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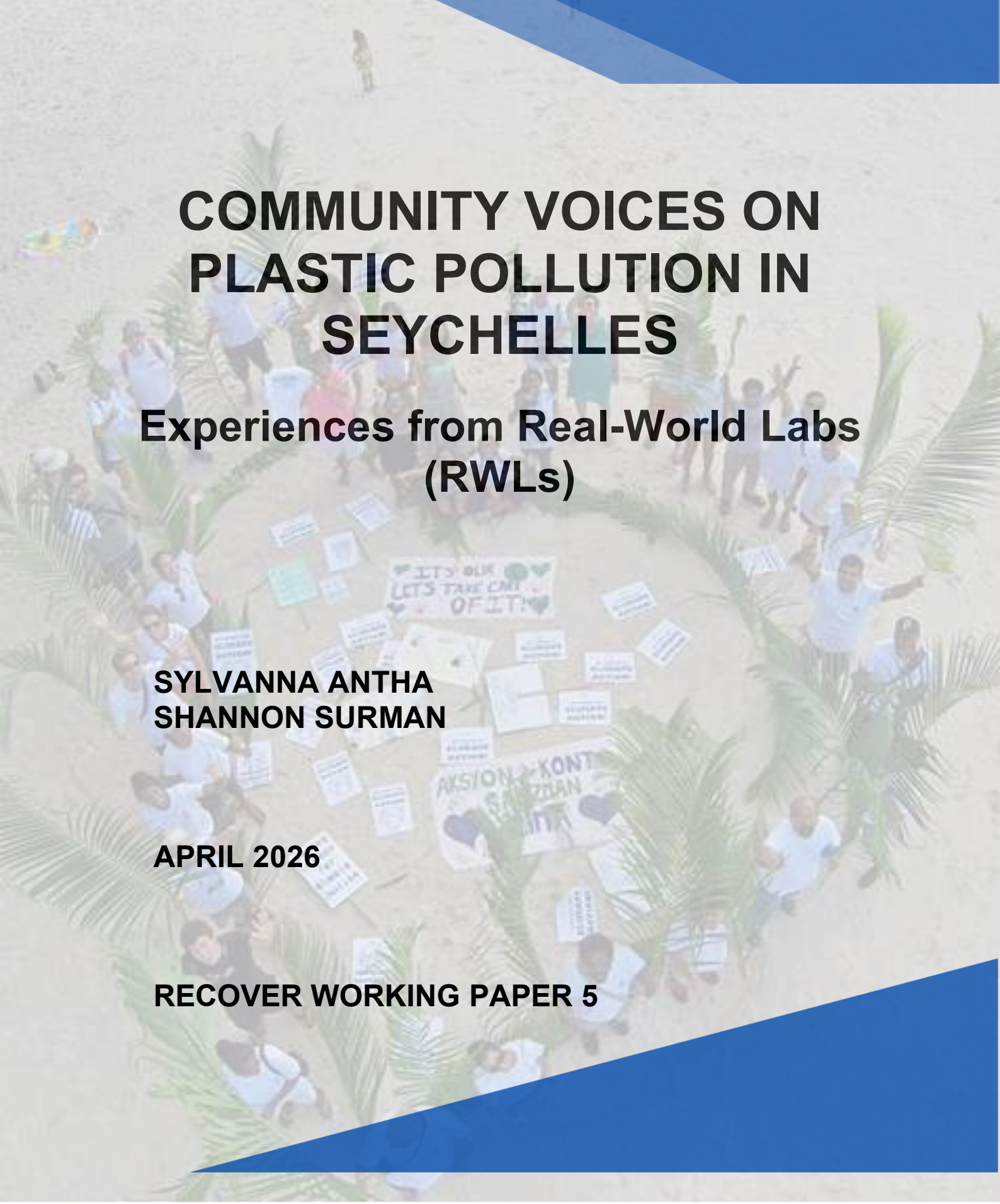
GRANT / SUBVENTION: - RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE VULNERABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RISK (RECOVER) WITH A FOCUS ON SMALL ISLANDS

COMMUNITY VOICES ON PLASTIC POLLUTION IN SEYCHELLES

Experiences from Real-World Labs (RWLs)



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CLIMATE ADAPTATION &RESILIENCE

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AUTHORS' DECLARATION

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THE RECOVER PROJECT

RECOVER stands for 'Resilience to climate vulnerability and environmental risk' with a focus on small islands. Addressing the needs and the unique challenges of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that are on the frontlines of climate change, the RECOVER Project aims to address climate change adaptation through a multi-risk and multi-sector approach. By conducting pilot projects in three small island states- Maldives, Mauritius, and Fiji- RECOVER will co-develop scalable and systems-changing climate resilience approaches to enhance understanding of small island climate adaptation capacities and possibilities. RECOVER is led by the University of Waterloo in Canada in partnership with implementing partners in activity countries: Maldives National University, the University of Mauritius and the University of Fiji.

RECOVER is funded and supported by the Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CLARE) programme. CLARE is a £110m, UK-Canada framework research programme, aiming to enable socially inclusive and sustainable action to build resilience to climate change and natural hazards. CLARE is an initiative jointly designed and run by the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office and Canada's International Development Research Centre. CLARE is primarily funded by UK aid from the UK government, along with the International Development Research Centre, Canada.

Through long-term commitments and partnerships worldwide, and needs-driven, action-focused research, CLARE links up short-and long-term issues, providing a better understanding of the risks associated with climate, supporting early action to reduce impacts of climate variability whilst enabling long-term, sustainable, and equitable economic and social development in a changing climate.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seychelles, as a Small Island Developing State, faces a growing challenge from plastic pollution, particularly Single-Use Plastics (SUPs) used in packaging and everyday consumer goods. With limited landfill capacity and distance from international recycling markets, most plastic waste cannot be effectively managed once it reaches the islands. Despite legislation introduced in 2005 banning selected single-use plastics, the importation and use of disposable packaging continue to rise. This waste accumulates in constrained landfill sites or is discarded into the natural environment, contributing to visual pollution, health risks, and the worsening of coastal flooding.

The S4S Resilience to Climate Vulnerability and Environmental Risk (RECOVER) project, funded by the Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CLARE) programme addresses these interconnected issues in vulnerable coastal communities through the Real-World Labs (RWLs). Within RECOVER, RWLs are spaces for adaptation engagement across various stakeholder groups, including the most climate-vulnerable and marginalized. In other words, RWLs are problem-solving and reflection spaces; their main goal is to support sustainable change and create solutions to societal problems through an inclusive process. In Seychelles, to understand and seek solutions to the SUP challenge, the RWL fostered an inclusive stakeholder process. These consultations were a cornerstone of the project, ensuring that interventions are informed by lived experiences, local knowledge, and social realities.

Four core stakeholder groups were engaged across five flood-prone districts including Anse Boileau, Anse Royale, Bel Ombre, Perseverance, and Pointe Larue, with additional engagement in Anse Aux Pins and Au Cap. Elderly Residents were engaged as keepers of inter-generational knowledge, providing a vital baseline of how practices have changed over time. Fishers were consulted as frontline observers of ocean health, offering unique insights into marine plastic pollution and its direct impact on livelihoods. Teachers were included as crucial influencers shaping the environmental values of future generations. Community Members were engaged as daily experiencers of the compounded risks of clogged drains and coastal flooding. Through Focus Group Discussions and participatory activities, the engagement process gathered rich, qualitative data while fostering shared ownership over research outcomes.

The findings reveal that SUPs are deeply integrated into daily life across all stakeholder groups. Communities directly associate plastic waste with poor health outcomes. Blocked drains exacerbate flooding during heavy rains. Environmental concerns include harm to marine life, visual pollution diminishing community pride, and microplastic contamination of water and marine ecosystems. All stakeholder groups agree that plastic pollution undermines the tourism sector through visual impact, damaging Seychelles' image as a pristine destination. Awareness of plastic bans varies by item. Across all groups, there is a strong consensus that enforcement is weak. Participants identified critical loopholes, including laws targeting specific items rather than source materials and exemptions for items such as straws attached to juice boxes. Stakeholders demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of alternatives, weighing pros and cons against local realities. The most cited barriers to adopting alternatives across all districts include cost, with alternatives perceived as more expensive than plastics; mindset, including resistance to change, social stigma, and habit; availability and accessibility, with alternatives not easy to find; and weak policy enforcement, with laws existing but not implemented effectively.

Several key lessons emerged from the engagement process. Tradition resonates as a pathway forward, with solutions framed around cultural heritage gaining more traction than purely environmental innovations. Awareness does not equal behaviour change, demonstrating that information campaigns must be paired with visible enforcement and

accessible alternatives. Sector-specific engagement reveals nuanced realities, showing that effective interventions must be tailored to sector-specific needs. Children mirror adults, meaning long-term change requires engaging the whole community, not just schools. Systemic barriers undermine individual willingness, as individual behaviour change cannot flourish in a system that works against it.

Based on these findings, the report puts forward several recommendations. Policy enforcement and legislative completeness must be strengthened by closing legal loopholes to target source materials rather than specific items, strengthening import controls through enhanced surveillance at ports of entry, increasing penalties, and establishing dedicated enforcement units. Investment in education and public awareness should include embedding environmental education in school curricula, launching sustained public awareness campaigns, providing teachers with educational resources, and targeting youth with trend-based engagement. Alternatives must be made accessible and affordable by reducing taxes on sustainable alternatives, increasing taxes on single-use plastics, subsidizing local production of alternatives, installing water refill stations in schools and public spaces, and supporting vendor transition. Traditional practices should be revived and modernized by promoting cultural alternatives through platforms such as the Creole Festival, incorporating traditional skills in school curricula, and modernizing traditional materials through collaboration with local artisans. Collective responsibility must be fostered, with government leading by example, supporting community champions, establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships, and introducing recognition systems for schools, businesses, and communities demonstrating leadership.

The stakeholder consultations reveal a consistent picture: Seychellois communities are aware, concerned, and willing to change, but they are constrained by systemic failures that undermine individual effort. The path away from single-use plastic dependency requires closing legal loopholes, enforcing existing laws with consistency, investing in accessible alternatives, reviving traditional practices, and embedding environmental responsibility across all sectors of society. The voices gathered in this report are a mandate for action.

