

<b>Best Practice Title -</b>	<i>Sustainable Plastic Management; An Innovative Approach to Responsible Disposal</i>
<b>Background:</b>	<p><i>The global challenge of plastic waste management has reached critical proportions, with developing countries facing particularly acute issues in this regard. The proliferation of plastic waste, driven by a variety of factors, has emerged as a pervasive environmental, health, economic, and social concern. In many developing countries, the issue of garbage disposal is a pervasive and complex problem deeply intertwined with the attitudes of the local population, the state of the education system, and the effectiveness of governmental systems. This multifaceted problem can be attributed to several key factors.</i></p> <p><i>Firstly, the attitudes of the local population play a pivotal role in the waste management equation. Cultural norms and practices often influence how individuals in developing countries perceive waste management. In some cases, there may be a lack of awareness or motivation to dispose of plastic responsibly. Traditional waste disposal practices may also contribute to the problem.</i></p> <p><i>Secondly, the education system's role in shaping behaviors is crucial. Insufficient education and awareness campaigns about the environmental impact of plastic waste can hinder efforts to change behavior. Effective waste management strategies require comprehensive education on the importance of responsible disposal.</i></p> <p><i>Furthermore, governmental systems in many developing countries can pose significant challenges to effective waste management. Inadequate waste management infrastructure, weak regulatory frameworks, and limited enforcement capacity can exacerbate the garbage problem. A lack of political will or financial resources can hinder the development of effective waste management systems.</i></p> <p><i>Moreover, the practical aspects of waste management present challenges. Local populations and infrastructure often face strain due to rapid urbanization and population growth. The growth of informal settlements often outpaces the expansion of waste management services.</i></p> <p><i>Financial capacity also plays a role in determining the effectiveness of waste management efforts. Insufficient financial resources can hinder the implementation of waste management projects, including recycling facilities and waste collection services, diverting funds from critical waste management initiatives.</i></p> <p><i>Technical knowledge and access to advanced waste processing technologies are often lacking in developing countries, further impeding progress toward sustainable waste management. The expertise required to manage plastic waste efficiently, including recycling technologies and waste-to-energy solutions, may be limited.</i></p> <p><i>Finally, the lack of access to advanced waste processing technologies, such as automated sorting and recycling equipment, hinders the ability to handle plastic waste effectively.</i></p> <p><i>The consequences of inadequate plastic waste management in developing countries are far-reaching and impact various aspects of society. These consequences include environmental degradation, health risks, economic setbacks, and social inequalities. Addressing the issue of plastic waste</i></p>

management in developing countries requires a holistic approach, innovative solutions, education campaigns, policy reforms, and international collaboration to mitigate the challenges posed by irresponsible plastic disposal. Initiatives promoting responsible plastic management represent a crucial step towards achieving a sustainable future.

### *Introduction*

*The initiatives we are proud to present involve two PET plastic management projects that are making a significant impact on recycling and responsible plastic disposal. These projects are actively addressing pressing waste management challenges in specific communities, with a focus on sustainability and positive social impact.*

***Project "Strengthening the Role of the Informal Waste Collectors in Kaduwela Municipal Council Area"*** Funded by the USAID Clean Cities, Blue Ocean (CCBO) program and implemented by Janathakshan, Project CCBO operates in the Kaduwela Municipal Council Area of Sri Lanka. This project is a response to the unique challenges faced by this community in managing plastic waste effectively.

*Kaduwela Municipal Council (KMC) and its surrounding areas grapple with insufficient plastic supply to meet market demand for clean, recyclable plastics. This project's innovative approach involves collaborating with registered Informal Waste Collectors (IWCs) and even non-registered IWCs. Together with KMC and the Western Province Waste Management Authority (WPWMA), the project aims to design an IWC-led plastic waste recycling model. This model will not only help bridge the supply-demand gap in the plastic recycling market but also empower the informal waste sector, thereby improving waste management practices in the region.*

***Project "Strengthening Informal Sector Waste Collection System for Improved Waste Management and Increased Collection and Recycling of PET Plastic in Sri Lanka"*** Funded by The Coca-Cola Foundation, Project TCCF commenced its operations in January 2022, targeting several districts in Sri Lanka, including Matara, Gampaha, Galle, Colombo, and Anuradhapura. The project's primary objective is to establish Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs) in these regions and enhance the collection and recycling of PET plastics.

