



 TUI CARE
FOUNDATION

TUI JUNIOR ACADEMY DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Youth Ambassadors for coral reef conservation in the
Dominican Republic



THE REEF-WORLD
FOUNDATION

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INTRODUCTION

This project has been one of a kind and has managed to achieve some truly remarkable results, all the more so when you consider that this project took place during a global pandemic that crippled the tourism industry and closed schools, our two primary beneficiaries. This project has managed to meet, and in some cases exceed, all of the planned objectives.

The primary aim was to measurably reduce direct local impacts to coral reefs by building capacity for and awareness of best environmental practice for diving and snorkelling activities. Working with the majority of the scuba diving centres across the country, this project has managed to reduce direct threats from diving activities to coral reefs by 22.7 % in 9 tourism hotspots. Using the Green Fins approach, this project has managed to directly train 112 members of staff in best environmental practice, and critical messaging and guidance has reached nearly 89,000 tourists over the timeline of the project, far surpassing the original target of 65,000.

The secondary objective was to create Youth Ambassadors to champion coral reef conservation projects and activities within their local communities through schools, clubs and associations. Again this has been achieved with over 2,423 children (923 directly and 1,500 indirectly) participating in and receiving a new curriculum created specifically for this project - the Youth Ambassador Coral Reef Conservation Programme. This is more than double the original target of 1,070. The subsequent conservation projects spearheaded by the Youth Ambassadors have reached nearly 5,981 local community members, also surpassing the original target of 4,000.

This strategic and tailored marine environmental education programme included learning objectives that covered topics associated with the ecology, conservation and value of marine ecosystems that these communities directly depend on. This was delivered either in person in schools or during field trips in order to give direct exposure to corals, seagrasses and mangroves while also teaching snorkelling to students. When direct delivery was not possible due covid restrictions, classes continued to take place online across the country, using social media to support questions from students. The education programme has been developed and delivered in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

While the content of this programme is not taught as part of the national curriculum as standard in the DR, it is now being delivered by 25 teachers who have been trained to do so across 18 schools (exceeding the target of 15) where we have had a direct partnership with and in other schools in the country during the online classes in partnership with the government. The feedback from teachers, students and individuals involved in

the programme has been extremely positive and anecdotal evidence suggests this programme will continue to be delivered in schools by the teachers beyond the scope of this project.

A key anticipated result of this project was to increase the opportunity of underprivileged children to access the benefits of the tourism industry, notably working in the scuba diving and snorkelling industry. Two of the new Youth Ambassador teachers trained as part of the “train the trainer” programme are scuba diving instructors at Green Fins operators and three are Green Fins Assessors which will enable a direct connection and exposure to the marine tourism industry.

As part of this project, a series of recommendations for strengthening the national curriculum with coral reef conservation content has been prepared and presented to relevant governmental authorities. Many of these recommendations have already been included in new adaptations of the national curriculum and also a new law that supports environmental teaching.

Additionally recommendations for strengthening relevant national legislation and regulations governing the tourism industry with best environmental practice in line with Green Fins have been established. This project has allowed new ties to be made between conservation groups, the tourism industry and key decision makers from within the government.

The biggest challenge of this project was the pandemic, which directly impacted the ability to conduct the planned activities. The government of the Dominican Republic was forced to close the schools and restrict tourism activities and public gatherings to prevent further transmission of the COVID-19 disease. This forced the project’s implementing partners to adapt, re-design and digitalise the Youth Ambassador curriculum and delivery mechanisms to enable online learning. The pandemic also led to many scuba diving operators having to either reduce their staff or close completely. The priorities of the businesses which did survive focused more on reclaiming lost profit, than environmental activities.

As pandemic related travel restrictions began to ease, the Dominican Republic was one of the first in the region to open up their borders. This led to higher than usual international visitor arrivals and the scuba operations being extremely busy making working alongside them harder than usual. The upside is that more tourists were exposed to the environmental best practice guidance and resources disseminated through this project and than was anticipated during the design phase of this project.

The 6 months project extension was critical to the project’s success allowing both Reef Check DR and Reef-World to reclaim some of the time lost as a result of the pandemic. The conservation impact will be greater and longer lasting as a result.





PROJECT OUTCOME EVALUATION



1. Curriculum for the Youth Ambassador Coral Reef Conservation Programme

An entirely new and unique curriculum has been developed by Reef-World with the support of Reef Check Dominican Republic who were able to ensure the content was accurate, locally specific and absent from the national curriculum which was last revised in its entirety by the government in 2016. The aim of the curriculum was to introduce the basics of marine ecology and threats to the major marine ecosystems present in the Dominican Republic - Mangroves, Seagrasses, Corals and the open sea. Interesting facts and low cost practical solutions to common everyday threats were explored through interactive games and challenges, the aim being that students would then change their behaviours and start to implement these solutions within their own family homes and local communities.

