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Rivers are the earth's arteries. If they get clogged the earth dies.

By [Safripol](#) Follow

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To put it bluntly, there would be no life on earth without rivers. They give us clean drinking water, irrigate our soil so we can grow food, help us to provide sanitation, and fuel our oceans. They need to be protected.

Last year an effective project aimed at reducing pollution in South Africa's rivers was greatly expanded. 15 new litter booms were installed in the catchment areas of the Olunga and UMngeni rivers in KwaZulu Natal, cleaning up the rivers and preventing pollution from reaching the ocean. Simple yet ingenious, the litter boom is essentially a pipe placed as a barrier on the water surface preventing plastic waste (plastic waste floats), from continuing downstream.

In the last few months alone the litter booms have led to approximately 6.6 tons of ocean-bound waste being recovered of which 3.9 tons were recycled and the rest diverted and repurposed. The project is an ongoing partnership between Safripol and Green Corridors and there are now a total of 21 of the partnership's litter booms in the area.

The booms have a benefit beyond reducing pollution in the rivers and the ocean. The project leads to a cleaner, greener environment for the communities along the river, with improvements to their drinking water and to their sanitation needs. Perhaps unexpectedly, the recovery of plastic waste also leads to employment for the local people. Much of the plastic waste is collected, separated, and sold to Buy Back centres for much-needed money. Even the plastic that is not recyclable goes to beneficiation centres where it can be mixed with gravel and made into bricks which can then be sold.

Avashnee Chetty, Sustainability Manager at Safripol, says *"The litter boom intervention is an effective way to mobilise local communities at grass roots level to recycle plastics and other useful materials while reducing environmental pollution. This project has created local jobs in the communities where the litter booms have been implemented, thereby creating ownership of the waste collection system, while at the same time contributing to a cleaner environment and plastic-free communities."*

Green Corridors Green Spaces Programme Manager Nick Swan adds “Our partnership with Safripol has brought multiple layered beneficial impacts, including scaling out of the litter booms installation and management into new river catchments, increasing the quantity of solid waste intercepted ...,”

Litter booms are just one weapon in Safripol’s ‘War on Waste’. War on Waste is a movement designed to combat pollution by encouraging the understanding that plastic has value and that instead of finding its way to landfills, plastic waste should be reused, recycled, and repurposed.

As well as creating greater awareness of the issue, Safripol has activated a whole range of initiatives to fight waste and pollution. Safripol has implemented separation at source at all its facilities to enable more efficient recycling. They have sponsored waste recycling bins and waste collection bags nationwide to support waste reclaimers and its partners PETCO and Green Corridors. The company also supports the development of Buy Back Centres and clean-up initiatives across South Africa.

The litter booms project is set to expand further. And help to turn the tide on pollution in our rivers. **DM**



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