

What to do with waste at the office?

A practical guide to reducing and separating waste at GIZ offices in the SICA region, the Caribbean and Mexico.



INTRODUCTION

Plastic pollution is contributing to the progressive destruction of the Mesoamerican Reef, the second largest barrier reef in the world. It is estimated that 89% of marine litter in the Caribbean comes from activities on land. Meanwhile, half of all plastic waste comes from packaging, much of which is single-use. Currently, only 9% of the world's plastic is successfully recycled.

Offices are estimated to produce just as much waste as households and sometimes even more. As a company, GIZ promotes measures to separate and reduce waste with the aim of preserving biodiversity and marine ecosystems.

The SICA Portfolio, through the Circular Caribbean regional programme, is pleased to share the guide What do you do with waste at the office? with you. It's a practical tool for reducing and separating waste at GIZ offices in the SICA region, the Caribbean and Mexico.

Circular Caribbean aims to stop plastic waste from entering our seas. It is funded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, in coordination with the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD) of the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the Ecology and Environment Ministry of the state of Quintana Roo, Mexico.



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TIPS TO REDUCE WASTE AT THE OFFICE

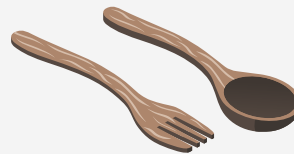
Did you know that plastic is one of the most commonly used materials?

Offices are estimated to produce just as much waste as households and sometimes even more.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?



Use thermos flasks or glass bottles. Bottled water produces waste and is expensive.



Opt for wood, bamboo or stainless steel cutlery.



Avoid using plastic straws and opt for reusable bamboo or metal ones instead. Think about whether you really need a straw or whether you can drink straight from the glass or bottle.



Use cloth bags to carry food.



Use ceramic or glass plates, cups and containers instead of polystyrene ones to serve food to staff and visitors.



Provide a separate bin for plastic waste and locate the nearest collection point for plastic waste.



Avoid products with multilayer packaging, such as glass jars with additional paper or plastic wrapping.



Buy loose products using your own reusable jars or containers (e.g. pulses, nuts, fruit and vegetables).

Also Important: Always use food up and by that avoid food waste.

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million tonnes of plastic enter our oceans each year... That's the equivalent of dumping 700,000 school buses of waste into the sea.

Why is it important to separate waste?

By separating what we throw away into recycling streams, we can recover and reuse a large part of the waste that would otherwise end up in a landfill.

How to do it?

Organic waste



Put organic waste in biodegradable plastic or paper bags or wrap it in newspaper and dispose of it in the correct bin.

Recyclables materials



Separate recyclable materials (paper, cardboard, plastic, glass and metal) in biodegradable bags, making sure that there is no broken glass, napkins, sanitary waste, etc.

Paper and cardboard



Only put unsoiled paper and cardboard, such as sheets of paper, boxes and notebooks, in the recycling bin and make sure that it does not contain sensitive information or, if it does, find a recycler that provides secure destruction services.

E-waste



Always dispose of electrical and electronic devices, batteries, light bulbs and ink cartridges at designated collection points and never in general waste bins.

USEFUL LINK: for more information visit: <https://bvearmb.do/handle/123456789/2155>

IMPORTANT:

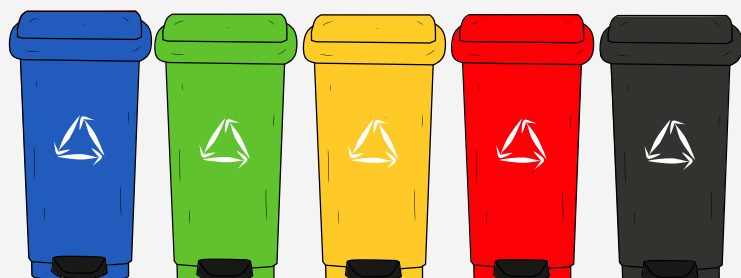
- a) Provide bins, preferably made from recycled materials, in safe, accessible locations.
- b) Find a recycling processing service.
- c) Encourage organic waste composting.

What else can you do?

Review national legislation

Identify policies, laws, bylaws and other instruments containing provisions on classification, categorisation, requirements and iconography for appropriate waste management.

You could also take a look at successful experiences and initiatives in similar contexts.



By preventing waste, we're saving money and contributing to the circular economy!

Steps for implementing a waste separation system in the office

1. Assign roles and responsibilities

- Decide who will be responsible for supervising the recycling system and what other roles are involved.

2. Draw up a logistics plan

- Identify the type of waste most commonly produced at your office (organic, paper/cardboard, recyclable, etc.).
- Estimate the approximate amounts produced each month to ascertain the biggest waste categories.
- Find out about the current collection service (frequency, cost and logistics). Input from administration and services personnel will be vital here.
- Identify safe and accessible public places and set up the necessary infrastructure for recyclable waste separation and collection.
- Produce a pilot plan, identifying the number and location of bins and the types of materials to be deposited in them.



3. Organise removal and processing

- Check whether the current collection service provider processes separated waste and, if so, find out their terms and conditions. Otherwise, look for a service provider that covers your area, collects separated waste for reuse (recycling, composting, etc.), provides information and is affordable.
- Place bins for waste separation (made from recycled materials) in strategic locations and practise and learn along with the rest of your colleagues.



4. Inform, educate and spread awareness

- Inform others about the new recycling system. This can be done by carrying out an internal campaign involving posters, articles in newsletters and talks on the subject.
- Teach colleagues what waste to separate and how and where to dispose of it. This requires clear signage and labelling so that people can easily see what types of waste go into which recycling bins.
- Organise a launch event to present the recycling system. The community should be informed about the new system in advance so that they know how to separate waste when the recycling bins are installed.



Testimonials

Experiences and lessons learned at GIZ offices in the region



Guatemala

At the agency and office in our area, we have bins for separating waste into three categories: recyclable, organic and non-recyclable.

‘Separating waste at the office means that we contribute to implementing national legislation, raise people’s awareness, reduce the amount of waste disposed of at municipal sites, meet institutional sustainability standards on waste management and increase the amount of outsourced recycling,’ remarks Mónica Mejía, Technical Advisor for Circular Caribbean at the GIZ office in Guatemala.



Mexico

All GIZ offices in Mexico have a system for separating organic and inorganic waste, with labelled bins for paper recycling and reuse. Some also separate batteries and electronic devices, and Casa Clima has a composting system.

‘It’s hugely satisfying to see tangible change in our immediate environment, which is not always the case in our projects, where changes often seem distant and intangible,’ explains a member of the Corporate Sustainability Handprint (CSH) team in Mexico.

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