Introducing more sustainable daily practices and behaviours to local communities via teachers, other schools staff and, critically, the students proved to be a very effective channel. This is especially pertinent in a country where half of the provinces are coastal (16 of 31) and many people are dependent on fishing for their livelihoods, the security of which, whether artisanal or industrial, is highly dependent on healthy reefs and associated ecosystems.



The main topics, goals and objectives of each module were:

1. MEET THE SEA

Goal: To introduce the students to the basic concepts and provide a fundamental understanding of the seas and oceans of the world while appreciating their importance and scale.



2. EXPLORE CORAL REEFS

Goal: To develop a basic understanding of the ecology of corals and the reef ecosystem and to develop an appreciation of their importance and relevance to us.



3. DISCOVER MANGROVES

Goal: To develop a basic understanding of what mangroves are, how they have adapted for survival, why they are important to us and how living and nonliving things that make up a food web in an ecosystem are connected.



4. SUBMERGE INTO SEAGRASS

Goal: To develop a basic understanding of what seagrasses are and to gain experience using a simple key/ID chart to identify a few species.

5. FANTASTIC FISH

Goal: To develop basic understand of marine fish and to gain experience using a simple key/ID chart to identify a few species.

6. TROUBLE BENEATH THE WAVES

Goal: To identify what the key environmental concerns are threatening our marine life and to empower the youth to become Youth Coral Reef Conservation Ambassadors for change.



In addition to each of these modules, content on how individuals can meaningfully contribute towards the reduction of a number of major environmental threats including: marine debris, single use plastics, microplastics, chemical pollutants and fertilisers, direct environmental damage through irresponsible management of boats and anchoring, overfishing, abandoned fishing gear, bycatch, restricted fisheries and seasons, logging and sedimentation.

Specific activities and games aimed at encouraging direct action and building awareness to the threats to marine ecosystems included:

- **Beach Cleanups** - Organising and conducting local beach cleanups with making sure that data on the type and amount of litter collected was recorded and submitted to the relevant authorities or organisations.
- **Waste Analysis activity** - Taking steps to analyse their lifestyle and identifying alternatives such as reducing plastic bag use by replacing them with using cloth bags, using reusable bottles, using reusable thermoses and containers instead of polystyrene foam and minimising energy consumption.
- **Spread the word** - Highlighting that “Education is a powerful tool” to motivate people to be a spokesperson for the environment within their community as a Youth Ambassador, and to use their voice in person and online (e.g social media)
- **Mural** - Encouraging children to paint ecological murals that educate and keep the focus on the importance of best practices.
- **Recycling** - Talking of the benefits of recycling but also helping them identify what, where and how they can collect, store and recycle certain materials in their community.
- **Volunteering** - Highlighting where, what and how they can volunteer with NGOs and governmental entities working on behalf of the environment.
- **Environmental Brigades** - Supporting the creation of environmental brigades, teams of first responders to environmental issues within their communities and with links with organisations and professional experts on these issues to know how to react to threats and major issues.



Additionally a field trip was designed with the goal to orientate students to the marine environment. It was common that many students did not know how to snorkel or even swim prior to participating in this programme so special trainers and instructors were required to provide close supervision to ensure student safety. Snorkelling equipment was provided along with training in snorkelling techniques, specifically including how to minimise any environmental impact. This allowed students to see firsthand the ecosystems they learned about as well as witnessing some of the anthropogenic impacts such as marine debris, algal growth associated with high nutrient loading and even invasive species (Red Lionfish - *Pterois volitans*).

2. Agreements of engagement with up to 15 schools

Within the timeframe of this project, Reef Check DR was able to secure agreements with 18 schools. These agreements were designed to establish the roles of the two entities in achieving the objectives of this project, the methods and approaches to be applied to do so, as well as establishing some safeguarding rules such as options around photographs being taken and used for the purpose of this project. The agreements listed the main objectives to be achieved as:

1. Increase the awareness of the value and threats to coral reefs;
2. Increase the conservation capacity of reefs coral between the youth industry and tourism,
3. Improve the health of coral reefs to maintain the integrity of the ecosystem services they provide to local communities and associated ecosystems in the Dominican Republic.

Each school that participated in this project also received an environmentally friendly plaque with the TUI Care Foundation logo that was displayed at the school.

3. Agreements of participation with 30 reef-dependent businesses (Green Fins dive and snorkel centres)

The Green Fins approach – coordinated internationally by The Reef-World Foundation in partnership with the UN Environment Programme – aims to reduce the negative environmental impacts associated with marine tourism activities. The initiative offers the only internationally recognised environmental standards for diving and snorkelling activities as well as a robust assessment system to measure compliance. Green Fins encourages and empowers the diving industry to adopt practical, low-cost alternatives to harmful practices through strategic training, support and resources. By reducing the local pressures tourism puts on coral reefs, it helps make corals healthier and more resilient to other more wide scale stresses.

