

FISHER LED ALDFG AWARENESS PROJECT

This 2 month project leveraged the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI)'s expertise as co-host of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter – Caribbean Node (GPML-Caribe) by harnessing previous Gladding Memorial Award (GMA) Winners to implement a community based outreach program focused on raising awareness on abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). The Gladding Memorial Award recognizes fishers with an enduring vision for the sustainable and wise use of marine resources and is awarded annually by GCFI. Two of the most recent GMA recipients; Winsbert Harry (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) and Cecil Marquez (Grenada) were selected to pilot this work, with the overall goal being to expand this to other areas within the region.



Cecil Marquez from Gouyave, Grenada, was awarded the Gladding Memorial Award in 2018. He was the first to introduce long line technology in Grenada after which, many fishers adopted the use of manual longlines from small, open boats to target swordfish and yellowfin tuna. More recently Cecil introduced larger vessels with cabins and popularized "Safety at Sea" training and equipping fishers with VHF radios, GPS and distress flares. He was also instrumental in establishing the Gouyave Marine Protected Area. He continues to be an active conservationist and leader addressing marine debris through beach cleanups and educating local school children about marine environments and conservation.

Winsbert Harry from Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was awarded the Gladding Memorial Award in 2019. He is the President of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines National Fisherfolk Organisation and is the Fisheries Liaison Officer of the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations. Winsbert is an advocate for promoting safety at sea, and encourages his colleagues to ensure that they have all safety equipment on board when going out fishing. He also promotes the use of technology in reducing vulnerabilities and building resilience to impacts of climate change

Abandoned, Lost and Discarded Fishing Gear Communication Products

In collaboration with the experts at Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI) communication products were developed to share pertinent information about ALDFG and to promote the adoption of best management practices for preventing and reducing the impact of ALDFG. A single large poster for display at fish houses, fish markets and other public places was complemented by a smaller personal – sized poster series for distribution to individuals (referred herein as mini-posters). All of these materials are available in English, Spanish and French and can be accessed online via: <https://www.gcfi.org/ghost-gear/>



Using the communication products developed and produced by GCFI and GGGI, the GMA Ambassadors visited all relevant fishing communities, fish houses, fishing cooperatives, fish processing plants, fish markets and other community establishments in both Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to display and distribute communication products. These GMA Winners capitalized on their authority as respected leaders within their local fishing communities to educate communities about ALDFG, and what can be done to reduce fishing gear impacts whilst simultaneously building capacity.

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are comprised of one large volcanic island (Saint Vincent) and an archipelago of smaller, generally low-lying island that extend towards Grenada. Our outreach efforts focused on the main island where there are numerous small fishing villages that ring the perimeter of the island. We targeted these small villages which are detailed below.

Kingstown Fish Market was the first target for awareness activities as it is the main fish market for the island of Saint Vincent and is also used as a processing plant to ship fisheries products to regional and international markets. Kingstown Fish Market located within the capital is also a fish landing site and is frequented by the main target recipients of this project: fishers and individuals in the fishery chain, vessel operators as well as the general public who purchase fish. The manager of the Kingstown Fish Market was also engaged so that he can continue to share information about the issue of ghost gear at the fish market. Observations related to lower landings of fish at the market were raised and inquiries were made as to whether ghost fishing could be contributing to this. Through multiple visits to the fish market, 40 fish vendors, 60 fishers and 150 members of the general public were engaged. A total of 400 mini posters were distributed with several larger posters erected around the market and fish landing site area. Of those engaged with, 80% of the fishers and vendors had never heard of the issue of ghost gear with 10% having some basic familiarity and the other 10% being aware of the issue.



