

# add it in : Circular Economy & Circular Development

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[Facility \(GEF\) Consultations with Civil Society](#) to discuss how to address plastic

pollution based on a circular economy approach. The **Reduce, reuse**

and recycle: a circular economy approach to

plastics, Waste water & Recycle

## Plastics and Circular Economy Circular Development: Community Solutions

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This publication captures the GEF Small Grant Programme's (SGP) experiences and lessons learned on plastics management, spanning not only the area of chemical and

waste management, but also international waters and biodiversity conservation. The projects focus on implementing a circular economy either through recycling, reducing and reusing plastics for new products, influencing consumer use and behavior, or developing better waste collection and management practices at the community level. Some of these initiatives have also been scaled up in partnership with government and private sector. The 10 cases included in this publication show that local communities and grassroots solutions are already contributing to the implementation of the circular economy concept by providing circular solutions to plastic waste problems through community-based actions to “reduce, reuse and recycle” plastics, known as “3Rs” ranking by the priority of actions.

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The GEF Small Grants Programme launched its new publication titled “Plastics Management and Circular Economy: Community Solutions.” The publication captures the experiences and lessons learnt from

community-based plastics management and promotes the circular economy system at a local and community level. Photo: [IISD/ENB | Francis Dejon](#).

Over 120 representatives from civil society, government, and the private sector convened at the [Global Environment Facility \(GEF\) Consultations with Civil Society](#) to discuss how to address plastic pollution based on a circular economy approach. The event was held on June 10, 2019, preceding the first day of the landmark [56th GEF Council meeting](#), during which the Council is expected to approve [the largest work program in GEF's history](#).

The discussion focused on each of the phases of the plastic lifecycle – production, consumption, and waste management – and considered efforts to reduce production, such as bans on plastic bags, mainstreaming of alternative materials and circular designs, efforts to extend the life of products through reuse, resale, repair, rent models, as well as strategies and tactics for successful awareness campaigns.

The session closed with a panel on financing, where options and new initiatives for financing plastic reduction were discussed by representatives from the private sector and multilateral development banks.

At the event, [GEF Small Grants Programme](#), a UNDP-implemented program that works with communities and civil society organizations on the ground, launched its new publication titled “[Plastics Management and Circular Economy: Community Solutions](#).” The publication captures the experiences and lessons learnt from community-based plastics management and promotes the circular economy system at a local and community level. The stories gathered from SGP grantees show that local innovations can play an essential role in plastic management.

Although plastics have become an integral part of our daily lives, the linear model of “take, make, use, and dispose” with regard to plastic materials poses a grave threat to the sustainability of our economy and environment. Most plastic packaging and goods are used only once and then discarded. Between 1950 and 2015, only 10 percent of the plastic waste generated was recycled, dramatically increasing the quantity of waste in the natural environment for 500-1000 years afterwards.

The GEF Small Grants Programme provides technical and financial support to projects led by civil society organizations and communities in order to test innovative practices for plastic waste management using a circular economy approach. This approach promotes closed-loop production and consumption through “reducing, reusing, and recycling” plastics through material engineering and product design, shifting consumer use and behavior, and developing sound approaches to waste collection and management.

*“The threats posed by plastic pollution can only be defeated by the collective efforts of all sectors of society,”* said **Francoise Clottes**, Director of Strategy and Operations of the GEF, during the launch of the new publication. *“We hope that this publication will be useful not only to other communities and CSOs around the world that may want to*

*replicate these model projects, but also to governments, the private sector and other stakeholders.”*

**Examples of innovative practices emerging from the SGP portfolio** include the efforts of a women’s association in Burundi, which undertook reforestation by packaging seedlings with ecological alternatives to plastics. The project replaced plastic bags with bags made from banana bark. This practice avoided the use of 3 million plastic bags throughout Burundi and was replicated in many other communities.

Furthermore, around 300,000 seedlings were planted in the national park, reforesting 13,000 hectares. An additional 150,000 seedlings were planted in the project beneficiaries’ farmlands. The sales of bark bags along with cereal and cassava grindings increased the livelihoods of the households to \$55 per year, allowing families to pay for school and hospital fees and improving the overall quality of life in the community.

Similarly, nearly 700 rag pickers in India, many of whom are socially marginalized and illiterate women, have been trained in waste collection and recycling activities. Through these efforts, women collect approximately 10 tonnes of plastic waste a day at five recovery centres in Bhopal. Around 45 tonnes of plastic waste are sold to cement industries in and around Bhopal to be used as fuel in the furnaces. Around 60 tonnes of plastic waste are sold to Madhya Pradesh Rural Road Development Authority every month to be used in road construction. These roads, made with mixed plastic, last longer due to their high resistance to water, which is important for a region with a significant monsoon period.

With the project, women now earn around \$3 – \$11 every day from selling the plastic waste. Over 850 rag pickers have been enrolled in health insurance schemes and provided with municipal identity cards and uniforms. The success of this project has also led to the establishment of a pilot plastic recovery center in Indore. As a result, around 3,500 rag pickers have been organized into self-help groups in the city.

The Government of Madhya Pradesh consequently released a policy on plastics in which they described the “Bhopal Model” and specified the Sarthak Karmis (women rag pickers) as an integral part of the collection centres, thus organizing them as an entity within the policy. Sarthak Karmis have also been included as the NGO representative to the High-Level Committee to share their best practices.

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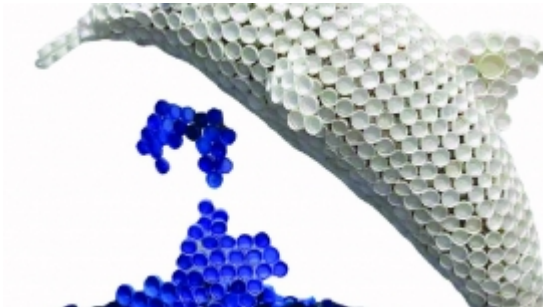
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