



Communications strategy

CIRCULAR CITIES BEYOND PLASTICS PROJECT

2025

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Context

- Latin America and the Caribbean shares 4% of total plastics production and 8% of total plastics consumption worldwide²⁷. With over 600 million inhabitants, plastic waste within the municipal waste stream is significant*.
- The “GEF LAC Cities” project will promote the implementation of circular actions at the city level with the goal of accelerating the transition to a circular economy, in line with commitments made by governments and productive sectors to address the issue of marine plastics and plastic waste pollution.
- The initiative will be implemented in six cities with direct influence on the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean: Cartagena (Colombia), Barranquilla (Colombia), Kingston (Jamaica), Montego Bay (Jamaica), Panama City (Panama), and Colón (Panama).
- The presence of marine litter in the three countries is generating adverse impacts on coastal ecosystems and affecting strategic sectors such as tourism and fishing. Limited institutional and operational capacities in comprehensive solid waste management, and the lack of adoption of holistic circular economy models, are compromising the quality of life of millions of inhabitants whose livelihoods depend on highly vulnerable marine-coastal environments. This situation is worsened by a generalized context of waste overproduction, lack of technical information, and inefficient or non-existent regulatory and policy frameworks.

* Savino, A., Quispe, C., Correa, M. (2018). “Waste Management Outlook for Latin America and the Caribbean”. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Project Objectives

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.

Lack of regulations and policy instruments from governments to incentivize sustainable consumption and production for circular plastic products and pollution reduction at city level.

Lack of innovations and investment from the private sector to tackle the plastic pollution from a systemic and value chain perspective at city level.

Lack of a common vision, approaches, and leadership for LAC cities to act collectively under an aligned regional strategy for circular economy of plastics at the regional level.

Lack of knowledge, awareness, and capacity to enable governments, businesses and other stakeholders to learn and adopt best practices at city, national and regional levels in LAC.

Project Goals



Reduce marine
plastics by
5,065 tonnes



Reduction of
9,382 tonnes
CO2eq emission



Reduce Persistent
Organic Pollutants
(POPs) by **54.9**
tonnes (HBCD and
PBDE)



Avoid the release
of **1.16** gTEQ
unintentionally
produced POPs



Reach the direct
beneficiary of
990,162
people, with
559,306 female
and **430,855**
males

RAISE AWARENESS

To raise awareness among public and private stakeholders and the wider public about the project objectives, processes, and benefits of project implementation at the national and regional level.

Strengthen the project's legitimacy, government support, and alignment with public and private sector commitments.

INSTITUTIONAL VISIBILITY

ENCOURAGE BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDINAL CHANGE

Develop consumer campaigns and partnership facilitation to encourage behavior and attitudinal change towards the circular economy of plastics, such as increasing the acceptance of refillable solutions, organizing large scale multi-channel campaigns aimed at motivating citizens to reduce plastic consumption, separating plastics waste from sources and disposing through responsible channels

Equip local actors with the tools, data, and capacity to scale circular solutions and replicate best practices.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Communication Stages

A multidimensional approach is needed to communicate the project's activities and implementation. Different target audiences will be more effectively engaged through various media. The channels will also be selected based on the type of messages to be communicated.

2nd Quarter 2025

A communication strategy for the project will be developed, and key audiences and focal points in each country/city will be identified to implement the strategy in their territory.

3rd , 4th quarter 2025

Communication materials will be developed (such as press releases, videos, web stories), along with a relevant dissemination plan (media, conferences, high-level events) to promote the project's visibility and key milestones.

4th quarter 2025 – Onward

:Build Institutional visibility, citizen awareness and knowledge transfer. These activities will increase actors' awareness of the objective, approach, and activities of the project, as well as the benefits associated with its implementation at both the local and national levels.

4th -quarter 2025 - Onward

Pilot a Behavior change campaign in on city in order to learn and then scale to other cities. This will include organizing a multi-channel campaign aimed to motivating citizens to reduce consumption, sort plastic waste at the source, and dispose of it responsibly using appropriate channels, among other solutions.

Lessons learned and best practices will be documented and communicated to key audiences to promote the replication of successful approaches..