*During its initial phases, the project collected an impressive 337,423 kilograms of PET plastic from 183 PET collection points across these districts. Beyond the quantitative achievements, the project also prioritized community engagement and awareness. More than 96 public awareness and community group programs were organized, involving 7,835 participants. These programs emphasized the responsible disposal, collection, and recycling of PET plastics. A key aspect of Project TCCF is its commitment to inclusivity and sustainability. The project identified and engaged 183 Informal Waste Collectors (IWCs) while strategically placing over 100 drop-off bins in public spaces to facilitate PET collection and promote responsible plastic disposal. Additionally, Project TCCF places a strong emphasis on gender equality and*

	<p><i>youth engagement, creating opportunities for women and youth to actively participate in waste management efforts.</i></p> <p><i>In terms of environmental impact, these projects have significantly contributed to the reduction of carbon emissions, preventing the disposal or landfilling of 231 metric tons of PET plastics. Furthermore, the projects have empowered and built the capacity of approximately 45 informal waste collectors, enhancing the community's resilience and contributing to the strategic direction of the organization.</i></p> <p><i>These initiatives exemplify a holistic and sustainable approach to plastic waste management, with tangible benefits for the environment, the economy, and the community. They represent a positive step toward addressing the pressing global challenge of plastic waste while creating opportunities for local development and empowerment.</i></p>
<p><b>Objective s:</b></p>	<p><i>The objectives of both PET plastic management projects, Project CCBO and Project TCCF, are meticulously crafted to address the pressing challenges associated with plastic waste management in their respective communities. These objectives are geared towards fostering sustainable and responsible practices for plastic disposal and recycling.</i></p> <p><i>At the core of these initiatives is a shared commitment to enhancing plastic recycling infrastructure. A fundamental goal is to establish and bolster Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs) and optimize collection methods. Through these efforts, the projects aim to significantly augment the capacity for recycling PET plastics in their target regions.</i></p> <p><i>Equally pivotal is the engagement and empowerment of Informal Waste Collectors (IWCs). Recognizing the vital role played by IWCs in the waste management ecosystem, both projects are dedicated to involving existing registered IWCs while also formalizing non-registered ones. This approach entails providing IWCs with training, resources, and support, thereby elevating their status as key stakeholders in plastic waste recycling endeavors.</i></p> <p><i>Furthermore, a crucial facet of these initiatives is the promotion of responsible plastic disposal within the communities they serve. Through comprehensive public awareness campaigns and community group programs, the projects seek to educate local populations about the far-reaching consequences of improper plastic waste management, encompassing environmental, health, and economic dimensions.</i></p> <p><i>Community participation is actively encouraged, with the installation of convenient drop-off bins in public spaces. This accessibility facilitates residents' contributions to recycling efforts. Additionally, the projects place a strong emphasis on fostering gender equality and youth involvement in waste management activities, thus creating an inclusive and engaged community.</i></p>

