







COMMUNITY



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SUNNY JAR ECO HUB is a not-for-profit social enterprise fostering green living in the city. We offer workshops and activities, providing opportunities to make sustainable living easy and accessible for all.

We believe that people collectively hold the wisdom, skills and knowledge needed to live more sustainably. We facilitate spaces and create moments to come together and learn from each other.

Our work aims to highlight the issues of climate change and plastic pollution. Our gentle approach to activism is centred around community wellbeing and small changes that people can incorporate in their daily routines that bring joy, improve health and save money.

THE PROJECT

Context

It is estimated that by 2050, the production and disposal of plastic could generate 56 gigatons of emissions, as much as 14 percent of the earth's remaining carbon budget. Combined with the negative impact of plastic pollution in our environment, it is clear that action is required to make significant changes to reduce our use of plastics.

The project was set in and around Chrisp Street Market in Poplar, a district in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, East London. This bustling and vibrant covered market with surrounding small businesses, provide the local community with affordable fresh fruit and vegetables, fish, meat, and a wide range of every day essentials.

Similar to many parts of Tower Hamlets, the majority of residents live in flats, making it difficult to recycle- Tower Hamlets has the worst recycling rates in London, due to insufficient waste facilities and high population density. In addition, many Poplar residents complained about the litter problems in the market and surrounding areas, and the large quantity of plastic waste ending up in the canal. Although there are many vibrant community groups and spaces in Poplar, there was not much happening around the issue of single-use plastics and sustainable living.

At the start of the project, most market stalls were using plastic bags to pre-pack their fruit and vegetables, as well as plastic carrier bags. This became an important drive for the project and created an opportunity to work both with the community and business owners to tackle the issue of single-use plastic.



Vision

Communities take action to reduce single-use plastics, working together and fostering sustainable behaviours through connecting and conversing about plastic waste.

Aim

- Encourage local residents' to take action to reduce single-use plastics waste in the Poplar area.
- Further develop residents' resourcefulness and knowledge on how to reduce their plastic waste.
- Foster community connection through making, learning and crafting together, whilst caring for their local environment.

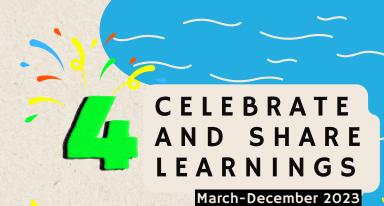
Plastic Free

OUR JOURNEY





September 2021 - January 2022







January 2022-March 2023



Our project articulated around 4 key stages of engagement:

Come together

Sept 2021-July 2022: we ran 5 community research and engagement sessions, asking people for their views on single use plastic reduction and raising awareness on plastic pollution.

July-October 2021: We ran 6 community litterpicks.

Sept 2021- February 2022: We ran 15 school workshops in 3 schools.

200 pupils wrote a letter to their MP, demanding action to reduce single-use plastic

Share skills and knowledge

September 2021 - July 2022: 15 workshops with ESOL (English classes for Students of Other Languages) classes at Chrisp Street Idea Store, teaching skills to reduce participants reliance on plastic, like crafting reusable tote bags, making snacks from scratch or plastic-free toiletries.

January 2022 - June 2023: 18 monthly community meet-ups open to all.

Co-produce a community action plan

January-May 2022 - 33 Participatory Action Research workshops to inform the community action plan.

- 4 ideas/potential projects to reduce single use plastic on the market:
 - · New bins with waste separations
- More reusable bags available for shoppers around the market
- · A campaign promoting people bringing reusable bags when shopping
- · A water fountain for people to refill their bottles

WHAT WE DID

March and May 2022 - 2 Community Voting Action Plan events on the market.

Sept 2022-March 2023: Bring Your Own Bag, community-led project funded by Tower Hamlets Community Fund, working towards actioning 2 of the voted projects, which were:

- More reusable bags available for shoppers
- A marketing campaign to encourage shoppers to reuse their shopping bags.

17 bag-making workshops and marketing campaign design sessions.

BYO Bag campaign launch and support of the action plan by IOO local people, business owners, workers and residents.

Celebrate and share learnings

March-December 2023

March -Sustainable Ramadan celebration

July- Plastic Free Picnic

October-End of project engagement at Chrisp Street
Market food festival

December-End of the year party at Poplar Union



These values have been informed by brainstorming sessions at the JUST FACT's partners meetings at the beginning of the project and developed throughout the project as we gained experience running workshops in the community.