STAKEHOLDERS

A photograph of a beach cleanup activity. In the foreground, a person's hand wearing a grey work glove is reaching down to pick up a clear plastic bottle with a blue cap from the sand. The bottle is lying on its side. In the background, two other people are visible, one in a brown jacket and another in a dark jacket, both engaged in similar activities. The scene is set on a sandy beach under a clear sky. The word "STAKEHOLDERS" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

Target Audiences - Description



Public Sector

Government officials (inter-ministerial, national, and local), policymakers, and regulatory enforcement and compliance agencies.

Interministerial

Who are they?

- Working groups or committees composed of multiple ministries (environment, health, economy, education, planning, etc.) that jointly address cross-cutting issues such as sustainability, waste management, and the circular economy.

Why are they key?

- They enable coordination of public policies across sectors, ensure regulatory coherence, and accelerate high-impact decision-making.

National

Who are they?

- Individual ministries (e.g., Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Health), as well as national planning or sustainable development agencies.

Why are they key?

- They define regulatory frameworks, allocate resources, sign international commitments, and have the ability to scale up or replicate local experiences.

Local

Who are they?

- Municipal governments, mayors' offices, local councils, and operational entities such as public sanitation companies and waste management units.

Why are they key?

- They directly implement actions on the ground, manage urban waste, and serve as the bridge to communities and grassroots recyclers.

Target Audiences - Description



Private Sector:

This sector, in partnership with municipalities, will play a significant long-term role in sustaining the circular economy approaches tested in the project and will be a key vehicle for ensuring the scaling and replication of these approaches in other locations.

Private sector organizations will be involved across all components of the project. This group may include companies that produce polymers, plastics, and packaging; manufacturers of durable and consumer goods; retailers; and businesses involved in collection, sorting, and recycling industries.

NGO's:

Organizations working on circular economy, solid waste management, plastic recycling and recovery, awareness campaigns, consumer behavior, and environmental education. The project will engage with these NGOs that focus on reducing plastic pollution through the exchange of experiences and lessons learned, seeking synergies in communication and other areas.

Academia:

Academic institutions, universities, research institutes, and networks of researchers in the countries and the Latin America and Caribbean region are increasingly working on marine debris and plastics from a value chain and circular economy approach.

Citizens:

Members of the general public who need to understand and adopt circularity in their daily lives through awareness and education campaigns.

