



PARTNERSHIP CASE STUDY

From Pilot to Partnership: Building a Community–Municipal System for Coastal Plastic Recovery

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ENGLISH

ABSTRACT

Partnership programmes frequently demonstrate early success but struggle to survive the transition from grant-funded pilots to routine local systems. This fictional case study documents a 24-month coastal plastic recovery initiative involving a municipal sanitation unit, three neighbourhood associations, informal waste collectors, and a regional recycler. The partnership introduced co-designed collection routes, transparent weighing, a minimum floor price, and quarterly learning reviews. Monthly recovery rose from 2.1 to 8.4 tonnes while rejected material fell from 31% to 12%. The decisive change was governance rather than equipment: partners clarified roles, shared data, and created a mechanism for revising prices and routes. The article identifies design principles for partnerships that seek operational durability. All organisations, places, people, and results are fictional and included solely to demonstrate the ZATARA journal format.

Keywords: cross-sector partnership; circular economy; coastal waste; informal workers; adaptive governance

中文

摘要

合作项目往往在试点阶段取得成效，却难以从资助项目转变为常规地方体系。本虚构案例研究记录了一项为期二十四个月的沿海塑料回收行动，参与者包括市政环卫部门、三个社区协会、非正式废品回收者和区域再生企业。合作机制包括共同设计收集路线、透明称重、最低保护价格和季度学习评审。每月回收量从二点一吨上升至八点四吨，不合格材料比例从百分之三十一降至百分之十二。关键变化不是设备，而是治理：各方明确职责、共享数据，并建立调整价格和路线的机制。所有组织、地点、人员和结果均为虚构，仅用于展示 ZATARA 期刊格式。

关键词: 跨部门合作；循环经济；海岸废弃物；非正式劳动者；适应性治理

BAHASA INDONESIA

ABSTRAK

Program kemitraan sering berhasil pada tahap percontohan tetapi kesulitan beralih dari pendanaan hibah menjadi sistem lokal rutin. Studi kasus fiktif ini mendokumentasikan inisiatif pemulihan plastik pesisir selama 24 bulan yang melibatkan unit kebersihan kota, tiga asosiasi warga, pengumpul sampah informal, dan perusahaan daur ulang regional. Kemitraan menerapkan rute pengumpulan yang dirancang bersama, penimbangan transparan, harga dasar minimum, dan tinjauan pembelajaran setiap triwulan. Pemulihan bulanan meningkat dari 2,1 menjadi 8,4 ton, sementara material tertolak turun dari 31% menjadi 12%. Perubahan utamanya terletak pada tata kelola: para mitra memperjelas peran, berbagi data, serta membangun mekanisme untuk menyesuaikan harga dan rute. Semua organisasi, tempat, orang, dan hasil bersifat fiktif dan digunakan hanya untuk mendemonstrasikan format jurnal ZATARA.

Kata kunci: kemitraan lintas sektor; ekonomi sirkular; sampah pesisir; pekerja informal; tata kelola adaptif

1. Context and Challenge

The fictional municipality of Teluk Harapan faced recurring plastic accumulation along 11 kilometres of urban coastline. Municipal collection focused on household waste, while low-value flexible plastics were rarely purchased by aggregators. Volunteer clean-ups removed visible waste but did not alter disposal incentives or downstream markets.

A six-month pilot initially supplied sacks, carts, and protective equipment to three neighbourhood associations. Recovery increased briefly, then declined when storage filled and collectors disputed weights and prices. The partners recognised that equipment had been introduced without an operating agreement.

2. Partnership and Actors

The redesigned partnership brought together the sanitation unit, neighbourhood associations, an informal collector cooperative, a regional recycler, and a convening foundation. Each actor controlled a necessary part of the system: public space access, household mobilisation, collection knowledge, market demand, or facilitation.

A memorandum of collaboration defined responsibilities without converting community groups into contractors. A steering group met monthly, and operational staff met weekly during the first quarter. Decisions on route changes and price adjustments required representation from the collector cooperative and at least two neighbourhood associations.

3. Approach and Implementation

Implementation proceeded through four phases: system mapping, route testing, service stabilisation, and municipal integration. Collectors mapped accumulation points and travel time. The recycler specified contamination thresholds. Community groups selected collection hours compatible with care work and local markets.

Every transfer used a shared digital scale and a paper duplicate receipt. A minimum floor price protected collectors from short-term market volatility, while a small municipal service payment covered collection of low-value material. Quarterly reviews combined weight data, rejection reasons, complaints, and worker feedback.

4. Evidence of Change

Average monthly recovery increased from 2.1 tonnes during baseline to 8.4 tonnes in months 19–24. Rejected loads declined from 31% to 12% after visual sorting guides and feedback from the recycler were introduced. Collector income became less volatile because the floor price and service payment separated labour compensation from commodity price alone.

