

Policy Solution Prototypes

(Output Paper)

Trinidad & Tobago

Prevention of Marine Litter in the Caribbean Sea



Supported by:

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1 Introduction

This output paper is part of the Prevention of Marine Litter in the Caribbean Sea (PROMAR) Project, a regional initiative aimed at addressing the persistent and growing challenge of marine litter and plastic pollution in the Wider Caribbean Region. PROMAR is funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) and implemented by adelphi in collaboration with the Cartagena Convention Secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme. The project is currently in Phase II (2024–2026), which includes Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and the British Virgin Islands.

As part of PROMAR’s third work package, which focuses on policy and capacity building, Trinidad and Tobago held the National Dialogue on Marine Litter Prevention and Plastic Waste Management on 3rd June 2025. The event took place at the Kapop Hotel, Port of Spain, and its main goal was to foster stakeholder collaboration, discuss policy challenges, and strengthen national efforts to reduce plastic waste entering the Caribbean Sea. In total, 42 participants took part in the event, including policymakers, waste management experts, academics, and NGOs, and the discussions were facilitated by Mr. Amar Munnolimath, a green and circular economy expert from adelphi.

The National Dialogue started with a welcome and opening session by Dr. Ava Maxam from the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA), followed by an introduction to PROMAR by Ms. Wendy Nelson, also from IMA, and a lecture on the waste management policy landscape by Ms. Keima Gardiner from the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development. After these sessions, the participants identified the following challenges related to marine litter and plastic waste management in Trinidad and Tobago:



Figure 1: Challenges on plastic waste management in Trinidad and Tobago, 2025.

The participants also listed Styrofoam, straws, cotton swabs, single-use plastic bags, and PET bottles as items of concern, highlighting that they should be included in the country’s efforts regarding marine litter and plastic waste management.

Finally, participants were divided into four working groups. Each group defined a challenge category, identified relevant stakeholders, indicated key success factors, and proposed innovative yet feasible policy options. To support this process, the adelphi team provided summaries of real-world case studies and global best practices to inspire the development of localised solutions. Once this process was completed, the groups presented their outcomes in a plenary session, followed by a collective reflection and feedback round.

Therefore, this output paper summarises and visualises the policy solution mechanisms that were collaboratively developed during the National Dialogue. It is intended to inform national policymakers, encouraging them to implement the proposed solutions and supporting Trinidad and Tobago in improving its plastic waste management through collaborative approach.



Figure 2: Participants of the National Dialogue on Marine Litter Prevention and Plastic Waste Management, Trinidad and Tobago, 2025.

2 Group 1: Circles of Circularity Awards

2.1 Background and Solution Overview

Group 1 focused on the challenge of **lack of funding**. According to them, the access to funding for marine litter prevention and plastic waste management is limited and non-transparent. Although instruments such as the Green Fund Executing Unit exist, complex procedures and unclear requirements often discourage smaller organisations and community groups from applying.

To respond to this, Group 1 proposed the **Circles of Circularity Awards**: an award system that supports projects at different stages of maturity. Early-stage initiatives would receive small grants and mentoring to refine concepts and pilots, while more advanced projects could access higher tiers with larger funding and clearer impact targets. Throughout, mentoring and technical support would help ensure effective and sustainable implementation.

The mechanism is also designed to leverage private sector engagement, for example by linking corporate contributions to tax incentives and public recognition. This would help mobilise additional resources and promote shared responsibility across government, businesses, NGOs, academia and intergovernmental organisations.

