



DRS and EPR in island territories

Thais Vojvodic - Common Seas

***Webinar: Circular Islands: Winning the Fight Against Marine Litter with Deposit Systems.
18.02.2026***



Our Health

research to understand and raise awareness of the impacts of plastic on human health

Our Ocean

tools and expertise for decision-makers including governments and business to help directly reduce their plastic pollution



Our Future

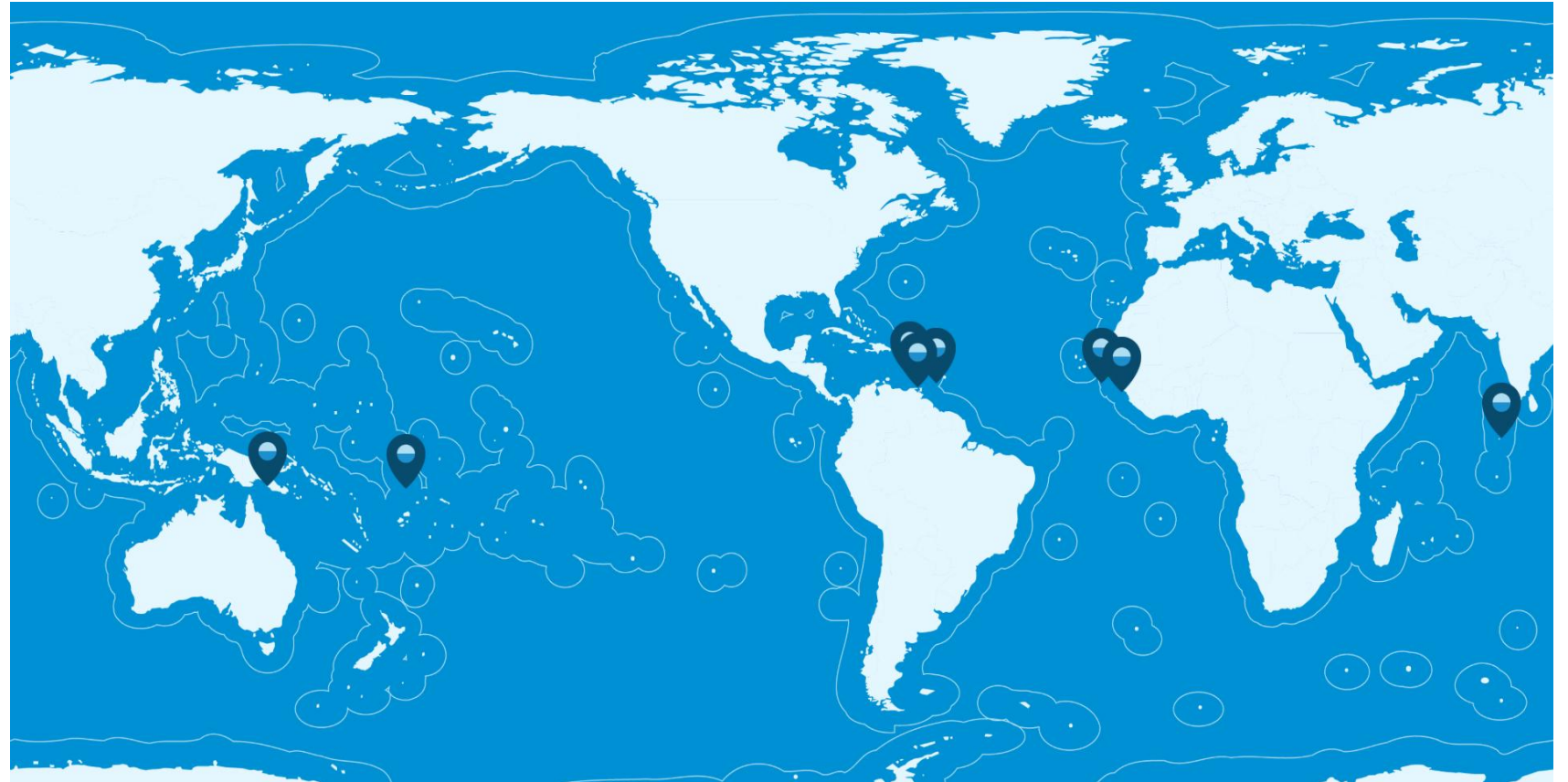
lasting change through education programmes to inspire and equip the next generation



Common Seas: co-developing National Action Plans to end plastic pollution in SIDS