Target Audience: Additional country highlights

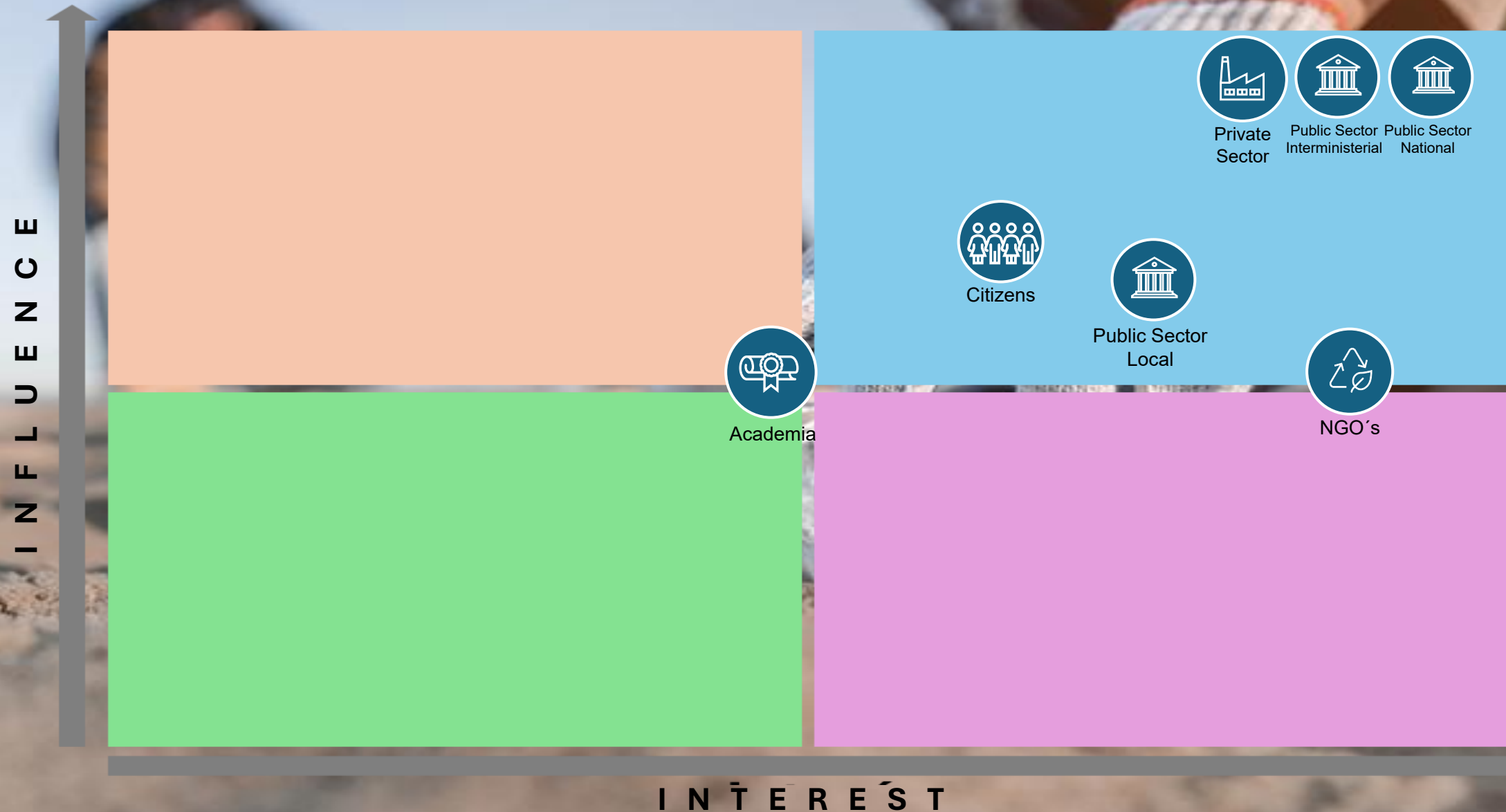
COLOMBIA

- ☐ Include other relevant stakeholders such as waste managers, recyclers, and international cooperation actors.
- ☐ Clarify that in Colombia, the national government does not manage the resources; in this case, they are directly managed by the municipalities.
- ☐ In the interministerial public sector, especially regarding issues of circular economy, collection, and waste management, various ministries and entities converge, such as the National Planning Department (DNP), Ministry of Housing, and DANE, among others.

PANAMA

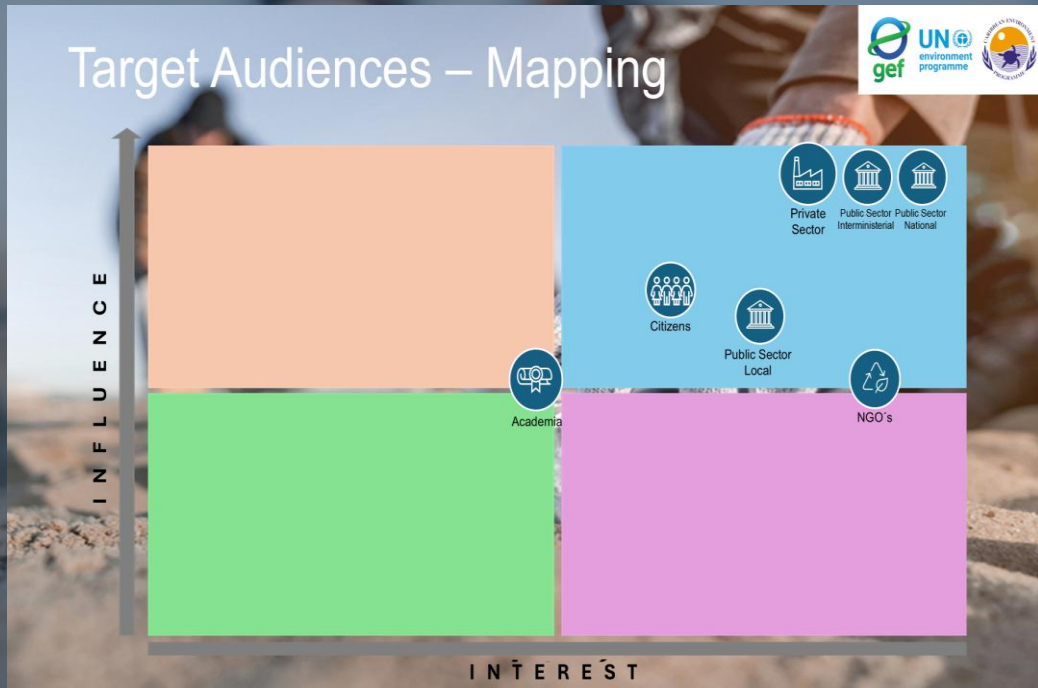
- ☐ Include Organized Groups, as they are very relevant in Panama.
- ☐ Also include embassies / ambassadors of countries, as they have high influence.
- ☐ Check whether the interministerial Audience is as relevant in Panama.