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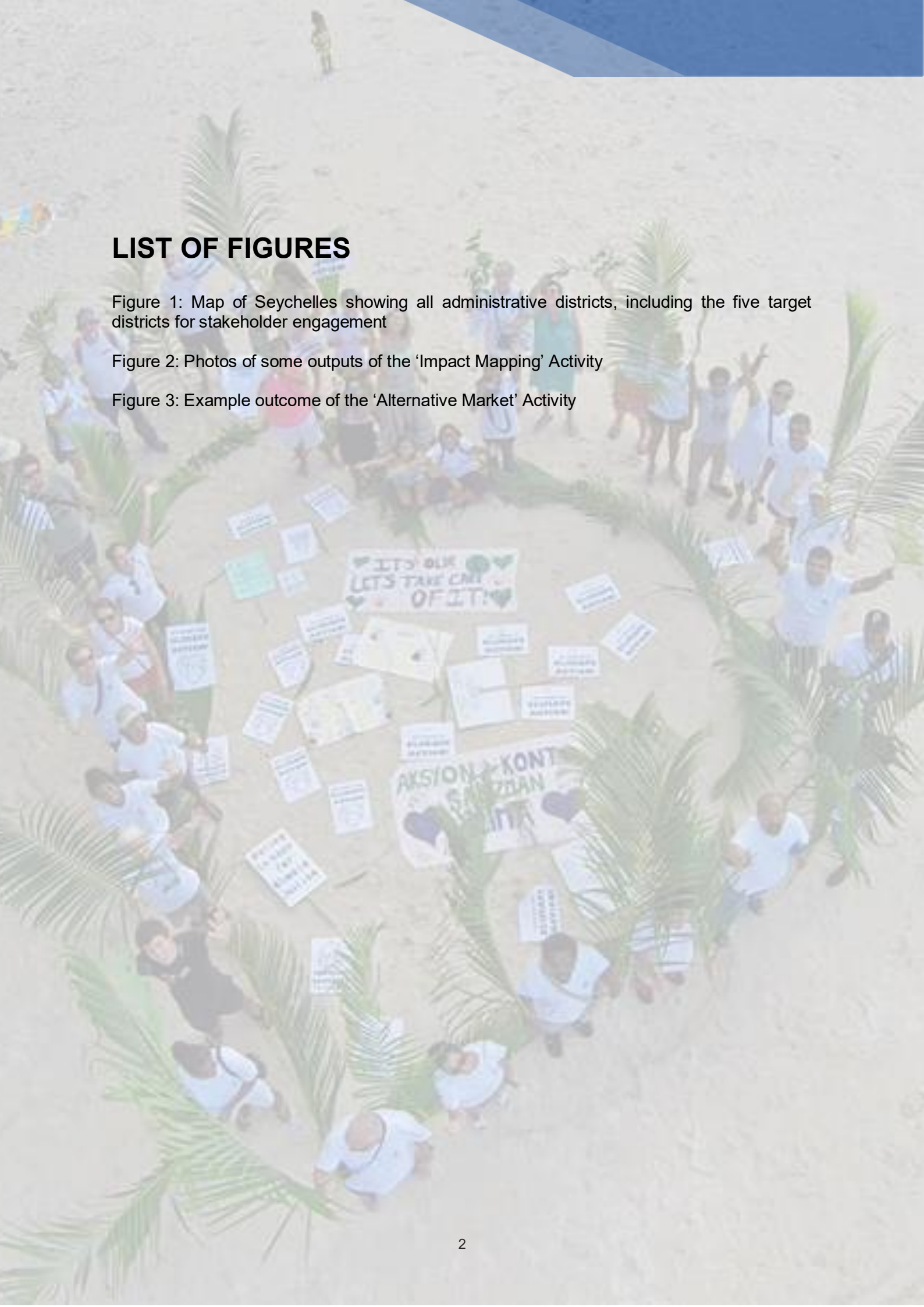

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1. Introduction

Seychelles, like many Small Island Developing States (SIDS), faces a growing challenge from plastic pollution, particularly from Single-Use Plastics (SUPs) used in packaging and everyday consumer goods. The country's limited landfill capacity and distance from international recycling markets mean that most plastic waste cannot be effectively managed once it reaches the islands. Despite the introduction of legislation in 2005 banning selected SUPs, the importation and use of disposable packaging continue to rise. Much of this waste either accumulates in already constrained landfill sites or is discarded into the natural environment, where it contributes to visual pollution, health risks, and the worsening of coastal flooding.

Plastic packaging poses multiple interconnected challenges. When not properly disposed of, SUPs clog drainage systems, exacerbating flooding during heavy rains, a growing concern as Seychelles experiences more frequent and intense climate-related weather events. Flooding in turn exposes low-lying, populated coastal communities to health risks such as mosquito-borne diseases and contamination from poor sanitation. Moreover, plastic debris threatens marine and terrestrial biodiversity and can lead to the ingestion of microplastics by both wildlife and humans. Although these problems are well recognized, the complex relationships between plastic pollution, climate-induced flooding, and community health have not yet been fully explored.

The S4S Resilience to Climate Vulnerability and Environmental Risk (RECOVER) Project, funded by the Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CLARE) Programme, and supported by University of Waterloo, seeks to address these interconnected issues particularly in vulnerable coastal communities. The project aims to raise awareness among residents and stakeholders while providing forums and tools for engagement, dialogue, and advocacy. It also responds to government requests for additional support in understanding and addressing the continued use of SUP packaging despite existing regulations. By collecting information on current patterns of SUP use, perceptions of alternatives, and the availability, accessibility, and affordability of biodegradable or reusable substitutes, the project will help identify practical and locally appropriate pathways for reducing plastic waste. Additionally, by mapping plastic flows through Seychelles, the project will provide valuable data to support informed decision-making on plastic imports and waste management policies.

Within this framework, stakeholder consultations form a cornerstone of the project. Meaningful engagement with communities and key actors ensures that interventions are informed by lived experiences, local knowledge, and social realities. In particular, involving vulnerable and coastal populations helps to ground the project's findings in the context of those most affected by plastic pollution and flooding. Engaging these groups also fosters ownership, enabling them to become advocates for sustainable change and partners in developing solutions suited to their daily lives and economic conditions.

2. Stakeholder Engagement Process

Our stakeholder engagement strategy is a foundational pillar of the RECOVER project, designed to move beyond simple data extraction and build meaningful, equitable partnerships. We recognize that the communities most affected by plastic pollution and climate vulnerability hold the key to understanding the problem and crafting durable solutions.

We have engaged four core groups, each for a specific strategic reason:

- **Elderly Residents** are the keepers of inter-generational knowledge, providing a vital baseline of how practices have changed over time.
- **Fishers** are on the front lines of ocean health, offering unique insights into marine plastic pollution and its direct impact on livelihoods.
- **Teachers** are crucial influencers and observers, providing critical insight into children's behaviors, serving as a conduit for awareness, and shaping the environmental values of future generations.
- **Community Members** are the first to experience the compounded risks of clogged drains and coastal flooding, making their lived experience essential for understanding vulnerability.

Five districts were also targeted and identified as flood-prone and hosting vulnerable populations. These include:

- Pointe Larue
- Anse Boileau
- Anse Royale
- Bel Ombre
- Perseverance

There were significant challenges in engaging fishers from the five districts. As a low-lying and flood-prone area, *Anse Aux Pins* was intentionally included to ensure adequate fisher engagement. In addition, *Au Cap* was included as part of the community focus group discussions, to facilitate data collection on SUPs for a University of Seychelles student project. These districts are indicated with purple numbering in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Map of Seychelles showing all administrative districts, including the five target districts for stakeholder engagement (indicated with red numbering), © Centre for GIS, Seychelles

Our approach is one of collaborative consultation. We are not merely informing these groups but actively listening and learning from them through Focus Group Discussions and interviews. These methods allow for rich, qualitative data collection and foster a sense of shared ownership over the research outcomes. This is not a one-off transaction, but the beginning of an ongoing relationship built on trust and mutual respect, which is crucial for the long-term adoption of the project's recommendations.

The engagement process is guided by three key objectives:

1) **To Co-Produce Knowledge**: To gather grounded, contextual insights about the use of single-use plastics and their direct link to environmental and health risks, ensuring our research reflects on-the-ground realities.

2) **To Identify Actionable Pathways**: To collaboratively identify and assess the social, economic, and practical viability of alternatives to plastic, as well as the barriers to their adoption.

3) **To Empower and Build Capacity**: To provide a platform for often-overlooked voices to contribute to the policy dialogue, thereby strengthening community capacity for advocacy and ensuring that project outcomes are both legitimate and sustainable.

2.1 Stakeholder Analysis

From the list of identified stakeholders, participants were selected from the five districts. The consultation covered six key topics, and the resulting consultations are presented in the table below (along with the additional fisher and community consultations in Anse aux Pins and Au Cap, respectively).

Table 1: Summary of Stakeholder Consultations across districts

District	Stakeholder Group	Daily Use of SUPs	Health and Environmental Impacts	Impacts on livelihoods	Awareness & perception (bans)	Practical Alternatives	Barriers to adoption
Anse Boileau	Elders	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Fishers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Teachers						
	Community Groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Anse Royale	Elders	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Teachers						
	Community Groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bel Ombre	Elders						
	Teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Community Groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Perseverance	Elders						
	Teachers						
	Community Groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pointe Larue	Elders	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Teachers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Community Groups						
Anse Aux Pins	Fishers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Au Cap	Community Groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

3. Stakeholder Perspectives: Voices from the Community

The results of the stakeholder consultations are presented thematically across six key topics. For each topic, perspectives are integrated from all four stakeholder groups - Elderly Residents, Fishers, Teachers, and Community Members - allowing for a holistic understanding of how different segments of the community experience and perceive plastic pollution in Seychelles.