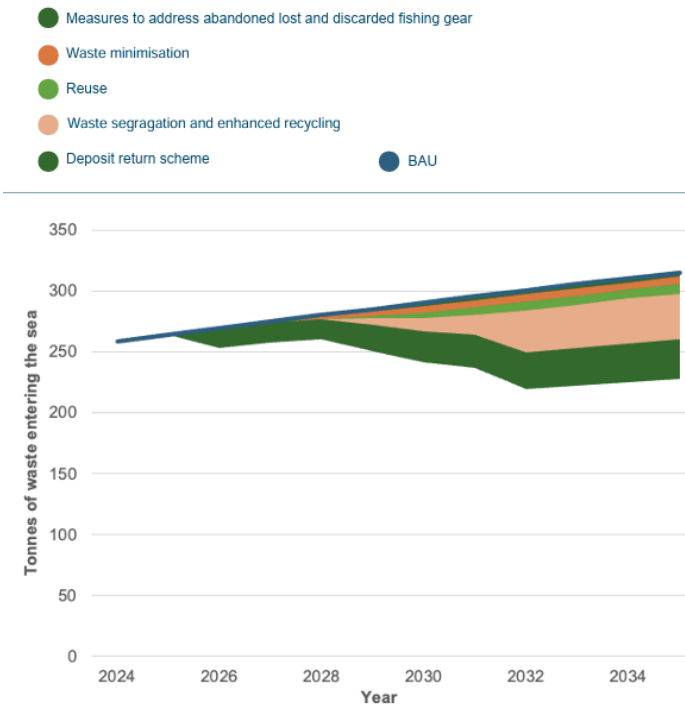
Countries we've supported:

- Barbados
- Saint Lucia
- Grenada
- Gambia
- Guinea Bissau
- Papua New Guinea
- Tuvalu
- Maldives



When modelling the most effective policy strategies to end plastic pollution in SIDS, DRS and EPR are consistently identified in the mix of upstream and downstream measures

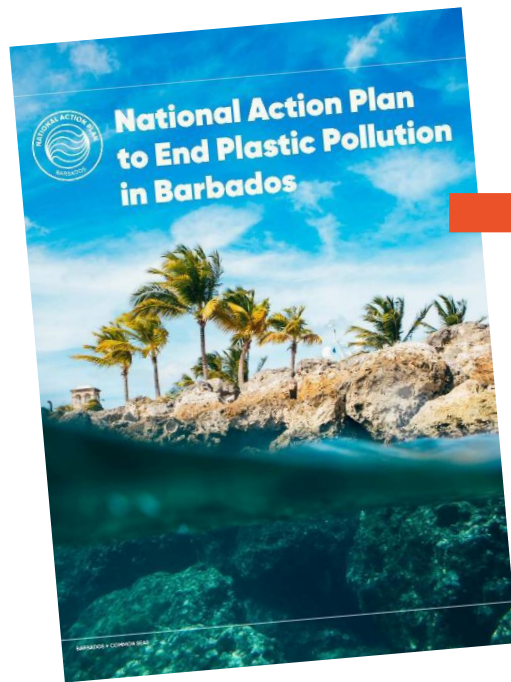
Example: DRS in Saint Lucia



- We identified that beverage and other plastic bottles are the most commonly leaked plastic item in Saint Lucia (12% out of a total of 347 tonnes of macroplastic waste in 2024)
- Our policy modelling showed that DRS could result in a 32-tonne reduction in marine plastic pollution per year by 2035 and reduce the amount of plastic waste landfilled by 2,427 tonnes per year by 2035.
- Of all the policies we analysed, the DRS was the second most impactful policy in terms of plastic pollution reduction, and the most impactful in terms of landfill avoidance
- This has helped to further solidify and provide quantitative justification of the prioritisation of the Bill, particularly given the lack of landfill space at the island's sole landfill site, estimated to have six to eight years of capacity remaining.
- The Management of Beverage Containers Bill has been in the making for more than 20 years, it intends to introduce a deposit return scheme (DRS) to Saint Lucia, requiring consumers to pay around 0,05 USD deposit when purchasing beverages in plastic containers.
- As of February 2026, the DSD is drafting a Cabinet Memo and is working towards securing Cabinet approval of the National Policy in the first quarter of 2026

When modelling the most effective policy strategies to end plastic pollution in SIDS, DRS and EPR are consistently identified in the mix of upstream and downstream measures

Example: EPR identified as an opportunity in Barbados, Papua New Guinea and Guinea Bissau