Target Audiences – Mapping



Target Audiences prioritization

Prioritizing target audiences over time ensures strategic, phased engagement. The public sector is key early on for policy support, while the private sector gains importance for scalable solutions. Citizens are gradually engaged to drive behavior change, NGOs to support local action, and academia to provide research and capacity building, aligning efforts with the project's evolving goals.



Target Audience	2025	2026	2027	2028
Public Sector	↑	↑	↑	↑
Private Sector	↗	↑	↑	↑
Citizens	→	↗	↗	↑
NGO's	→	↗	↗	↗
Academia	→	↗	↗	↗

Target Audiences – Strategy



Public Sector

	Who are they?	Influence	Interest	Project role	Comms. Objective
Inter-ministerial	Working groups or committees composed of multiple ministries (environment, health, economy, education, planning, etc.) that jointly address cross-cutting issues such as sustainability, waste management, and the circular economy.	HIGH	HIGH	Enable coordination of public policies across sectors, ensure regulatory coherence, and accelerate high-impact decision-making.	Coordinate, Collaborate, Integrate, Align
National	Individual ministries (e.g., Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Health), as well as national planning or sustainable development agencies.	HIGH	MEDIUM HIGH	Define regulatory frameworks, allocate resources, sign international commitments, and can scale up or replicate local experiences.	Inform, Advocate, Empower, Report
Local	Municipal governments, mayors' offices, local councils, and operational entities such as public sanitation companies and waste management units	MEDIUM	HIGH	Implement actions on the ground, manage urban waste, and serve as the bridge to communities and grassroots recyclers.	Engage, Educate, Enable, Showcase

Target Audiences – Strategy



Private Sector

Who are they?	Influence	Interest	Project role	Comms. Objective
Producers of polymers, plastics, and packaging; manufacturers of durable and consumer goods; retailers; collection, sorting, and recycling industries; and the informal sector.	HIGH	MEDIUM HIGH	Implementing partners, innovators.	Engage, drive action, showcase innovation opportunities, share best practices.
Those working in circular economy, solid waste management, plastic recycling and recovery, awareness campaigns, consumer behavior, and environmental education.	MEDIUM	HIGH	Allies in awareness and on-the-ground action.	Coordinate, share messages, mobilize audiences, share best practices.
Members of the general public who need to understand and adopt circularity in their daily lives through awareness and education campaigns.	MEDIUM HIGH	MEDIUM HIGH	Beneficiaries, promoters of change.	Raise awareness, educate, activate behavior.
Universities and research institutions addressing topics related to marine plastics, plastic pollution, and the circular economy.	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	They document, analyze, and propose solutions.	Exchange knowledge, disseminate results.