3.1 Introduction to Stakeholder Groups

3.1.1. Elderly Residents - Voices of Memory and Change

Elderly participants brought a unique historical perspective to the consultations, drawing on decades of lived experience to contrast past and present practices. Their contributions were marked by vivid recollections of traditional, plastic-free lifestyles and a deep understanding of how Seychellois society has evolved. As keepers of inter-generational knowledge, they offered not only critical observations on current plastic dependency but also practical wisdom on sustainable alternatives rooted in cultural heritage. Their voices remind us that solutions to today's plastic challenge may lie in rediscovering and adapting the practices of yesterday.

3.1.2. Fishers - Frontline Observers of Ocean Health

Fishers occupy a unique position at the intersection of plastic dependency and marine stewardship. Their daily reliance on plastic equipment, from bait buckets to fish storage boxes, reflects the practical realities of a modern fishing economy. Yet their livelihoods also depend on healthy oceans, making them direct witnesses to the environmental consequences of plastic pollution. The perspectives shared by fishers reveal a pragmatic tension between immediate operational needs and long-term ecological concerns. Their voices are essential for identifying durable, functional alternatives that can withstand the demands of life at sea.

3.1.3. Teachers - Shaping the Next Generation's Environmental Values

Teachers serve as both educators and role models, uniquely positioned to observe how plastic dependency manifests in young people and to influence the environmental attitudes of future generations. Their insights bridge the home, school, and community, revealing how habits are formed, reinforced, or challenged across these spaces. The focus group discussions highlighted the tensions teachers face, between curriculum demands and the need for environmental education, between school-based initiatives and inconsistent behaviors at home, and between the convenience of plastics and the imperative to model sustainable practices. Their voices underscore that lasting change requires alignment between what is taught in classrooms and what is practiced in communities.

3.1.4. Community Members - Lived Experiences of Plastic Pollution

Community members are the daily witnesses to and experiencers of plastic pollution's consequences, from clogged drains and local flooding to littered beaches and health concerns. Their participation in the RECOVER project activities brought spatial, practical, and emotional dimensions to the data. Through hands-on activities including sorting relays, impact mapping, livelihood brainstorming, policy debates, alternative market evaluations, and barrier tree exercises, community members across five districts contributed grounded insights into how plastics are used, where they accumulate, and what might work as solutions. Their collective voice reflects both frustration with systemic failures and genuine willingness to be part of meaningful change, provided that alternatives are accessible, affordable, and culturally relevant.

3.2. Daily Use of Single-Use Plastics (SUPs)

Objective: To understand which SUPs are most commonly used across different segments of the community, their perceived benefits and drawbacks, and patterns of use and reuse.

Table 2: Daily Use of Single-Use Plastics - Comparative Perspectives Across Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder Group	Types of SUPs Commonly Used	Use and Reuse Behaviour	Knowledge of Traditional Alternatives	Perceived Benefits and Drawbacks of Plastics
Elderly Residents	Plastic bottles and small plastic bags for snacks and groceries. Plastic takeaway boxes also noted, though some now bring reusable containers or cloth bags.	Often reuse plastic bags multiple times before discarding. Many try to reduce waste by using cardboard boxes or other containers provided by shops.	Strong knowledge and nostalgia for traditional packaging: *Sak vakwa, Sak Lapo, kornen, Papye Kaye*, and *Fey Bannann* (banana leaves). Viewed as strong, biodegradable, and culturally important.	Plastics viewed as convenient and lightweight but associated with pollution, waste accumulation, and environmental damage. Convenience makes them hard to give up despite awareness of harms.
Fishers	Plastic buckets (e.g., paint buckets) for bait and water, plastic boxes for storing fish, bin liners for packaging fish. Jerry cans and large plastic bottles for water storage.	Plastic buckets and boxes reused for 3-5 years before deteriorating. Jerry cans reused until breakage. Bin liners discarded quickly due to contamination from fish blood and smell.	Some recall using coco de mer shells in the past, but this is no longer viable due to cost and protection status. No current alternatives seen as feasible.	Plastics viewed as essential, durable, and cost-effective tools with no viable alternatives currently available for fishing operations.
Teachers	Biscuits and chips packaged in plastics, takeaway boxes, and plastic bottles as most common items in schools. Plastic bottles noted as most frequent item brought to school.	Observe higher levels of plastic waste following school events. Recall that taps along roads and at schools previously reduced need for bottled water, but these are no longer available.	Support teaching students to make traditional products such as t*ant vakwa* and *kornen* as sustainable alternatives. Seen as reviving cultural knowledge while addressing plastic pollution.	Water bottles cited as most difficult item to avoid due to daily convenience, distance from work, and concerns about tap water quality (chlorine, taste).

Stakeholder Group	Types of SUPs Commonly Used	Use and Reuse Behaviour	Knowledge of Traditional Alternatives	Perceived Benefits and Drawbacks of Plastics
Community Members	Through sorting relay activities across five districts: food and beverage packaging, personal care and hygiene products, household containers and plastics, medical plastics, fishing-related plastics (coastal districts).	High recognition of SUPs demonstrated across all age groups, including active participation by school children. SUPs confirmed as deeply integrated into everyday routines.	Nostalgia for traditional materials expressed across districts. Recognition that many modern alternatives are rooted in traditional practices, providing foundation for reintroduction.	Deep integration of SUPs into daily life acknowledged. Convenience and affordability recognized alongside environmental concerns.

3.3. Health, Flooding, and Environmental Impacts

Objective: To capture community perceptions of how SUPs affect health, local flooding, and the broader environment.

Table 3: Health, Flooding and Environmental Impacts - Comparative Perspectives Across Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder Group	Perceived Health Impacts	Perceptions of Flooding and Drainage Issues	Perceived Environmental Impacts
Elderly Residents	Plastic waste associated with poor health outcomes. Stagnant water around discarded plastics creates mosquito breeding grounds and increases disease risk. Burning plastic releases harmful fumes causing respiratory problems.	Drains and canals often become clogged with plastic waste during heavy rains, leading to localized flooding. Perceived as both a sanitation issue and sign of poor waste management.	Concern for marine and terrestrial animals affected by plastic waste. Observed fish, turtles, and birds ingesting or becoming entangled in plastics. Visual litter described as demoralizing, diminishing community pride.
Fishers	Burning plastic releases harmful fumes affecting respiratory health. No direct link made between marine plastic and human health impacts from consuming fish.	Plastics seen to block drains and exacerbate flooding, especially after heavy rainfall. Accumulation on beaches and in neighbourhoods common.	Have not personally witnessed fish or marine species harmed by plastic ingestion, though acknowledge entanglement in coral reefs kills corals. Plastic litter on beaches and sea surfaces visibly increasing.
Teachers	Identified risks: choking hazards from small plastics, allergic reactions, mosquitoes breeding in stagnant water trapped by plastics, students playing with plastic bags (suffocation risk). Concerns about water bottles left in cars leaching chemicals.	In Pointe Larue, heavy rainfall led to flooding that on one occasion resulted in temporary school closure. Blocked drains exacerbate flooding and create breeding grounds for rats and stray dogs, posing disease risks.	Plastic waste reported as prevalent around bin sites and following school events. One school described plastic waste as 'everywhere,' with improper disposal of snack packaging being a particular problem.
Community Members	Through impact mapping across districts: Attracts mosquitoes and rodents, causes health problems and sickness, foul smells, microplastic contamination of water.	Blocked drainage increases flooding risk. Identified specific flood-prone locations across all districts: Anse Royale, Sweet Escotte, Les Canelles, Mont Cristo, Anse Baleine, Anse Louis, Montagne Posée, La Réserve, Caiman Estate, and others.	Pollution includes green waste, dead animals, diapers and sanitary pads. Strong visual impact on communities. Microplastic contamination of water and marine life identified. Illegal dumping by outsiders and litter spread by animals noted as social issues.

3.4. Impacts on Livelihoods and Key Sectors

Objective: To explore how plastic use and pollution affect traditional livelihoods such as fishing and farming, and key sectors like tourism.

Table 4: Impacts on Livelihoods and Key Sectors - Comparative Perspectives Across Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder Group	Impact on Fisheries and Marine Life	Impact on Tourism and Community Image	Impact on Traditional and Other Livelihoods
Elderly Residents	Plastics widely recognized as harmful to fisheries. Participants explained that fish and turtles often ingest plastics, leading to sickness or death. However, they did not make a link as to how pollution in the sea ultimately affects people who depend on fisheries for food and income.	Plastic litter makes Seychelles less attractive to visitors. Compared present to earlier decades when beaches were cleaner and communities took more pride in surroundings. Some noted tourists are more environmentally conscious than locals; others believed tourism itself contributes to waste.	Recalled that fishing and farming once relied heavily on natural materials such as *Sak Lapo*, *kapatya*, and woven baskets rather than plastics. Perceived shift to plastic as reducing environmental quality and increasing dependence on imported materials.
Fishers	No direct impact on fish stocks or catch observed. However, plastic pollution seen as long-term threat to marine ecosystems and thus to fishing. Acknowledge entanglement in coral reefs kills corals.	Have not received complaints from tourists about plastic in fish or on beaches. However, believe reducing plastic would improve tourism appeal. Plastic accumulation seen as visually unappealing though not yet major conflict point.	Some fishers noted they could make money selling plastic bags, but most do not provide bags to customers, who often bring their own.
Teachers	Agreed that plastic pollution affects the marine environment, which in turn impacts the food consumed by humans.	Recognized that plastic pollution undermines tourism sector due to visual impact of litter. Tourists may arrive expecting clean Seychelles but encounter pollution. Perception of nation that does not recycle damaging to country's image.	Environmental topics incorporated into subjects such as science and social studies. Recycling initiatives include Christmas Tree competitions using recycled materials. Potential seen to use recycled materials across all subjects. At creche level, environmental education incorporated daily.

Stakeholder Group	Impact on Fisheries and Marine Life	Impact on Tourism and Community Image	Impact on Traditional and Other Livelihoods
Community Members	Through livelihoods brainstorming: Fishers identified plastics as essential for selling, preserving, and storing fish and bait; reusable for water and juice. Disadvantages include disposal problems, danger to marine life, sea pollution, old traps and fuel cans harming coral, fish and turtles dying, litter washing ashore.	Tourism sector analysis: Plastics used to carry items and hold rubbish. Tourists litter and do not pick up trash. Polluted environment deters tourists. Suggestions include reusable bags, anti-littering signs, banning plastics in certain areas, encouraging tourists to use bins, producing more biodegradable and natural fibre items.	Vendors identified plastics as cheap containers, easy for carrying fruits and vegetables, good for display, preserving heat and hygiene, aiding sales. Disadvantages include environmental liability, increased costs, health and safety risks, microplastics entering water, promoting single-use culture. Ideas include paper packaging, accepting client containers, encouraging bag reuse, reuse and refill models, optimizing packaging, improving waste management.

