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## Executive summary

**2025 has seen Common Seas' work to tackle plastic pollution deliver increasing impact through collaboration, as we have strengthened our partnerships with SIDS governments and educators.**

Our Government Partnerships programme has now completed policy recommendations for Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau and Saint Lucia. We are delighted to report that the project's funder, the UK FCDO has endorsed our progress, awarding a further grant to support the move toward implementation.

While negotiations towards a Global Plastics Treaty have stalled, we have reinforced our international leadership on plastic pollution in SIDS by co-hosting a ministerial event at the UN Ocean Conference with the Government of Tuvalu and contributing to a high-level panel at INC-5.2. Recognising that meaningful change on plastics will require multilateral action, we launched the first Insights Paper from the National Planning Working Group on Plastics Action.

Long-term sustainable change demands youth engagement, and education sits as a key enabling factor in policy recommendations for our SIDS partners. Our Education Programme has continued to grow in reach and recognition: the Barbados Ministry of Education endorsed Plastic Clever Schools, reinforcing the link between our policy and education work; the programme has also been endorsed as a UN Ocean Decade Project.

To enable wider adoption, we launched new global resources – shaped by a working group of 14 international experts – and translated these into French, Dutch, and Indonesian. In Q4, we launched a new website and CRM designed to accelerate completion of the award programme.

In the laboratory, we supported research into the effects of plastics on human health. Preliminary results from the thrombosis study at Imperial suggest that exposure of human endothelial cells to specific microplastics trigger an inflammatory response.

While there is much more work needed to understand health implications, our advocacy efforts have already supported a youth-led campaign on plastics in chewing gum. And further strengthening the connection to our policy work, our high-profile Nature roundtable in Q4 connected policymakers and researchers from multiple disciplines on this emerging science.

Together, our mutually reinforcing programmes are driving systemic change to stop the flow of plastic pollution at its source.

Thank you for your continued support.



**Charlotte Davies,**  
**Managing Director, Common Seas**



# Where we work



## Our Project Locations

- Barbados
- The Gambia
- Indonesia
- Greece
- UK
- Tuvalu
- Saint Lucia
- Grenada
- Papua New Guinea
- Guinea Bissau
- The Maldives



# Our impact in 2025

**23**

endorsed  
publications and  
resources

**762**

professionals  
upskilled

**5**

National  
governments  
supported

**1,869**

schools taking  
action

✓

**56,243 Tonnes**

potential annual reduction in  
plastic pollution

2

**63,843 Tonnes**

potential reduction in waste  
generation

# Government partnerships

## Impact in 2025

**2025 marked an important milestone in advancing our mission to reduce plastic pollution in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), with completion of national policy plans for five partner countries – growing our reputation and funding whilst driving long-term change.**

**National policy:** We reached the end of a key phase of our work with five partner countries: Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Papua New Guinea, Saint Lucia, and Tuvalu, in our UK Government funded-project. Deploying our Plastic Drawdown modelling tool, and undertaking broad national consultations, our team engaged over 140 participants to model waste flows, analyse policies, and co-develop a national framework.

Building on these achievements, an extension to the programme is underway, expected to be completed by March 2026, enabling us to support countries as they move from planning to implementation.

**Regional and global engagement:** We deepened our influence at the global level through an official side event at the UN Ocean Conference co-hosted with Tuvalu, and a high-level panel at the Global Plastics Treaty negotiations (INC-5.2) hosted at the World Economic Forum. We established a Plastics National Action Plan Working Group with other leading organisations, which published its first Insights Paper to inform treaty discussions.

We have increased our participation in the international debate through the publication of a research report on Regional Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) report and associated Vision Paper, receiving the endorsement of over 40 key stakeholders.

## Looking ahead to 2026

With 5 NAPs in place, our focus will be on transitioning from planning to implementation.

This includes targeted support to current country partners, including finance assessments, institutional capacity and support in practical plans, such as reuse pilots and integration of the informal sector.

On the research side, under our partnership with the Indian Ocean Commission, we will develop a feasibility study to explore implementation of regional EPR among Indian Ocean SIDS.