NGO's



Citizens



Academia

Audiences: Do's – Don'ts

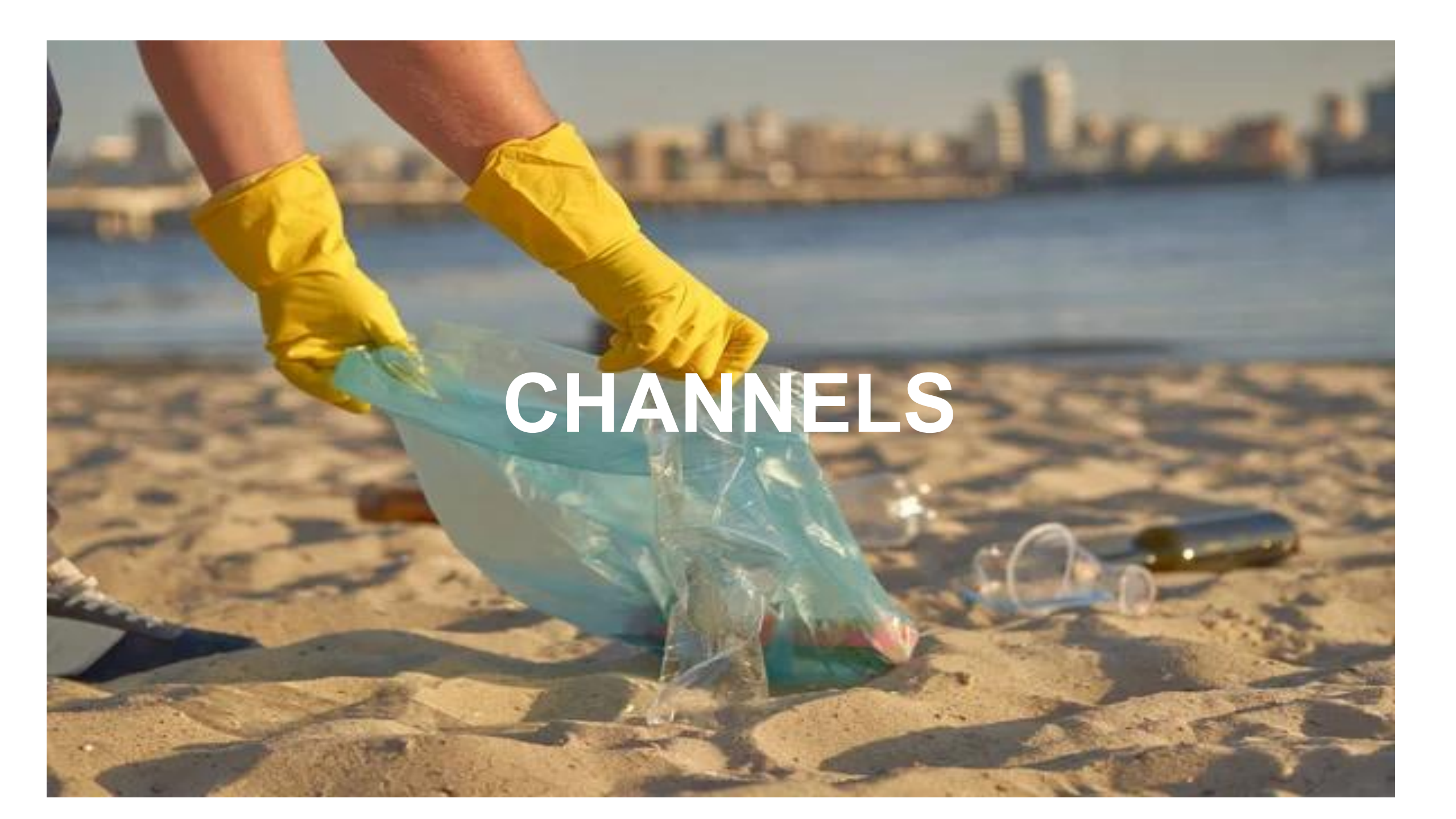
Detailed recommendations that the GEF LAC project team and partners should consider when engaging with any of these stakeholders.