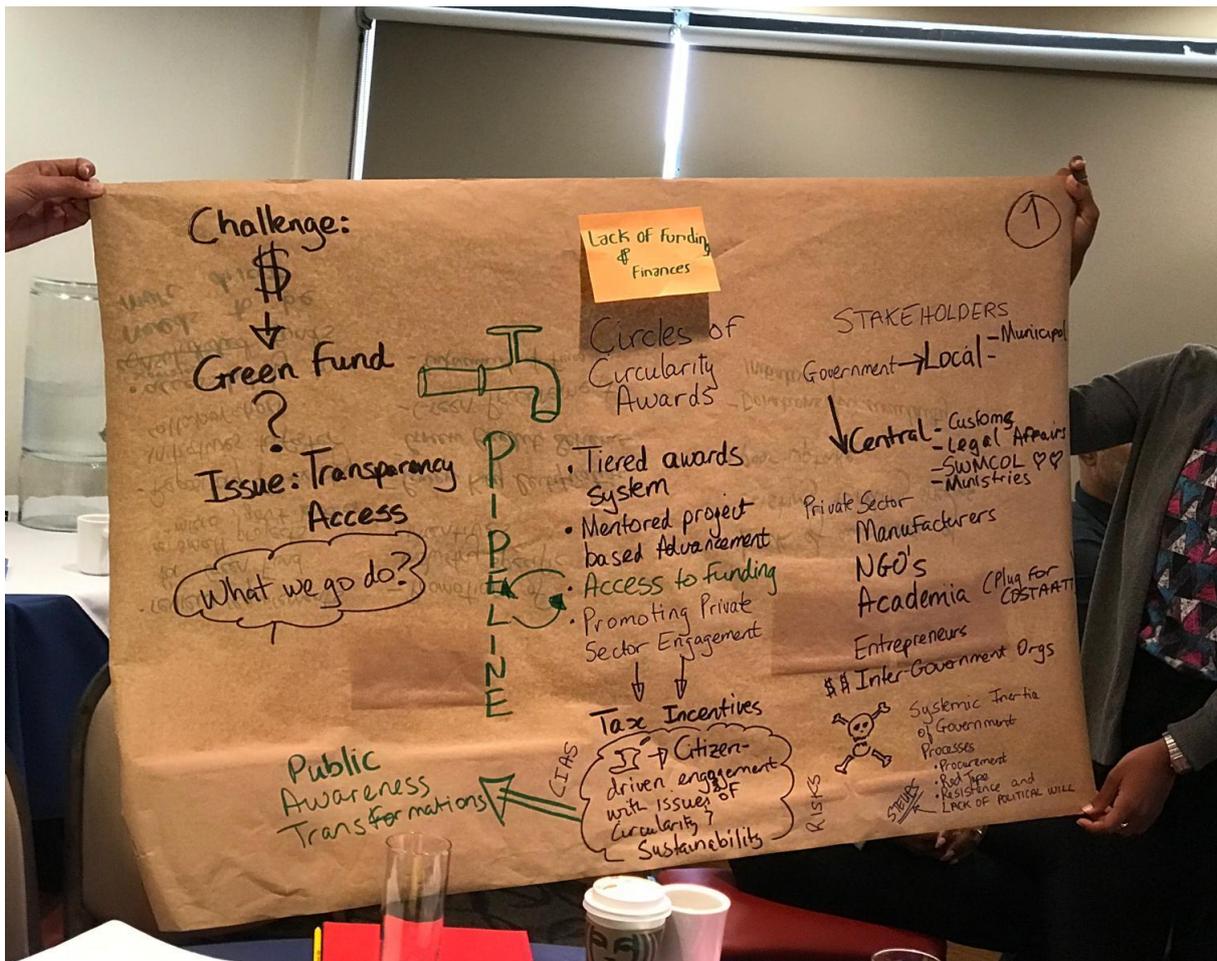


Figure 3: Group 1 presentation, Trinidad and Tobago, 2025.

2.2 Next Steps

To implement the proposed solution, Group 1 identified the following next steps:

- Establish a small multi-stakeholder working group to design the awards structure, funding tiers, eligibility criteria and governance, ensuring alignment with existing mechanisms such as the Green Fund.
- Simplify and standardise application and reporting procedures, with clear guidelines, digital forms and transparent assessment criteria accessible to smaller and first-time applicants.
- Embed mentoring and capacity-building support for award recipients, focusing on project design, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Define modalities for private sector participation, including exploring tax incentives and recognition schemes to encourage corporate contributions to the awards.