Finally, we will continue to raise visibility of our work through global and regional forums, consolidating Common Seas' position as a trusted policy partner to island nations tackling plastic pollution.

## What people said about us

"The National Action Plan reflects our ambition to integrate environmental stewardship into our development agenda. I thank Common Seas and the UK Government for their invaluable support."

**Dr Maina Talia, Minister for Home Affairs, Climate Change & Environment Tuvalu**



**5**

National Action Plans and reports completed

**180**

stakeholders engaged across all consultations and events

**£0.5M+**

secured in new programme funding (FCDO extension)

**7**

international NGOs sharing insights on National Plans for the Global Plastics Treaty

**8**

expert organisations contributing to regional EPR work

**4**

high-level international events hosted

**40+**

endorsements for our published regional EPR Vision Paper

**11+**

multi-sectoral webinars delivered

## IMPACT STORIES

# Regional co-operation among Indian Ocean SIDS

Like other islands – the Indian Ocean islands are under threat from plastic pollution. The Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) is the only regional organisation in Africa representing island states exclusively, comprising five member states: the Union of the Comoros, France (representing Réunion), Madagascar, Mauritius, and Seychelles.

The IOC has been leading collective action to defend the specific characteristics of its member states on the continental and international stages for over 35 years. Working to improve ecosystem preservation, sustainable management of natural resources, maritime security, among others.

With plastic pollution being one of the region's most pressing concerns, the 2023 Ministerial Declaration on Circular Economy affirmed IOC member states' commitment to advancing the region's circular economy and strengthening cooperation on sustainable waste and resource management, through regional collaboration on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).



With IOC member states having mandated a regional EPR approach, and Common Seas' recognised expertise for working effectively with Small Island States, it became clear that working together had big potential.

Common Seas and the IOC signed a letter of Mutual Understanding to bring theory into practice, aiming to develop a framework for regional collaboration for EPR among Indian Ocean SIDS.

Whilst no policy alone can deliver the scale of change required to tackle plastic waste completely, EPR is often identified as part of the suite of policies that can safeguard SIDS' environments, economies and health.

The partnership was brought to life through a workshop held in November, with more than 30 stakeholders from all island states in the region providing valuable information for developing a comprehensive feasibility study.

The study will include the mapping of maritime routes and transport agreements, waste flows and tonnages, alongside a review of legislative frameworks and proposed infrastructure and recycling solutions. On completion in 2026, this will enable design of a regional EPR scheme fully adapted to the Indian Ocean Commission region, to significantly reduce plastic pollution and strengthen blue economy resilience.



**Regional EPR offers island nations a practical way to strengthen waste systems.**

Traditional EPR models are difficult to implement in SIDS and remote regions, so we began exploring a regional alternative, convening a group of other experts to support. Our 2025 research report shows that adapting EPR at a regional scale could boost economic resilience, reduce dependency on grant funding, and offer a more effective response to plastic pollution.

# Education

## Impact in 2025

**This year, we supported educators and empowered students through global resources, youth-led initiatives, and hands-on events. From launching Plastic Clever Schools (PCS) in Indonesia to receiving UN Ocean Decade endorsement, we advanced inclusive, action-focused ocean literacy worldwide.**

**Equipping educators:** Through in-person events, webinars, and one-on-one meetings, we supported 575 educators globally, providing tools and inspiration to nurture the next generation of ocean advocates. Following the launch of our Global Action resources with River Cleanup and the Amyas Valora Foundation, PCS was adapted for Indonesia, with 29 schools participating. We developed a new PCS platform, creating a globally accessible website with a smooth way for regular and meaningful engagement with our resources, events and growing community.

**Empowering young people:** Over 2,600 youth-led actions to tackle plastic pollution were submitted to PCS, with 154 schools earning the award. Progress was accelerated by project officer support, events, and the School Action Fund. Amy Meek, Co-founder of Kids Against Plastic, joined as Youth Action Officer, enhancing our enrichment programme. Instagram drove 23% of new registrations. Our international presence grew, particularly in Greece, with 400 schools registered. We joined a two-day Cycladic Museum event, and 500 schools from 30 countries signed up for the International Day of Action, resulting in 700 submissions in November alone.