Stakeholder	✓ Do's	✗ Don'ts
Public Sector	Involve from early stages of design and planning.	Approaching with decisions already made, leaving no room for feedback.
	Show concrete benefits (economic, social, reputational).	Using technical language without relating it to political or local impact.
	Align project actions with existing development plans or regulatory frameworks.	Assuming all authorities understand or prioritize the circular economy.
	Facilitate visibility opportunities (events, press, recognitions).	Treating the public sector solely as a regulatory body.
Private Sector	Emphasize opportunities for innovation, efficiency, and reputation.	Presenting the project without linking it to return on investment or "what's in it for them."
	Propose clear and measurable roles for their participation.	Generalizing the sector as "the problem" of plastic pollution.
	Facilitate public-private partnerships with shared benefits.	
	Generate replicable success cases with company names.	
	Facilitate visibility opportunities (events, press, recognitions).	

Audiences: Do's – Don'ts

Detailed recommendations that the GEF LAC project team and partners should consider when engaging with any of these stakeholders.

Stakeholder	✓ Do's	✗ Don'ts
NGO's	Promote spaces for co-creation of knowledge (webinars, hackathons, collaborative papers).	Seeing them only as operational executors.
	Enhance their capacity for citizen mobilization.	Disregarding traditional or community knowledge.
	Publicly recognize their work and contributions.	Imposing centralized or decontextualized communication campaigns.
	Provide communication tools and institutional strengthening.	
Academia	Invite contributions based on evidence, data, and impact evaluation.	Excluding them from public communication spaces.
	Offer access to project data and results for analysis.	Limiting their role solely to report production.
	Include students or young researchers in project activities.	
Citizens	Involve all community groups (women, youth, elders, recyclers) from the start.	Avoid involving citizens just to “check a box.” Make their input meaningful.
	Use simple, local language and culturally relevant visuals.	Don't wait for problems to arise—proactive engagement prevents issues.
	Partner with respected community leaders or influencers.	Avoid making commitments you can't fulfill—it breaks trust.
	Maintain regular, two-way communication—not just one-off engagements.	Citizens may disengage if they don't understand the language.

A photograph showing a person's hands wearing bright yellow gloves, collecting trash into a light blue plastic bag on a sandy beach. In the background, there is a body of water and a city skyline under a clear sky. The word "CHANNELS" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters in the center of the image.

CHANNELS

Communication Channels

There needs to be a multi-pronged approach for communicating the project activities and their implementation. It needs to be remembered that different target audiences will be most effectively engaged through different mediums. The mediums will also be selected based on the type of messages to be communicated. Key mediums include:

OWNED MEDIA

Project website, email newsletters, UNEP Media (newsletters, blogs, webpage)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Project leaders LinkedIn + Partners: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter/X, YouTube

EARNED MEDIA

Press releases, op-eds, interviews, media briefings

EVENTS

Field events, forums, events with public and private sector associations, best practice events, multi-city workshops, workshops.

CAMPAIGNS

Campaigns targeting all audiences, digital campaigns, radio, print, and TV.

Partnership Outreach

Partner channels, influencers, ambassadors, academics, NGOs, experts.

Channels: Additional country highlights

COLOMBIA

- ❑ It is important to ensure that communication efforts are aligned with the progress of the project and the actions taking place in the cities.
- ❑ It is important to define which channels will be used for communication. The strategy serves as a guide, but not all channels will be addressed, as this greatly depends on the limited budget available.
- ❑ Communication efforts must be adapted to the local budgetary capacity.

PANAMA

- ❑ A very relevant channel for the team in Panama—due to its closeness, agility in sending information, and engagement—is the use of WhatsApp Business groups per project.
- ❑ Next step: continue building contact databases and create these groups. It is important to map out the spaces available in the different channels managed by the Ministry, which kindly offered to support project communications during the meeting.
- ❑ Influencers and ambassadors: develop a list of Do's and Don'ts to understand the guidelines for working with them, to ensure the content feels organic, and to avoid unnecessary noise.
- ❑ It is important to review the communications approval flow for all upcoming efforts to avoid losing immediacy.