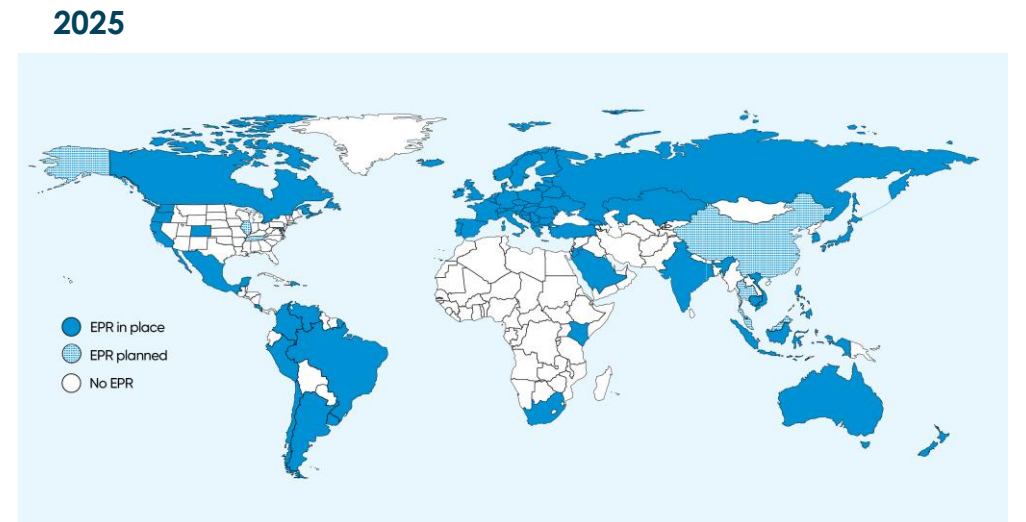
Five strategies that will reduce Barbados' plastic pollution by 73% over 10 years

- Strategy 1 - Single-use bottles
- Strategy 2 - Single-use plastic bags
- Strategy 3 - Other single-use plastic items
- Strategy 4 - Implement source separation and extended producer responsibility
- Strategy 5 - Downstream measures

EPR has emerged all over the world, but not so much in SIDS

- There are over 400 EPR schemes worldwide
- Growing support from private sector
- 75% of those started in the past 20 years
- New major funding programmes and research dedicated to exploring EPR in developing countries (ex: CGF report)
- Few SIDS have fully implemented EPR so far

Some barriers for implementation of EPR are specific to the circumstances of SIDS and remote geographies



Research report objective and approach

Objective: Explore how EPR can be adapted to address the unique challenges of SIDS / remote geographies.

Approach: Collaborative research led by Common Seas and Circlearth, in consultation with expert collaborators and an Advisory Group.



Consultation Process: multiple interviews across the Indian Ocean, Caribbean, and Pacific regions with:

- SIDS governments / Regional bodies
- PROs
- Recyclers
- Plastic producers

Research development timeline



PREVENT
Waste Alliance



Vision paper endorsed by 40+ organisations signalling strong support from different sectors

NOW LAUNCHED

Vision Paper and Research Report
Regional EPR: A potential solution to reduce plastic pollution in SIDS and remote geographies

READ NOW!

Common Seas

WRAP **UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH** **Africa Circular** **ANZPAC PLASTICS PACT**

VISION PAPER

Endorsing organizations include: Africa Circular, African Circular Economy Network, ANZPAC PLASTICS PACT, Circulearth, CITEO, CR&J, DOERS, Environmental Management Vanuatu, EVERYDAY PLASTIC, EVOLVED, Expra, Global Deposit and Return Platform, Greening the Caribbean, IOOE, INDIAN OCEAN COMMISSION, INOFF PLASTIC, INNOVATION ALLIANCE, 3.CONCEPTS, M. MME RECYCLAGE, NAIROBI CIRCULAR ECONOMY ASSOCIATION, NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY, Nestlé, OCEAN NOW!, PERPETUAL, PLANET PATROL, reloop, RETORNA.ORG, SOLUTIONS, THE GREATER GOOD DIAPER PROJECT, UKWIN, UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH, VERRA, WRAP, VF PACKAGING, WIEGO, and WWF.



New Research on Regional Approaches to EPR for SIDS

Could a coordinated, regional approach to EPR offer a solution to challenges faced by remote geographies?