3 Group 2: One World, Our Responsibility

3.1 Background and Solution Overview

Group 2 addressed the challenge of **lack of awareness and community engagement** on marine litter prevention and plastic waste, as well as resistance to behaviour change. Participants noted that although information exists, it often does not translate into sustained changes in daily practices, such as waste separation.

To respond to this, the group proposed a bottom-up, community-led approach in which communities and local stakeholders act as the main implementation bodies. Awareness activities would be co-designed with community actors to ensure relevance and ownership. As highlighted by Ms. Keima Gardiner from the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development, the approach could integrate income-generating components, such as composting, so that environmental action also creates tangible economic benefits. This combination of education, practical action and small economic gains is expected to reduce resistance and support more lasting behaviour change.

3.2 Next Steps

According to Group 2, the following steps are required now:

- Identify and engage key community actors (e.g. local leaders, schools, youth and women's groups) to co-design awareness and action activities.
- Prepare simple, locally relevant awareness materials that link marine litter and plastic pollution to everyday community concerns.
- Pilot community-based initiatives that combine environmental action with income generation, such as composting or small-scale recycling.
- Offer basic training and mentoring for community focal points on behaviour change, facilitation and practical techniques (e.g. composting, waste separation).
- Create regular community feedback and learning spaces to review progress, share experiences and adjust activities as needed.

4 Group 3: Monopolise to Monetize

4.1 Background and Solution Overview

Group 3 addressed the challenge of **lack of coordination**, which they connected to overlapping mandates, parallel initiatives and limited information-sharing, reducing efficiency and making it harder to achieve coherent, nationwide action on marine litter.

To respond to this, the group proposed a more centralised coordination model, summarised as a **Monopolise to Monetise** approach. Under this model, a line ministry would mandate and oversee SWMCOL/SWMCORP as a central coordinating body, supported by advisory sub-committees for specific waste streams (e.g. glass, plastics, e-waste). These sub-committees would bring together public sector agencies, private sector actors, NGOs and other stakeholders to advise on collection, sorting, disposal and valorisation pathways. A central digital “landing page” and a clearly defined central authority would help consolidate information, standards and guidance.

Legislation was identified as a key success factor, particularly the introduction or strengthening of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes, combined with appropriate incentives to encourage compliance and investment. Activism, public awareness, joint venture partnerships and an enabling environment for grants and community development were also seen as essential to support the propose. Together, these elements aim to move from fragmented efforts to a coordinated system capable of attracting investment, supporting innovation and improving overall waste management performance.

4.2 Next Steps

To operationalise the proposed centralised coordination model, Group 3 suggested the following next steps:

- Designate a clear lead ministry and empower SWMCOL/SWMCORP as the central coordinating authority for key waste streams, with defined roles and responsibilities.
- Establish advisory sub-committees for priority materials (e.g. glass, plastics, e-waste), including representatives from the public sector, private sector, NGOs, academia and communities.
- Develop or strengthen legislation and regulations, including EPR schemes and associated incentives, to support coordinated waste collection, treatment and recycling.
- Create a central digital landing page to provide information on roles, regulations, collection points, reporting requirements and opportunities for partnership and funding.
- Formalise coordination mechanisms with Regional Corporations and communities to align collection, disposal and community-level initiatives with national strategies.
- Promote public awareness, civil society activism and joint venture partnerships to reinforce political will and ensure broad-based support for the new coordination framework.

5 Group 4: Curbside Collection System of Recyclables

5.1 Background and Solution Overview

Group 4 worked with the challenge of **lack of infrastructure** in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), particularly land constraints and the lack of adequate infrastructure for recycling and waste collection. Limited space for landfills, transfer stations and recycling facilities, combined with fragmented collection systems, makes it difficult to manage growing volumes of plastic waste in an efficient and environmentally way.