	<p><i>Reducing carbon emissions is a pivotal environmental objective. By diverting PET plastics from landfills and incineration, both initiatives aim to curb carbon emissions. In doing so, the projects make a significant contribution to climate change mitigation by preventing the release of greenhouse gases associated with conventional plastic disposal practices.</i></p> <p><i>Another central goal is to bolster the resilience and livelihoods of informal waste collectors. Capacity-building opportunities and income-generating activities are provided, enhancing the well-being of these individuals and their communities.</i></p> <p><i>Collaboration with local authorities and government agencies is integral to the success of the projects. They aim to work closely with municipal councils and waste management authorities to develop sustainable waste management models, thereby creating a conducive environment for responsible plastic management.</i></p> <p><i>Ultimately, these well-defined objectives serve as guiding principles, shaping the activities and initiatives of Project CCBO and Project TCCF. These initiatives are dedicated to making a meaningful and lasting impact on plastic waste management in their respective communities, and beyond, serving as exemplars of responsible plastic disposal and recycling practices in developing countries.</i></p>
<b>Focus of Best Practice</b>	<p>All waste types__  Organic waste__   Plastic waste __Yes__   E-waste __ </p>
<b>Initiative Description:</b>	<p><i>Overview</i></p> <p><i>Both Project CCBO and Project TCCF prioritize a comprehensive awareness and education initiative to actively engage and educate the community about responsible plastic disposal and recycling. We do it by empowering informal waste collectors. These initiatives are essential components of the objectives to drive lasting behavioral change and ensure the sustainability of plastic waste management efforts.</i></p> <p><i>Target Audience</i></p> <p><i>The primary target audience for the awareness and education initiative includes local residents, schools, community groups, and informal waste collectors (IWCs). By engaging these diverse stakeholders, the projects aim to create a holistic and community-driven approach to responsible plastic waste management.</i></p> <p><i>Frequency and Duration</i></p>

*The awareness and education activities are ongoing throughout the project's implementation period, ensuring continuous engagement with the community. CCBO project is a 2-year project (2022 March -2024 March), and the TCCF Project is a 2-year project (2022 January -2023 December). Various activities are organized regularly. Such as workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns. These events are designed to create sustained impact and foster long-term behavioral change.*

#### *Activities and Strategies*

*Workshops and Seminars - Regular workshops and seminars are conducted to educate community members about the environmental, health, and economic impacts of improper plastic disposal. These sessions are interactive, encouraging active participation and knowledge sharing.*

*Public Awareness Campaigns - High-impact public awareness campaigns are organized periodically to reach a wider audience. These campaigns include distributing educational materials, conducting street events, and collaborating with local media outlets for broader coverage.*

*Community Group Programs - Community groups play a crucial role in spreading awareness. The projects facilitate programs within these groups to discuss responsible plastic disposal practices and encourage collective action.*

*School Engagement - Schools are vital hubs for awareness efforts. The projects collaborate with local schools to integrate plastic waste management education into the curriculum. Educational materials, such as posters and flyers, are distributed in schools, and interactive sessions are conducted to engage students.*

*Informal Waste Collector Training - The initiative recognizes the importance of IWCs as change agents. Training programs are organized specifically for IWCs, covering topics like waste segregation, recycling techniques, and safety measures. These programs equip IWCs with the knowledge and skills needed to be effective advocates for responsible plastic disposal.*

*Beach Clean-ups - Beach clean-ups are a pivotal component of the awareness and education initiative. Community members, including students, volunteers, and residents, actively participate in cleaning up beaches and coastal areas. These events provide a hands-on experience of the environmental impact of plastic waste and emphasize the importance of responsible disposal.*

*School Seminars - School seminars are organized as part of the educational outreach. These seminars engage students directly, offering interactive sessions that cover the significance of responsible plastic waste management. Students are educated about the environmental and social consequences of plastic pollution and are encouraged to become advocates for change within their communities.*

*Tree Planting Activities with Students -To promote environmental stewardship and sustainability, tree planting activities involving students are organized.*

#### *Partnerships and Collaborations*

*The awareness and education initiative is strengthened through strategic partnerships and collaborations that significantly enhance its impact. By collaborating with local municipal councils and waste management authorities, the initiative gains access to essential resources and facilities for educational activities, ensuring that it reaches a broader audience. Partnerships with local schools enable the seamless integration of plastic waste management education into the curriculum, directly engaging students and fostering a culture of responsible disposal. Additionally, collaboration with community organizations and groups extends the initiative's reach and effectiveness, harnessing the collective power of the community to drive change. Lastly, working closely with local media outlets and leveraging social media platforms amplifies the projects' messages, ensuring widespread dissemination and increasing community engagement. These collaborative efforts collectively empower the awareness and education initiative to create a lasting impact on responsible plastic waste management.*

#### *Funding and Financing*

*The project "Strengthening Informal Sector Waste Collection System for Improved Waste Management and Increased Collection and Recycling of PET Plastic in Sri Lanka" is funded by The Coca-Cola Foundation Sri Lanka. The total amount of funding secured for these initiatives is 214,825 USD.*