**Building recognition:** Partnership with River Cleanup enabled translations into French, Dutch, and Indonesian, as well as establishing PCS in Cameroon. In Barbados, the Ministry of Education recognised PCS as a tool for plastic reduction and student-centred learning, and supported training for local teachers to equip them with practical resources.

## Looking ahead to 2026

**We will strengthen our global network, using our new website to better understand and engage teachers and students.**

We will work to increase participation through targeted outreach. A vibrant calendar of activities will keep momentum high, including the International Day of Action, School Action Fund, World Ocean Day for Schools, and The Big Plastic Count.

To amplify impact, we will begin development of a new Community Action Award, giving schools the opportunity to share learning from PCS and lead lasting change in their communities, supported by dedicated funding for this next phase.

## What people said about us

"Plastic Clever Schools has completely changed the way we think. It has created passionate children who have led the way in reducing single-use plastic in our school"

~ Mrs Bullough, Primary School Teacher, UK



# Plastic Clever Schools

**605**

new schools registered to Plastic Clever Schools (total 1,869)

**1345**

evidence submissions demonstrating student action

**€185K**

secured in new funding

**18**

new multi-lingual resources published

**154**

schools awarded Plastic Clever status

**30+**

countries represented in the International Day of Action

**575**

teachers attended online training webinars, events or received 121 support

**1,000+**

video views on youtube of recorded events and resources

## IMPACT STORIES

# Driving global impact: Lessons from Plastic Clever Schools in Indonesia

This year, we made Plastic Clever Schools (PCS) truly globally accessible, partnering with River Cleanup to launch our Global Action Resources.

11 million metric tonnes of plastic enter our oceans from land-based sources each year. Much of this pollution originates from littering or leakage from dumpsites, flowing into rivers and eventually reaching the sea. Small coastal nations, despite contributing the least to the problem, often suffer the greatest ecosystem damage. Education is a critical step toward systemic change - and young people are at the heart of that transformation.





Our Global Action Resources were co-created with sustainability experts and educators to ensure they are inclusive, accessible, and action-focused, supporting ocean literacy and equitable access to environmental education worldwide.

Our recent visit to Bandung and Surabaya offered valuable insights into how schools are reducing plastic waste in ways that fit their daily routines—from reusable tumblers and snack boxes becoming part of school culture, to creative reuse projects led by students.

A standout moment was a cleanup along the Cikapundung River. 80 students from 7 schools collected nearly 90 kg of waste, demonstrating both the impact of collective action and the enthusiasm of young people to lead change.

The pilot is promising: **29 schools are participating and 7 have already completed the PCS Award**, showing strong demand for the programme and an impressive ability to turn learning into real-world impact. Lessons learned so far include:

- **Community-driven action works.** Schools that embed plastic reduction into everyday routines see deeper engagement, reinforced by support from school leaders and families.
- **Creativity builds ownership.** Hands-on projects spark innovation and pride. Ensuring all schools can access materials and ideas will help sustain this momentum.
- **Global tools must adapt locally.** The PCS framework provides structure, but local cultural and logistical realities shape what success looks like.
- **Action must lead to lasting change.** Awareness alone isn't enough—schools need opportunities to implement solutions that reduce plastic in measurable, sustained ways. Initiatives like a Community Action Award can help extend impact beyond the classroom.

Building on the strong foundations and our growing global footprint, we will apply these learnings as we launch PCS in Cameroon in early 2026. Across this network, the next phase of PCS will introduce a Community Action Award to recognise and inspire schools that drive lasting plastic reduction within their wider communities.

# Plastic and health

## Impact in 2025

**We saw steady advancement in our science programme, combining research with advocacy to elevate the conversation on plastics and human health. Despite challenges, we strengthened partnerships, delivered research milestones, and convened influential voices to shape future action.**

**Research and experimental work:** Two research projects continued at Imperial College London:

**Food packaging and gut health studies** (co-funded by Minderoo Foundation)

After delays due to staff absence and sample degradation, additional samples were tested, completing practical work. Analysis and write-up are nearing completion, with findings expected to inform dietary exposure assessments.