Rose Place a community located on the south coast of Saint Vincent is the leading fishing community in Kingstown, the capital of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and is also home to the Goodwill Fishermen Cooperative. There are 52 boats stationed at Rose Place that go out to fish on the high seas with 156 fishers within the community. Being a native of Rose Place, Gladding Memorial Award Winner Winsbert Harry was able to capitalize on existing relationships and had several focused



group meetings with members of the fishing industry as well as the local community. Through these engagements, 70 mini posters were distributed to fishers, with a further 40 given to boat and local shop owners and 140 distributed amongst the general public within the community. The office of the National Fisherfolk Organization (NFO) of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is also located within Rose Place so large posters were erected at both the Goodwill Fishermen Cooperative and the NFO with smaller posters left at the office for distribution and perusal by future visitors. A meeting was also held with the Chief Fisheries Officer at the Department of Fisheries to update the division on the status of the project while also erecting large posters at the office and leaving mini posters for future distribution.



Barrouallie a town located on the west coast was previously the capital of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. This area is renowned as being a fishing community and more specifically for "blackfish" (i.e. fishing for the short-finned pilot whale *Globicephala macrorhynchus*). The other types of fishing occurring within this community are seine netting and Fishery Aggregation Device (FAD) fishing used in the offshore fishing industry. Fishers and members of the Barrouallie Fishermen Cooperative along with other members of the communities were engaged with 65 mini posters distributed to individuals with larger posters erected at the office of the Barrouallie Cooperative. Local fishers were also recruited to assist with educating their fellow fishers and community members (See here for accompanying video of this activity).

Clare Valley is located on the southwestern, leeward coast of Saint Vincent and is an important sea turtle nesting site for leatherbacks (*Dermochelys coriacea*). The main fishing activities within this community are seine netting and high sea fisheries. Fishers, boat owners and seine operators were made more aware about ghost gear and how to safely use and dispose of their gear as well as how to remove gear from their beaches. Through this activity 150 mini posters were distributed to high seas fishers, boat owners and community members with 25 posters left at a local shop where local fishers frequent.





Calliaqua, located in the far south on the windward side of Saint Vincent, is an active fishing community where there is a fish market and landing site for fishers. Pot fishing is the main activity type with this community so there was special mention on how to safely use and manage this gear type to prevent ghost fishing by GMA Ambassador Winsbert Harry. During the visit to this community, fishers, boat boys, fish cleaners and the general public were engaged with and 250 mini posters were distributed with large posters erected at the landing site and public

areas where the fishers frequent.

In addition to visits to local fishing communities, other entities such as the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Environment Fund as well as the National Parks, Rivers and Beaches Authority were engaged to help further promote ghost gear awareness on their websites and through their offices. A visit was also made to the Lowmans Leeward Early Childhood School to engage with local kids and teachers.



In addition to these focused in-person activities, broader communication strategies were implemented such as a radio jingle and an article in the local newspaper, which can be accessed [here](#).

Perspectives from the GMA Ambassador Winsbert Harry:

It was a great experience for me as the GMA winner to play a role to not only learn about ghost gear but also share my knowledge. During my visit to some of the fishing communities I was able to reach out not only as SVG's only GMA winner but also as the President of the National Fisherfolk Organization. During these interactions I was also able to gain more perspectives about the movement of fish as well as reports of low landing of fish at the various landing sites which led me to wondering whether the incidence of ghost gear was contributing to low landings of fish. This project also gave me the opportunity to meet other stakeholders within

the fishery sector such as fishers, fishing communities, fish vendors, vessel operators, non-governmental organizations, members of the Fisheries Division as well as the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. I was also able to get my two daughters involved, thereby helping to pass on knowledge to the next generation. Ghost gear solutions and activities are very important for fisher's to get involved in as many see it as a problem to their livelihoods.



