

Implemented by:



Supported by:



Supported by:



**PLEASE Project**  
Plastic Free Rivers and Seas for South Asia

## Official Report

# “Navigating the Waves: Strategies, Challenges, and Collaborative Solutions in Mitigating Plastic Pollution in Sri Lanka”

High-Level Roundtable Discussion | Sri Lanka | 15 March 2024



**Event:** High Level Roundtable Discussion

**Theme:** Plastic Pollution Interventions in Sri Lanka

**Topic:** Navigating the Waves: Strategies, Challenges, and Collaborative Solutions in Mitigating Plastic Pollution in Sri Lanka

**Date:** 15 March 2024

**Time:** 3:00 PM to 6.15 PM - Roundtable Discussion | 6:30 PM onwards - Dinner

**Venue:** [Radisson Hotel Colombo](#), 36-38 Clifford Pl, Colombo 00400

**Moderator:** Nalaka Gunawardene, Communication Specialist, World Bank

**Discussants:** Senior representatives from the government of Sri Lanka, UN agencies, multilateral financial institutions, bilateral donors, NGOs and civil society networks, corporate sector, think tanks, and academia

## Introduction:

The inaugural High-Level PLEASE Roundtable Discussion on Plastic Pollution was held in Sri Lanka on 15 March 2024, marking the first in a series of national-level roundtables aimed at consolidating efforts to combat plastic pollution in South Asian countries. Organised by the PLEASE project, a regional initiative implemented by the South Asian Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) and supported by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) with funding from the World Bank, the roundtable brought together diverse stakeholders from government, corporate sector, civil society, academia, and advocacy groups. The event was joined by 26 external, invited participants and 28 internal participants from SACEP, UNOPS and the World Bank.

The objectives of the Roundtable Discussion were:

- To create a platform for on-going dialogue and collaboration regarding interventions to combat plastic pollution.
- To facilitate knowledge sharing among public-private-plural sector stakeholders working on plastic pollution interventions in Sri Lanka and South Asia.
- To identify existing interventions and innovations, and explore opportunities for collaboration and synergies.
- To assess challenges and needs within the country's efforts to address plastic pollution and explore potential areas for future interventions.

The final agenda is given as Annex 1.

The full list of participants is given as Annex 2.

## Roundtable Discussion Brief:

The roundtable discussion commenced with opening remarks that underscored the gravity of plastic pollution and the urgency to address this environmental crisis.

Ms. Anjalie Devaraja, Project Director of the PLEASE Project, highlighted how plastic pollution poses a significant threat to our planet, exacerbating climate change impacts and affecting ecosystems and livelihoods. She explained how the PLEASE project aims to tackle plastic pollution by promoting a Circular Plastic Economy, and fostering regional collaboration. Notably, the project adopts a gender-inclusive approach, recognizing

Implemented by:



Supported by:



Supported by:



women's crucial role in addressing the intersection of plastic pollution and climate change through gender-focused monitoring and evaluation.

Ms. Rokeya Khaton, Director General of SACEP, emphasised the need for aligning regional policies with global initiatives to combat plastic pollution effectively. She mentioned SACEP's commitment to working closely with its member states, ensuring well-coordinated and mutually reinforcing efforts to amplify impact and contribute to the global fight against plastic pollution.

Mr. Charles Callanan, Country Director of UNOPS, shared his own experiences grappling with plastic's convenience and challenges, highlighting the exponential growth of plastic usage in South Asia with increasing economic growth. He stressed the critical role of forums like this and the efforts of organisations such as SACEP, the World Bank, and USAID in addressing the plastic pollution crisis.

The roundtable discussion was structured into three sessions, each focusing on a specific theme:

1. Current interventions for tackling plastic pollution in Sri Lanka
2. Innovative solutions and best practices
3. The way forward and prospects for collaboration

### **Session 1: Current Interventions for Tackling Plastic Pollution:**

During this segment, speakers provided valuable insights into ongoing efforts to address plastic pollution in Sri Lanka. Ms. Chiyo Kanda, the World Bank's Country Manager for Sri Lanka and Maldives, emphasised the necessity of a holistic approach involving various stakeholders beyond just policymaking. Her remarks underscored the importance of community engagement, governmental support, and corporate responsibility in driving meaningful change.

Ms Nihani Riza, Deputy Director/Economic Growth at USAID, focused on successful projects that have prioritised behavioural change and community involvement. Her emphasis was on reducing reliance on plastic inputs and empowering local communities resonated with the audience, highlighting the effectiveness of bottom-up approaches in tackling plastic pollution.

