



## Australia's APEC Support Program (AASP)

### CASE STUDY

#### THE APEC GROUP ON SERVICES PROJECT: SERVICES THAT CLEAN-UP MARINE DEBRIS



#### KEY POINTS

- In addressing the critical issue of marine debris, the Australia APEC Support Project Fund (AASP) project aligned with APEC's *Roadmap on Marine Debris* and demonstrated the intersection between environmental protection and trade and economic policy.
- The project successfully achieved endorsement by APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade of [APEC Non-Binding Guidelines on Services that Support Clean-up of Marine Debris](#) – a key resource for policy makers and other stakeholders.
- The socialisation of project findings, including through a joint Public-Private Dialogue (PPD), facilitated awareness among public and private sector stakeholders and increased their engagement on these issues, aligning with Australia's priorities to create a more conducive

environment for trade in clean-up services and Australia's objectives to tackle plastic pollution oceans.

- The project contributed to raising awareness and building the capacity of developing economies to undertake policy action and participate in regional and global efforts to promote investment, trade, and market creation in industries and activities in the services sectors involved in marine debris management, prevention, and clean-up.

#### TIMELINE

The *APEC Group on Services Project – Services that clean-up marine debris* commenced in March 2022 and was completed in June 2023.

#### PROJECT RATIONALE

Plastic waste alone accounts for over 80 per cent of marine debris, and

the increased use of plastics during the COVID-19 pandemic has raised concerns that the crisis is leading to even more plastic waste reaching the environment. This global issue requires the participation and collaboration of multiple economies and individual actors within the Asia-Pacific region.

#### OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Marine Debris project were to:

1. Foster innovation in the trade in services sector by highlighting the role of trade policy in addressing environmental challenges.
2. Contribute to building the capacity of developing economies to undertake policy action and participate in regional and global efforts to promote investment, trade and market creation in industries and activities in the services

sectors involved in marine debris management, prevention, and clean-up.

3. Accelerate the implementation of specific APEC-wide actions, including APEC's *Roadmap on Marine Debris*.
4. Leverage cross-fora collaboration with the APEC Ocean Fisheries Working Group and Chemical Dialogue to demonstrate the role that trade in services plays in addressing environmental challenges.
5. Improve services data and statistics by drawing from various sources to provide a statistical base on services that clean up marine debris.

## APPROACH

The Marine Debris project aimed to clean marine debris throughout the Asia-Pacific region by demonstrating how services companies play a crucial role in cleaning up ocean pollution. The project was led and funded by Australia through APEC's Group on Services (GoS) and in collaboration with universities and private sector companies. It aimed to address a key environmental issue for the Asia-Pacific region by identifying and removing barriers to trade in services that would hinder the clean-up of marine debris. It also aimed to promote trade and investment in industries involved in marine debris management. The project brought together representatives from Asia-Pacific into a series of forum discussions aimed at specific themes and issues on the subject of marine debris.

## OUTCOMES

### Socialisation of key policy imperatives

The [Policy Brief](#) highlighted to developing economies the importance of services involved in the clean-up of marine debris and identified potential barriers

to trade in this activity, evidencing the need for continued reform and collaborative action to promote open services trade. The socialisation of these findings within the APEC Chemical Dialogue and the Group on Services (GOS) and through the Public Policy Dialogue facilitated awareness among public and private sector stakeholders and increased their engagement on these issues in line with Australia's priorities on services ([APEC Steps Up Environmental Services Efforts and Marine Debris Clean-Up](#)).

The endorsement of the [APEC Non-Binding Guidelines on Services that Support the Clean-up of Marine Debris](#) by APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade (and incorporated in the [2023 APEC Trade Ministers' Meeting Chair's Statement](#)) achieved the support of developing APEC economies for policies to address barriers to cross border services addressing environmental issues.

### Increased awareness of the importance of addressing marine debris

Participants from developing economies reported that they had increased awareness of the role and various functions of the services involved in cleaning up marine debris as part of their participation in this project. They also reported an enhanced understanding of the economic and environmental impact of any barriers to services trade in cleaning up marine debris, as one representative from a developing economy noted:

*"In our economy, we will now review our current strategy and raise awareness about the disposal of marine debris. Waste management mechanisms will also need to be evaluated to enable alternative methods to better utilise marine debris."*

(Anonymous, workshop participant)

### A stronger understanding of possible future services leading to investment

Participants reported a better understanding of how APEC can best carry forward future work focused on services in cleaning up marine debris to promote investment, trade and market creation in these industries and activities across the APEC region. For example, a policy brief and primer highlighted the importance of services involved in the clean-up of marine debris and identified potential barriers to trade in this activity, evidencing the need for continued reform and collaborative action to promote open services trade.

*"Marine debris alternative means to be used for the betterment of the economy including investment and commercial opportunities that will benefit the economy and across borders."*

(Anonymous, workshop participant)

### Increased knowledge around sustainable and inclusive growth

Participants from developing economies gained insights from experts' presentations on

## GENDER

The project achieved its aim to create a gender balance with respect to participation (57% of participants were female). The majority of participants also reported being very satisfied with the ways in which the workshop made them more aware of how gender issues can be integrated into topics such as Trade in Marine Debris Collection Services and Sustainable and Inclusive Growth.



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## BENEFITS EXPERIENCED BY DEVELOPING ECONOMIES

- Demonstrated how services that clean up marine debris can address a key environmental issue for ocean-bound regions while contributing to sustainable economic growth.
- Provided practical strategies to identify and remove barriers hindering services that clean up marine debris.
- Shared best practice examples of promoting trade and investment in industries involved in marine debris management.
- Demonstrated the significance of trade policy in addressing environmental challenges.

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## REFERENCES

- [APEC Non-Binding Guidelines on Services that Support Clean-up of Marine Debris](#)
- [Policy Brief](#)
- [2023 APEC Trade Ministers' Meeting Chair's Statement](#)

environmental services and marine debris, as well as the essential aspects of sustainable and inclusive growth. They also became aware of how individuals could contribute to initiatives aimed at protecting the marine environment.

*"I want to focus my economy on moving towards circular plastics and prioritise the avoidance of barriers to services on our agenda. We also need to ensure that any transition to alternative materials does not lead to a greater environmental or economic impact on economies, particularly those that are developing."*

(Anonymous, workshop participant)

## LESSONS LEARNED

The project identified the following challenges and lessons learned. The project team was also able to identify and/or make adjustments or corrections for many of the challenges. These are outlined below.

### Project design

Due to the project being conceptualised before the AASP's Theory of Change had been finalised, it was difficult to monitor and evaluate progress and outcomes against the AASP outcomes. In the future, it was recommended that the project design is reviewed to ensure closer linkages to the AASP's framework.

### Capacity building

It was recommended that the project scope be amended to include in-person delivery of capacity building between sessions in the Asia-Pacific region to make the activities more accessible to participants from developing economies and from a greater variety of agencies. It also recommended that a web-based knowledge platform be developed to build foundational knowledge across APEC.

## Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

There was a shift in the design of M&E for the two dialogues with the introduction of a new survey platform (Mentimeter). The latter collected survey responses in real-time while the participants were in attendance. AASP outcomes were mapped retrospectively to the relevant indicators of success in feedback from participants. Continued deployment of the online Mentimeter survey platform was recommended.

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