In this context, the group proposed the introduction of a structured **Curbside Collection System for Recyclables**, combined with household waste separation. Under this model, households would sort recyclable materials and designated collection services would pick them up on a regular schedule. SWMCOL/SWMCORP and contracted service providers would oversee the operational aspects, while recyclers would receive cleaner, better-sorted materials for processing.

A top-down framework was considered necessary to enable and coordinate this shift, with the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government playing central roles in setting the legal and institutional basis. Regional corporations would be responsible for local implementation. The solution relies on strong political buy-in, timely and accessible collection services, private sector support, and a gradual public mindset shift towards separation at source and responsible disposal.



Figure 4: Group 4 presentation, Trinidad and Tobago, 2025.

5.2 Next Steps:

To ensure the effective implementation of the Curbside Collection System of Recyclables, Group 4 identified the following success factors:

- Strong public–private partnerships to combine public administration with private sector investment, innovation and operational capacity.
- Development of an efficient waste collection system, including precise scheduling of pick-ups.
- Progressive development or upgrading of infrastructure, including facilities to sort and recycle plastics.
- Adequate financial investments and access to technical expertise to design, operate and continuously improve collection and recycling systems.
- A phased approach, starting with pilot community projects to test, refine and demonstrate the curbside collection model before scaling up.
- Introduction of litter wardens or similar mechanisms to conduct checks, support compliance and reinforce local accountability.
- Targeted public awareness and communication campaigns to build public buy-in, support mindset shifts and encourage consistent household waste separation.

6 Recommendations

Considering all the discussions and group work that happened at the National Dialogue on Marine Litter Prevention and Plastic Waste Management held in Trinidad and Tobago, several cross-cutting recommendations emerged to strengthen marine litter prevention and plastic waste management in Trinidad and Tobago. These recommendations aim to improve coordination, financing, incentives, infrastructure and knowledge to support more effective and inclusive policy implementation.

- **Establish a central coordinating authority:** Participants recommended designating a clear central authority to coordinate marine litter management and waste policy implementation. This body should act in partnership with relevant ministries, SWMCOL/SWMCORP, regional corporations and other key stakeholders.
- **Develop sustainable and equitable financing mechanisms:** To reduce the financial burden on municipal authorities and improve access to funding, participants suggested developing more transparent and inclusive financing models. This includes mechanisms such as the proposed Circles of Circularity Awards for project-based funding, as well as shared-cost approaches that more fairly distribute waste management expenses across producers, consumers and public authorities.
- **Introduce and strengthen market-based incentives:** The National Dialogue highlighted the need for economic drivers that encourage waste reduction, recycling and circular business models. Recommended measures include the development of market-based instruments, such as taxes, levies, subsidies and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes, paired with appropriate incentives to support compliance, innovation and investment in circular solutions.
- **Invest in data and monitoring systems:** Participants noted significant gaps in data on waste streams, litter composition and the performance of existing initiatives. They recommended investing in robust, standardised monitoring systems and regular data collection to inform policy design, track progress and guide resource allocation. Partnerships with academia and relevant agencies can help generate and analyse this evidence base.
- **Strengthen community-based awareness and engagement:** To address low awareness and resistance to behaviour change, the participants emphasised the importance of bottom-up, community-led approaches. Recommendations include co-designing awareness activities with community actors, linking behavioural change to tangible benefits and providing basic training and mentoring to local focal points.
- **Improve infrastructure and service delivery for collection and recycling:** Recognising the land constraints and infrastructure gaps in Small Island Developing States, participants recommended phased improvements to collection and recycling systems. This includes piloting and scaling up curbside collection of recyclables, promoting household waste separation, investing in facilities to process plastics and other materials, and ensuring timely, reliable collection services.
- **Promote public–private partnerships and an enabling environment:** To achieve the ideas presented, it is important to create an enabling environment for joint action between government, private sector, NGOs and communities. This involves fostering public–private partnerships, mobilising financial and technical resources, supporting community development initiatives and ensuring visible political support to keep marine litter prevention high on the national agenda.

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