



24 February 2015 - In February 2014, [UNESCO](#)'s [Man and the Biosphere \(MAB\)](#) programme launched an awareness and mobilization campaign entitled ['No plastic: A small gesture in our hands'](#) in partnership with the Regional Government of Principe. The aim of the campaign is to reduce plastic waste and promote access to drinking water in the biosphere reserve.

Fifty plastic bottles can be exchanged for a 'Principe Biosphere Bottle', a reusable stainless steel bottle made from safe, plastic-free materials. These bottles can be replenished at various treated water points installed across the Island of Principe.

After a year-long campaign, 6,000 'Principe Biosphere Bottles' were distributed throughout a population of only 6,737 people, thirteen water fountains were established and a total of 30,000 plastic bottles were removed. That's more than four bottles removed for every single inhabitant.

Support for the project came from partnership with the Spanish Ministry for Agriculture, Food

and the Environment, and the HBD group. The Regional President of the Government of Principe has announced that by 2020 Principe Island will become 'plastic-free' and that this project will serve as a model for future activities.



Basic Plastic facts

- Enough plastic is thrown away each year to circle the earth four times.
- We currently recover only five percent of the plastics we produce.
- It takes 500-1,000 years for plastic to degrade.
- The [Great Pacific Garbage Patch](#) in the North Pacific Gyre off the coast of California is the largest ocean garbage site in the world. This floating mass of plastic is twice the size of Texas.

Whilst [new technologies](#) to convert used plastic into fuels such as crude oil are being developed , as well as [innovative uses for used bottles](#) the best solutions to our plastic problem are still to reduce our use of plastics, and to reuse and recycle whenever possible.

