

Developing a multi-stakeholder forum for engagement towards a policy plan

Main messages

Developing a multi-stakeholder forum for engagement towards a policy plan:

- aims to include all stakeholders across plastics lifecycle.
- provides a neutral and inclusive space for stakeholders to share knowledge and develop strategies and actions to tackle plastic pollution.
- can deliver benefits beyond reducing plastic pollution such as financial resources for research, infrastructure development, job creation, and more.
- can pose multiple challenges to do with overcoming sector-specific silos, maintaining engagement, and defining clear responsibilities and overlapping jurisdictions.

Background

The development of policy plans and integrated strategies for sustainable resource management is guided by international and regional initiatives, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans (RSCAPs). Such initiatives provide frameworks for addressing environmental concerns and serve as important guiding principles. To ensure effective implementation, additional agreements and comprehensive protocols are necessary, which need to be specifically tailored to address the challenges at national and local levels in various contexts.¹ Policy plans can include, but are not limited to, supporting policy implementation, as well as the research and development of solutions to accelerate actions enhancing a just transition to more sustainable practises. Policy plans also provide the opportunity to foster capacity-building, awareness raising

and international cooperation. Furthermore, these plans are designed to be living documents that continuously evolve and adapt strategies, considering responses captured through monitoring and stakeholder engagement efforts.

Multi-stakeholder forums for policy plans

A crucial first step for any policy plan is identifying and involving stakeholders to collate relevant knowledge and information under a scoping study.^{2,3} A multi-stakeholder forum (MSF) brings together various stakeholders, representing a broad range of sectors, including government, industry, civil society organisations, the informal sector, academia, and communities. Multi-stakeholder forums should provide a neutral and inclusive platform, supporting the sharing of knowledge to develop shared goals and actions.⁴ Approaches for establishing an effective multi-stakeholder forum for developing a policy plan are detailed in the literature,⁵ with a brief overview provided in this document.

Knowledge sharing and action development

Solutions regarding plastic and waste management need to be considered over the entire life cycle of a product, with many solutions needing coordination and integration across sectors to be fully effective. Multi-stakeholder forums can help identify data and knowledge gaps during initial consultations⁶ and guide the research and development stage of a policy plan.⁷ Mapping of actions and initiatives through multi-stakeholder forums can help align such actions and initiatives with relevant national and regional policies. Following these efforts, draft policy plans can be developed through targeted local and national workshops, the information from which can be summarised and shared with all stakeholders.⁸ Through further consultation and formulation of an 'action matrix', stakeholders can help review, finalise and implement plans for adoption.⁹

Advantages

- The multi-stakeholder forum provides a space for dialogue, knowledge sharing, coordination, and joint decision-making to develop and implement effective strategies and actions to tackle plastic pollution.
- A policy plan can inspire a broad range of national stakeholders to get involved in strategic efforts, while also encouraging financial resources for research, infrastructure development, new technologies, job creation, and reduced human and environmental health impacts. Through sharing research, best practises and lessons learned, countries can help promote actions towards global sustainable development.

Disadvantages

- Engaging a diverse range of stakeholders and ensuring effective governance structures pose challenges. This includes overcoming sector-specific silos, maintaining engagement, defining clear roles and responsibilities, and addressing overlapping jurisdictions.¹⁰ Lack of expertise to interpret and share data, as well as political and public acceptance of enforcement can also hinder stakeholder engagement and outreach efforts.¹¹
- Challenges exist in raising public interest and awareness, effective communication, and securing sustainable funding for long-term initiatives. This includes mixed messaging, inadequate public engagement, and restricted funding mechanisms that hinder long-term planning and implementation.¹² Lack of standardised definitions and explanations for key terms also adds to coordination challenges.¹³

Petrochemical extraction



The plastics life cycle and its stakeholders

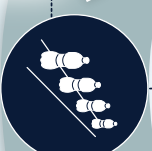
stakeholder group
 ● science ● industry ● society
type
 ● governmental ○ non-govt. ● both