Implemented by:



Supported by:



Supported by:



Mr Sampath Ranansinghe, Programme Coordination Specialist, Climate & Environment at UNDP, provided a comprehensive overview of the challenges posed by improper waste disposal practices and the critical need for improved waste management infrastructure. He underscored the importance of collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and international organisations in implementing effective waste management solutions.

### **Key Takeaways:**

- Collective action involving all stakeholders is crucial for tackling plastic pollution effectively.
- Behavioural change and community engagement are essential components of successful interventions.
- Improving waste management infrastructure and policy enforcement are critical for long-term sustainability.

### **Session 2: Innovative Solutions and Best Practices:**

Speakers highlighted innovative approaches and best practices that have been successful in mitigating plastic pollution in Sri Lanka.

Ms Sharika Senanayake, Director, MAS Foundation for Change, talked about temporary measures like strainers that showed the importance of adaptive solutions to tackle immediate challenges while long-term strategies are being developed.

Ms Anosha Koralage, Head of Sustainability, Enterprise Risk Management & Group Initiatives, John Keells Holdings, offered some insights into initiatives aimed at waste reduction and upcycling, and showcased the role of the private sector in driving innovation and sustainability. She also flagged the potential for businesses to be agents of positive change in the fight against plastic pollution.

Mr Muditha Katuwawala, Coordinator, The Pearl Protectors, summed up his organisation's experiences in community mobilisation for coastal and marine conservation. He also mentioned the need for holistic approaches that address both land-based and marine sources of plastic pollution.

Implemented by:



Supported by:



Supported by:



## Key Takeaways:

- Adaptive solutions and corporate responsibility are essential for addressing immediate challenges.
- Grassroots efforts and community mobilisation play a crucial role in raising awareness and driving behavioural change.
- Collaboration between the public and private sectors is key to implementing innovative solutions and best practices.

## Session 3: The Way Forward and Prospects for Collaboration

During the third session, speakers discussed the path forward and opportunities for collaboration in tackling plastic pollution.

Mr. Mahinda Werahera, Director, Ministry of Environment, and Ms Sarojini Jayasekara, Director, Central Environment Authority (CEA) briefly explained policy and regulatory measures taken to reduce, reuse and recycle plastics used in the country. They also summed up key recommendations of the [Sri Lanka National Action Plan on Plastic Waste Management: 2021–2030](#) that provides a comprehensive assessment and framework for interventions.

Mr. Mahinda Werahera renewed his Ministry's call for support from international organisations for continued investment and technical assistance in implementing the Sri Lanka National Action Plan.

Ms Shiranee Yasaratne, Senior Advisor of Biodiversity Sri Lanka presented her alliance's work in promoting Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in Sri Lanka. She highlighted the importance of regulatory frameworks and industry engagement in driving sustainable practices and the role of public-private partnerships in promoting accountability and transparency in plastic waste management.

Prof Ms Badunee Liyanage Athapaththu, Professor in Environmental Engineering at the Open University of Sri Lanka, shared some insights into successful community engagement projects and academic research that demonstrated the potential for interdisciplinary collaboration in finding innovative solutions.

Implemented by:



Supported by:



Supported by:



## Key Takeaways:

- Continued support from international organisations is crucial for achieving national goals and strategies.
- Regulatory frameworks and industry engagement, such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), are essential for accountability and transparency.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration between academia, government, and industry is key to finding innovative solutions to plastic pollution.

## Overall Key Takeaways and Recommendations

1. Strengthen collaboration and coordination among stakeholders to maximise the impact of interventions and avoid duplication of efforts.
2. Prioritise data gathering, inventory management, and the establishment of centralised databases to inform decision-making and policy development.
3. Promote the adoption of economic instruments, such as extended producer responsibility (EPR) and deposit return systems, to incentivize sustainable practices and circular economy approaches.
4. Integrate research findings, particularly on microplastics and their environmental impacts, into policy development and regulatory frameworks.
5. Enhance public awareness and education campaigns to drive behavioural change and promote sustainable alternatives to single-use plastics.
6. Empower and formalise the role of informal waste collectors, recognizing their crucial contribution to waste management efforts.
7. Foster public-private partnerships and corporate social responsibility initiatives to drive innovation and implement sustainable solutions.
8. Prepare for the potential implications of the global Plastic Treaty (expected by end 2024) by actively participating in the on-going intergovernmental negotiations and aligning national policies with international commitments.