This project sought to further establish and expand Green Fins in the Dominican Republic by building on previous Green Fins implementation success after a soft launch in 2018.

Green Fins Certified Members are dive or snorkel operators who have committed to following the Green Fins Code of Conduct and have achieved a minimum standard of environmental performance during their annual assessment. Assessments are conducted in conjunction with environmental training by Green Fins assessors, qualified by The Reef-World Foundation.

Certified Members are based in an active Green Fins location and receive annual assessments, training and feedback to help them reduce their environmental impact in line with the Code of Conduct. Certified Members are ranked by their environmental performance (Bronze, Silver, Gold) based on the results of their assessments. These operators must achieve a minimum standard and show ongoing improvements during their assessment to be certified.

In total there were 30 separate Green Fins assessments and on-site training with scuba diving and snorkelling centres in the Dominican Republic. 3 businesses closed during the pandemic and it is estimated that another 10 operations (that we intended to target) also closed.





4. 1,070 children (ages 14 – 18) to become Youth Ambassadors

2,423 Youth Ambassadors were trained as a result of this project. Reef Check DR directly trained a total of 923 students through a series of in-person classes, field trips and online classes. Because the interest in the programme was so great, Reef Check DR made the decision to pass over the full training content and teaching resources (e.g. presentations) to all schools involved (including schools that are not part of the 18 that we have an agreement in place with) along with detailed guidance on how to deliver the programme. As a result of this an additional 1,500 Youth Ambassadors were trained. This was an unplanned capacity building intervention, beyond the train the trainer programme which was delivered to 25 teachers (see outcome 7), which resulted in a much greater indirect reach than initially anticipated during the planning stages of this project.

Each of the children attending an in-person class received a blue Youth Ambassador t-shirt and certificate of attendance showcasing the support from TUI Care Foundation. Each child that registered for the online session delivered over Zoom while the covid restrictions were in place, also received a digital certificate of attendance signed by the government.



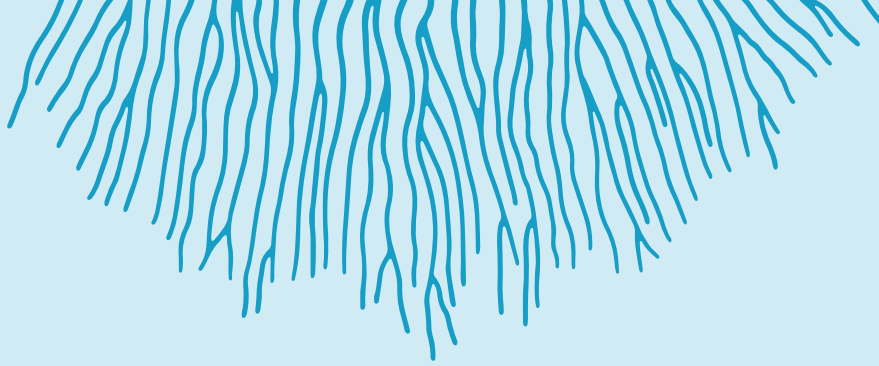
5. Youth Ambassador environmental activities to engage 1,860 community members and 2,170 family members)

The original estimations for this project were that each child that took part in the Youth Ambassador programme would be passing on their new knowledge to their families and other community members to approximately 3.5 individuals per student. During the course of this 3 and half year project, the estimated cumulative number of family and community members reached was 5,981, higher than the target of 4,000 due to the higher number of students reached through the Youth Ambassador programme.

6. Environmental training for at least 325 staff of local reef-based tourism businesses as indicated through record of attendance sheets, and awareness raising reaching 65,000 tourists over the course of the project

This original target of 325 was reduced by TUI Care Foundation to 110 as a result of the impacts of the covid-19 pandemic. The reasons being because many businesses were forced to close or greatly reduce the scope of their operations. This resulted in many staff losing their jobs and centres running operations with fewer staff. This meant that few staff per operation assessed received Green Fins environmental training - during which staff teams are given information on how to reduce their negative impacts to coral reefs and associated ecosystems in compliance with the Green Fins code of conduct. The eventual total number of staff that was reached was 112.

As previously mentioned, the Dominican Republic was one of the first countries in the region to open its borders to international tourists after the pandemic. This resulted in a high demand from tourists in the immediate months after the covid-19 pandemic. Due to the unexpected increase in tourist visitor arrivals the estimated reach for the total number of tourists exposed to Green Fins best practice guidance as a result of this project was 88,900, far surpassing the original target of 65,000.



7. Train the Trainer for 10 champion trainers from within the Green Fins Dominican Republic network (Green Fins National Team and participating businesses) and 15 teachers of participating schools to deliver the Youth Ambassador Coral Reef Conservation Programme

On the 19th May, Jorge E. Díaz-Romero from Reef Check Dominican Republic delivered the Train the Trainer programme to 25 individuals who would go on to be Youth Ambassador Teachers and deliver the curriculum in their respective schools, clubs and other venues to children under the age of 18.

The participants came from 7 of the project's participating schools, 3 Green Fins dive centres, 1 university, 2 NGOs (Fundación Verde Profundo and the Dominican Reef Network) and 2 Green Fins Assessors.

8. Environmental performance assessment data analysis showing improved environmental practice of 30 reef-based tourism businesses (Green Fins dive and snorkel centres)

Green Fins Certified Members are assessed annually based on a 15-point code of conduct, which measures the company's impact on coral reefs. An assessment takes into account an operator's processes both above and below the water to gain an overall picture of its environmental impact.

During a Green Fins assessment, trained Green Fins assessors will visit the dive or snorkel centre and join a regular diving or snorkelling trip with the guests to observe the staff and customers, look around the shop and ask a few questions. This allows the assessor to observe what the operator is doing well and determine three action points for improvement over the following year. The assessor will meet with the dive centre's owner or manager to discuss these action points, agree on a sustainability action plan to address them and conduct a one-hour environmental awareness presentation for all staff. This can all take place within one day to make it as easy as possible for the operator.

During the timeline of this project, an analysis of the Green Fins assessment data has shown that there has been a 23% (25% since 2018) improvement in environmental performance among participating dive operations, thus reducing their daily impacts to coral reefs.

The detailed assessment process and corresponding data provides useful insights into industry wide challenges and where improvements are being made to operational practice. By analysing comparable data from Green Fins members who had repeat assessments, we are able to determine where operators are either lessening or worsening their impact on the marine environment.

Areas of operations that showed most improvement (or biggest % in change) as a result of exposure to the Green Fins assessment and training systems were as follows (data taken from 7 repeat assessments of the 30 conducted):

- Awareness and understanding of local laws and regulations - 60% improvement in their score
- Delivery of environmental briefings to divers - 60% improvement in their score
- Use of environmental materials (posters etc) - 50% improvement in their score
- Use, deploy or maintain mooring buoys - 33% improvement in their score
- Awareness and uptake of MPA rules and regulations - 33% improvement in their score

In contrast to this, the areas that showed the biggest decline were as follows:

- Increase in the contact or damage to corals or marine life - Although this increased marginally (only 2 out of 7 operations) the risk to the environment remains high and should be considered a major priority
- Increase in the risk from chemical pollution - 43% (only 2 out of 7 operations)
- Increase in poor garbage or solid waste management - 14% decline (only 1 out of 7 operations)

9. Recommendations for strengthening national curriculum with coral reef conservation content presented to relevant authorities

The national curriculum is reviewed every 4 years and as part of this project a review of the 2016 national curriculum highlighting specific intervention points where the government could enhance their current curriculum with the inclusion of specific activities, tasks and learning objectives was conducted.

It was planned to feed this back to the government in 2020 and support them with the development of the planned curriculum updates. However, due to the limitations and priority shifts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, this review did not happen. Instead, we worked closely with the Ministry of Education to adapt the Youth Ambassador Program for online delivery, and delivered this in partnership with the Ministry. As a result of the close ties created through this unexpected collaboration, key decision makers in the Ministry were exposed to the course content.

As a result, these key decision makers chose to insert sections of the Youth Ambassador Programme curriculum into the 2016 curriculum. This resulted in the following adapted documents to be included in Initial, Primary and Secondary curriculum adaptations:

- <https://www.ministeriodeeducacion.gob.do/docs/direccion-general-de-curriculo/ARrE-adequacion-curricular-del-nivel-inicial-2022pdf.pdf>
- <https://www.ministeriodeeducacion.gob.do/docs/direccion-general-de-curriculo/dPOb-adequacion-curricular-del-nivel-primariopdf.pdf>
- <https://www.ministeriodeeducacion.gob.do/docs/direccion-general-de-curriculo/lqwQ-adequacion-curricular-nivel-secudariopdf.pdf>



Amenazas

- Este ecosistema tiene factores que lo amenazan, tanto naturales como antropogénicos.
- Al proporcionarnos cobertura contra tormentas y tsunamis, son un daño colateral que sufre al protegernos.
- Cualquier alteración al cuerpo de agua en donde se encuentre, hecha por el hombre o no, afectará al manglar.
 - Entre estas causas están: aumento del nivel del mar, fertilizantes, basura, entre otros.
- La tala, manejo irresponsable de botes, y la urbanización costera también representan un riesgo para los manglares, los cuales generalmente son vistos como un obstáculo al "progreso".

Construcciones cercanas a la costa en el Parque Nacional Archipiélago Los Roques, Venezuela. Foto: Diario Tal Cual



In addition to this, as part of this project and providing recommendations, the government of the Dominican Republic created the environmental education law (94-2020, replacing Law No. 295 of 1985), which declares:

“to be of high national interest to include the need to conserve the country’s natural resources in national education programs”

and to

“to include environmental education at different levels, cycles, grades, modalities and stages of the Dominican school and higher education system in public and private educational centers.”

