. Collaborate and invest to increase the recycling and composting rates for plastics;
6. Report publicly and annually on progress made towards these targets.

**Read more here:**

**<https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development/indonesia-tourism-development-supporting-biodiversity-conservation-pangandaran>**

## Incineration for energy a solution for areas without recycling solutions in Sri Lanka?

This article summarizes the experiences of a small scale waste to energy incineration plant for Hotel Heritage Ahungalla, Sri Lanka. The waste heat generated by the proposed incinerator proved to be used for energy, and save resources for the fuel otherwise used for the oil fired boiler. Secondly, this proved as a good indoor solid waste management plan for the hotel, that kept their environment clean rather than continuing unplanned open dumping.

**Read more here: <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1233715/FULLTEXT01.pdf>**

# Organizations and institutions that can help you on your journey

## The SDG Compass

provides guidance for companies on how they can align their strategies as well as measure and manage their contribution to the realization of SDG 12. The Compass have clear recommendations on how different actors can reduce waste and increase recycling:

<https://sdgcompass.org/sdgs/sdg-12/>

## IUCN Sri Lanka

The International Union of Conservation Network in Sri Lanka is working with coastal and marine resources, business and biodiversity, economics of conservation. They are responsible for the Counter Measure project in Sri Lanka, that targets plastic pollution in rivers in Sri Lanka. Get in touch to see if you can be involved to protect a river near you.

## UN

The United Nations have clear recommendations on how different stakeholders can get involved with mitigative and adaptive climate action in their industries:

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/climate-change/>

## UNWTO

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation has well developed guidelines on climate action tailored to the tourism industry: <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>

## IKHAPP

The International Knowledge Platform for Plastic Pollution gives scientific recommendations for how the tourism industry in South East Asian countries can contribute. Learn more and explore the research:

<https://ikhapp.org/environment/>

## The Pearl Protectors

Are a volunteer-based organization that advocates and takes action towards protecting the marine environment of Sri Lanka. The organization invites business actors to join beach clean-ups and is responsible for the campaign "Nurdle Free Lanka"

# Key words and definitions

## Macroplastics

largest of the three classifications of plastics (macro, micro and nano) and is visible to the naked eye. These include common items such as plastic bags, water bottles, etc. While these are less likely to enter the food chain because they are hard to ingest due to their size, they do still break down into micro and nano plastics (*Ecomerge, 2022*).

## Microplastics

are classified as plastics that have a diameter of one to five millimeters. There are two main types of micro plastic, primary and secondary. Primary microplastics are things like the microbeads in cosmetics, or plastic pellets. Secondary microplastics are formed as macro-plastics breakdown. Micro-plastics can easily be incorporated into the food chain and as such pose a significant environmental risk (*Ecomerge, 2022*).

## Nanoplastics

are created by the degradation of micro-plastics and can be smaller than 1  $\mu\text{m}$ . Due to the extremely small size of nano-plastics they are highly likely to enter the food chain, as they can be consumed at the initial parts of food chains. Nano-plastics also have a high surface area to volume ratio making them more likely to absorb organic pollutants and other hazardous contaminants (*Ecomerge, 2022*).



Sustainability  
Principles

**For more information about the  
Alliance and our projects**

please visit : <https://www.srilankatourismalliance.com>  
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