Messages / Channels



Public Sector

Comms. Objectives	Core Message	Channels	Suggested tactics
Inform, engage, highlight impact, and foster commitment.	- Intersectoral commitment - Relevance for public policy - Results / best practices	- Bilateral meetings - Participation in events - Technical bulletins - Field visits - Specialized media	- Presentations - Policy briefs - Executive reports - Events with experts - Targeted campaigns
Engage, drive action, highlight innovation opportunities, share best practices.	- Leadership opportunity - Economic and reputational benefits - Replicable success stories	- Digital - Forums - Specialized Media - Digital Media - Briefings	- Testimonial videos - Events (field trips) - Presentations - Targeted campaigns
Coordinate, align messaging, mobilize audiences, share best practices.	- Active participation. - Social and environmental impact. - Need for citizen mobilization	- Workshops - Educational Materials - Social Networks - Alliances	- Histories - Meetings - Field trips
Raise awareness, educate, drive behavior change	- Innovation - Knowledge transfer	- Publications - Webinars - Forums - Workshops	- Publications - Webinars - Papers
Exchange knowledge, disseminate results	- Active participation - Need for citizen mobilization - Benefits Circular economy - Education	- Social Media - TV, Radio - Social Experiments (activations) - Education	- Targeted campaign - Activations



Private Sector



NGO's



Academia



Citizens

A person with long brown hair, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, is kneeling on a paved surface, sorting through various types of recycling. There are nine green plastic bins arranged in a 3x3 grid. The bins contain different materials: plastic bottles, aluminum cans, cardboard boxes, and other recyclable items. The person is currently reaching into one of the bins in the middle row.

GENDER & SOCIAL INCLUSION MESSAGES

** This content will be further reviewed and refined as part of the Gender & Social Inclusion Strategy.*

Gender & Social Inclusion key messages



Topic	Draft Talking Points
Empowerment Through Inclusion	• Women are vital actors in the fight against marine plastic pollution. By empowering women across the plastics value chain, we promote sustainability, equity, and local resilience. • When women are empowered with skills, resources, and leadership roles, they become powerful changemakers in transforming waste into opportunity.
Equal Voices, Stronger Solutions	• Incorporating gender perspectives ensures more inclusive, effective, and lasting solutions for plastic waste reduction in our cities and oceans. • Solutions shaped by diverse voices, especially women's, are more grounded, equitable, and responsive to real community needs
Bridging Gaps, Building Opportunities	• The circular economy offers untapped opportunities for women's economic empowerment, leadership, and innovation in waste management. • Investing in women led circular initiatives bridges economic gaps and unlocks scalable, community driven innovations.
Local Action, Global Impact	• Gender equal participation in this project contributes to global development goals – particularly SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 14 on life below water. • What women achieve locally in waste reduction and resource recovery strengthens global climate action and ocean protection.
Shared Responsibility, Shared Benefits	• A successful transition to a circular economy depends on the full and effective participation of both women and men in shaping change. • When inclusion drives collaboration, the social, environmental, and economic benefits of circularity are shared more broadly and fairly

** This content will be further reviewed and refined as part of the Gender & Social Inclusion Strategy.*

Gender & Social Inclusion: Do's – Don'ts

Detailed recommendations that the GEF LAC project team and partners should consider when talking about Gender.

✓ Do's	✗ Don'ts
• Use inclusive language: Always use gender-neutral or inclusive terms like "community leaders," "waste workers," and "stakeholders of all genders."	• Don't portray women only as victims or passive beneficiaries: Frame them as active participants and leaders in change.
• Showcase women's contributions: Highlight real stories and roles of women in waste management, recycling, policy-making, and innovation.	• Don't generalize gender roles: Avoid assumptions like "women are more responsible recyclers" or "men dominate all technical fields."
• Cite benefits of equality: Emphasize how gender-inclusive approaches lead to better project outcomes and stronger communities.	• Don't exclude men: Gender equality is about including everyone. Emphasize collaboration and shared responsibility.
• Promote shared leadership: Reinforce the value of equal representation in decision-making and leadership roles.	• Don't use paternalistic or charity-based language: Avoid phrases that suggest women need to be "saved" rather than empowered.
• Ensure cultural sensitivity: Tailor messages to local contexts, especially when referring to indigenous or marginalized communities.	• Don't overlook intersectionality: Recognize the additional barriers faced by indigenous women or women in informal work.
• Disaggregate data: Whenever you present data, refer to gender specific trends and gaps.	

