VESS
VANUATU ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE SOCIETY

# International Coastal Cleanup Report

# September 2023

## Summary of the International Coastal Cleanup 2023

This September, 36 volunteers (18 men and 18 women) joined the global effort for the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup, removing marine debris from the ocean, beaches, rivers, and lagoons. VESS organised a cleanup event at Ifira Point, and an underwater cleanup was also organised by VESS and Big Blue Dive Vanuatu, as a Dive Against Debris event. Other organisations also arranged their own cleanup events, including Vanuatu Ecotours and Nabanga Pikinini. A total of 2,743 littered items were collected at Ifira Point, Eton beach, Rentapao river, Second lagoon and Port Vila Seafront. This ICC event is part of VESS's environmental awareness program, and funding for supplies was provided by Vanuatu Climate Action Network.

In addition, the VESS team were completing field work in the remote Torres Islands during September and conducted a coastal litter count, recording a total of 2,533 marine debris items across 2 sandy beaches and 1 rocky coastline. In Efate and Torres Islands, although some of the items were similar, there was not as much diversity of litter in Torres. Interestingly, in Torres, most of the litter counted consisted of floating foreign items that are washed up on the beach, while in Efate, a higher number of items originated from local sources.

### About the International Coastal Cleanup

For decades, volunteers with Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup have removed millions of kilograms of rubbish from our oceans, beaches and waterways every year in September. They not only pick up rubbish but count every item as well. The resulting item-by-item, location-by-location Ocean Trash Index provides the only global snapshot of the ocean trash littering the world's coasts and waterways. For the last eight years Vanuatu has participated in the ICC, coordinated by Vanuatu Environmental Science Society. The data collected has contributed to policy in Vanuatu including the ban on single use plastics, established by the government in 2018 and 2019.

## Efate cleanup events

The VESS cleanup on 14th of September at Ifira Point was attended by a range of volunteers including diplomats, OXFAM officers and Vanuatu Climate Action Network members.

The Vanuatu Ecotours team also carried out cleanups and data collection at Eton beach and Rentapao river.

Below is the list of top ten litter items collected from four sites on Efate: Ifira Point, Eton, Rentapao and Second Lagoon. Note that glass and plastic fragments were not included in the top 10 items as they are usually pieces of the other items.

| **Litter Items** | **Quantity** |
|---|---|
| Plastic drink bottles | 411 |
| Plastic food wrappers | 398 |
| Aluminum drink cans | 232 |
| Glass bottles / jars | 168 |
| Plastic packaging (non-food) | 138 |
| Plastic caps and lids | 104 |
| Rope | 65 |
| Cardboard / bamboo takeaway box | 61 |
| Juice & milk boxes | 57 |
| Reusable shopping bags | 49 |

Most of the top ten items were the same as in previous years with plastic bottles and plastic food wrappers topping the list. However, in recent years we have seen more re-usable shopping bags and juice and milk boxes in the litter data.

## Underwater cleanup at the Port Vila Seafront, Efate Island

The underwater cleanup for scuba divers was organized in conjunction with Big Blue Dive, and was carried out on the Seafront in Port Vila Harbour.

The top 10 litter items collected in the underwater cleanup are listed in the table below.

| Litter Items | Quantity |
|---|---|
| Glass bottles | 89 |
| Aluminium drink cans | 86 |
| Plastic food wrappers | 41 |
| Clothing | 20 |
| Bricks, cinderblocks, chunks of cement | 19 |
| Plastic drink bottles | 14 |
| Shoes, flipflops and sandals | 14 |
| Appliances and electronic devises | 8 |
| Cans (food and juice) | 4 |
| Fishing line | 4 |

## Torres Islands litter surveys

Below is the list of top ten litter items collected from three sites in Torres Islands: Yawas and Yukavigamena (both on Hiu Island), and Lunghariki (Loh Island). Note that glass and plastic fragments were not included in the top 10 items.

| Litter Items | Quantity |
|---|---|
| Plastic caps and lids | 588 |
| Plastic drink bottles | 251 |
| Shoes | 183 |
| Plastic packaging (non-food) | 142 |
| Other plastic bottles / jars (oil, shampoo) | 60 |
| Rope | 50 |
| Tins cans | 12 |
| Cigarette lighter | 8 |
| Fishing floats and buoys | 8 |
| Plastic food wrappers | 7 |

In Torres, plastic fragments were the most commonly recorded item (1097). From our calculations of a beach surveyed in Torres, we concluded that there are 1.15 pieces of microplastics within each square meter of the beach. However, this result is likely to be underestimated as some plastic pieces were buried in the sand, or not easily visible.

## Acknowledgments

VESS is grateful for the many volunteers who braved the wet weather to collect litter and data to help understand reduce the problem of waste in our oceans. Each year of data collection contributes to a picture of what items are increasing and decreasing in Vanuatu and leads to solutions to waste issues.

Further detailed data for each of the cleanup locations is listed in the Appendices.