Help address known SWM challenges

- Economies of scale
- Less-isolated locations
- Address legacy plastics
- More efficient logistics

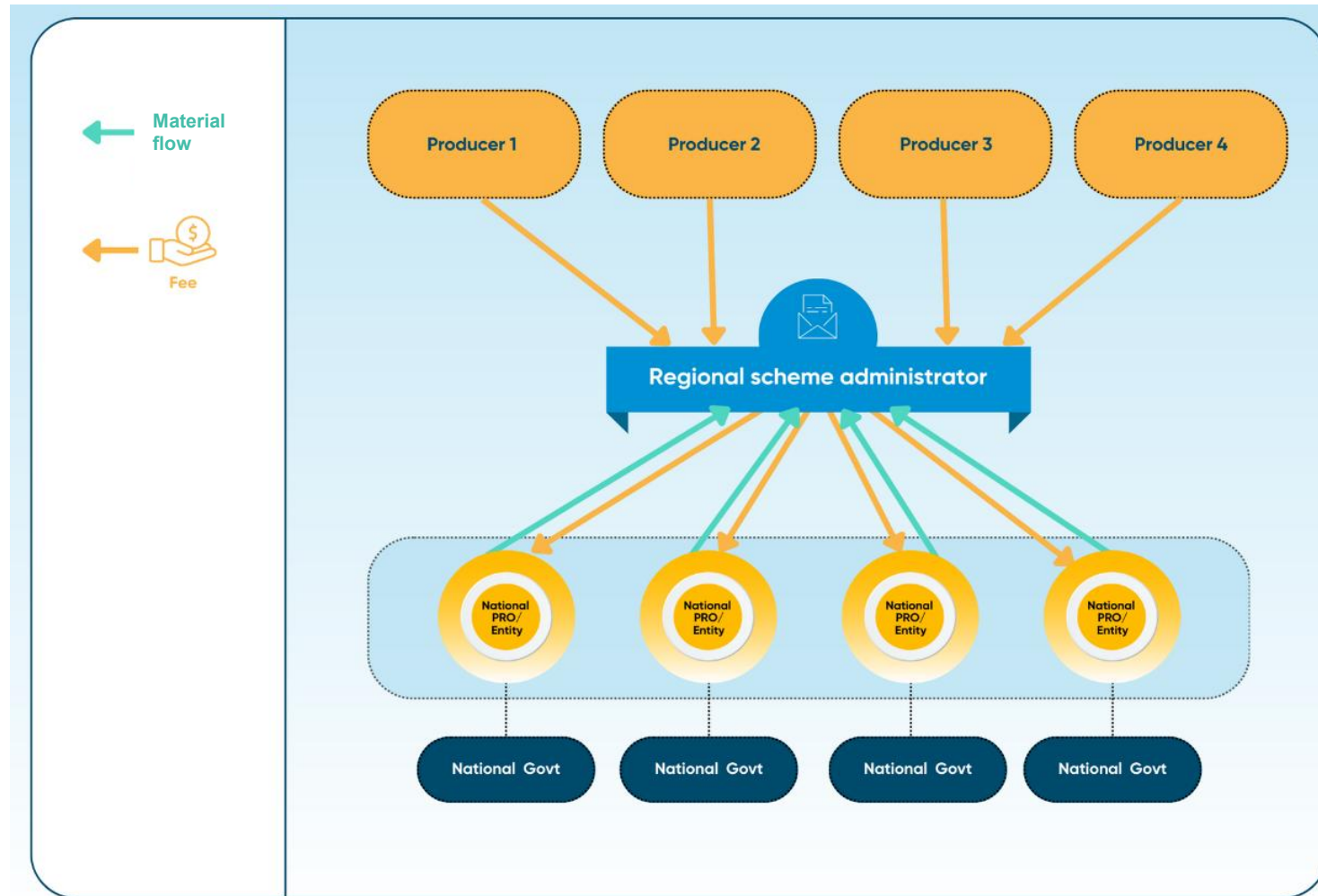
Increase efficiency and impact of EPR schemes

- Greater influence on product design
- Less risk of free riders
- Expand to include brands
- Decrease reliance on the public sector

Co-benefits

- ✓ Increased transparency, data and traceability
- ✓ Harmonised rules for producers
- ✓ Decrease total waste management costs
- ✓ Better prices for recyclable materials
- ✓ Better access to the end-market
- ✓ Shared infrastructures
- ✓ Socially inclusive

Report focus: What might regional EPR look like, and how could it work?



Report structure

1. Legal basis and institutional set-up

Voluntary	X	Mandatory
Single administrator	X	Multiple administrators
Profit	X	Nonprofit
Existing regional entities	X	New ones

2. Operational flows and end markets

National PRO	X	Regional Adm
Regional adm as sole trader	X	Regional and subregional
Material flow through regional hub	X	Material flow through sub-regional hub

3. Financial flows and obligated entities

Collection of the fee		
National PRO	X	Regional Adm
Budget spending and fair allocation of funding		
Equal share model	X	Performance-based model
Proportional to market size		Needs-based model

4. Governance and enforcement

Governance roles	
Regional EPR governance council	X
Thematic subcommittees under the regional Adm	
Dispute resolution mechanism	
Tiered dispute resolution process	X
Peer review and reputational accountability	

Focus on the legal basis and institutional set-up

1. Legal basis and institutional set-up

Voluntary	X	Mandatory
Single administrator	X	Multiple administrators
Profit	X	Nonprofit
Existing regional entities	X	New ones

2. Operational flows and end markets

National PRO	X	Regional Adm
Regional adm as sole trader	X	Regional and subregional
Material flow through regional hub	X	Material flow through sub-regional hub

3. Financial flows and obligated entities

Collection of the fee		
National PRO	X	Regional Adm
Budget spending and fair allocation of funding		
Equal share model	X	Performance-based model
Proportional to market size		Needs-based model

4. Governance and enforcement

Governance roles		
Regional EPR governance council	X	
Thematic subcommittees under the regional Adm		
Dispute resolution mechanism		
Tiered dispute resolution process	X	
Peer review and reputational accountability		

Focus on the financial flow and obligated entities

1. Legal basis and institutional set-up

Voluntary	X	Mandatory
Single administrator	X	Multiple administrators
Profit	X	Nonprofit
Existing regional entities	X	New ones

2. Operational flows and end markets

National PRO	X	Regional Adm
Regional adm as sole trader	X	Regional and subregional
Material flow through regional hub	X	Material flow through sub-regional hub

3. Financial flows and obligated entities

Collection of the fee		
National PRO	X	Regional Adm
Budget spending and fair allocation of funding		
Equal share model	X	Performance-based model
Proportional to market size		Needs-based model

4. Governance and enforcement

Governance roles	
Regional EPR governance council	X
Thematic subcommittees under the regional Adm	
Dispute resolution mechanism	
Tiered dispute resolution process	X
Peer review and reputational accountability	

Focus on the governance and enforcement

1. Legal basis and institutional set-up

Voluntary	X	Mandatory
Single administrator	X	Multiple administrators
Profit	X	Nonprofit
Existing regional entities	X	New ones

2. Operational flows and end markets

National PRO	X	Regional Adm
Regional adm as sole trader	X	Regional and subregional
Material flow through regional hub	X	Material flow through sub-regional hub

3. Financial flows and obligated entities

Collection of the fee		
National PRO	X	Regional Adm
Budget spending and fair allocation of funding		
Equal share model	X	Performance-based model
Proportional to market size		Needs-based model

4. Governance and enforcement

Governance roles	
Regional EPR governance council	X
Thematic subcommittees under the regional Adm	
Dispute resolution mechanism	
Tiered dispute resolution process	X
Peer review and reputational accountability	

Conclusions

- EPR is not a silver bullet. While often promoted as a comprehensive solution to plastic and packaging waste, EPR alone cannot resolve the complex waste management challenges faced by SIDS.
- When tailored to the realities of SIDS, a regional EPR approach has the potential to significantly reduce the strain on under-resourced national waste systems, unlock shared infrastructure solutions, and support the development of sustainable financing mechanisms for waste management
- By pooling resources and aligning regulatory efforts, SIDS can increase their leverage with producers and exporters, improve the economics of waste processing, and work collectively to access regional or international end markets for recyclables
- While the report outlines the key design elements and theoretical options for considering the design of a regional EPR scheme for SIDS, the successful design and implementation of such a system will be highly context-dependent.
- The characteristics of individual islands — and the broader region — will significantly shape what is feasible, effective, and politically acceptable in practice



Partnership with Indian Ocean Commission



Sept
2023

Mandate from IOC Member States



The 2023 Ministerial Declaration on Circular Economy affirmed Member States' commitment to regional collaboration on EPR to advance a regional circular economy agenda and to strengthen cooperation on sustainable waste and resource management.



Sept
2025

Letter of Mutual Understanding between IOC and Common Seas



To work together to bridge theory into practice, supporting the IOC to develop a framework for regional collaboration on EPR.



Nov
2025

Scoping Workshop



To bring together IOC member states, private sector representatives, and regional waste management actors to define the scope, resources and timeline needed to develop a comprehensive feasibility study for a regional EPR scheme.



Q2
2026

Feasibility Study

To include a mapping of maritime routes and transport agreements, waste flows and tonnages, a review of legislative frameworks and proposed infrastructure and recycling solutions.





Thank you!

thais@commonseas.com