GRENADA

Grenada is a tri-island developing state in the eastern Caribbean comprised of the main island (Grenada), Carriacou and Petit Martinique along with several smaller uninhabited islands. Grenada's deep sea and other fishing activities have grown significantly over the last 2 decades. There are now more than 1,000 long line boats operating from the shores of Grenada and the length of long lines may now stretch to distances of over 40 nautical miles. This new and expanding technique has brought tremendous gains and sustainable livelihood to small-scale fishers, the community and the country at large. However, such development comes with a price, and it is now resulting in serious effects in the form of ALDFG/ghost gear. For this ALDFG Awareness program, there was island-wide coverage of the island of Grenada including the 6 parishes with 8 major fish markets, 3 fish processing plants and numerous unofficial landing sites. Posters and other handouts were distributed during interactive sessions with stakeholders at markets, processing plants, boat repair shops and rum shops. Furthermore Secondary Schools, Primary Schools, the Community College (TAMCC) and St George's University were also targeted in their science classes along with a 15-minute interview on GBN TV.



Saint Andrew: Located on the East Coast, Saint Andrew is the largest parish within Grenada with Grenville being its capital. Grenville is a primary landing site with fish markets and port facilities and is also home to the Grenville Fishermen Association and the Soubise Fishermen Cooperative. This site mostly sees landing of tuna, which are primarily harvested, from trolling near Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs), predominantly concentrated around the east coast of Grenada. In addition to trolling, pot fishing and reef fishing are dominant within this area. Through interactive sessions 200 fishers were engaged with and large posters were erected at communal areas and mini posters distributed to individuals.



Saint Patrick: Located on the North Coast, Saint Patrick is one of the smaller parishes with Sauteurs being the capital. Since the 1980s, fishers in Sauteurs used trammel nets (net deployed along the seabottom to entangle catches) to harvest spiny lobster and there was ongoing dialogue between the fishers and the Fisheries Division for several years where fishers argued successfully, at the policy level, for relaxed enforcement of legislation until suitable alternative gear was introduced by the Fisheries Division. No other locations in Grenada used these nets due to their non-selective and destructive nature and they were eventually prohibited in Grenada and other neighbouring islands. Sauteurs is home to the

St. Patrick's Fishermen Cooperative and through interactive sessions approximately 200 fishers and other community members were engaged with and communication materials distributed in public areas and to individuals.

Saint Mark: Located on the North West Coast, Saint Mark is the smallest parish by area in Grenada with Victoria being the capital. Victoria is a primary landing site with fish market and port facilities and is also home to the St. Mark's Fishermen Cooperative; it is popularly referred to as 'Sunset'. Also located within this Parish are the Waltham Fish Market and the Waltham Fishermen Cooperative. Unlike other primary landing sites, Waltham has a fish market but no port facility. Through in-person interactive sessions, close to 500 fishers and community members were engaged within this parish with several large posters being erected at communal areas and mini posters distributed to individuals



Saint John: Located on the West Coast, Saint John is a smaller parish in Grenada with Gouyave being the capital. Gouyave is a fishing town and is renowned as one of the most prolific fishing areas in the Eastern Caribbean. It is locally proclaimed as the "fishing capital" of Grenada and has a prosperous fishing industry based around commercially important species such as tuna and other pelagics like marlin, sailfish, swordfish, and wahoo. Gouyave is home to the Gouyave Fishermen Cooperative Society Limited, which is one of the most active cooperatives on the island. Being a native of Gouyave, GMA Winner Cecil Marquez was able to capitalize on existing relationships and had several focused group meetings with members of the fishing industry as well as the local community. Through these interactions, close to 300 fishers and community members were engaged within this parish with several large posters erected at communal areas and mini posters distributed throughout the community.



Saint George: Located on the West Coast, Saint George is the second largest parish by area in Grenada but is the most densely populated, as this is where the capital St George's is located. Home to the Grenada Fish Market and St George's Fish Complex, long-lining and reef fishing are the most predominant fishing methods. Also within the parish of Saint George is the SIFH Fish House in Grand Mal, which is a modern HACCP-certified (an international standard defining the requirements for effective control of food safety) seafood processing facility and is also the

largest export facility on the island. Furthermore, the port of St George's harbor berths of around 60+ large long liners employing approximately 300 fishermen. Within this parish, there is the Calliste Fishermen Cooperative, Southern Fishermen Association Inc and the Melville Street Fishermen Group. Individuals working within these groups are actively employed within the fishery supply chain. This parish is also home to the St. George's University where students pursuing environmental degrees were engaged with to learn more about the issue of ghost gear, its effects and what can be done in response. Through these interactions, close to 500 fishers, students and community members were engaged with the ALDFG posters displayed throughout the capital at key areas such as the Fisheries Division, various fish landing sites, processing plants, markets and other communal areas with mini posters distributed to individuals.

