

plastic↻cycle

IMPACT REPORT 2024 / 25



The John Keells Group's Social Entrepreneurship Project Plasticcycle continues to spearhead initiatives under the vision of being a catalyst in significantly reducing plastic pollution in Sri Lanka, across the key focus areas of encouraging the reduction of single-use plastics, supporting responsible disposal, and promoting recycling initiatives and innovation.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS



49MT of recyclable plastic waste collected during the year



21 Recyclable plastic collection bins placed



GOLD WINNER
Best Corporate Social Responsibility Website & Mobile UE Website



8 MT of plastic waste collected via the Jumbo Bag Initiative



572kg of plastic waste collected in 8 under sea locations



Social media campaign highlighting the impact of plastic misuse

SIGNIFICANT PROGRAMMES

09 new 40kg-capacity and **12 new 15kg-capacity** Plasticcycle collection bins were placed in **19 strategic high-volume areas**, with the sponsorship of corporate partners, during the period from 1st of April 2024 – 31st March 2025. **07** of these new bins marked the **expansion of the Plasticcycle bin network to the Northern Province** of Sri Lanka, with **Keells** supermarkets sponsoring these bins in alignment with the opening of Keells Jaffna.

From the **309 bins** in the network, **49MT** of plastic waste was collected during this period and **223MT** since the launch of the bins in 2017.



Plasticcycle bin network expansion with Keells supermarkets

Further to the pilot programme in 2017 conducted in 2 Municipal wards in Colombo 02, the Plasticcycle bin network continues to serve as the backbone of our collection ecosystem. Based on the collection volume of the location, **the bins are available in 15kg, 40kg, 90kg** capacities in standard shapes, along with bins in custom-designed shapes and sizes.

The cash incentives offered by the collectors of Plasticcycle, assigned to the caretakers of the bins at the locations, encourage segregated and clean plastic waste. The introduction of per-kilogram incentive payments by collectors in 2023 to the locations has led to a **50% increase** in recyclable plastic waste collections in 2024.

An external monitoring party was appointed in 2020 to evaluate and report on all bin locations on a structured periodic basis.

Plasticcycle partners only with collectors registered with the Central Environmental Authority to ensure accountability in the collection process. The appointed collector picks up plastic waste from designated Plasticcycle bins and delivers it to a responsible recycling plant of the largest plastics recycler and leading polyester yarn and filaments manufacturer in Sri Lanka.



Plasticcycle bin network expansion with Tea Smallholder Factories PLC

Launched in August 2023, the Jumbo Bag Initiative introduce **large, custom-designed** sacks to individuals who have the capability to gather a high volume of recyclable plastic waste from multiple low-volume locations, such as households or small-scale restaurants and other businesses. **The individual collectors are incentivised by Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) and collectors per kg.** This initiative not only boosts recycling efforts but also empowers micro-level collectors, **creating livelihood opportunities at the grassroots.**

The Jumbo Bag Initiative has collected **8MT** of recyclable plastic waste from 1st April 2024- 31st March 2025 and **11.2MT** since launch



PET bottles collections – Jumbo bags

As a result of the Cleaner Seabeds for Sri Lanka Expedition, Thilip Reef was cleared of all plastic and other waste in June 2024!

With Plasticcycle as the principal sponsor of the expedition, **572kg** of plastic waste was collected in **20 dives in 8 locations** during the period. Since the partnership with Plasticcycle in March 2023, **the expedition has collected 1,908kg of plastic waste to date.**



Underwater cleanup at Thilip Reef Trincomalee

In 2023, Plasticcycle partnered with The Pearl Protectors, a youth-led marine conservation organization, on their Cleaner Seabeds for Sri Lanka expedition. The contribution by Plasticcycle supports underwater clean-ups in **the Western, Eastern, and Southern provinces of the Sri Lankan coastal belt**, where plastic waste has accumulated due to poor waste management practices and ocean currents.

This expedition gives the opportunity for volunteer divers from across the globe to participate and help remove plastic waste from the seabed, thereby preventing plastic waste from breaking down into microplastics and harming marine life such as sea turtles, plankton, and various species of fish. This partnership initiative marks a significant step in extending Plasticcycle's efforts beneath the surface, supporting the long-term goal of safeguarding Sri Lanka's marine biodiversity from the growing threat of plastic pollution.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to a survey conducted by National Aquatic Research Agency (NARA), **80% of the seabed in the Western Province of Sri Lanka has been deemed polluted.** The cause of this pollution is the result of household and industrial waste being directed into the ocean with over 25% of Sri Lanka's population living in close proximity to the coast of the island. From this waste, only 15% floats on the surface of the water, whereas the remainder sinks to the ocean floor. Globally, it is estimated that there are close to **one million tons of 'ghost gear'**, such as lost or abandoned fishing gear and nylon nets, which contribute to the plastic waste in the ocean, causing injury and death to over **550 marine species** worldwide.

"The Thermopylae Sierra Wreck off the coast of Mount Lavinia is now free from ghost-fishing nets, as a result of the cleaner seabeds for Sri Lanka Expedition"
-Muditha Katuwawala-

(Executive Director at The Pearl Protectors)

Date - 14th June 2024

Location - Kayankeri Coral Reef, Batticaloa & Pasikudha Reef

Divers - 08 divers

Collections - 120kg of ghost fishing



Date - 28th June 2024

Location - Dutch Bay, Trincomalee

Divers - 03 divers

Collections - 107kg of ghost fishing nets

Date - 19th July 2024

Location - South Reef, Trincomalee

Divers - 09

Collections - 80kg of abandoned, lost, discarded fishing gear



Date - 13th September 2024

Location - Swamy Rock and South Thilip Reef, Trincomalee

Divers - 08

Collections - 83kg of abandoned, lost, discarded fishing gear

Date - 22nd December 2024

Location - Sierra Wreck, Dehiwala

Divers - 06

Collections - 45kg of abandoned, lost, discarded fishing gear



Date - 03rd January 2025

Location - Sierra Wreck, Dehiwala

Divers - 06

Collections - 45kg of abandoned, lost, discarded fishing gear

Date - 29th January 2025

Location - Palagala South Reef, Dehiwala

Divers - 05

Collections - 54kg of plastic trash (plastic bottles, wrappers & bags)



Date - 27th February 2025

Location - Palagala South Reef, Dehiwala

Divers - 07

Collections - 23kg of abandoned, lost, discarded fishing gear

Date - 19th March 2025

Location - Palagala North Reef, Dehiwala

Divers - 05

Collections - 40kg of abandoned, lost, discarded fishing gear & plastic trash



Start-Up-Cycle was launched in 2023, and we received an overwhelming response from nearly **50 local innovators**, including those from the North and East, who sent in over **120 applications**, keenly supporting with solutions to the problem statements given by our **Leisure, Retail, and Consumer Foods** sectors.

Following the closure of applications, we conducted our Open Day, where applicants were provided with detailed introductions to the problem statements by our sector representatives. Thereafter, the applicants participated in a series of workshops led by subject area experts from within the Group over a six-week period. These areas included: The development of a Minimum Viable Product (MVP), Understanding Intellectual Property, Finance and funding and the relevant legislation and legal aspects.

At the end of these six weeks, all applicants submitted their business plans and eight were selected to present to three independent judges, experts in the field of environmental stewardship and entrepreneurship.



Start-up-cycle innovators presenting their sustainable products to a panel of experts

The **3 winners from the inaugural edition of Start-Up-Cycle** Challenge Platform are making progress in working with our businesses to complete their milestones. The three winners include innovators who are developing: **compostable seaweed-based cling films** to solve the issue of non-compostable plastic cling film, **compostable banana fibre-based takeaway boxes** to solve the issue of non-compostable plastic bento boxes, and **compostable arecanut leaf-based fruit juice cups** as a compostable alternative to plastic fruit juice cups.

HERE'S A FACT...

Sri Lanka currently imports virgin plastic raw materials for varying applications, which amounts to **300,000 MT/annum**.

(Ministry of Environment, 2021)

Awareness & communication programmes

Paid partnership with Dr. Suneth Rajawasan, family physician, educator, entrepreneur, health and well-being trainer on a series of educational videos on social media during February and March 2025 and received significant views and engagement, predominantly from **TikTok and Facebook**. The topics included harmful effects of burning plastics, impact of ingesting microplastics, what is Bisphenol A (BPA) and how does it affect your body, and how plastic is cancer-causing.






Addressing the consequences of plastic misuse

The Plasticcycle social media platforms – **Facebook, Instagram, and the newly launched TikTok profile** – reach diverse audiences that engage and, together with us, advocate to reduce plastic pollution. Approximately 1% of the engagement on our social media is negative and relates to Plasticcycle's association with Group businesses like Elephant House and Keells that use non-recyclable plastic packaging.

DID YOU KNOW?

“44.7% of uncollected plastic waste ends up being openly burned? And it doesn't just vanish. Instead, it releases a harmful mix of **bisphenols, polycyclic aromatic compounds, microplastics, and nitrogen oxide**, creating a serious environmental hazard.”

-Dr Suneth Rajawasan-
(Family physician, educator, entrepreneur, health & well-being trainer)

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|  | Views | 42.9k |
|  | Views | 21.1k |
|  | Views | 9.7k |

Cumulative social media views for the educational video series

Paid advertorial in *Echelon Magazine* and *EconomyNext* in May 2024 – “John Keells Group's Plasticcycle, Influencing Change One Challenge at a Time”.



Keells Managers meeting



Cinnamon Bentota Bay awareness session

Internal awareness during the period included a specially designed awareness session for the **staff of Cinnamon Bentota Bay and Beruwala** in September 2024, and continued awareness sessions at John Keells Group inductions and quarterly Keells managers' meetings.

HERE'S A FACT...

Sri Lanka generates about **938 metric tonnes of plastic waste every day**. Out of that, only **32% gets collected, and just 4% is recycled**. (Ministry of Environment, 2021)

Strategic discussions and research

A comprehensive piece of research on biological methods to **degrade plastic waste** was conducted in collaboration with John Keells Research, with further discussions held with Harvard University, USA, and a private organisation working under the university, from July 2024.

Introducing Stenum Asia to Keells Supermarket, Hemas Consumer Brands, Unilever Sri Lanka, and Vega Technologies, and conducting discussions to pilot **smart refilling stations for cleaning products to reduce the amount of plastic packaging**, from December 2024 onwards.



*Discussion with Harvard University experts
on plastic degradation methods*

Participated in roundtable discussions, which concluded in October 2024, on drafting policy on **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**, conducted in collaboration with the National Cleaner Production Centre, Sri Lanka and the SWITCH-Asia Programme of the European Union, which was presented to the Central Environmental Authority (CEA).

Presented success stories and challenges from Plasticcycle at a workshop conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations on **reducing food waste and identifying plastic alternatives for food packaging**.



Discussion on reducing food waste in Sri Lanka

Presented the **plastic resource efficiency methodologies** at the PLASTICS (Promoting Long-term Approaches for a Sustainable, Transformative and Inclusive Circular Economy in Sri Lanka) programme with the SWITCH-Asia Programme of the European Union.

Conducted an internal feasibility study on **'Seabin' technology** for Sri Lanka. (Seabin's are floating bins designed to filter water and capture debris, particularly plastics, in inland water bodies.)

Awards and recognition

In January 2025, Plasticcycle was featured by the World Economic Forum's ***Equitable Transition Initiative*** as a case study, highlighting our commitment to fostering a sustainable future. [View case study](#)



Plasticcycle case study featured on the WEF website

At the BestWeb.lk Awards 2024, Plasticcycle was the recipient of the prestigious **Gold Award** in the '**Best Corporate Social Responsibility Website**' category and the '**Best Mobile User Experience Website**' within the same category.



Best Web Awards 2024