3.5. Awareness and Perceptions of Plastic Ban Policies

Objective: To understand the level of awareness, knowledge sources, and opinions about the enforcement and effectiveness of plastic ban regulations in Seychelles.

Table 5: Awareness and Perceptions of Plastic Ban Policies - Comparative Perspectives Across Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder Group	Awareness and Sources of Information	Perceptions of Effectiveness	Views on Responsibility and Enforcement
Elderly Residents	Most participants aware of national bans on certain plastics. Learned through radio, word of mouth, and local announcements. Awareness consistent across all three homes.	Despite knowing about ban, believed enforcement weak. Reported still seeing banned plastic products in circulation, especially imported ones. General view: law exists but not adequately implemented or monitored.	Responsibility should be shared between government agencies, shop owners, public, and local authorities. Better collaboration and stricter controls on plastic imports necessary for ban to be effective.
Fishers	Aware of plastic bans primarily through TV and word of mouth. Know about restrictions on SUPs.	Ban seen as weakly enforced. Plastic items remain widely available. Compliance low due to mindset, carelessness, and lack of alternatives.	Believe government should lead but everyone has role. Suggest better control of imports and more practical enforcement measures. Recommendations include incentives for returning plastics, stricter import controls, clearer communication of laws.
Teachers	Aware of bans on balloons, straws, plastic utensils, and takeaway boxes. Some noted they had 'no idea of the control,' indicating limited knowledge of enforcement mechanisms.	Ban seen as partially effective but poorly enforced. Balloons largely absent, but other banned plastics continue to be imported and used. Banned items still available because they enter through customs.	Mixed views on teacher role. Some felt they already carry too many responsibilities and lack time for law enforcement. Others emphasised teachers are primary role models and must lead by example. Community and local authorities must also play supporting roles.
Community Members	Through policy debate activity with 31 participants: Balloon ban awareness: 87% (27 participants). Straw ban awareness: 74% (23 participants). Plastic utensils ban awareness: 48% (15 participants). Polystyrene boxes ban awareness: 55% (17 participants).	Strong consensus: Laws seen as having 'no teeth' and poorly enforced. Examples: balloons and straws still smuggled and used openly; banned utensils widely available. Perceived failure points: lack of customs surveillance, insufficient enforcement resources, no visible consequences for violations.	Primary responsibility placed on government to stop plastic at source through stricter import controls and customs enforcement. Shared responsibility emphasised: individuals, vendors, enforcement agencies, National Assembly all have roles. Vendors criticized for not accepting customer containers and continuing to supply banned items.

3.6. Practical Alternatives to Plastics and Styrofoam

Objective: To identify preferred and feasible alternatives to SUPs and assess willingness to adopt or support such alternatives.

Table 6: Practical Alternatives to Plastics - Comparative Perspectives Across Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder Group	Knowledge of Alternative Materials	Willingness to Adopt Alternatives	Feasibility and Local Production
Elderly Residents	Strong recall of traditional non-plastic packaging: *kornen, Sak vakwa*, cloth bags, glass bottles, clay containers. Emphasised these were part of Seychelles' culture and could be revived.	Strong willingness to use or purchase reusable and biodegradable products, even if slightly more expensive, provided they are durable and available locally. Durable cloth or woven bags seen as good investments.	Broad support for initiatives to produce alternatives locally and reduce dependence on imports. Some concern about scarcity of natural materials like *vakwa*. Seen as way to promote innovation and create new livelihoods.
Fishers	Some recall using coco de mer shells in the past, but this no longer viable due to cost and protection status. No current alternatives seen as feasible for fishing operations.	Skeptical of alternatives if more expensive or less durable. Prefer cheap, long-lasting options. Cloth bags considered useless for fish due to blood and smell. Reusable containers used but still require plastic liners.	Believe government should provide or promote alternatives but acknowledge government cannot supply everything.
Teachers	Glass bottles proposed but concerns about cost and secondary student willingness. Reusable cloth bags suggested but noted as unsuitable for all products. Water refill stations strongly recommended. Traditional materials need updating to attract younger generations.	Success depends on how alternatives are designed (e.g., cloth bags as fashionable backpacks). Competitions and trend-following approaches suggested to capture student interest. Clear, consistent media campaigns and signage recommended.	Alternatives must be durable, affordable, easy to clean. For secondary students especially, must be fashionable and appealing. Partnerships with private sector and community stakeholders recommended to support procurement.

Stakeholder Group	Knowledge of Alternative Materials	Willingness to Adopt Alternatives	Feasibility and Local Production
Community Members	Through Alternative Market activity, evaluated multiple options: Compostable containers (bamboo, paper): healthy, biodegradable but prone to rot, expensive, tears with wet food. Bamboo and paper straws: durable, natural, biodegradable but unhygienic, expensive, tear easily. Reusable metal and wooden cutlery: durable, reusable, biodegradable but rust, corrosion, retain smell, prone to bacteria. Banana leaves: environmentally friendly but hygiene concerns. Refillable glass and metal bottles: healthier, reusable but breakable, heavy, expensive.	Detailed evaluations showed participants recognize no alternative is perfect. Biodegradability often comes with trade-offs in durability or cost; reusability raises hygiene concerns; natural materials may have limited availability. This nuanced understanding is essential for realistic policy design.	Multiple alternatives noted as 'not readily available in Seychelles,' underscoring the need to address import policies, local production, and market development alongside consumer education. Nostalgia for traditional materials, combined with concerns about modern convenience and availability, suggests path forward lies in bridging past wisdom with present innovation.

3.7. Barriers to Adopting Alternatives

Objective: To identify behavioral, economic, and structural barriers preventing communities from reducing their dependence on single-use plastics.

Table 7: Barriers to Adopting Alternatives - Comparative Perspectives Across Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder Group	Behavioral and Social Barriers	Economic and Systemic Barriers	Suggested Supports to Overcome Barriers
Elderly Residents	Convenience emerged as most cited reason for continued plastic use. Plastic described as easy and accessible; alternatives require more effort. Resistance to change attributed to laziness and habit, particularly among younger generations.	Cost seen as constraint; alternatives often more expensive or less accessible. Continued importation of plastic products undermines local efforts to reduce usage. Felt vendors and importers should bear greater responsibility.	Proposed awareness campaigns, stronger enforcement of import regulations, training opportunities for local production of alternative packaging. Suggested community-based initiatives could reduce plastic dependency and create jobs.
Fishers	Habit, convenience, and mindset are major barriers. Many fishers see no reason to change, especially if alternatives are less convenient.	Alternatives perceived as more expensive. Fishers prefer low-cost options and doubt incentives would change behaviour. Lack of collection systems, weak enforcement, continued availability of plastics undermine change.	Suggest deposit schemes and better waste management. Believe government should lead but everyone has role. Recommend incentives for returning plastics, stricter import controls, clearer communication of laws.
Teachers	Emphasised that lack of awareness is not the problem; rather, it is 'mentality and mindset' that must change. Habits are hard to break and require consistent action across society. Students mirror adult behavior, when parents and teachers fail to model responsible practices, children internalize this as normal.	Cost identified as primary barrier. Alternatives more expensive than plastics. School policies and infrastructure (e.g., water refill stations) critically important, especially given lack of affordability for many parents.	Requested educational materials: posters, videos, songs, workbooks. Visually appealing, ready-to-use resources to support classroom discussions. Suggested 'environment champions' in each class, point systems to reward good behavior, reintroducing waste sorting bins.

Stakeholder Group	Behavioral and Social Barriers	Economic and Systemic Barriers	Suggested Supports to Overcome Barriers
Community Members	Through Barrier Tree activity across five districts: Mindset resistance to change, unwillingness to change, negative attitudes and embarrassment about using alternatives (e.g., cloth bags seen as 'unfashionable'), people still have choice to use SUPs, lack of community cohesion to drive change.	Most cited barriers across 4-5 districts: Cost - alternatives perceived as more expensive than plastics. Availability and accessibility - alternatives not easy to find. Weak policy enforcement - laws exist but not implemented or monitored effectively. Plastics too cheap and accessible.	Most supported solutions across districts: Education and awareness - continuous, multi-platform sensitization (media, schools, community programs). Economic interventions - reduce taxes on alternatives, increase taxes on plastics, subsidize local production. Policy and enforcement - strengthen import controls, clarify laws, increase penalties, ensure consistent enforcement. Local production and tradition - revive and modernize traditional alternatives (*vakwa, kapatya*), support local enterprises.

4. Summary and Concluding Remarks

4.1 Elderly Residents

Discussions across the three elderly homes revealed a deep awareness among participants of both the practical and environmental dimensions of SUPs in daily life. The elders demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the balance between convenience and sustainability, recognizing the ease and affordability that plastics bring, while also lamenting their lasting harm to the environment, health, and community wellbeing.

Across all sessions, there was a strong sense of nostalgia and pride in traditional Seychellois practices that once relied on natural, reusable, and biodegradable materials. Participants recalled these with a sense of cultural identity and viewed them not only as environmentally friendly, but also as a symbol of self-reliance that has gradually diminished with the spread of plastic dependency. This memory of past practices represents an important social foundation for any future efforts to reintroduce sustainable packaging options.

Health and environmental impacts of plastics were described in tangible and emotional terms, from mosquito breeding and blocked drains to the distress of seeing littered coastlines. Participants linked these problems to broader social and economic consequences, including risks to tourism and fisheries. These observations underscored an understanding that plastic waste is not merely a household issue but one that touches livelihoods, aesthetics, and national pride.

Awareness of existing plastic bans was widespread, reflecting the reach of government messaging. However, participants expressed skepticism about enforcement and the continued presence of banned items, suggesting that awareness alone is insufficient without consistent monitoring and visible accountability. At the same time, there was a collective willingness to be part of the solution, provided that alternatives are accessible, durable, and locally relevant.