* This content will be further reviewed and refined as part of the Gender & Social Inclusion Strategy.

Gender & Social Inclusion: Additional country highlights

COLOMBIA

- ❑ It is very important to include in the inclusion strategy the various population groups that have historically faced exclusion, such as different ethnic groups, youth, marginalized communities, among others.

PANAMA

- ❑ ANCON asks how the implementation of social inclusion and gender will be carried out in the field. It is important to include this in the strategy on Gender and Social Inclusion.
- ❑ Gender issues do not necessarily refer to women's empowerment, which is why they suggests we call it: "Gender, Empowerment, and Social Inclusion."
- ❑ The narrative and talking points of the gender strategy should be adjusted to include empowerment.

A person with long brown hair, wearing a red shirt and blue jeans, is kneeling on a paved surface, sorting through nine green plastic bins filled with various types of recyclable materials. The bins are arranged in a 3x3 grid. The materials include plastic bottles, cardboard boxes, metal cans, and other household waste. The person is currently sorting through the bin containing white plastic jugs.

ACTIVITY GRID

PROJECT MILESTONES

Communication lines of action

INSTITUTIONAL VISIBILITY

CITIZEN AWARENESS

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

OBJECTIVE

Strengthen the project's legitimacy, government support, and alignment with public and private sector commitments.

Increase general understanding, engagement and advocacy on marine plastics and circular economy for plastics

Equip local actors with the tools, data, and capacity to scale circular solutions and replicate best practices.

ACTIONS

- ❑ Highlight the project's alignment with existing policies, international commitments (like the Global Plastic Treaty), and sustainability goals.
- ❑ Promote participation and visibility of public and private sector leaders in milestones of the project.
- ❑ Position the cities as pioneers of circular economy models in the region.

- ❑ Promote waste separation, recycling, and reuse habits.
- ❑ Make visible the environmental and social impacts of plastic pollution.
- ❑ Celebrate local solutions and change agents (e.g., recyclers, entrepreneurs).

- ❑ Ensure that knowledge generated by the project, from diagnostics to pilot results, is shared effectively with external key stakeholders and internal audiences. It's about embedding lessons and capacities within cities so that actions are sustainable and scalable beyond the project's timeline.

Communication Tactics

Target Audience		 Bi-lateral Meetings	 Briefings	 Events	 Workshops	 Best practices Sharing	 Press
	Public Sector Interministerial						
	Public Sector National						
	Public Sector Local						
	Private Sector						
	NGO's						
	Academia						
	Citizens						

KPIS



KPI'S

KPIs	INDICATOR
Communication Materials developed	☐ Communication and Knowledge Management Strategy formulated and agreed. By 2025 ☐ Key targeted audiences identified, and mailing lists developed 2025. ☐ Project website in Spanish and English developed in 2025 and updated regularly. ☐ Media information kits, including briefing sheets on the GEF LAC project and planned interventions with contact information, and project brochure in Spanish and English developed by 2025. ☐ Project newsletter disseminated in 2025 ☐ Short videos in Spanish and English to introduce the project and its key progress developed in 2025.
Raising awareness and promoting cross-cutting education.	☐ Key results from the awareness raising activities integrated in the IW:Learn platform, GGKP and other platforms if relevant ☐ Awareness raising materials developed for the project by 2025 and updated regularly ☐ Feature articles and interviews with key stakeholders published in the local and national networks (social media, partners websites, etc). ☐ Educational presentations to different groups, such as recyclers associations, informal waste pickers, private sector associations, communities, etc. developed
Behavior change campaigns	☐ Targeted behavior changing campaigns directed to local communities designed and implemented, with participatory strategy designed and material developed in 2026 – Y4. ☐ Large scale multi-channel campaigns aimed at motivating citizens to separate plastics waste from sources and dispose towards the responsible channels conducted in 2026 – Y4.
Knowledge	☐ 6 selected case studies on circular policies developed based on policy instruments of component 1 by Y4 ☐ 6 selected case studies on sustainable business practices developed based on 6 business solutions of component 2 by Y4



Communications strategy

CIRCULAR CITIES BEYOND PLASTICS PROJECT