*The project "Strengthening the Role of the Informal Waste Collectors through a Plastic Waste Recycling Model in Kaduwela Municipal Council Area" is funded by the USAID Clean Cities, Blue Ocean (CCBO) program. The total amount of funding secured for these initiatives is 232,470 USD.*

*These funds are allocated to various components of the awareness and initiatives, including the development and dissemination of educational materials, the organization of workshops and seminars, the implementation of public awareness campaigns, and the technology, machinery, technical knowledge, and other relevant equipment to informal waste collectors.*

#### *Knowledge Materials and Visual Documentation*

*The knowledge materials used for the awareness and education initiative include educational materials, posters, flyers, videos, and interactive tools designed to effectively convey the message of responsible plastic waste management. Visual documentation, including photographs and videos of initiative implementation, is available to provide a comprehensive view of the initiatives' impact on the community.*

	<p><a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OETZkK_KxSSc945e9hjckZyJr2IKX1AR/view?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OETZkK_KxSSc945e9hjckZyJr2IKX1AR/view?usp=sharing</a> - Video Production 1 - TCCF Project</p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FLsnilUXe4Q_jSR8GUGn_xUbWFLY5PEV?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FLsnilUXe4Q_jSR8GUGn_xUbWFLY5PEV?usp=sharing</a> - Project photos.</p> <p>All other documents are attached.</p>
<p><b>Outcomes</b> :</p>	<p><i>Initiative Results and Outcomes The comprehensive awareness and education initiatives implemented as part of Project CCBO and Project TCCF have produced substantial results and transformative outcomes, significantly influencing plastic waste management practices and community engagement within the targeted areas. Waste Reduction and Recycling Rates One of the most notable achievements of these initiatives has been the substantial reduction in waste sent to landfills and an increase in PET plastic recycling rates. By effectively educating the community about responsible plastic disposal and recycling, the initiatives have successfully diverted a significant amount of PET plastics away from environmentally harmful disposal methods. This diversion has not only reduced the environmental footprint but also contributed to the conservation of vital resources. The TCCF project supported to cutdown of 231 metric tons of carbon and the CCBO Project supported to cutdown of 207.2 metric tons of carbon instead of throwing or landfilling of PET plastics during the years (2023 - up to now) while resilient built about 45 informal waste collectors by increasing capacities. Under the project CCBO,</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>· 50 Informal Waste Collectors (Street and Door-To-Door Collectors) and 30 Junk and Nadar Shops have been identified to be directed to strengthen their role through a Plastic Waste Recycling Model in Kaduwela Municipal Council Area.</i></li> <li><i>· 04 potential Plastic Recycling Center (PRC) locations and operators have been identified in Athurugiriya, Battaramulla, and Kaduwela areas.</i></li> <li><i>· Technical guidance and facilities were provided for selected PRCs such as machinery and equipment (03 crushers, 03 balers, 03 digital scales, 06 fire extinguishers, 03 first aid kits, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)) with USAID CCBO funding.</i></li> <li><i>· Initiated to facilitate registration of IWCs with the assistance and guidance of the Western Province Waste Management Authority (WPWMA). 24 IWCs have enrolled in the “Green Force” (Haritha Balakaya) program executed by WPWMA.</i></li> <li><i>· 02 Training conducted for IWCs and 35 Males and 02 Females participated.</i></li> </ul>



- 01 Medical Clinic and training on safety and health measures conducted for Formal Waste Collectors (FWCs) who are attached to Kaduwela Municipal Council.
- Developed Social Behavioral Change (SBC) strategies for the groups that were identified through baseline studies of the project for promoting the sustained performance of 3R/Solid Waste Management (SWM) practices, particularly those that complement the work of the IWCs and the operation of the PRC, and highlight the important role of informal waste collectors in collecting and processing plastic.
- 283 community Members of Kaduwela Municipal Council Area participated in 05 sessions on project induction and community education/awareness program.
- 116 Community Animators are identified from Women-based Organizations, Youth Clubs, Senior Citizen clubs and associations, and Community Councils in 57 Grama Niladhari Divisions (GNDs).
- 03 Community Animator training on 3R/SWM and their role as Community Animators conducted and 99 (42 Males and 57 Females) participated.

#### *Success Stories*

*Story – Nirmala - Escaping social stigma through circular economy*  
 Janathakshan identified Nirmala (40) through the project, Strengthening the Role of the Informal Waste Collectors through a Plastic Waste Recycling Model in Kaduwela Municipal Council Area funded by USAID Clean Cities, Blue Ocean (CCBO) program. When the project team reached her, she was one of the middle-level waste collectors and recyclers based in Mulleriyawa New Town, Sri Lanka. Nirmala has passed the GCE Advanced Level Examination and completed a Diploma in Management Studies. She started recycling plastic in 2022 with the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic situation in the country. She was thinking of starting a business as she and her family had enough time to do something during this time. She and her husband managed to get a locally manufactured plastic crusher machine to start recycling and gradually learned to segregate plastic with the knowledge she received from some experts in solid waste management informally and with her own experience. They commenced recycling of plastic after placing the crusher machine in the small storerooms at her home and she received the help of another woman in her neighborhood. The challenge was collecting recyclables. However, she managed to initiate receiving recyclables from municipal tractors and trucks. Importantly, Nirmala could build up business relationships with Informal Waste Collectors (street and door-to-door collectors). Also, with the support of her husband, she started to collect recyclables from quarries located in the area. The whole family, including her three children, is engaged in the value-addition process. Also, she could offer an employment opportunity to another woman. Unfortunately, her locally manufactured crusher machine has broken down and Nirmala had to



ask her female employee not to come to work as she was unable to process the collected recyclables and lacked of supply of material. Meanwhile, Janathakshan identified her through the CCBO project. With the assessment of potential Plastic Recycling Center (PRC) locations and operators, the project team discussed with her and collected the necessary information about the business. The project is designed to establish 04 PRCs in strategic locations to support recycling processes and maximize convenience for IWC access. Based on the criteria and the report of the assessment, Nirmala's location was selected as a potential space that is appropriate for establishing a PRC. This created a new hope for Nirmala to restart her business. Janathakshan provided technical guidance, machinery, and equipment in the establishment of the PRC facility. Janathakshan supported her in purchasing equipment and materials for the center such as a digital scale, sorting table, four-wheel trolley, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and crushing and baling machines with USAID/CCBO funding. Further, Janathakshan also facilitated the PRC with safety equipment such as first aid kits, and fire extinguishers with USAID/CCBO funding. With this support, Nirmala received the opportunity to restart her plastic value addition process with a Plastic Recycling Center facilitated by Janathakshan with the necessary machinery and equipment. Nirmala did not have baling facilities even though she was willing to bale plastic at her center. With the new bale machine (which has 50 bale weight), she will be able to add value to the plastic she collects. The previous locally manufactured crushing machine had only a 05 hp capacity that could not produce at least 100 kg of value-added plastic in a day. The newly provided crushing machine has a 200 kg/hour capacity and she is now able to produce high-quality value-added plastic. Importantly, Nirmala is now able to carry out her plastic value addition process with the necessary health and safety measures provided by Janathakshan with USAID/CCBO funding. Through the planned training on Health and safety measures, she will be able to practice them at her PRC. Nirmala once mentioned that she has the enthusiasm and the willingness to be an entrepreneur with her limited resources. If she gets at least the minimum resources, she will be able to restart the crushing plastic and continue her business. Now, Janathakshan has provided her not with the minimum resources, but the resources that she needed to develop an environmentally friendly business and quality value-added production with resources. She is also ready to provide a few employment opportunities for neighboring women and it will create income-generating opportunities for women who are trying to escape from social stigma. Moreover, the center will address one of the main challenges IWCs have in adequate, safe, and environmentally sound processing space, as well as storage space to safely aggregate larger volumes of material so they can earn more income and be integrated into a more formal system.