While convenience and habit remain major barriers, participants displayed openness to behavioral change, particularly when framed within community values and practical support systems. The discussions indicated that change is most likely to occur when it resonates with cultural memory, when alternatives are made tangible and affordable, and when individuals see their own role as part of a collective effort rather than an isolated responsibility.

Overall, the voices from the elderly homes point to a community that is reflective, informed, and ready to engage in the transition away from SUPs, a transition that will require both rekindling traditional knowledge and fostering innovation in equal measure.

4.2 Fishers

The engagement with fishers revealed a pragmatic and economically driven perspective on plastic use. While fishers are aware of the environmental impacts of plastics, particularly on drainage, flooding, and coral reefs, they do not perceive an immediate threat to their livelihoods from marine plastic pollution. Plastic items such as buckets, boxes, and jerry cans are viewed as essential, durable, and cost-effective tools with no viable alternatives currently available.

Fishers are informed about plastic bans but are skeptical of their enforcement and effectiveness. They see a disconnect between policy and practice, with plastic items remaining widely accessible. There is a shared sense that responsibility should be collective, but also a clear expectation for government to facilitate change through practical measures such as incentives for returning plastics, stricter import controls, and the promotion of affordable alternatives.

Economically, fishers are resistant to change **if** alternatives are more expensive or less functional. The notion of financial incentives for reducing plastic use was met with doubt, as plastics are deeply embedded in both the economics and routines of fishing. However, there is an underlying recognition that reducing plastic could benefit tourism and community well-being in the long term.

Overall, fishers represent a critical but challenging stakeholder group in the transition away from SUPs. Their dependence on plastic is rooted in practicality and economics, and any intervention must offer durable, affordable, and functionally equivalent alternatives. Engaging fishers in solution design, particularly through participatory approaches that address their operational realities, will be essential for developing sustainable and accepted alternatives in the fisheries sector.

4.3 Teachers

The engagement with teachers revealed a professional group deeply aware of the plastic challenge, both in their personal lives and through their unique vantage point as educators. Teachers observe firsthand how plastic dependency manifests in young people, from the prevalence of bottled water and snack wrappers to the mirroring of adult behaviors that normalize environmental harm.

Teachers recognize their role as primary role models but also express frustration at being expected to carry this responsibility alone, and with limited resources and time. They emphasised that schools cannot succeed without parallel efforts from parents, communities, and government. The home environment was consistently identified as the foundation upon which school-based education either flourishes or falters.

Key insights from teachers include:

- Plastic bottles are the most pervasive and difficult-to-avoid item in schools, driven by convenience, cost, and concerns about tap water quality.
- Students mirror adult behavior-when parents and teachers fail to model environmentally responsible practices, children internalize this as normal.
- Flooding and health risks are tangible concerns, with schools in Pointe Larue having closed due to flood events exacerbated by plastic-clogged drains.
- The plastic ban is partially effective, but weak enforcement and continued importation undermine its impact. Teachers see banned items still in circulation and question the seriousness of implementation.
- Alternatives must be affordable and appealing, especially for secondary students who are sensitive to fashion and peer perception. Traditional materials like *vakwa* and *kornen* have potential but need modernization to attract younger generations.
- Systemic support is essential, including water refill stations in schools, educational materials, partnerships with private sector, and sustained media campaigns.

Teachers are cautiously optimistic about the potential for change. They see students as more receptive than adults to new habits when properly guided. However, they stress that change requires consistency, continuity, and collective effort. Initiatives that start with enthusiasm but

fade due to lack of follow-through (e.g., waste sorting bins) are demoralizing and counterproductive.

Ultimately, teachers call for a whole-of-society approach in which environmental responsibility is embedded not only in school curricula but in everyday community life, supported by visible enforcement, accessible alternatives, and sustained public awareness. As one participant noted: "We need to be consistent in our actions. The law is not severe enough, and it is a danger to our kids who will mirror these habits."

4.4 Community Members

The engagement with community members across five districts through six participatory activities generated rich, localized data that grounds this report in lived reality. Participants demonstrated sophisticated understanding of the plastic challenge, recognizing both the practical utility of plastics in daily life and their profound environmental and health consequences.

4.4.1 Plastic Sorting Relay

Overall Themes from the Activity

- High Recognition: Participants across all districts easily recognized and categorized a wide array of SUPs, indicating their deep integration into daily life.
- Consistent Core Categories: Despite district differences, all groups identified similar core categories, primarily centered on consumption (food/drink) and personal/household care.
- Engagement & Teamwork: The activity fostered collaboration and discussion, with participants negotiating categories and justifying their choices.
- Inter-generational Awareness: School children participated actively, showing that recognition of plastic types is present across age groups.

The activity provided a visual and participatory snapshot of the SUPs most embedded in community daily life. Participants across all districts demonstrated clear, consistent recognition of common plastic items, primarily categorizing them into Food & Beverage Packaging, Personal Care & Hygiene, and Household Use. This exercise confirmed that SUPs are deeply integrated into everyday routines, from meal storage and personal care to household management, establishing a tangible baseline of current usage patterns.

4.4.2 Impact Mapping

Overall Themes from the Activity

- Widespread Spatial Impact: Plastic pollution is not confined to a single area but is widespread across residential, coastal, and even remote dump sites.
- Clear Cause-and-Effect Understanding: Communities directly associate plastic waste with blocked drains (worsening flooding), disease vectors (mosquitoes, rodents), and ecosystem harm (marine life, water contamination).
- Strong Community Awareness: Participants demonstrated detailed knowledge of pollution hotspots and their complex socio-environmental impacts, including effects on tourism and community pride.
- Highlighted Systemic Issues: Problems such as illegal dumping by non-residents and inconsistent waste management infrastructure were identified as key contributors.

The Impact Mapping activity translated community observations into a visual geography of plastic pollution. Participants not only pinpointed specific affected areas but also articulated the multifaceted consequences of pollution, directly linking physical waste to tangible problems in health (disease vectors, foul smells), infrastructure (blocked drains, flooding), environment (marine and terrestrial degradation), and community well-being (tourism, pride). This exercise provided spatial context to the plastic problem and highlighted its direct intrusion into daily life and local ecosystems, providing critical localized evidence to inform targeted interventions and policy discussions.

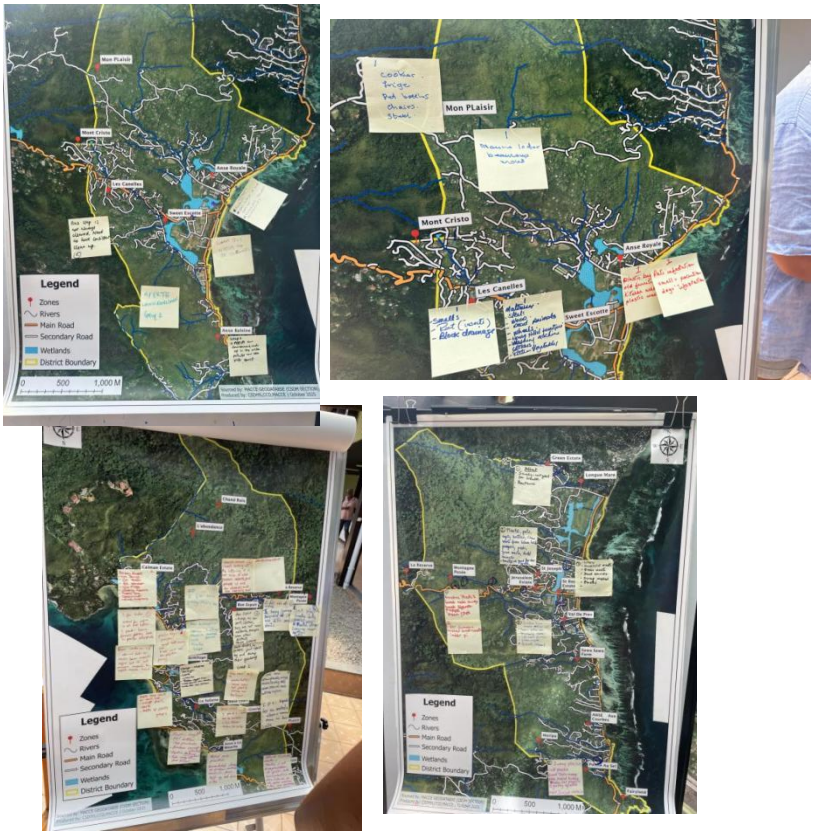

Figure 2: Photos of some outputs of the 'Impact Mapping' Activity

4.4.3 Livelihood Brainstorm

General Discussion Outcomes (Cross-District Themes & Policy Suggestions)

Beyond sector-specific ideas, the general discussions yielded strong consensus on systemic interventions.

- National Policy & Enforcement - Calls for high-level debate in the National Assembly, stricter enforcement of existing bans, and a review/restriction on plastic imports.
- Economic Instruments - Suggestions included taxing plastic imports, increasing plastic prices to discourage use, and providing subsidies/incentives for vendors and businesses adopting alternatives.
- Education & Awareness - Need for sustained, coordinated public education on plastic impacts, waste separation, recycling, and training in traditional alternative production.

- Cultural Revival - Strong support for reviving and promoting traditional materials (*kapatya*, *kornen*, banana leaves) through cultural platforms like the Creole Festival.
- Tourist Engagement - Ideas to mandate proper waste disposal by tourists and use of advertising at key entry points (airports, hotels) to promote responsible behavior.

Overall Themes from the Activity

- Dual Nature of Plastic: Across all districts and sectors, plastics are seen as essential tools for practicality, hygiene, and cost, but also as primary pollutants threatening health, environment, and economic sustainability.
- Sector-Specific Vulnerabilities: Highlighted direct marine ecosystem damage from the fishing sector; cost and waste management struggles for vendors; reputational damage and visual pollution was emphasised for the tourism sector.
- Solutions Rooted in Tradition & Policy: Ideas frequently combined revival of traditional alternatives (*kapatya*, *vakwa*, banana leaves) with calls for stronger policy (bans, taxes on imports, enforcement of laws, incentives for alternatives).
- Systemic vs. Individual Responsibility: Participants called for national-level intervention (import controls, laws, education) while also proposing individual/community actions (reusable bags, proper disposal, cultural revival).