**Thrombosis study** (co-funded by Medical Research Council)

In vitro results show microplastics – polyamide (PA), polystyrene (PS), and polyethylene terephthalate (PET) – trigger low-level inflammation and shift endothelial cells toward a pro-thrombotic state. Elevated thrombosis markers and protein assays suggest increased clotting propensity. Similar responses were observed in stromal endometrial cells.

**Communication and advocacy:** A key highlight was the Nature roundtable, convening 60 participants from science, NGOs, and industry. The event explored gaps in research, underscored the need for interdisciplinary approaches, and reinforced Common Seas' credibility through partnership with Nature, opening opportunities for joint activities and publications.

We also supported **City2Sea** and **nuud gum** campaigns to raise awareness of plastics in chewing gum and advocate for a UK ban, engaging young people from Plastic Clever Schools.

## Looking ahead to 2026

**With increasing visibility and debate surrounding long-term impacts of microplastics, our focus is on the role of robust science to inform decisions.**

We support work to review and identify specific gaps where research may be valuable in delivering actionable insights, particularly in areas relevant to other programmes such as issues for SIDS or young people.

We will seek to deepen links between science and policy with parliamentary groups and advisory committees.

We will continue to amplify advocacy through credible platforms and partnerships, ensuring science translates into actionable change.

## IMPACT STORIES

# Uniting science for health: how collaboration is driving microplastics research

Microplastics trigger immune responses and may increase clotting risk - research is helping uncover what this means for human health, and fostering collaboration to tackle key questions.

In 2025, Common Seas deepened our understanding of the health impacts of plastic pollution by fostering collaboration among leading scientists and driving targeted research.

A highlight of the year was the roundtable we co-hosted with Nature, which brought together 60 participants from academia, NGOs, and industry. This event created a rare space for interdisciplinary dialogue, exposing gaps in current knowledge and reinforcing the need for coordinated action. The discussions revealed that while evidence on microplastics and health is growing, much research remains observational and fragmented.





Participants highlighted urgent priorities, from understanding exposure pathways in everyday environments to assessing the toxicity of so-called “biodegradable” plastics. The event exposed critical gaps in current research and reinforced the need for coordinated action, reinforcing Common Seas’ position as a credible convener.

Alongside convening thought leaders, we advanced our own research agenda. At Imperial College London, we co-funded a pioneering study on the thrombotic effects of microplastics. In vitro experiments showed that common polymers – polyamide, polystyrene, and PET – can trigger low-level inflammation and push endothelial cells toward a pro-thrombotic state. Elevated clotting markers and protein assays suggest microplastics may increase the risk of thrombosis, with similar responses observed in endometrial cells. These findings, published as an abstract in *Research and Practice in Thrombosis and Haemostasis*, mark an important step toward understanding how plastics interact with human biology.

By convening experts and sponsoring cutting-edge research, Common Seas is helping to shape a global evidence base that informs policy and action. As we look ahead, we will continue to amplify science through credible platforms and partnerships – ensuring that knowledge translates into meaningful change.