The law has the following specific objectives:

- Form competencies by creating skills and values that lead towards sustainable development, based on equity, social justice and respect for biological diversity.
- Promote the implementation of climate change adaptation policies and measures and climate risk management.
- Promote the development of environmental awareness and understanding of the environment in its many aspects and its complex relationships.
- Promote in the individual and human groups the adoption of behaviours and the development of abilities to search for joint solutions to the environmental problems that generate climate change.
- Promote the extension of practices and sustainable ways of life in the different territorial contexts of the Dominican Republic, based on the rational and supportive use of resources, as well as respectful enjoyment of the environment.

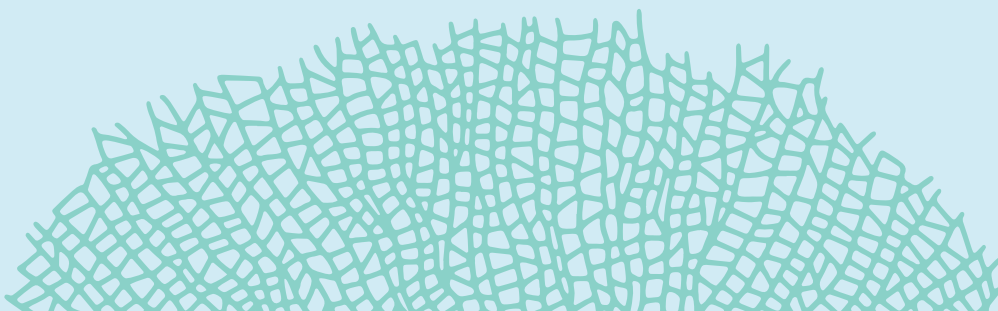
This is a great outcome resulting from this project and it’s hoped that these important national curriculum changes will result in the increased awareness to the issues of climate change and marine ecosystem health, as well as the solutions to be part of the change needed to protect them, among children across the country for many years to come.

An additional list of key recommendations, based on the learnings from this project will be presented to the government in line with the anticipated curriculum review later this year, to further strengthen the marine environmental content in the national curriculum.

10. Recommendations for strengthening relevant national legislation / regulation governing the tourism industry with best environmental practice in line with Green Fins

A document presenting an analysis of the Green Fins assessment data, a general gaps and needs analysis and outlines opportunities for the government to strengthen legislation / regulations to support the marine tourism industry to further adhere to best environmental practice will be officially submitted to the government.

It outlines specifically where and how Green Fins can meaningfully deliver on national and international targets. This includes the National Development Strategy and the Government Plan 2020-2024 for the Dominican Republic (delivering on 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals) and international frameworks including the Cartagena Convention and Protocol, current committed CBD targets (and potentially the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework) and RAMSAR convention.





CHALLENGES

The biggest challenges associated with this project were directly associated with the restrictions in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Examples include but were not limited to; restriction on international travel preventing Reef-World from coming to the Dominican Republic restricting meetings with the government, NGO's, local schools, scuba diving and snorkelling operations, and our implementing partner Reef Check Dominican Republic.

This also made project planning incredibly difficult because it was unknown when restrictions would be lifted. All public schools were advised to close in the early stages of the pandemic with no known dates for reopening. As a result we had to adapt, shift focus and work with some of the private schools that opened earlier providing us with a channel to access children in the Dominican Republic, which was otherwise not possible. Reef Check Dominican Republic were able to continue constant communication with the focal points (teachers, headmasters and headmistresses) of the schools throughout the pandemic. However, one of the major problems was upon reopening of the public schools many of the original contacts at the schools had left their original roles or posts as teachers at the school. This was due to many teachers realising the potential of online teaching opportunities often with higher financial remuneration. This meant having to establish new channels of communication with the schools and establish new networks essentially starting over resulting in further delay to the project.

In July 2020, a general election was held to elect a president, vice-president, 32 senators and 190 deputies. This was the first time such widespread elections were being held in the Dominican Republic in which all authorities would be elected at the same time. They had originally been planned for 17th May 2020, but were postponed due to the pandemic resulting in additional issues surrounding planning for the project. During this time, there were additional security checkpoints on roads and in or near election locations making travel to schools and marine tourism operations more difficult than usual.

The election also resulted in a change of leadership which resulted in the removal of some key government officials that this project had already established and meant having to start again. This was made all the more difficult due to the lack of prioritisation of any existing projects from the outgoing governmental party.



LESSONS LEARNED

The pandemic which we had no control over was the single biggest challenge to the project's progress. In terms of planning budgeting and collaboration there were no major issues. International travel restrictions preventing staff from Reef-World being able to travel to the country during critical moments of project implementation had lasting effects.