This activity fostered sector-specific analysis of plastic dependency. Participants provided nuanced insights, recognizing plastics as essential tools for hygiene, preservation, and cost-efficiency in their trades, while simultaneously identifying them as sources of pollution, health risks, and threats to ecosystems and tourism. The brainstorming generated practical, community-rooted ideas for mitigation, ranging from reviving traditional materials to policy reform, highlighting a clear understanding of the need for systemic change alongside individual action.

4.4.4 Policy Debate

Key Discussion Themes and Community Views

General Agreement with Laws:

- Strong support in principle, especially for environmental protection and future generations.
- Recognition that laws are necessary but currently flawed in design and execution.

Perceptions of Weak Enforcement:

- Consensus - Laws are seen as having ‘no teeth’ and are poorly enforced.
- Examples cited - Balloons and straws are still smuggled in and used openly; banned plastic utensils remain widely available.
- Perceived failure points - Lack of surveillance at customs, insufficient resources in enforcement agencies (Environment, Customs, Seychelles Revenue Commission, Fair Trading Commission), and no visible consequences for violations.

Identified Loopholes and Law Incompleteness:

- Laws target specific items (e.g., single straws) but not others (e.g., straws attached to juice boxes).
- Bans on polystyrene do not cover other plastic takeaway or food containers.
- No clear legal definition or standards for ‘bioplastics or biodegradable alternatives.
- Packaging for imported goods (appliances, freezers) often contains prohibited plastics but is not regulated.

Views on Responsibility:

- Primary responsibility is placed on the government to stop plastic at the source through stricter import controls and customs enforcement.
- Shared responsibility is also emphasised - individuals, vendors, enforcement agencies, and the National Assembly all have roles.
- Vendors are criticized for not accepting customer-owned containers and for continuing to supply banned items.

Suggested Solutions and Improvements:

- Strengthen Enforcement - Create dedicated task forces, impose on-the-spot fines, and improve monitoring at ports of entry.
- Revise and Complete Legislation - Laws should be based on source materials rather than specific items, cover all single-use plastics, and include clear definitions.
- Enhance Education & Sensitization - Continuous, multi-generational education starting in schools; clear communication of laws and health impacts (e.g., microplastics) in simple language and via posters in communities.
- Promote Alternatives & Local Industry - Support local production of traditional alternatives (*kapatya*, *vakwa*); incentivize recycling and waste sorting with pilot projects and collection systems.
- Economic Measures - Tax plastic imports heavily to discourage use and fund alternatives; provide subsidies for businesses adopting sustainable practices.

This activity revealed a significant gap between awareness and effective implementation of plastic ban laws. While a majority of participants were aware of the core prohibitions, they expressed strong skepticism about enforcement and identified critical loopholes in the legislation. Thus, this activity underscored that community awareness of plastic bans is reasonably high, but trust in their implementation is low. The discussion highlighted a community that is supportive of the laws in principle but frustrated by systemic failures in monitoring, import control, and consistent application. Participants are willing to comply and adopt alternatives, especially those rooted in tradition, but they demand a coherent, enforced, and well-communicated policy framework. The path forward, as voiced by the community, requires closing legal loopholes, rigorous import control, and embedding environmental responsibility into both cultural practices and national governance.

4.4.5 Alternative Market

Overall Themes:

Tradition as a Resource:

- Across multiple districts, participants recognized that many modern alternatives are rooted in traditional practices. This cultural memory provides a foundation for reintroducing sustainable materials with community acceptance.

Trade-Offs Are Well Understood:

- The detailed evaluations show that participants recognize no alternative is perfect. Biodegradability often comes with trade-offs in durability or cost; reusability raises hygiene concerns; natural materials may have limited availability or production impacts. This nuanced understanding is essential for realistic policy and program design.

Knowledge Gaps Exist Alongside Enthusiasm:

- In one district, participants were unfamiliar with the term ‘single-use plastics’ despite being regular users of such items. This highlights the critical need for foundational education and awareness-building to accompany any transition strategy.

Feasibility Concerns Must Be Addressed:

- While supportive of alternatives in principle, participants in one district raised legitimate concerns about whether a complete transition is practical in a modern, convenience-driven society. The tension between environmental ideals and daily realities must be acknowledged and navigated thoughtfully.

Availability and Supply Chain Matter:

- Multiple alternatives (e.g., wax paper) were noted as 'not readily available in Seychelles,' underscoring the need to address import policies, local production, and market development alongside consumer education.

Collective Decision-Making Is Valued:

- One district request to work as one team rather than in pairs reflects a community-oriented approach to problem-solving, valuing consensus and shared understanding over individual opinions.

The activity successfully introduced participants to a range of plastic alternatives and prompted critical evaluation of their practicality in the local context. Participants demonstrated strong engagement, carefully weighing the positive traits (biodegradability, reusability, health benefits) against negative traits (cost, hygiene concerns, durability issues) for each alternative. The activity revealed that communities are not only open to exploring alternatives but are also capable of critically evaluating them against local realities. The detailed pros-and-cons analysis demonstrates a sophisticated understanding that the transition away from plastics involves navigating complex trade-offs. The nostalgia for traditional materials, combined with concerns about modern convenience and availability, suggests that the path forward lies in bridging past wisdom with present innovation. Effective transitions will require sustained education, visible public awareness campaigns, local production support, and opportunities for collective community dialogue to build consensus and ownership over sustainable solutions.

Figure 3: Example outcome of the 'Alternative Market' Activity

4.4.6 Barrier Tree and Solution Leaves

Overall Themes and Cross-District Insights

Most Cited Barriers (4-5 districts):

- Cost - Alternatives are perceived as more expensive than plastics.
- Mindset - Resistance to change, social stigma, habit.
- Availability & Accessibility - Alternatives are not easy to find.
- Weak Policy Enforcement - Laws exist but are not implemented or monitored effectively.

Most Supported Solutions:

- Education & Awareness - Continuous, multi-platform sensitization (media, schools, community programs) to shift perceptions and demonstrate health/environmental benefits.
- Economic Interventions - Reduce taxes on alternatives; increase taxes on plastics; subsidize local production.
- Policy & Enforcement - Strengthen import controls, clarify laws, increase penalties, and ensure consistent enforcement.
- Local Production & Tradition - Revive and modernize traditional alternatives (e.g., *vakwa*, *kapatya*) and support local enterprises.

Interconnectedness Recognized:

- Participants frequently noted that barriers and solutions are linked, e.g., reducing cost through local production can improve accessibility, which, paired with education, can shift mindset.

The activity successfully mapped the multi-layered obstacles to reducing plastic dependency while generating a rich set of community-driven solutions. It provides a clear, visual consensus on the systemic nature of the plastic challenge. It revealed that barriers are deeply interconnected; spanning cost, mindset, availability, enforcement, and education; and that effective solutions must likewise be integrated, combining policy, economic incentives, education, and cultural revival. Communities are not only aware of the obstacles but are also capable of proposing holistic, actionable strategies that blend policy reform, economic incentives, cultural revival, and education. The activity underscores that transitioning away from SUPs requires a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach in which government leadership, community action, and individual behavior change must align.

5. Lessons Learned

The stakeholder engagement process yielded not only rich data on plastic use and perceptions but also valuable insights into the dynamics of community consultation itself. The following lessons emerge from reflecting on how participants engaged, what resonated with them, and where challenges arose. These observations should inform future engagement strategies and project design.

A. Tradition Resonates as a Pathway Forward

Across all stakeholder groups, particularly among the elderly and teachers, there was strong cultural recall of traditional, plastic-free practices. Participants expressed pride in materials such as *vakwa*, *kapatya,* and banana leaves, and viewed their revival as both practical and culturally meaningful. This suggests that solutions framed around cultural heritage may gain more traction than those presented as purely environmental or technological innovations.

B. Awareness Does Not Equal Behaviour Change

The Policy Debate (community engagement) demonstrated that while awareness of plastic bans is reasonably high (87% for balloons, 74% for straws), this knowledge has not translated into consistent behaviour change. Participants continue to use and encounter banned items due to weak enforcement, continued importation, and habitual convenience. This underscores that information campaigns alone are insufficient; they must be paired with visible enforcement and accessible alternatives.

C. Sector-Specific Engagement Reveals Nuanced Realities

Plastics play different roles across sectors. For fishers, plastics are essential, durable tools with no current alternatives. For vendors, they offer low-cost convenience but create waste management burdens. For tourism, they pose reputational risks. Effective interventions must be tailored to these sector-specific realities rather than applying one-size-fits-all solutions.

D. Communities Understand Trade-Offs

Stakeholders critically evaluate alternatives, weighing pros (biodegradability, reusability) against cons (cost, hygiene concerns, durability). This nuanced understanding demonstrates that communities are not simply resistant to change but are realistically assessing what will work in their daily lives. Policy design must respect and respond to these grounded assessments.

E. Children Mirror Adults - For Better or Worse

Teachers consistently emphasised that students replicate the environmental behaviours they observe at home and in the community. This cuts both ways: where adults model responsible practices, children adopt them; where adults litter or disregard bans, children normalize this. Any strategy for long-term change must therefore engage the whole community, not just schools.

F. Systemic Barriers Undermine Individual Willingness

Across all activities, participants expressed willingness to adopt alternatives and comply with bans, provided that alternatives are affordable, available, and consistently enforced. The persistence of banned imports, weak customs control, and lack of government follow-through were repeatedly cited as demotivating factors. Individual behaviour change cannot flourish in a systemic environment that works against it.

G. Participatory Methods Generate Richer Data

The use of interactive activities i.e. sorting relays, mapping, barrier trees, produced deeper engagement and more nuanced insights than traditional question-and-answer formats would have. Participants co-created knowledge, negotiated meaning in groups, and visualized their perspectives. This approach not only yielded better data but also built community ownership of the findings.

6. Recommendations

Drawing directly from the voices and ideas shared by elderly residents, fishers, teachers, and community members, the following recommendations are organized thematically. They reflect the consensus views that emerged across districts and stakeholder groups, offering a roadmap for policy and programmatic action grounded in community reality.