*Evaluation of Initiative's Success:*

*The success stories, including Nirmala's transformation, exemplify the initiatives' profound impact on individual lives within the community. These stories underscore the pivotal role that responsible plastic waste management plays in creating sustainable livelihoods and reducing social stigma.*

	<p><i>Beyond individual successes, the initiatives have achieved remarkable community engagement, uniting community members, schools, and local organizations in a shared commitment to responsible plastic disposal. This collective effort has fostered a profound sense of environmental responsibility, positively influencing plastic waste management practices within the targeted areas.</i></p> <p><i>The success of the initiatives extends beyond mere waste reduction and recycling rates. It represents a holistic transformation of communities, empowering individuals, nurturing environmental consciousness, and contributing to the development of more sustainable and resilient neighborhoods. These initiatives serve as models for how responsible plastic waste management can bring about tangible social and environmental benefits while addressing the pressing global challenge of plastic pollution.</i></p>
<p><b>Lessons Learned:</b></p>	<p><i>Key Lessons from the Initiative</i></p> <p><i>The implementation of Project CCBO and Project TCCF has yielded valuable lessons that encompass a wide range of aspects, providing insights into the challenges faced, successes achieved, and recommendations for future initiatives in plastic waste management.</i></p> <p><i>Challenges Faced</i></p> <p><i>Resource Constraints - One of the primary challenges faced was the limited availability of resources for waste management initiatives in developing countries. This included insufficient support from government for critical components such as infrastructure development, recycling facilities.</i></p> <p><i>Behavioral Change - Effecting behavioral change within the community was a formidable challenge. Changing deeply ingrained cultural practices and promoting responsible plastic disposal required sustained efforts, creativity, and patience.</i></p> <p><i>Lack of Awareness - Many community members initially had limited awareness of the environmental and health consequences of improper plastic disposal. Effective education campaigns were crucial, but they often faced initial resistance and required ongoing reinforcement.</i></p> <p><i>Successes Achieved</i></p> <p><i>Community Engagement - The initiatives successfully engaged local communities, empowering them to actively participate in responsible plastic disposal. This engagement led to a sense of shared responsibility for environmental conservation and demonstrated the potential for community-driven change.</i></p>

*Inclusivity - A key success lies in the initiatives' focus on inclusivity, particularly involving informal waste collectors (IWCs). These individuals became vital change agents, significantly contributing to higher recycling rates and improved waste management practices.*

*Youth Empowerment - The initiatives recognized the significance of engaging youth in waste management efforts. Integrating plastic waste education into school curricula resulted in environmentally conscious students who actively advocated for change within their communities.*

#### *Recommendations for Future Initiatives*

*Long-term Sustainability - Future initiatives should prioritize long-term sustainability by developing comprehensive education programs that extend beyond the project's duration. Continuous engagement and the reinforcement of responsible plastic disposal practices are essential to maintain momentum.*

*Community Ownership - Empowering communities and fostering a sense of ownership over waste management initiatives are critical. Local involvement ensures that initiatives align with community needs and preferences, increasing the likelihood of success.*

*Strengthening Informal Sectors - Building the capacity of informal waste collectors emerged as a vital success factor. Future initiatives should prioritize providing training, equipment, and support to enhance their role in responsible plastic disposal.*

#### *Best Practices and Tips*

*Tailored Education - Customize education campaigns to address specific community needs and concerns. Emphasize the local context and cultural nuances in waste management messaging to ensure relevance and resonance.*

*Collaborative Partnerships - Forge strategic partnerships with government, local authorities, schools, and community organizations to extend the reach of awareness campaigns and leverage available resources. Collaboration enhances the effectiveness of initiatives.*

*Youth Engagement - Incorporate youth-friendly approaches, such as interactive workshops and school programs, to engage younger generations effectively in plastic waste management initiatives. Youth involvement fosters a culture of responsible disposal from a young age.*

#### *Funding and Financing Insights*

*Diverse Funding Sources - Seek funding from a variety of sources, including government grants, corporate sponsorships, and international foundations. Diversifying funding streams can provide financial stability and resilience to initiatives.*

*Leverage Public-Private Partnerships - Explore collaborations with private sector entities interested in corporate social responsibility and sustainability.*