If we were to do the project again there would be a bigger emphasis on training up more teachers and trainers in the country at the beginning of the project so that there was less dependency or implications from staff leaving the project.

BENEFICIARIES

Beneficiary #1 Owners of Certified Gold Member - Slow Dive - Casa Chihuahua

Julie Piron and David Pletinckx are the managers and owners of a scuba diving operation in Bayahibe in the east of the Dominican Republic called Slow Dive - Casa Chihuahua. This operation has shown one of the biggest improvements in the country in their assessment score from their first assessment in 2019 to their most recent one in 2022 by 39%. Through their three assessments and on-site training and evaluation they have shown how taking onboard their annual feedback has had a direct and measurable reduction in threats to the marine environment. The local staff that they employ (captains, drivers, chefs etc) are all supportive of the changes that Julie and David have made to reduce their impact. This knowledge and awareness inevitably is passed onto the local community driving more changes. Through simple everyday acts such as removing plastic and waste from underwater when they are diving, installing and repairing mooring buoys, not selling or displaying any marine life, supporting local marine monitoring programmes (FUNDEMAR), having a no smoking, no touch and a no glove policy, not single use plastic, using reusable containers, not feeding fish or marine life and the active use of environmental awareness materials at their operation they are having minimal impact on the marine environment. This is reflected in Slow Dive - Casa Chihuahua being the only Certified Gold Green Fins Member in the Dominican Republic (Q1 2023).



**Beneficiary #2 -
Someira Zambrano - Youth Ambassador Teacher and Green Fins
Assessor**

“Teaching in the Youth Ambassador Program has been an amazing experience, through which I had the opportunity to empower young people to take action in protecting our oceans.

The program has taught students the importance of marine conservation and the many threats facing our oceans. They have learned about topics such as sustainable fishing practices, marine biodiversity, and the impact of pollution on our marine ecosystems.

The students have also been able to participate in hands-on activities such as beach cleanups. These activities have not only helped to clean up our beaches and restore damaged ecosystems, but they have also given students a sense of ownership and responsibility for the health of our oceans.

One of the Youth Ambassador Program’s most impressive aspects is its ripple effect on the wider community. The students who have participated in the program have become marine conservation advocates and shared their knowledge with their friends, family, and peers.

Through the Youth Ambassador Program, we are creating a new generation of ocean ambassadors committed to protecting our marine ecosystems in the Dominican Republic. I am confident that the impact of this program will be felt for many years to come, and I feel privileged to be a part of it.”



SUSTAINABILITY

Reef-World and Reef-Check Dominican Republic are seeking support to continue to drive the success of this project towards long term sustainability. This project has achieved incredible outputs, despite severe limitations as a result of the pandemic restrictions. Concrete steps to institutionalise both initiatives implemented through this project (Green Fins and Youth Ambassador Program) within national frameworks and legislation within the Dominican Republic have been taken. It is expected that both programmes will eventually be fully supported by national funds (private and public), and meaningful steps towards this were made prior to the pandemic refocusing the government’s priorities. Both programmes require funding in the short term to remain operational and continue to drive positive change in environmental behaviours both within the tourism sector and local communities, until a point when a combination of national government / private sector support can sustain both programmes long term.

Both the Youth Ambassador programme and Green Fins meaningfully contribute towards TUI Sustainability Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals by meaningfully supporting both people and planet, with tangible results. Despite the enormous achievements of this project, there is still work to be done to ensure the project’s long term impact and the sustainability of the two initiatives.

Green Fins directly delivers on the goals of the TUI Sea the Change Programme that focuses on ocean, coastal and marine ecosystems conservation and supports the economic wellbeing of coastal communities which rely on tourism. A healthy marine tourism industry depends on a healthy reef and TUI could be a major part of helping to restore the marine tourism industry in a part pandemic world, sustainably supporting livelihoods and being at the forefront of helping to address and reduce some of the major negative impacts identified through the Green Fins assessments.

Additionally, the Youth Ambassador programme could continue to deliver on the TUI Junior Academy programme that inspires young people to protect nature and wildlife and empowers them to become Eco Champions in their communities. The ready to go curriculum and in particular the field trip that has been designed as part of the project support TUI Care Foundations aim to “bring the classroom to life through excursions and nature-based experiences.”

Green Fins has been proven to be replicable, and there are many TUI destinations which could greatly benefit from the initiative. In addition, the Youth Ambassador curriculum, course and train the trainer programme is replicable. Reef-World would be thrilled to explore the opportunity of working with TUI Care Foundation further to secure the future success of these initiatives in the DR, as well as to replicate these initiatives and scale our impact.

INNOVATION

In terms of innovation, the design of the Youth Ambassador curriculum, supporting presentations and t-shirts and overall design, this remains entirely unique and there is still no other similar programme that is currently active in the Dominican Republic. The entire project was itself innovative.

Collaborations between the schools (both private and public), the government, local and national NGOs and the tourism sector is also unique and there is no other programme that combines these sectors with the goal of reducing direct local pressures to marine ecosystems.