A. Strengthen Policy Enforcement and Legislative Completeness

- Close Legal Loopholes: Revise plastic ban legislation to target source materials rather than specific items, ensuring that all single-use plastics, including those attached to products (e.g., juice box straws) and non-polystyrene takeaway containers, are covered.
- Strengthen Import Controls: Enhance surveillance and enforcement capacity at ports of entry, involving Customs, the Seychelles Revenue Commission, and the Fair-Trading Commission in coordinated action to prevent banned items from entering the country.
- Increase Penalties: Impose meaningful fines and on-the-spot penalties for violations, applied consistently to importers, vendors, and individuals.
- Establish Dedicated Enforcement Units: Create task forces with responsibility for monitoring compliance across districts, supported by adequate resources and clear mandates.

B. Invest in Education and Public Awareness

- Embed Environmental Education in Curricula: Integrate plastic pollution, waste sorting, and sustainable alternatives into school curricula from creche through secondary levels, using interactive and age-appropriate methods.
- Launch Sustained Public Campaigns: Move beyond one-off sensitization to continuous, multi-platform awareness campaigns using traditional media (SBC, radio), social media, and community signage. Messaging should highlight health impacts (e.g., microplastics), environmental consequences, and the benefits of alternatives.
- Provide Teacher Resources: Develop and distribute visually appealing, ready-to-use educational materials; posters, videos, workbooks, interactive games; to support classroom discussions on plastics and alternatives.
- Target Youth with Trends: Use social media trends, competitions, champions programs, and trend-based engagement (e.g., fashionable reusable bags) to make sustainability appealing to younger generations.

C. Make Alternatives Accessible and Affordable

- Reduce Taxes on Alternatives: Lower import duties and taxes on sustainable alternatives (e.g., glass bottles, bamboo products, cloth bags) to reduce retail prices and encourage adoption.
- Tax Plastic Products: Introduce or increase taxes on single-use plastics at point of import to discourage use and generate revenue for alternative development.
- Subsidize Local Production: Provide grants, subsidies, and technical support for local enterprises producing alternatives from traditional materials (*vakwa*, *kapatya*, banana leaves) or modern sustainable inputs.
- Install Public Infrastructure: Establish water refill stations in schools, public spaces, and communities, linked to campaigns promoting reusable bottles.

- Support Vendor Transition: Work with vendors and takeaway outlets to phase out single-use plastics, providing support for bulk purchasing of alternatives and recognition for early adopters.

D. Revive and Modernize Traditional Practices

- Promote Cultural Alternatives: Use platforms such as the Creole Festival to showcase and celebrate traditional materials (*kornen*, sak *vakwa*, banana leaves) as viable, culturally rooted alternatives to plastics.
- Incorporate Traditional Skills in Education: Teach students to make traditional products like tant *vakwa* and *kornen* in schools and as extra-curricula, linking cultural preservation with environmental sustainability.
- Modernize Traditional Materials: Work with designers and local artisans to update traditional items (e.g., woven bags as fashion accessories) to appeal to contemporary tastes, especially among youth.

E. Foster Collective Responsibility and Leadership

- Government Lead by Example: Ensure that public events, meetings, and government offices model best practice by eliminating single-use plastics and using sustainable alternatives.
- Support Community Champions: Empower local environmental champions in each district to sustain momentum, monitor progress, and encourage peer behaviour change.
- Establish Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: Facilitate collaboration between the Ministry for Education, Ministry for Environment, private sector, and community organizations to resource and implement plastic reduction initiatives.
- Incentivize Good Practice: Introduce recognition and reward systems for schools, businesses, and communities demonstrating leadership in reducing plastic use.

F. Address Sector-Specific Needs

- **For Fishers:** Invest in research and development of durable, affordable alternatives to plastic fishing gear (buckets, boxes, storage). Engage fishers in solution design to ensure functionality.
- **For Vendors:** Provide accessible alternatives for food packaging, support bulk purchasing, and enforce bans on single-use plastics in commercial outlets.
- **For Tourism:** Work with hotels, tour operators, and airport authorities to promote responsible waste disposal among tourists and eliminate single-use plastics in the sector.

7. General Conclusions

The RECOVER project stakeholder consultations have illuminated the complex relationship between Seychellois communities and single-use plastics. Across four stakeholder groups, elderly residents, fishers, teachers, and community members, a consistent picture emerges: communities are aware, concerned, and willing to change, but they are constrained by systemic failures that undermine individual effort.

Elderly residents remind us that a plastic-free lifestyle is not a futuristic ideal but a lived historical reality. Their nostalgia for traditional materials and practices is not mere sentiment; it is a repository of practical knowledge that can guide present-day solutions. They demonstrate that change is possible and that cultural memory is a resource to be harnessed, not discarded.

Fishers embody the pragmatic tension at the heart of the plastic challenge. Their livelihoods depend on durable, affordable, functional equipment that currently only plastics can provide. Yet they also witness the environmental degradation that plastic pollution causes. Their voices call for innovation that respects operational realities, alternatives that are not just environmentally sound but practically equivalent.

Teachers occupy the critical intersection between present challenges and future possibilities. They see daily how plastic dependency manifests in young people and how adult behaviours are mirrored by children. They are frustrated by being expected to solve alone a problem that requires whole-of-society effort. Yet they remain cautiously optimistic that with proper support, resources, infrastructure, parental engagement, they can help shape a generation with stronger environmental values.

Community members, through their active participation in six consultative activities, provided the granular, localized data that grounds this report. They mapped the littered beaches and clogged drains they navigate daily. They weighed the pros and cons of alternatives with sophisticated understanding of trade-offs. They debated policy effectiveness with clear-eyed recognition of where laws fail. They built barrier trees and solution leaves that visualize both the obstacles and the pathways forward.

Across all groups, several truths emerge with clarity:

- Awareness is high, but enforcement is weak. Communities know the laws; they see them being violated with impunity. This erodes trust and motivation.
- Willingness exists, but alternatives must be accessible. People will change, but only if affordable, durable, culturally appropriate options are available.
- Tradition offers a path forward. The past contains practical wisdom that, when updated for modern contexts, can contribute to sustainable solutions.
- Systemic change is non-negotiable. Individual behaviour change cannot succeed in a system that continues to import banned plastics, fails to enforce laws, and offers no infrastructure support.
- Children are both vulnerable and hopeful. They mirror adult behaviours, for good or ill, but they are also more receptive to new habits when properly guided and supported.

The path away from single-use plastic dependency in Seychelles is not simple, but it is clear. It requires closing legal loopholes, enforcing existing laws with consistency and consequence, investing in accessible alternatives, reviving and modernizing traditional practices, and embedding environmental responsibility across all sectors of society. It demands that government lead by example, that communities be engaged as partners not subjects, and that the burden of change be shared collectively rather than placed on individuals alone.

The voices gathered in this report are not just data points; they are a mandate. Elderly residents, fishers, teachers, and community members have spoken with clarity, wisdom, and willingness. The question now is whether those with power to act will listen and respond with the urgency and commitment that the plastic challenge demands.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Guiding Questions – Elderly

A. Daily Use of Single-Use Plastics (SUPs) and Their Impact

When you buy things from the shop or get food from a takeaway, how is it usually packaged for you to bring home?

Follow-up Questions:
1. Can you tell me which plastic items you use most often in your daily life? (e.g., water bottles, bags, food containers).
2. Thinking back to when you were younger, before plastic was everywhere, what did people use to carry their shopping or package food? (Probe: baskets, cloth bags, banana leaves, paper).
3. What are some **good things** and some **not-so-good things** about using plastic packaging today?
4. If you had to choose, what is the one plastic item you find most difficult to do without, and why?

B. Health, Flooding, and Environmental Impacts of Plastic Waste

Have you noticed changes over the years in the amount of plastic rubbish in your neighborhood, on the streets, or in the ocean?

Follow-up Questions:
1. During the heavy rains, have you ever seen the drains and canals get blocked? What do you see blocking them?
2. Do you think this plastic rubbish and blocked drains make the flooding in our area worse? Can you describe how?
3. From your perspective, what kind of problems can this plastic waste cause for people's health? (Probe: mosquitoes, smells, contaminating water).
4. What about for animals, birds, or fish? Do you think it affects them?
5. Does seeing plastic waste in nature and in our communities affect how you feel about our island?

C. Impacts on Livelihoods and Key Sectors

Thinking about traditional Seychellois life, like fishing or farming, has plastic packaging changed how things are done?

Follow-up Questions:
1. For those of you with family or friends who fish: do they use plastic for bait, to store fish, or for anything else? Is this better or worse than how it was done in the past?
2. Do you think the plastic waste we see on land and in the sea affects the fishing industry here?
3. Many visitors come here for our beautiful nature. Do you think they are disappointed when they see plastic pollution?
4. Do you think a cleaner environment, with less plastic, could help tourism and create more jobs for young people?

5. Overall, do you think our reliance on plastic has been more helpful or more harmful for Seychelles' way of life?

D. Awareness and Perceptions of Plastic Ban Policies

Have you heard about the law in Seychelles that bans certain plastic items, like some shopping bags and Styrofoam boxes?

Follow-up Questions:
1. Where did you hear about this ban? (e.g., TV, radio, family, shopkeepers).
2. In your opinion, is this ban working? Do you still see or receive these banned items?
3.Why do you think people might still be using banned plastic items?
4. What do you think would make the plastic ban more effective? (Probe: stricter rules, more education, better alternatives).
5. Who do you think should be responsible for making sure the ban is followed? (e.g., government, shops, police, everyone).

E. Practical Alternatives to Plastics and Styrofoam

Can you think of any good alternatives to plastic packaging? What could we use instead?

Follow-up Questions:
1. What did people use in the past that we could bring back? (e.g., woven palm leaf baskets, glass bottles that are returned, paper wrapping).
2. If you were to buy a reusable shopping bag, what would it need to be like for you to use it? (Probe: light weight, strong, easy to fold and carry).
3. For takeaway food, what kind of container would be good? (e.g., cardboard, bamboo, reusable tiffin tins).
4. Do you think products made from natural materials (like leaves or paper) are a good idea for Seychelles? Why or why not?
5. Would you be willing to try using these alternatives if they were available?