Implemented by:



Supported by:



Supported by:



## Conclusion

The insights and recommendations generated from the roundtable discussion are expected to inform future interventions, policies, and funding priorities aimed at mitigating plastic pollution in Sri Lanka. By harnessing the expertise and resources of diverse stakeholders, Sri Lanka can develop a comprehensive and sustainable approach to addressing plastic pollution, paving the way for a cleaner and healthier environment for future generations.

The Roundtable Discussion served as a catalyst for collaborative action and knowledge exchange, highlighting the importance of collective efforts in tackling plastic pollution. By leveraging the expertise and resources of stakeholders from various sectors, Sri Lanka can chart a sustainable path towards a plastic-free future.

Implemented by:



Supported by:



Supported by:





## Annex 1

### Agenda

Timestamp	Segment	Description
3:30 - 4 PM	<b>Opening Remarks and Introduction</b>	<p>A brief overview of the agenda by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Anjalie Devaraja - Project Director, PLEASE Project</li> <li>2. Ms. Rokeya Khaton - Director General, SACEP</li> <li>3. Mr. Charles Callanan - UNOPS Asia, Country Director</li> <li>4. Ms. Chiyo Kanda, The World Bank's Country Manager for Maldives and Sri Lanka</li> </ol>
4.00 - 4.45 PM	<b>1st Open Discussion [45 mins]</b>	<p><b>Theme: Current Interventions for Tackling Plastic Pollution in Sri Lanka</b></p> <p><u>Speakers   5 mins each</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ms. Chiyo Kanda, The World Bank's Country Manager for Maldives and Sri Lanka</li> <li>2. Ms. Nihani Riza, Deputy Director/Economic Growth, USAID Sri Lanka &amp; Maldives</li> <li>3. Sampath Ranansinghe, Programme Coordination Specialist, Climate &amp; Environment Team, UNDP Sri Lanka</li> </ol> <p><u>Open Floor Discussion   20 mins</u></p>
4:45 - 5:30	<b>2nd Open Discussion [45 minutes]</b>	<p><b>Theme: Innovative Solutions and Best Practices</b></p> <p><u>Speakers   5 mins each</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sharika Senanayake - Director - MAS Foundation for Change</li> <li>2. Ms. Anosha Koralage, Head of Group Sustainability, Risk Management and Group Initiatives - John Keells</li> <li>3. Muditha Katuwawala - Coordinator, Pearl Protectors</li> </ol>

Implemented by:



Supported by:



Supported by:





		<u>Open Floor Discussion   20 mins</u>
5:30 - 6:00	<b>3rd Open Discussion [45 mins]</b>	<b>Theme: Way Forward, and Prospects for Collaborations</b>  <u>Speakers   5 mins each</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mr Mahinda Werahera, Director (Environment Pollution Control and Chemical Management), Ministry of Environment</li> <li>2. Ms. Sarojini Jayasekara - Director (Solid Waste Management Unit), Central Environment Authority</li> <li>3. Mrs. Shiranee Yasaratne - Senior Advisor of Biodiversity Sri Lanka (industry alliance)</li> <li>4. Prof. Badunee Liyanage Athapattu - Open University SL - Professor in Environmental Engineering</li> </ol>
6:00 - 6:15	<b>Closing Remarks and Key Takeaways</b>	<p>The session will conclude with a summary of key takeaways and insights from the discussions.</p> <p>Closing remarks by Mr. Sivakumaran Sithamparanathan, Technical Senior Officer - Environmental   PLEASE Project</p>
6.30 PM onwards	<b>Dinner &amp; Networking Session</b>	(We will send an RSVP form to the confirmed attendees of the roundtable discussion)

## Annex 2

### List of Participants

#### Government of Sri Lanka (2 representatives)

- Mr Mahinda Werahera, Director, Ministry of Environment, Sri Lanka
- Ms Sarojini Jayasekara, Director, Central Environment Authority (CEA)

#### Bilateral and Multilateral Development Partners (3)

- Mr Sampath Ranasinghe, Programme Coordination Specialist, Climate & Environment, UNDP
- Mr Roshan Narasinghe, Deputy Chief of Party, USAID Ocean Plastics Reduction Activity

Implemented by:



Supported by:



Supported by:



- Ms Nihani Riza, Deputy Director/Economic Growth, USAID

### **Civil Society Organisations (10)**

- Mr Muditha Katuwawala, Coordinator, The Pearl Protectors
- Mr Errol Abeyratne, Green Financing Specialist, EU Switch Asia PLASTIC Project, Biodiversity Sri Lanka (industry alliance for conservation)
- Ms Ashani Basnayake, Member Board of Trustees, Federation of Environmental Organizations (FEO) Sri Lanka
- Mr Senith Abeyanayake, Research Associate, Natural Capital Forum, Centre for a Smart Future
- Ms Shiranee Yasaratne, Senior Advisor, Biodiversity Sri Lanka
- Mr Rathika de Silva, Executive Director/Network Representative, UN Global Compact Network Sri Lanka
- Ms Dinithi Samarathunga, Programme Officer, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- Mr Nishshanka De Silva, Founder, ZeroPlastic Movement
- Ms Sonali de Silva, Public Interest Law Foundation (PILF)
- Ms Mihiri Gunawardena, Public Interest Law Foundation (PILF)

### **Corporate Sector (7)**

- Ms Sharika Senanayake, Director, MAS Foundation for Change
- Mr Nihal Cooray, Business & Industry Development Services Ltd., Sri Lanka
- Ms Anosha Koralage, Head of Sustainability, Enterprise Risk Management & Group Initiatives, John Keells Holdings
- Mr Pasan Senadheera, Assistant Manager - Plasticcycle, John Keells Holdings PLC
- Mr Nishantha Sanjeewa, Managing Director, Negombo Recycling Club (PVT) Ltd
- Mr Malimbada Prasanth, Chief Executive Officer, Eco Spindles (Private) Limited
- Mr Janaka Hemathilake, CEO/Executive Director, Janathakshan Gte Ltd

### **Academic community (4)**

- Prof Ms Hemanthi Ranasinghe, Professor in Forestry & Environment Science & Director of International Affairs Division, University of Sri Jayawardenepura

Implemented by:



Supported by:



Supported by:



- Dr Yohan Mahagamage, Senior Lecturer, The Open University of Sri Lanka
- Prof Ms B C Liyanage Athapaththu, Professor in Environmental Engineering, The Open University of Sri Lanka
- Prof Ms Meththika Vithanage, Professor at Ecosphere Resilience Research Centre, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

#### **The World Bank (4)**

- Ms Chiyo Kanda, Country Manager for Maldives and Sri Lanka
- Mr Joseph Ese Akpokodje, Senior Environmental Specialist, South Asia Region
- Mr Nalaka Gunawardene, Senior Communication Consultant
- Ms Lashan Jayasuriya, Consultant

#### **SACEP (2)**

- Ms Rokeya Khaton, Director General, SACEP
- Ms Priyankari Alexander, Programme Officer, SACEP

#### **PLEASE PIU (3)**

- Ms Anjalie Devaraja, Project Director, PLEASE PIU
- Mr Sarath Muthugala, Procurement Specialist, PLEASE PIU
- Mr Kapila Sooriyaarachchi, Communication Specialist, PLEASE PIU

#### **UNOPS (19)**

- Mr. Charles Callanan Country Manager, UNOPS South Asia
- Ms. Constanza Malagamba, Senior Programme Manager
- Mr. Sivakumaran Sithamparanathan, Environmental Specialist
- Ms. Yasodhara Kariyawasam, Communications Specialist, PLEASE Project PIU
- Ms. Amenthi Jasinghe, Partnerships Development Manager, UNOPS Head Office
- Ms. Udani Dissanayake, Partnerships Development Assistant, UNOPS Head Office
- Ms. Fathima Nihra, HR Assistant, UNOPS Head Office

Implemented by:



Supported by:



Supported by:



- Ms. Chamini Ekanayake, Technical Senior Associate - Environmental, PLEASE Project PIU
- Ms. Dinali Jayasinghe, Grant Specialist, PLEASE Project PIU
- Ms. Anjalee Pitadeniya, Project Management Support - Senior Associate, PLEASE Project PIU
- Ms. Harshi Bhagya, Project Management Support - Senior Officer, PLEASE Project PIU
- Ms. Subashini Kaneshwaran, Communications Officer, PLEASE Project PIU
- Ms. Imasha Lakshmiwewa, Assistant Communications Officer, PLEASE Project PIU
- Mr. Jaime Olmos, PMO Specialist, PLEASE Project PIU
- Mr. Priyanga Jayasekara, Project Management Support Senior Officer, PLEASE Project PIU
- Mr. Thushan Jayarathne, Project Support Associate (Procurement & Contracts), PLEASE Project PIU
- Mr. Stephan Rodrigo, Intern, UNOPS Head Office
- Ms. Sol Song, UNOPS Head Office
- Mr. Hemantha Sumith, Driver, UNOPS Head Office

Implemented by:



Supported by:



Supported by:

