

# Precious Plastic

## Our Project and Aims

Precious Plastic is a small student-led project that aims to help the environment by upcycling waste plastic bottle caps to make jewellery and keychains and using the bottles to plant on campus.

We have discovered that our beaches are littered with waste materials, especially plastic bottles, in which animals get stuck or which end up in the food chain as they break into microplastics. After interacting with parents, local groups and “Projets Tortue Tahiti Gabon” (an association which helps marine turtles find their way into the ocean after hatching), we found that plastic pollution is a huge problem in Libreville and more often than not, bottle caps were very hard to recycle.

As we took it upon ourselves to take action, we organised beach cleanups and school-wide collection drives to collect the waste in our community which we can recycle. The bottle caps are melted and shaped to make products and apart from aiming to reduce and recycle the waste, we aim to use our revenue to mobilise people for the cause of wildlife, especially sea turtles, an important part of Gabon’s fauna, but we know that we cannot do this alone. Thus, we aim to, also, spread awareness and educate people about harmful effects of plastic, responsible consumption and reasons and methods of reusing and recycling which will hopefully inspire them to minimise their plastic waste or take on similar projects

REACHED 200+  
PEOPLE

30 BAGS + (130 L EACH)  
OF WASTE COLLECTED

RECYCLING 100S OF  
PLASTIC BOTTLES

## Highlights

Among the many highlights of this experience, three of our favourites have been:

(i) collaborating with the Green Hills Academy from land-locked Rwanda. Upon hearing about our project on their visit to Gabon, they wanted to get involved and thus, we went to clean the beach a second time with them, which, just like the first time, gave us a very fulfilling and satisfying feeling.

(ii) As soon as we spread the word about our project, many people were intrigued by it and wanted to get involved. We, effectively, communicated the ways in which they could help our cause. This helped us feel really good about our project and drove us to do better.

(iii) The production process. We thoroughly enjoyed melting, shaping and sanding the small shapes. It was great to see how a bottle cap turned into these beautiful and colourful objects that we, ourselves, made.

## Testimonials

“I have interacted with most members of the precious plastic project, have seen them in action, and I can definitely say with assurance that it is an inspiring and creative idea that builds upon the education we receive here at ERV as global citizens. Can’t wait for it to continue to thrive!” -Astride Ebama, Grade 10 student

“Your efforts will make the environment sustainable and protect the life of land as well as ocean. Your project is making a difference in society” -Tejinder Kaur & Jay Surti, Global Social Leaders Team

“Coming from a landlocked country, it was great to have worked alongside the team to clean the beaches in Libreville and understand the issues concerning marine life and plastic waste. Their efforts motivate me to undertake a similar project to protect wildlife in Kigali, Rwanda” - Jayden Henne, Green Hills Academy, Rwanda



## Funding, Donations, and Assistance

To begin this project, we needed some equipment. One of the biggest challenges we faced was acquiring all of the material as much of it is not available in Gabon. As for the household items that were required such as a box of masks or a roll of parchment paper, we brought them from our own homes while few other materials such as heat-resistant gloves and litter pickers were very generously donated to us by people who believed in our project.

Luckily, we were able to secure some funding from our school (about \$100) to buy the remaining materials and as one of our team members was travelling, they were able to help us with the chapati makers to melt the plastic among other materials.

In addition, the school provided us with the ability to print our posters for free and use their science labs to melt the plastic and manufacture our products. Our parents, too, helped us by providing transport to and from the beaches.

## Knowledge and Learning

This project, as small as it sounds, is something that has made us all gain skills and knowledge. We learnt how to be organised as we drafted our initial documents like budgets, risk-assessments, and a lot more to carefully plan each step. We set deadlines and as we pushed ourselves to meet them, we learnt how to effectively manage our time. While working as a team, we faced some challenges as there were misunderstandings and differences of opinion but eventually, we flourished as a team. We helped each other do better and once we understood our roles, the entire process ran extremely smoothly. Our production process was like an assembly line and over time, our speed only increased. The trust, confidence and friendship that we had is what made this project a success.

Apart from that, we have also learned a lot about our ecological footprint, the environment we live in, and about ways to recycle plastic. For example, we better understand how plastic causes problems for animals on the beaches and sea and what waste is harder to recycle. As a result, we have become more aware of the issues that concern today's generation and this planet and we believe that we are better prepared to face these challenges, as we lead the way as responsible social leaders.

Going forward, the only tip that we have for other projects is to be aware of the purpose of your project as it keeps you together and fuels you to achieve the mission that you had set for yourselves.

**"We were happy to know that our small efforts were, slowly but surely, bringing a change in protecting wildlife on land and in sea, preventing climate change and designing sustainable communities."**

—  
*Team, Precious Plastic (ERV)*