F. Barriers to Adopting Alternatives

If a shop offered you a non-plastic container for your food, but it cost a little more money, what would you think?

Follow-up Questions:
1. What is the biggest challenge for you in switching away from plastic? Is it the cost, the convenience, or not knowing what else to use?
2. If alternatives were offered, how important is it that they are made right here in Seychelles?
3. What kind of support would you need to help you use less plastic? (Probe: information, help getting the alternatives, community programs).
4. Do you think younger generations are more or less willing to change their habits than your generation?
5. What is one simple thing we could all start doing today to reduce plastic waste?

Appendix 2: Guiding Questions – Fishers

A. Daily Use of Single-Use Plastics (SUPs) and Their Impact

In your fishing operations, what plastic items do you use most often? (e.g., for bait, storing catch, packaging fish to sell, food and water on the boat).

Follow-up Questions:
1. Why is plastic the preferred material for these tasks? What are its main advantages for you? [bait] [storing catch] [packaging fish] [food and water on the boat]
2. Have you tried using any other types of materials for these jobs? What was the result?
3. How much of this plastic is typically used only once and then thrown away?
4. What do you currently do with the plastic waste generated on your boat or at the landing station?

B. Health, Flooding, and Environmental Impacts

From your time on the water, have you noticed changes in the amount of plastic pollution in the ocean and along the coastlines?

Follow-up Questions:
1. How does encountering plastic debris (like bags, lines, nets) affect your fishing? Does it ever damage your gear or make areas unfishable?
2. Have you personally seen impacts of plastic waste on marine life? (e.g., fish, turtles, birds eating it or getting tangled). Have you seen plastics inside any fish caught?
3. On land, do you see plastic waste from the community contributing to blocked drains and worse flooding, especially near coastal areas where fish are landed?

C. Impacts on Livelihoods and Key Sectors

Do you think the presence of plastic pollution affects the health of the fish stocks or the marine ecosystem you depend on?

Follow-up Questions:
1. Do you think tourists or fish buyers have any concerns about plastic pollution affecting the quality or perception of Seychelles' fish?
2. Could reducing ocean plastic potentially benefit your livelihood in the long run? How?
3. Is there a connection between plastic packaging and your ability to get a good price for your catch? (e.g., does fresh fish in clean, presentable packaging sell better?).

D. Awareness and Perceptions of Plastic Ban Policies

Are you aware of the current law that bans certain single-use plastics in Seychelles?

Follow-up Questions:

1. How have the ban(s), if at all, affected the availability or cost of the packaging you need for your work?
2. Do you find it difficult to get the specific plastic items you need for fishing that are both effective and legal?
3. What is your opinion on the ban(s)? Is it effective from your perspective as a fisher?

E. Practical Alternatives to Plastics and Styrofoam

For the plastic items you rely on, are you aware of any strong alternatives that could work for a fishing environment? (e.g., reusable ice boxes, biodegradable bait bags).

Follow-up Questions:
1. What are the most important qualities a packaging material must have to survive a day at sea? (e.g., waterproof, durable, buoyant if dropped overboard).
2. Would you be willing to switch to an alternative if it performed just as well, even if it cost a little more initially?
3. Who do you think should be responsible for providing or promoting these alternatives? (e.g., suppliers, government, SFA, yourself).

F. Barriers to Adopting Alternatives

What would be the biggest challenge for you in switching from the plastic items you currently use?

Follow-up Questions:
1. Is cost the main barrier, or is it more about the availability and durability of alternatives?
2. Would a system for reusing and returning containers (e.g., for ice or fish) be practical for fishers?
3. What kind of support would make it easier for you to reduce plastic use? (e.g., access to affordable alternatives, training, incentives).
4. Do you think there is a role for fishers' associations in tackling this issue?

Appendix 3: Guiding Questions – Teachers

A. Daily Use of Single-Use Plastics (SUPs) and Their Impact

In your daily life, at home or at school, what are the most common single-use plastic items you encounter?

Follow-up Questions:
1. What plastic items do you see students using and bringing to school most frequently? (e.g., water bottles, snack wrappers, plastic bags).
2. From your observation, why do you think these items are so prevalent in the school environment?
3. Thinking about your own habits, what is the one plastic item you find most difficult to avoid, and why?
4. How has the shift to plastic packaging changed daily routines at school compared to when you were a student yourself?

B. Health, Flooding, and Environmental Impacts of Plastic Waste

Have you observed issues with plastic waste in and around your school or local community?

Follow-up Questions:
1. Does plastic litter around the school grounds or in nearby drains pose a problem, especially during the rainy season?
2. Have you or the school ever had to deal with flooding or waterlogging that was worsened by blocked drains? What was that like?
3. From your perspective, what are the health and safety risks for students associated with plastic waste? (e.g., mosquitoes, slipping hazards, pollution).
4. How do you think the prevalence of plastic waste affects students' connection to and appreciation for Seychelles' natural environment?

C. Impacts on Livelihoods and Key Sectors

As educators shaping future generations, how do you see plastic pollution impacting Seychelles' key sectors like tourism and fisheries?

Follow-up Questions:
1. Do you incorporate topics like environmental sustainability or plastic pollution into your lessons? If so, how?
2. Do you think students understand the link between a clean environment and future job opportunities in sectors like tourism?
3. In your opinion, is our reliance on plastic more helpful or harmful for Seychelles' long-term future and economic well-being?

D. Awareness and Perceptions of Plastic Ban Policies

Are you aware of the current law in Seychelles that bans certain single-use plastic items?

Follow-up Questions:
1. How is this ban reflected (or not reflected) within the school environment? (e.g., in canteens, school events, shops nearby).
2. In your opinion, is the ban effective? Do you still see banned items being used by students, staff, or in the community?
3. Why do you think people, including young people, might still be using banned plastic items?
4. What role do you believe schools and teachers should play in ensuring the success of such environmental policies?

E. Practical Alternatives to Plastics and Styrofoam

What practical alternatives to single-use plastics do you think could be successfully introduced in schools and the wider community?

Follow-up Questions:
1. What alternatives have you or your school already tried to adopt? (e.g., reusable water bottles, metal cutlery).
2. What would a "school-friendly" alternative to common plastic items need to be like? (e.g., durable, affordable, easy to clean).
3. Do you think using traditional or natural materials (e.g., woven baskets, paper) is a viable concept to teach students about today?
4. How can we make alternatives more appealing and accessible to young people?

F. Barriers to Adopting Alternatives

What, in your experience, are the biggest challenges in moving away from single-use plastics, especially in an educational setting?

Follow-up Questions:
1. Is the main barrier cost, convenience, availability, or a lack of awareness?
2. How important is it that alternatives are supported by school policies and infrastructure (e.g., installing water refill stations)?
3. What kind of support or resources would help you, as a teacher, promote these alternatives more effectively in the classroom?
4. Do you feel that students are more or less receptive to changing their habits compared to adults?
5. What is one simple change your school could implement this year to significantly reduce its plastic footprint?

Appendix 4: Focus Group Discussion Activities and Methodologies

Daily Use of Single-Use Plastics (SUPs)

Activity: Plastic Sorting Relay
Objective: To identify commonly used single-use plastics (SUPs) and their roles in daily life through a hands-on sorting activity.
Method: Participants were divided into small groups, provided with a mixed pile of common SUP items, and asked to sort them into self-defined categories (e.g., food packaging, personal care, etc.). Groups then presented their categorizations.

Health, Flooding, and Environmental Impacts

Activity: Impact Mapping
Objective: To visualize how plastic waste affects the community by identifying specific locations of pollution and discussing associated impacts on health, flooding, environment, and livelihoods.
Method: Participants were provided with large district maps. They used markers to identify and number spots where plastic waste causes problems (e.g., clogged drains, littered beaches) and used sticky notes to describe the impacts on health, flooding, environment, and livelihoods.

Impacts on Livelihoods and Key Sectors

Activity: Livelihoods Brainstorm
Objective: To explore how plastics affect key livelihood sectors (fishing, vending, tourism) by analyzing their advantages and disadvantages, and to generate community-driven ideas for reducing negative impacts.
Method: Participants were divided into small groups, each focusing on a specific sector (fishers, vendors, tourism). Groups reflected on how plastics both help and hinder work and provided at least one idea to reduce the negative impacts, followed by group summaries.

Awareness of Plastic Ban Policies

Activity: Policy Debate: Hands Up/Down
Objective: To gauge community knowledge and opinions on existing plastic ban policies, including awareness levels, perceptions of enforcement, and attitudes toward the laws' effectiveness.
Method: The facilitator read aloud four key points from Seychelles' plastic ban policies. After each point, participants voted by raising their hands if they knew the law or keeping hands down if they did not. Votes were counted, followed by an open discussion on agreement, enforcement, and perceived effectiveness.

Practical Alternatives to Plastics

Activity: Alternative Market
Objective: To showcase and evaluate practical, locally relevant alternatives to single-use plastics (SUPs) by allowing participants to 'interact' with potential substitutes and assess their feasibility, durability, cost, and cultural appropriateness.
Method: A simulated 'market' was set up with stations featuring cards representing different alternatives (e.g., bamboo utensils, cloth bags, vakwa baskets, glass containers, biodegradable packaging). Participants moved through the stations, handling the 'items' (or

reading descriptions), and used sticky notes to jot down perceived pros and cons for each alternative. This was followed by a guided group discussion focused on the question: Which alternatives would work best in our community, and why?

Barriers to Adopting Alternatives

Activity: Barrier Tree & Solutions Leaves
Objective: To collaboratively identify the key challenges (economic, social, behavioral, systemic) to adopting alternatives to single-use plastics (SUPs) and to brainstorm actionable, community-informed solutions, creating a visual record of the barriers and proposed fixes.
Method: Using a visual 'Barrier Tree' metaphor on a flipchart, participants identified barriers as 'rocks' weighing down the tree (written on white sticky notes). In pairs or small groups, they then brainstormed solutions, written on green sticky notes and placed as 'leaves' on the branches. A final group discussion reviewed the most common barriers and assessed the feasibility of proposed solutions.