	<p><i>Such partnerships can provide not only financial support but also logistical assistance and expertise.</i></p> <p><i>Resource Optimization - Efficiently allocate funds by prioritizing critical components of the initiative, such as education campaigns, recycling infrastructure, and training programs for informal waste collectors. Strategic resource allocation ensures maximum impact.</i></p> <p><i>Grant Management - Develop strong grant management practices to ensure transparency and accountability in fund utilization. Proper financial reporting and impact assessment are essential for sustaining funding and building donor trust.</i></p> <p><i>In summary, these initiatives offer valuable insights for addressing the global plastic waste crisis. They highlight the importance of holistic approaches, community engagement, and sustainability in plastic waste management. By addressing challenges, capitalizing on successes, and implementing the recommended practices, future initiatives can make significant strides in mitigating plastic pollution and fostering responsible, resilient communities.</i></p>
<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p>	<p><i>In the pursuit of fostering zero-waste cities and communities, the case study of Project CCBO and Project TCCF provides invaluable insights into the pivotal role played by awareness and education initiatives. These initiatives exemplify the transformative power of community engagement, collaboration, and effective funding strategies on the path to sustainability.</i></p> <p><i>Community engagement emerges as the cornerstone of success, affirming that real change begins within communities themselves. By equipping individuals and local communities with knowledge and tools for responsible plastic waste management, these initiatives have ignited a groundswell of change toward zero-waste cities. The active participation of informal waste collectors, youth, and community groups underscores the importance of inclusivity in effecting enduring change.</i></p> <p><i>Collaboration, whether with local authorities or community organizations, has magnified the impact of these initiatives. Through partnerships, vital resources and facilities for educational activities have been secured, expanding the reach of awareness campaigns and weaving a tapestry of support for responsible plastic waste management. These collaborative efforts showcase the strength of unity in advancing sustainable practices.</i></p> <p><i>Effective funding and financing strategies have provided the bedrock for the sustainability and expansion of these initiatives. A diverse array of funding sources, encompassing grants and private sector collaborations, have furnished the financial resources needed to implement key initiative components. Resource optimization and stringent grant management practices have ensured judicious fund allocation to maximize impact.</i></p> <p><i>In conclusion, this case study resounds as a testament to the potential of communities to pioneer change. It demonstrates that awareness and education</i></p>

	<i>initiatives, anchored in community engagement and collaboration, serve as catalysts for lasting behavioral transformation. These initiatives shine as exemplars of hope, affirming that, with the right strategies and support, communities can emerge as champions of sustainable practices, steering us steadfastly towards a future of zero-waste cities and communities.</i>
<b>References:</b>	<i>Janathakshan / WE THINK GREEN! WE ACT GREEN! (n.d.). Retrieved September 15, 2023, from <a href="https://janathakshan.lk/">https://janathakshan.lk/</a></i> <i>Janathakshan, Annual Reaport (2021-2022), Colombo, Janathakshan GTE Ltd</i> <i>Janathakshan, Annual Reaport (2022-2023), Colombo, Janathakshan GTE Ltd</i>

## **The Coca-Cola Foundation, Eco-Spindles and Janathakshan to combat plastic pollution in Colombo with the launch of the 'Eko Wave' Material Recovery Facility**

**Colombo xx, 2023:** In honour of World Environment Day 2023, The Coca-Cola Foundation joined forces once again with Eco-Spindles and Janathakshan (GTE) to officially launch 'Eko Wave' – an advanced Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Colombo, in the presence of the Chief Guest, Supun Pathirage - Chairman of the Central Environment Authority.

Taking decisive action in line with United Nations' theme for World Environment Day 'Solutions to Plastic Pollution', the Eko Wave MRF in Colombo showcases an unwavering dedication to environmental sustainability and offers a robust solution to local plastic waste challenges. Serving as a comprehensive response to the prevailing plastic-waste management challenges in the region, the MRF utilizes efficient technology and innovative waste processing processes, setting a commendable example for responsible production and consumption.