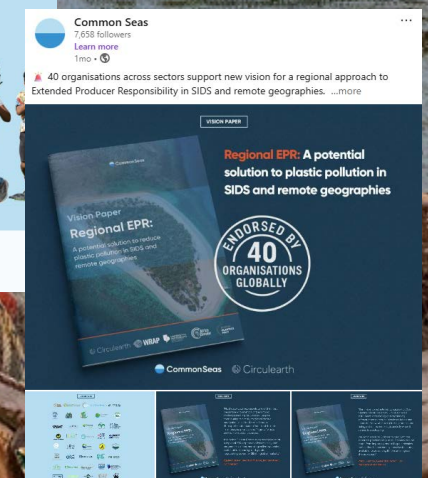
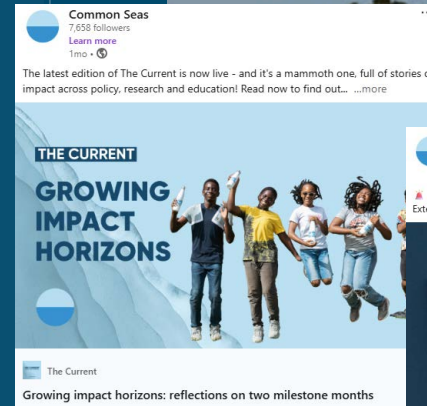
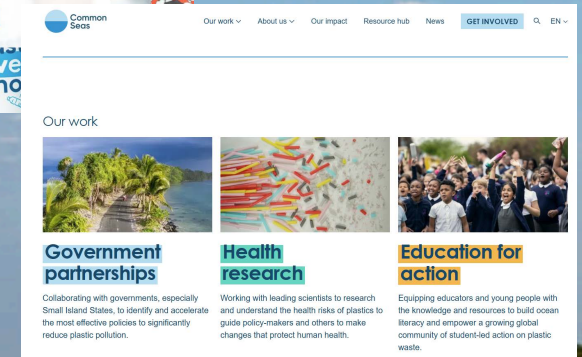
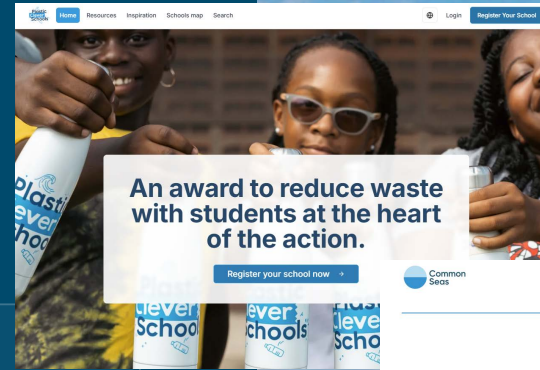
# Finance and operations

## Building an authentic global brand

We made great strides in building a more cohesive, accessible, and globally relevant brand that reflects our values and impact, and improved effectiveness of our communications channels.

We've delivered upgraded websites for both [commonseas.com](https://commonseas.com) and [plasticcleverschools.org](https://plasticcleverschools.org). By combining ultra-low bandwidth and AAA standard accessibility, the [commonseas.com](https://commonseas.com) website provides improved access to resources and shares our work more effectively to stakeholders worldwide. The [plasticcleverschools.org](https://plasticcleverschools.org) website also provides an enhanced user journey for schools, supporting active participation in the programme, and more flexible reporting to help us respond to feedback and make continued improvements.

By refining our audience targeting toward the most relevant stakeholders and increasing our focus on opinion-led content, we've significantly boosted reach and engagement compared to last year. This helped secure endorsements and support for some of our key publications this year, including our regional EPR research report and associated vision paper, which has been endorsed by over 40 organisations.





## Impact-driven delivery

Monthly reporting against our impact framework is now embedded, with new dashboards providing deeper insights at the programme level. This data-driven approach is helping us allocate resources effectively and identify areas for growth.

**A significant success was in securing an extension in funding of £525k from the UK government to build on the existing policy work in SIDS.**

Funding highlights include:

€ **Clean Blue Sporades**  
€15k from private donors towards school action

€ **Latsis Foundation**  
€10k enabling digital resources

€ **River Cleanup**  
€10k website development for Plastic Clever Schools

£ **Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office**  
£525k Sustainable Blue Economies programme

€ **Amyas Valora Foundation**  
€150k Global resources template and Indonesia project

# Cultivating our talent

Team members have actively represented Common Seas at high-profile events, including the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, the latest round of the Global Plastics Treaty negotiations in Geneva, and the IUCN World Conservation Congress, building networks and expertise.

We've continued our learning series with diverse topics, covering EPR, finance, and even an in-depth series of training sessions on AI tools, to enable adoption of some new approaches that support more effective and flexible data analysis and reporting.

We also developed and delivered a series of new induction sessions for onboarding staff, alongside a practical team litter pick activity as a useful way of connecting around our mission and shared values.





[www.commonseas.com](http://www.commonseas.com)

THANK YOU TO ALL PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS INCLUDING

