



Transforming the plastic economy

Lessons for action



This brief presents lessons from an independent evaluation of a global initiative to tackle plastic pollution: The Global Plastic Action Partnership (GPAP).

Plastic pollution remains a major environmental, public health and equity challenge, requiring coordinated action across the entire plastics value chain. Drawing on evidence from 25 countries, the evaluation examines how a multi-stakeholder model is supporting governments, businesses and civil society to align around shared priorities, develop national roadmaps, and strengthen engagement in global policy processes.

The findings highlight both early progress and ongoing challenges, offering practical lessons for policymakers and practitioners seeking to drive system-wide change in complex and evolving contexts.

Read the [Global Plastic Action Partnership Evaluation Report](#)

Key messages



Convening and alignment

National Plastic Action Partnerships (NPAPs) create trusted spaces for stakeholders across the plastics value chain to align around the need for ambitious change. National roadmaps provide a shared framework to guide and co-ordinate action.



Evidence as foundation

GPAP's early investment in situational analysis has grounded national dialogue in a shared understanding of the problem and helped build momentum for action.



Progress with limits

While there are early signs of meaningful progress, GPAP's work represents only the start of a long-term transition. Sustained engagement will depend on securing funding models that preserve NPAP independence and credibility.



Linking national and global action

GPAP's combined national and international engagement is mutually reinforcing. Its global footprint positions it to support systems-level change efficiently over time.

Context

Plastic pollution is one of the most pressing environmental, health and equity challenges of the 21st century. Production continues to rise, private sector action is limited, and a fragmented geopolitical context is making coordinated responses more difficult.

Established in 2018 by the World Economic Forum, GPAP provides a neutral, multi-stakeholder platform bringing together governments, businesses, civil society and international organisations. NPAPs are central to its approach, supporting countries to build a shared evidence base, strengthen trust, and agree coordinated roadmaps for action.

With NPAPs now established in 25 countries and moving into delivery, and global treaty negotiations ongoing, GPAP has the potential to support much needed change – at both global and national levels. An independent evaluation by Itad and the University of Portsmouth, commissioned by the World Economic Forum, has generated insights to inform future action.

Key findings from the evaluation

Relevance

GPAP's model addresses key barriers to transforming the plastics economy. National platforms convene stakeholders across the value chain, enabling trust-building and consensus essential for meaningful change.

Efficiency

National platforms provide an efficient mechanism for influencing systemic change, engaging diverse stakeholders and aligning priorities. While monitoring, evaluation and learning systems could be strengthened, delivery is broadly efficient.

Effectiveness

Global and national engagement are mutually reinforcing, strengthening commitments to change. National platforms provide trusted forums for analysing challenges, building collaboration and agreeing priorities. This has supported public-private collaboration, elevated under-represented voices – including informal workers – and contributed to a more enabling policy environment.

Government engagement has generally been strong. However, unclear ownership of national roadmaps risks slowing momentum and weakening accountability for delivery.

Impact

Systemic change appears feasible where upstream and downstream interventions are implemented together, with potential for significant improvements in waste management and waste avoidance. National roadmaps make a compelling case for whole-of-value-chain action, but delivery is not yet assured. More time is needed to assess the extent to which entrenched interests can be shifted and long-term change sustained.

Nonetheless, the initiative has strengthened conditions for systemic change and represents good value for money. Its global network of countries also contributes to international momentum, including efforts to advance a global plastics treaty.

Sustainability

Some national platforms are beginning to transition to long-term delivery. However, without continued funding, gains risk being lost. Work is ongoing to develop funding models that balance financial sustainability with neutrality.

Conclusions

1

The initiative has developed a distinct and relevant model that addresses key barriers and creates value at national and global levels.

2

Early evidence suggests catalytic change is achievable in some contexts. National and global convening functions reinforce one another, building a community committed to ambitious change.

3

The approach effectively mobilises diverse stakeholders, builds consensus, and can be adapted across different country contexts.

4

National roadmaps are a central strength, providing a clear strategic framework for coordinated action, though clearer ownership would further strengthen delivery.

5

Rapid expansion in GPAP's national footprint reflected the urgency of the challenge but preceded a robust evidence base and now coincides a more constrained funding environment, creating challenges for sustaining momentum.

6

Emerging funding models offer promise but also highlight tensions between financial sustainability and maintaining neutrality, which will need careful management.

7

Overall, the initiative has strengthened the enabling environment for circular economy approaches and supported more ambitious policy action. The next phase will be critical to translating this momentum into sustained, system-wide change.

Lessons

- Tackling systemic global challenges does not follow a defined linear process. As a result, there may be a rationale to scale before complete proof of concept in pilot countries. In such cases, a clear rationale and strong monitoring, evaluation and learning systems are essential to guide adaptation and build evidence over time.
- Public-private collaboration is critical, and impartial convening plays an important role in managing power dynamics and building trust. However, vested interests remain influential, requiring sustained engagement from change-makers across the ecosystem.
- Convening stakeholders across the value chain is an effective way to build consensus and accelerate learning, while identifying shared priorities for action.
- Highlighting the environmental, economic and health consequences of inaction alongside a robust business case for solutions is a powerful motivator, underlining the value of situational analyses and scenario modelling.
- Monitoring systemic change could be strengthened by combining government and private sector data with the insights of informal workers.
- Advancing circularity and equity together is essential for a just transition. This requires embedding social protection and inclusion in strategies, roadmaps and interventions.
- Momentum can be fragile once roadmaps are agreed and requires early, visible action – supported by catalytic funding – to sustain progress.
- Inclusive national processes can strengthen countries' positions in global negotiations by building domestic consensus for systems change.



Solving complex challenges with evidence and learning

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