*potential source of data or data repository system

- Petrochemical Trade Associations***
represent extraction companies, to advocate industry standards, guide lines, best practices and policies
- Industry Players***
companies that engage in extraction processes
- Transparency Initiatives***
global standards groups that promote transparency and accountability
- Scientific Research Institutions***
researchers studying sustainable fuel-based plastics
- Academic Institutes of Higher Learning***
universities researching decarbonisation and green chemistry regarding plastic
- Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)**
focused on issues such as marginalised communities
- Labour Advocacy Groups**
advocate for sustainable practices, and push for stricter regulations
- Educational Institutions**
educate students about the environmental impact of plastic waste, promote recycling and waste reduction practices, and conduct research on sustainable waste management solutions
- Environmental or Sustainability Committees/Commissions***
advise the government on environmental issues
- Labour Advocacy Groups**
address occupational health and safety aspects related to waste management
- Informal Waste Sector Groups**
representing informal waste workers within the waste sector
- Informal Waste Sector Advocacy Groups**
support the just and inclusive transition of informal waste sector
- Social Enterprises and Cooperatives**
innovative solutions for plastic waste management such as community-based recycling centres
- NGOs***
advocating for sustainable end-of-life management of plastic waste, awareness raising
- Community-Based Organisations**
organize clean-up activities, promote recycling and waste reduction initiatives, and raise awareness
- Indigenous and Tribal Communities**
have unique perspectives and traditional knowledge regarding waste management contributing to cultural research and sustainable development
- Faith-Based Organisations**
engage their members in waste reduction and recycling practices, raise awareness, and support community-based initiatives
- Youth and Student Organisations**
organize campaigns, clean-up events, and awareness raising activities, and promote responsible waste management and promote behaviour change
- Media and Influencers**
media outlets, journalists, and social media

- International Development Groups***
addressing the issues of greenhouse gas emissions and resource efficiency
- Inter-Government Organizations (IGOs)***
unifying policies, stabilizing markets and other issues of common interest
- Trade Development Groups***
setting global/national trade regulations, guidance and settling disputes
- National Government Authorities***
import/export and customs groups
- Plastic Trade Associations***
collaboration, advocacy and knowledge exchange; represent the plastic industry
- Industry Players***
including suppliers, manufacturers, processors, machinery/equipment manufacturers, brand owners and retailers
- Labour Advocacy Groups**
occupational health and safety aspects
- Social Justice Groups**
protect the rights of affected communities and workers
- Consumer Advocacy Groups**
work on behalf of consumers to ensure product safety, transparency, and accountability
- NGOs**
working on circular economy
- Scientific Research Institutions***
research on life cycle assessments (LCA), product design, sustainable alternatives, and circular economy
- Academic Institutes of Higher Learning***
departments engaged in research on LCA, product design, sustainable alternatives, and circular economy
- International Development Groups***
focused on the reduction of plastic pollution in environments and minimizing the generation and transboundary movement
- National and Local Governments***
can implement and enforce policies related to plastic waste management, require recycling programs, waste management, and other stakeholders in their regions
- Legislative Bodies**
have the authority to enact laws and regulations related to plastic waste management
- Ministry/Department of Finance***
deals with financial aspects related to waste management, such as taxation, subsidies, and incentives
- Ministry/Department for Environment***
responsible for overseeing environmental monitoring and advocating regulations and policies
- National Environmental Agencies***
developing waste management policies, regulations, and guidelines to reduce plastic waste, increase recycling rates, and improve waste disposal methods
- Waste Management Authorities or Agencies***
national and local municipal responsible for waste management policies and practices
- Department of International Trade***
import/export and customs groups
- Ministry/Department of Health***
concerned with public health aspects of plastic consumption and waste mismanagement
- Health and Safety Agencies***
focus on assessing and managing workplace safety risks associated with waste management
- Standards Agencies**
that develop and enforce standards and regulations related to plastic recycling, incineration, landfill and waste-to-energy processes

Design & Production



- International Development Groups for Chemicals***
develop guidelines, standards, and best practices for additives
- Ministry/Department for Industry***
handle policies and regulations related to the production, manufacturing and use of plastics
- Ministry/Department for Finance***
deal with taxation, subsidies, and incentives related to plastic production and manufacturing
- Standards Agencies**
develop and enforce standards
- Industry Players***
logistics, distribution and freight companies, as well as retailers and wholesalers responsible for distribution and packaging optimization, and sustainable logistics
- Trade Associations***
advocating for responsible practices and engaging with stakeholders along the supply chain
- NGOs**
advocating for responsible practices and engaging with stakeholders along the supply chain
- International Development Groups for Hazardous Substances***
aim to minimize the generation and transboundary movement of hazardous wastes and chemicals
- Chamber of Commerce***
responsible for regulating trade, including import and export
- Ministry/Department of Trade***
responsible for import and export
- Ministry/Department of Transport***
concerning infrastructure planning and development, permits and licenses, monitoring and enforcement, and promoting sustainable practices
- Scientific Research Institutions***
research plastic pollution, waste management, recycling technologies, and sustainable alternatives
- Academic Institutes of Higher Learning***
departments engaged in research on plastic pollution, recycling technologies, and sustainable alternatives
- Industry Players***
waste management companies, recycling companies, producers, manufacturers and brand owners
- Trade Associations***
provide guidance on waste management, and collaborate with other stakeholders
- Financial Institutions**
can provide funding and technical support for just transition