TOURISM INDUSTRY & BEYOND

Tourism industry

As previously mentioned this project involves the cooperation of the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Environment. At the beginning of this project, we managed to establish good ties with the government and managed to make some progress on ensuring that certain laws and regulations were supporting the sustainability of the marine tourism industry. Additionally, we are working very closely with representatives from the Vice Minister of Coastal and Marine with 3 staff having been trained to support Green Fins activities.

All Ministries involved are still keen on supporting the project through the provision of staff at the request of Reef Check DR but it is not yet part of their own annual plan of action.

The Ministry of Tourism is unable to provide a list of all the registered scuba diving operations in the country. However it estimated that this project has reached at least 80-90% of available scuba diving businesses in the country. PADI, the largest scuba diving certification agency, currently has 32 shops registered in the country of which most are now Green Fins members. This project reached 29 operations.

Other entities

As part of this project we have also involved the UK government namely the JNCC as part of an approach to raise additional awareness about invasive species and also stony coral tissue loss disease (SCTLD) which is spreading rapidly across the Caribbean region. Information and handouts designed by the JNCC were distributed through The Reef-World Foundation to Green Fins members as part of this project. They provided information on how to identify and report coral diseases in a bid to prevent further spread and contamination in the country.

The Auxiliary Navy also provided a member of staff and supported the project with additional information, support and a member of their team.



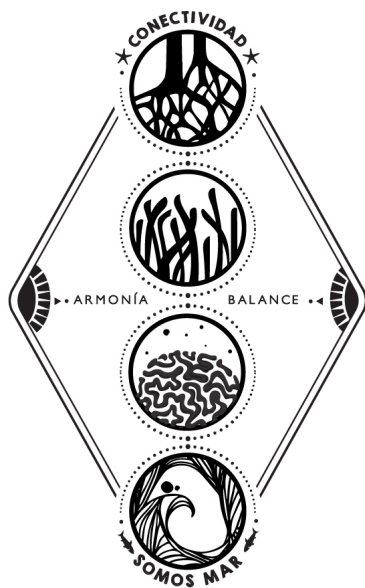
PROJECT MATERIALS

UNIFORMS AND SHIRTS

Youth Ambassador T-shirts have been designed, printed and distributed to educators and students.



Main logo



T-shirt design, back



Final T-shirt design





SIGNAGE

Donor commemorative plaques have been designed and developed and distributed to the schools. The majority of the schools have agreed to display the signs that will be displayed outside the buildings to show their involvement in the project and raise local awareness.



Plaque design



Plaque mock-up

CERTIFICATES

Two certificates have been designed for certificate for students who have completed the TUI Junior Academy marine environmental course to be certified as You Ambassador and for teachers who have completed the “train the trainer” programme to be certified as Youth Ambassador Teachers.



Certificate for teachers



Certificate for students

BEST PRACTICE MATERIALS

Best practice materials have been developed to include the Green Fins materials. This includes a new certificate of participation for Green Fins members which includes the TUI Care Foundation logo and is signed by the Minister of Environment.



PROJECT FLYER

A project flyer design has been created to promote the TUI Junior Academy.