Carriacou: is one of the Grenadine Islands and is a dependency of Grenada and is accessible via a ferry from Grenada, which takes about two hours. Home to approximately 8,000 people, there is only one town / city: Hillsborough. The Hillsborough Fish Market is a primary landing site with fish market and port facilities whilst there is also the Windward Fish Centre on the island of Carriacou. The main fishing methods on the island are pot fishing and reef fishing. Through focused interactive sessions and group meetings, 200 fishers and community members were engaged and posters were distributed.



Perspectives from the GMA Ambassador Cecil Marquez

This was a fulfilling experience since I was able to interact with those mostly responsible and directly involved in their everyday livelihood, one that I share as a fellow fisher with almost 40 years in the sector. My achievement of being the first fisher from Grenada and the southern OECS (Organization of Eastern Caribbean States) Islands to win the Gladding Memorial Award allowed me to capture their attention, confidence and trust in the information they were receiving. Despite all the positivity towards the project from fishers and community members, there was still lots of negativity and opposition from older fishers as they still believe and hold on to the fact that the ocean would eventually swallow and take care of everything thrown into it. I am excited and optimistic that with follow-up programs, sometime in the future, they will embrace the opportunity. In my discussions with fishers, a major concern that arose was the disposal of end of life gear. There were numerous questions about what should be the best methods in Grenada as there are currently no facilities available that deal with this. I assured them that taking it back to shore would be a starting point but this highlights the need for such a venture within the region.

I think this project has been a learning and positive experience for all, those who ply the trade, students, and the wider community whose livelihood and sustainability depends on the health of the ocean. It will be my ultimate joy and satisfaction when someday key environmental issues such as ALDFG becomes part of the school curriculum. This approach, in my view is probably a good starting platform because young minds are more readily open to the challenges and adaptation of our ever changing world, but they are also our future and the ones likely to be affected by our current actions.



CONCLUSION

This fisher-led awareness project has revealed the value of peer-to-peer interactions and the benefit of using fishers as ambassadors to spearhead education and awareness activities such as these since their livelihoods and sustainability depends on the health of the ocean. Furthermore, using previous Gladding Memorial Award recipients allows for increased confidence and trust by fishers and community members in the information they were receiving but also improves the probability of candid conversations and exchanging of information and experiences. As fishers are the main actors in fisheries, their knowledge is an essential component of the social, cultural, and ecological context and sustainability of small-scale fisheries. Furthermore by piloting this work in two countries, we have started to build a network where these fisher can share their experiences with each other and ultimately with future fishers when the project is expanded to other countries. From this project, we recognized the need to have a standard level of existing awareness from our ambassadors. Cecil Marquez has previously represented GCFI at an ALDFG Workshop hosted by the Global Ghost Gear Initiative in Panama in 2019 and thus had a more in-depth understanding of the intricacies of this issue as compared to Winsbert Harry who only received training from GCFI. Thus, if this project were to be expanded, future ambassadors would first be exposed to a training workshop conducted by GGGI.

Via interactive discussions with fishers, this project also uncovered a major limitation within the region. Whilst there are several established best practices related to proper disposal of end of life fishing gear, the lack of such facilities within the Caribbean is a major obstacle. Fishers in Grenada especially while excited and motivated to do their part to reduce the incidence of ghost gear are left with a challenge of what to do with their end of life gear. This highlights the need for efforts to either develop a regional facility or introduce measures for local collection and consolidation to eventually be shipped internationally. Clearly this remains a limitation in the efforts to address circular economy principles.