The MRF was established with funding and support from The Coca-Cola Foundation (TCCF), the philanthropic arm of Coca-Cola, and Eco Spindles, a prominent plastic recycling company in Sri Lanka. The project was implemented by Janathakshan (GTE) Ltd., a respected non-profit organization recognized for its expertise in promoting circular economy practices and advancing low-carbon development in the country. Eko Wave presents itself as a comprehensive answer to plastic waste management challenges in Colombo, with the remarkable ability to collect and process more than 18,000 kilograms of plastic waste every month.

With the highest amount of waste generation in the country being reported in the Western Province, efficient waste management becomes vital within its districts. Colombo specifically, as a prime commercial hub, produces approximately 1057.5 metric tons of waste per day with household waste being the primary contributor. However, the current waste management system in Colombo, only recovers about 1.1% of recyclables per month.

Addressing this challenge, Eko Wave will take a proactive and community-centric approach, setting itself apart by connecting with the informal waste collection network to enhance recyclable waste collection. The MRF will play a pivotal role in efficiently collecting and processing recyclable materials. As it operates as a comprehensive facility, it will utilize balers and crushers to extract maximum value from the inflow of solid waste. The facility will segregate, compress, and crush recyclables, mainly focusing on PET plastic, to transform them into compact bales and granules. These processed materials will then be sent to Eco Spindles, Sri Lanka's leading plastics recycler and manufacturer of value-added products such as bristles for brushes and yarn for garments which are exported to over 15 countries

Notably, Eko Wave will also spearhead extensive awareness campaigns, targeting schools and local communities, to promote responsible disposal practices and emphasize the importance of recycling, specifically on PET plastic. These initiatives have already reached 2,000 people in Colombo through 25 awareness programmes.

By developing the Informal Waste Collectors (**IWC**) network, the facility will create additional income opportunities for individuals, especially those from vulnerable communities. Over 115 collectors have been identified accordingly, and the project teams are working closely with Eko Wave to strengthen their capacity. Eko Wave also functions as a buy-back center which will provide a platform for local communities, residents, and businesses to sell their recyclable waste directly to the facility, further incentivizing responsible waste management.

"The launch of Eko Wave represents a significant milestone in our collective efforts to combat plastic pollution and promote responsible production and consumption," said <<spokesperson at The Coca-Cola Foundation and title>>. "Through these collaborative efforts, TCCF is not only able to spearhead plastic-waste management solution, but also address community welfare concerns as well. Our commitment lies in supporting vulnerable communities and empowering waste collectors through these facilities. Especially during the current economic crisis, we aim to create alternative livelihood opportunities, and importantly, enhance the dignity of waste workers. We thank our partners profusely for bringing this project into fruition"

"We believe that these Material Recovery Facilities are comprehensive solutions to address the pressing plastic waste issue, particularly in Colombo," said Prasantha Malimbadage – CEO of Eco Spindles Pvt. Ltd. "With a capacity to recycle over 400 tons a month, we are more than capable of supporting our shared goal of cleaner, greener, more sustainable Sri Lanka. We are proud to support this vital initiative, which aligns with our commitment to sustainability and creating a circular economy."

Janaka Hemathilaka – CEO of Janathakshan GTE said "This initiative goes beyond immediate benefits for project beneficiaries, extending its positive impact to the nation. Together, we are able to promote the principles of a circular economy and actively contribute to key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as Responsible Production and Consumption (no. 12), Climate Action (no. 13), and Life below Water (no. 14). It also stimulates the county's economy and paves the way towards a cleaner environment. It is a testament to our commitment to fostering a holistic and sustainable development for a better future"

Eko Wave marks the second MRF in the country to be established under the project 'Strengthening informal sector waste collection system for improved waste management and increased collection and recycling of PET plastic in Sri Lanka', supported and funded by The Coca-Cola Foundation and Eco Spindles, in collaboration with Janathakshan. This project is taking significant steps to combat plastic pollution in Sri Lanka by establishing six MRFs nationwide. Such efforts by The Coca-Cola Foundation and its partners exemplify their commitment to environmental sustainability and their proactive approach to finding effective solutions to plastic pollution in Sri Lanka.