## Appendices

### 1. Cleanup data from five locations in Efate

| Litter item | Quantity | Litter item | Quantity |
|---|---|---|---|
| Plastic shopping bags | 9 | Paper and newspaper | 9 |
| Re-usable Shopping bags | 49 | Phone Refil cards | 2 |
| Other plastic bags | 37 | Toys | 8 |
| Paper bags | 9 | Electrical appliances | 5 |
| Polystyrene takeaway containers | 8 | Plastic water bottles | 323 |
| Other plastic takeaway containers | 48 | Other plastic drinks bottles | 88 |
| Cardboard / bamboo takeaway box | 61 | Other Plastic bottles / jars (oil, shampoo) | 25 |
| Plastic Straws - long | 5 | Glass bottles | 168 |
| Plastic Straws - short | 9 | Aluminium drink cans | 232 |
| Battery Household / phone | 6 | Tins cans | 41 |
| Plastic caps and lids | 104 | Juice & milk boxes | 57 |
| Metal caps and lids | 45 | 6 pack holders | 1 |
| Plastic Food wrappers | 398 | Nappies | 1 |
| Paper and cardboard food wrappers | 33 | Clothes | 15 |
| Foam packaging | 8 | Shoes | 26 |
| Plastic packaging | 138 | Fishing line | 10 |
| Cardboard packaging | 2 | Fishing net | 1 |
| Cigarette butts | 40 | Rope | 65 |
| Cigarette packets | 5 | Fishing floats and buoys | 1 |
| Cigarette lighter | 3 | Reobar | 5 |
| Plastic pieces | 98 | Tooth brush - plastic | 2 |
| Glass pieces | 2 | Plastic string | 3 |
| Foam/polystyrene pieces | 31 | Paint brush | 1 |
| Metal pieces | 8 | Wooden forks and spoons | 6 |
| Cloth pieces | 7 | Tile spacer | 1 |
| Aluminium foil | 4 | Fibre glass | 2 |
| Balloons | 1 | Concrete fibres | 9 |
| Glove - plastic | 3 | Super glue tube | 1 |
| Lolli pop stick | 31 | Umbrella handle | 2 |
| Plastic table cloth | 1 | Plastic tube | 1 |
| Coffee cup | 2 | Plastic plates and cups | 6 |
| Marker (stationary) | 1 | Plastic knives, forks and spoons | 23 |
| School bag | 1 | Metal, glass and ceramic plates and cups | 4 |
| Painting tray | 1 | Drink pouches and sachets | 1 |
| Ball | 1 | Cotton buds, sticks/swabs | 8 |
| Wood piece | 1 | PPE-mask | 11 |
| PVC pipe | 1 | E-Cigarettes | 2 |
| Timber | 11 | Palette wrap & plastic sheets | 1 |

## 2. Underwater cleanup data: Port Vila Seafront

| Litter item | Quantity |
|---|---|
| Bags: grocery/retail (plastic) | 2 |
| Beverage bottles: less than 2 litres (plastic) | 14 |
| Fishing: line | 4 |
| Food wrappers | 41 |
| Scuba & snorkel gear, masks, snorkels, fins | 1 |
| plastic fragments | 3 |
| Glass & Ceramic Materials | |
| Beverage bottles (glass) | 89 |
| Cups, plates, tableware, dishes (glass & ceramic) | 1 |
| Fluorescent light tubes | 1 |
| glass & ceramic fragments | 33 |
| Appliances: household, computer equipment & other electronic devices | 8 |
| Batteries | 1 |
| Beverage cans (aluminium) | 86 |
| Cans: food, juice, other (tin) | 4 |
| Caps & lids (metal) | 3 |
| Cars & car parts | 1 |
| Pipes & rebar | 1 |
| Wire, wire mesh, barbed wire | 2 |
| Metal fragments | 2 |
| rubber fragments | 3 |
| Bricks, cinderblocks, chunks of cement | 19 |
| Clothing | 20 |
| Shoes, flip flops, sandals, tennis, etc | 14 |
| toys | 1 |

## 3. Cleanup data from Torres Islands

| Litter item | Quantity | Litter item | Quantity |
|---|---|---|---|
| Plastic shopping bags | 2 | foam/polystyrene pieces | 58 |
| other plastic bags | 5 | Balloons | 1 |
| plastic caps and lids | 588 | Clothes peg - plastic | 5 |
| Plastic Food wrappers | 7 | Pens and pen lids | 2 |
| Foam packaging | 1 | PVC Pipe | 3 |
| Plastic packaging | 142 | Spray Cans | 6 |
| Plastic water bottles | 84 | Strapping bands | 2 |
| Other drinks bottles | 167 | Syringes | 1 |
| Other Plastic bottles / jars (oil,shampoo) | 60 | Toothbrush - plastic | 4 |
| Glass bottles | 2 | Wood / timber | 2 |
| Aluminum drink cans | 1 | Pipe insulation | 1 |
| Tins cans | 12 | Bag strap | 1 |
| clothes | 3 | Packing strap | 1 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| shoes | 183 | Large hard plastic unidentified | 1 |
| fishing net | 7 | Plastic fitting | 1 |
| Rope | 50 | Spool | 1 |
| Fishing floats and buoys | 8 | Hair clipper comb | 1 |
| plastic pieces | 1097 | Coat hanger plastic | **3** |
| Rake plastic | 1 | Reel plastic | **2** |