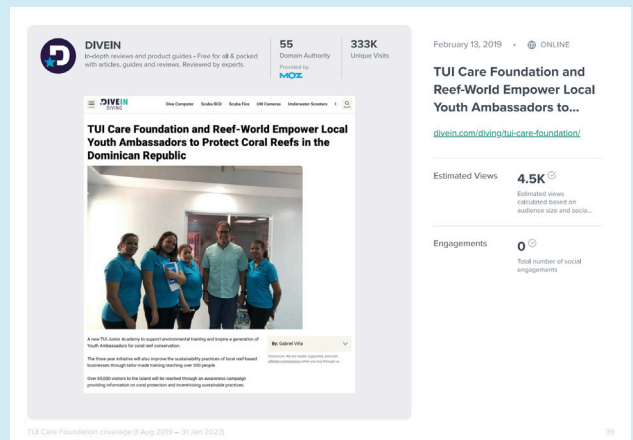
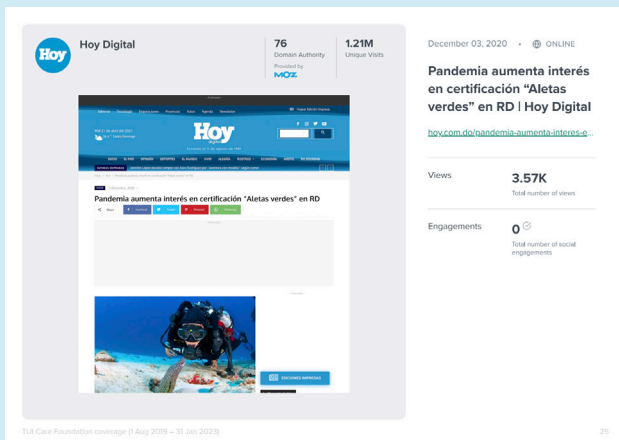
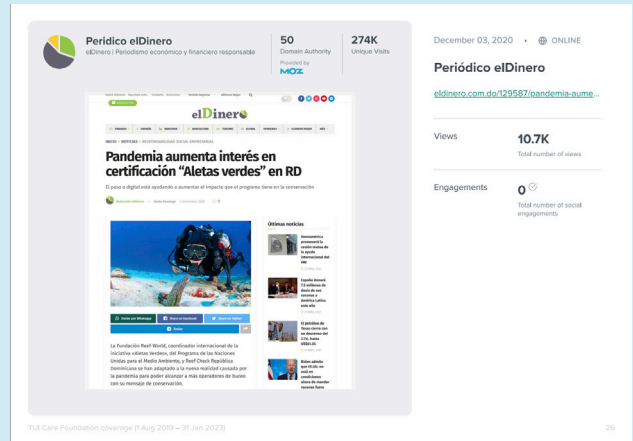
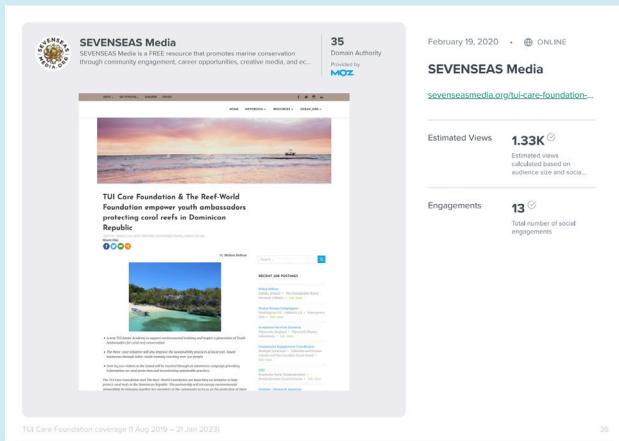
Flyer in Spanish

Flyer in English

PROJECT COMMUNICATION

During the course of this 3 and half year project, a total of 240 posts were made across the Reef-World and Green Fins social media channels. We were posting more frequently than quarterly as initially planned because the data shows that our audience liked following the updates and development of the project. These posts have generated 73,838 impressions with average reach per post at 350 and 2,245 engagements.

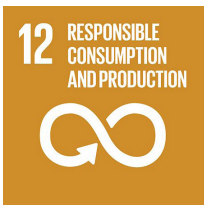
Since the launch of the partnership, a total of 10 articles and press releases have been distributed with 52 pieces of coverage secured, 89k estimated coverage views, 816 social media engagements and an average domain authority of 42. The coverage reached an audience of 11.6 million people.



UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)



SDG 4. 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' Specifically supporting SDG4.7, through delivery of this programme, the Youth Ambassadors programme will provide learners with the knowledge and skills needed to foster sustainable development. The content in the curriculum directly provides information on best practice and sustainable approaches on topics that cover the legal seasonal catch of specific key species, how and why to minimise plastic use, the effects of harmful fishing practices and the importance of marine ecosystems and their services that directly benefit marine and coastal



resources that is currently lacking or altogether absent in the national curriculum that is taught throughout schools in the Dominican Republic. This will also be supported through targeting specific dive guides who work in proximity to the schools to help deliver the lectures/field trips for the schools' children. The aim is to inspire the children to work in the tourism sector with an environmentally positive approach.



SDG 12, 'To ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns'. By promoting collaboration between the government of the Dominican Republic and the private sector, the Green Fins assessment system provides a robust and effective tool to promote and monitor compliance to sustainable tourism practices. Additionally, important messaging is being distributed to the children via the Youth Ambassador classes to tackle the issues surrounding sustainable consumption and production for the next generation.

SDG 14, 'To conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.' Promoting coral reef resilience and reducing local direct threats by improving the sustainable practices of scuba diving and snorkelling businesses (Green Fins members) through training and targeted feedback following assessments. This can range from highlighting the threat and providing solutions to reducing direct diver damage to promoting better waste management.

FINANCIAL EVALUATION

The full budget requested from TUI Care Foundation of £154,867.59 was spent by both Reef-World and Reef Check DR in the delivery of the objectives of this project. Additionally, the full amount of matched funding that was acquired from the UN Environment and private sector sources by Reef-World of £26,540.53 was spent. The total spend was £181,415.96.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge and thank our partners at TUI Care Foundation for supporting both Reef-World and Reef Check Dominican Republic to be able to support the Green Fins initiative and supporting the needs of the children and people of the Dominican Republic.

Reef-World would also like to thank Ruben Torres and all the staff at Reef Check Dominican Republic who have worked tirelessly over the years to make this project and its outcomes a success.



THE REEF-WORLD
FOUNDATION