



Unlocking circularity in Small Island States

Insights from a World Circular Economy Forum Accelerator Session hosted by Common Seas

About the session

Our online Accelerator Session as part of the World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF) 2026 brought together perspectives from SIDS policymakers, NGOs and the private sector to explore which circular economy systems work for Small Island States – and the benefits of implementing them.

Drawing from experience across the Pacific, Caribbean and Indian Ocean, we discussed how tailored approaches to EPR, DRS, and reuse can overcome barriers to unlock lasting pollution reduction in SIDS.

Our speakers



CARLA WORTH
COMMON SEAS



CAMILLE MONDON
SEYCHELLES



JONAS BARKHAU
GIZ



ANDREA CINO
WRAP



DAGNY TUCKER
PERPETUAL



AXEL DARUT
CIRCLEARTH



ALEX WHITE
HAWAII'

Solutions explored

Regional EPR:

How harmonised frameworks can level the playing field for islands, creating the scale and waste volumes needed to make circular systems.

Reuse at scale:

Why islands present a unique environment for reuse systems, while reducing pressure on landfills reaching capacity.

Deposit Return Systems:

How islands can use DRS as an incentive to treat packaging as a valuable resource rather than waste, reducing pollution.

Capacity building:

Why understanding perspectives and identifying alignment across fragmented value chain is vital to creating lasting systemic change.

"The main message I'm taking away is SIDS don't necessarily need to catch up with circularity models developed elsewhere. They have an opportunity to design systems differently from the outset – around resource constraints, resilience, prevention and the realities of island economies."

Carla Worth, Head of Policy,
Common Seas



The context



Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are disproportionately impacted by plastic pollution, and have long been among the most ambitious countries when it comes to addressing the triple planetary crisis. However, their unique circumstances and the constraints of remoteness mean that traditional circular solutions often fall short, leaving incineration and landfill as the only options available.

Our session showed that circularity is possible when solutions are designed with SIDS' realities in mind from the outset. And SIDS are ready to lead.

Key insights

- SIDS are leaders on a global scale and innovators on a domestic level.
- The challenges SIDS face - **limited land, expensive waste management** - mean that linear systems are very costly for islands.
- Those **constraints create interesting cases for reducing imports, retaining materials locally and developing circular systems.**
- **There is no one-size-fits-all model for circularity in SIDS.**
- Solutions need to be **locally-owned and evidence-based** and **designed around specific islands' realities.**
- **Exploring regional collaboration and engaging the whole value chain** can help to understand motivations and develop solutions that address SIDS' structural constraints.

What's next?

Common Seas is partnering with Small Island Developing States to continue exploring innovative ways to increase circularity on islands. Working across the whole value chain, we are currently adapting solutions such as EPR, reuse and DRS to the specific context of SIDS and remote geographies.

If you are interested in being a part of this work, reach out to us at: carla@commonseas.com.

About Common Seas

Common Seas creates systemic change to stop plastic pollution, connecting policy with education and practical action.

We partner with governments, businesses, communities and young people, to turn solutions into lasting impact. Our programmes focus on:

- Generating and sharing evidence to drive stronger protections from harm and motivate change.

- Supporting governments and key stakeholders to develop and implement effective policies and practical circular solutions.
- Empowering children and young people through education to build knowledge, inspire action and drive long-term behaviour change.

We work particularly in coastal locations and small islands developing states SIDS where the challenge is greatest, supporting a just transition to a future freed from plastic pollution.