Residents reported greater confidence when collection times were predictable. The sanitation unit incorporated two routes into its annual operating plan. The recycler agreed to a 12-month purchasing arrangement, conditional on contamination remaining below 15%.

Table 1

Partnership phases, decisions, and outputs (fictional case).

Phase	Months	Core decision	Illustrative output
System mapping	1–3	Define material and actor flows	Shared baseline and risk map
Route testing	4–8	Select routes, hours, and weighing points	Three tested collection routes
Service stabilisation	9–18	Set floor price and feedback protocol	Lower rejection and predictable payments
Municipal integration	19–24	Assign recurrent budget and oversight	Two routes in annual operating plan

Note. Values are synthetic and should not be cited as empirical evidence.

Monthly plastic recovery across implementation stages

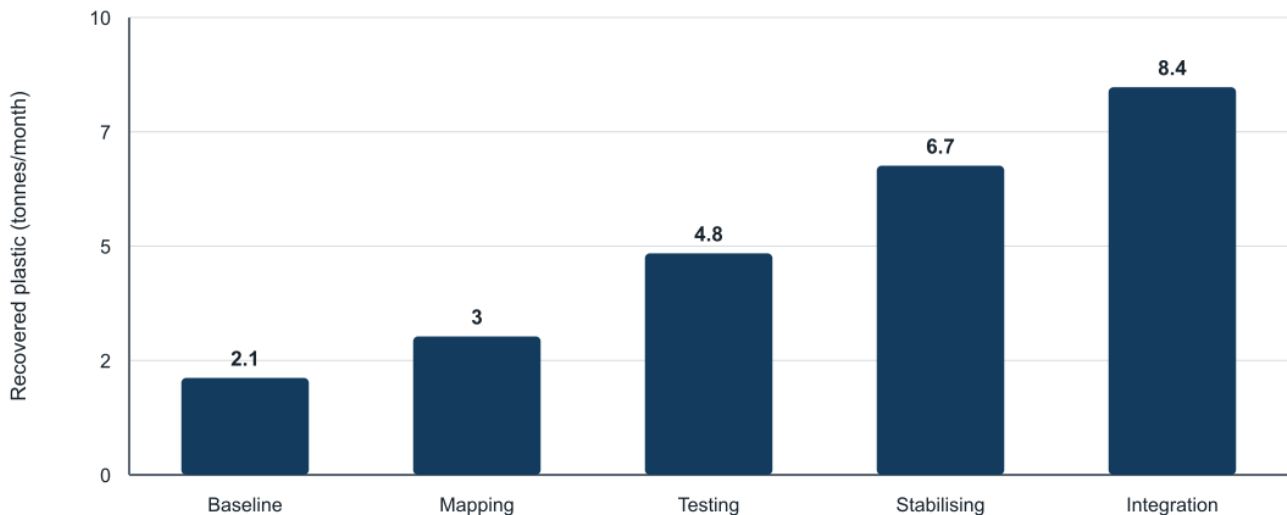


Figure 1. Average monthly plastic recovery by programme stage. Values are synthetic and shown for layout demonstration.

5. Lessons and Limitations

The partnership's main lesson was that durability depended on rules for coordination, information, and revision. Equipment mattered, but it became useful only after actors agreed how materials, payments, and complaints would move through the system.

The case remains limited by synthetic evidence and a short time horizon. A real evaluation would need independent verification, worker-safety indicators, lifecycle impacts, and analysis of whether benefits were distributed equitably across neighbourhoods.

6. Implications for Practice

Practitioners should treat pilots as tests of an operating model rather than demonstrations of equipment. Transition planning should begin early, with explicit attention to recurrent finance, data ownership, worker voice, market risk, and the authority to adapt.

Practice and Policy Implications

- Define the operating model before purchasing equipment.
- Protect worker voice in route, price, and safety decisions.
- Use joint data reviews to adapt services and manage market risk.

Declarations

Data Availability Statement

The synthetic dataset used to populate the tables and figure is fully reproduced in this article. No external dataset or real participant record exists.

Ethics Approval

Not applicable. This is a fictional demonstration article and no human participant, animal, biological specimen, or identifiable record was involved.

Consent to Participate and Publish

Not applicable. All author names and affiliations are pseudonymous and all content was created for layout demonstration.

Author Contributions

J.A.D.: Conceptualisation, methodology, writing—original draft. M.S.R./S.K.R./D.N.R.: analysis, visualisation, writing—review and editing. L.M.T./M.C.L./A.P.V.: validation, interpretation, writing—review and editing.

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Conflict of Interest

The pseudonymous authors declare no competing interests.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

Generative AI was used to create synthetic demonstration prose, pseudonymous names, fictitious data, and layout content. No claim in this article should be interpreted as reporting a real study.

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