

ABANDONED, LOST, AND OTHERWISE DISCARDED FISHING GEAR (ALDFG) IN THE WIDER CARIBBEAN

Abandoned, lost, and otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG), also known as ghost gear, refers to fishing gear that becomes derelict and no longer controlled by a fisher or vessel.

ALDFG is one of the most dangerous forms of marine litter as it is designed to be durable and can continue capturing marine life and destroying marine habitats for a long time.

IMPACTS OF ALDFG

Derelict gear may scar the seafloor, entangle marine life including many endangered species, smother or damage reef systems, be a hazard to navigation, and have deleterious economic impacts to fishers and the fishing sector by impacting fish catches.

CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE ALDFG GOVERNANCE

- As a global challenge, ALDFG stands at the nexus of fisheries management, environmental governance, maritime transport, and solid waste management.
- The legal framework for ALDFG governance in the Caribbean is relatively weak, largely fragmented, and often ad hoc. Most legal provisions outlined in national fisheries laws were not designed for ALDFG management but instead as broad measures aimed at conserving fish stocks.

DRIVERS OF ALDFG



IMPROVING ALDFG MANAGEMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

- The Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) in partnership with GPML-Caribe and the GCFI developed the Caribbean Regional Action Plan to Prevent ALDFG by building on global best practices and guided by regional stakeholder consultations.
- The plan complements existing regional instruments and provides an overarching framework, which can be adapted nationally, by taking account of local drivers and fishery characteristics.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO REGIONAL POLICY MAKERS

The enactment of measures to reduce, manage, and mitigate the impacts of ALDFG

should form a crucial part of national fisheries management systems, and should include measures for managing gear that has reached its end of life.

Predictive modelling techniques may be applied

to identify areas with the highest potential for gear loss based on a probability-mapping analysis. It will provide fisheries managers with a baseline understanding and guidance on where to apply resources for further in-depth assessments.

For governments that wish to prioritize ALDFG governance within their fisheries management systems, a three-pronged approach is recommended.

- 1 National risk assessments to improve the understanding of local circumstances related to ALDFG by integrating fisher interviews and/or national stakeholder workshops to provide insight into the local drivers of fishing gear loss and associated likelihood and risk.
- 2 Legislative and policy reviews to identify key gaps in ALDFG related legislation, assess policy coherence across various sectors, and identify weaknesses in the management regime.
- 3 National ALDFG management plans to guide national risk assessments, proposed legislative reforms identified in the legal and policy review, and best practice guidance provided in the regional framework document. National management plans should also align with policy directives codified in regional marine litter policies.