End-of-Life



- International Development Groups for Hazardous Substances***
aim to minimize the generation and transboundary movement of hazardous wastes and chemicals
- Chamber of Commerce***
responsible for regulating trade, including import and export
- Ministry/Department of Trade***
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- Ministry/Department of Transport***
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Consumption



- International Development Groups for Human Health***
investigate health impacts of plastic, provide guidance on chemical safety, risk assessment, and exposure limits
- Ministry/Department of Health***
concerned with public health aspects of waste mismanagement and plastic consumption
- Water Services Regulation Authorities***
national and local municipal responsible for sewage
- Legislative Bodies**
authority to pass laws and regulations related to plastic consumption
- Consumers**
preferences and behaviours influence the demand for products, packaging options, and recycling practices
- Community-Based Organisations**
organize events and initiatives to raise awareness, promote behaviour change, and implement local solutions
- Faith-Based Organisations**
engage in plastic consumption initiatives by integrating environmental stewardship
- Media and Influencers**
media outlets, journalists, and media influencers highlight plastic pollution, sustainable alternatives, and behaviour change
- NGOs**
develop initiatives to promote responsible consumption and raise awareness
- Aquariums, Natural History and Science Museums**
play an important role in raising awareness

Flow of plastics

Further reading

Stakeholder Engagement case studies and guidance:

- 'A Blue Future: developing a national marine litter action plan in SIDs – lessons learnt in Belize' (Monsanto et al. 2022) – article reviewing a coordinated response involving multiple sectors and a broad range of stakeholders: <https://academic.oup.com/icesjms/advance-article/doi/10.1093/icesjms/fsac206/6953704?login=false>
- 'An approach for effective stakeholder engagement as an essential component of the ecosystem approach' (Oates and Dodds, 2017) – article exploring lessons from two European Union projects led by WWF UK and the Celtic Seas Partnership to present an approach for effective stakeholder engagement: <https://academic.oup.com/icesjms/article/74/1/391/2967555>
- 'How to communicate with stakeholders about marine litter: A short guide to influencing behavioural change' – deliverable from the MARLISCO 'Marine Litter in Europe Seas: Social Awareness and Co-Responsibility, focuses on understanding stakeholder perceptions, communication and engagement, and challenges and opportunities: https://www.marlisco.eu/tl_files/marlisco/Downloadables/WP%202/Annex1_Final_Guide.pdf
- 'Coming to the table: Early stakeholder engagement in marine spatial planning' (Gopnik et al., 2012) – case study of engagement with ocean stakeholder in the USA, highlighting the importance of engaging with stakeholders early: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X1200019X>
- 'Municipal solid waste management under decentralisation in Uganda' (Okot-Okumu and Nyenje, 2011) – reviews devolved solid waste management and constraints on achieving sustainable waste management by analysing waste characteristics, generation rates, collection, disposal, management and stakeholder roles: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0197397511000178>

Policy Plan Guidance Resources:

- United Nations Environment Programme
- List of National Action Plans developed globally available on the GPML: <https://digital.gpmarinelitter.org/knowledge/library/resource/map/action-plan>
- 'Guidelines for the development of actions plans on marine litter' (UNEP/AHEG/2019/3/INF/7) – from the ad hoc open-ended expert group on marine litter and microplastics: <https://smastr16.blob.core.windows.net/gerco/sites/256/2021/09/guidelines-for-the-development-of-action-plans-on-marine-litte.pdf>
- 'Policy options to eliminate additional marine plastic litter by 2050 under the Osaka Blue Ocean Vision' (2021) – summarises the current plastic policy landscape and explores upstream and downstream interventions using known technology and approaches: <https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/policy-options-eliminate-additional-marine-plastic-litter> – available in French
- 'Marine Litter: A Global Challenge' (UNEP, 2009) – provides a review, analysis and recommendations of regional assessments and action plans on marine litter: <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/marine-litter-global-challenge>
- 'From Pollution to Solution: A global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution' (UNEP, 2021) – reviews networks, citizen science and community initiatives, providing an annex for regional action plans on marine litter: <https://www.unep.org/resources/pollution-solution-global-assessment-marine-litter-and-plastic-pollution> – available in French
- 'Marine plastic debris and microplastics: Global lessons and research to inspire action and guide policy change' (UNEP, 2016) – reviews international and regional governance frameworks, a selection of different types of measures, risk assessments and guidance for selecting measures and key research needs: <https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/marine-plastic-debris-and-microplastics-global-lessons-and-research-inspire>