JOY

- Bringing positivity to the climate discussion
- Creating fun activities for all to enjoy
- Joining local celebrations and community get-togethers

FOR EVERYONE

- · Meeting people where they are
- Showcasing local people's knowledge and skills
- Partnering with local organisations and community leaders
- Co-designing marketing campaign and workshops
- · Be welcoming, kind and patient
- Listen with an open mind and champion each other's ideas
- · Share food and drinks
- Center activities around mindfulness and wellbeing

KINDNESS TO THE PLANET

- No single-use items used during our events
- Sharing tools and resources as much as possible
- Compost our waste
- Upcycling and repurposing waste material.
- Litterpicking during events

LONG-LASTING CHANGE

- Create long-lasting relationships within the community
- Empower people to keep learning and teaching others
- Creation of resources to inform future similar projects.

COME TOGETHER



HOW DID WE GET THE COMMUNITY TO COME TOGETHER?

The first part of our project was about meeting local people.

We visited shops and market stalls and chatted with the business owners and their customers about their use of single use plastic, the challenge they faced in cutting down plastic and their concerns for the environment

We took part in local events and ran fun eco-activities to invite people to stop by and start conversations. We focussed on large events to reach a broad and diverse audience, like local fairs or seasonal festivals in the market.

We also ran schools and community workshops and created posters and social media campaigns to increase awareness.

By creating these opportunities to join in eco-activities, people realised that most of us are concerned by the environment and want to take positive action where they can.

COLLABORATIVE ART INSTALLATION

WORKING WITH LOCAL SCHOOLS

Art brings people together and facilitates different types of learning and expression.

We worked with 3 local schools, 200 school children and 80 community members to create an art installation. They collected, cut and tied thousands of plastic pieces onto large nets to represent the amount of plastic choking the ocean.

During a series of 5 workshops, we taught the pupils about the impact of single use plastic on our environment and looked at solutions to reduce plastic consumption.

The children all wrote a letter to their local MP and voiced their concerns for the future of the planet.

230 children took part Letters to MP January 2022

Schools workshop
October 202







A TOURING EXHIBITION

The nets, along with posters raising awareness on plastic pollution, were exhibited in different community venues and in the local market for 12 months, engaging a wider audience.

The exhibition brought people together creating a talking point.

Artwork at Chrisp St Idea Store,
October 2022

Siraz's shop

Artwork on Chrisp street market,
June 2022

Quote from business owner Siraz

The exhibition was good. It raised awareness.

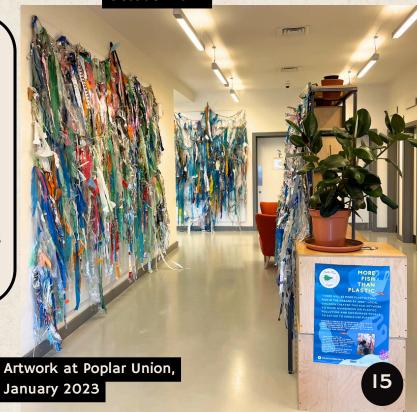
I was already aware of this issue but it

created conversations with my custumers.

It is nice to see art in the street in Poplar, it makes us locals talk for sure. First, I thought, what is this?

And then I looked closer and read the posters

Extract from a chat with locals having coffee on the market square.







SHARE SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE



WORKING WITH EXISTING GROUPS

FOCUSING ON PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

PLASTIC FREE LIVING WORKSHOPS

T-SHIRT BAGS DIY

PLASTIC LESS CLEANING PRODUCTS

NATURAL SKINCARE DIY BEESWAX WRAPS MAKING 18

CREATING SPACES FOR COMMUNITY LEARNING AND SHARING

We wanted to create spaces and moments for the people of Poplar to share their skills and knowledge on plastic free living and sustainable living skills and reach people who may not traditionally see themselves as eco-friendly or lived in a sustainable way. Our main focus was to make our workshops as accessible as possible and break barriers between people, showing that everyone can play a part in reducing single-use plastic and help the environment.

Providing sessions for ESOL (English classes for speakers of other languages) was key to reaching a diverse group of people that didn't necessarily have prior knowledge or interest in the topics.



Acknowledging that members of the community are an amazing resource and that we can learn from each other, we encouraged community members to share their skills and supported them in facilitating workshops, for instance by providing materials or assisting with the activity.

During each session, we raised awareness on plastic pollution and single use plastic, as well as looking at practical solutions. Participants learned about recycling, making plastic free toiletries, upcycling t-shirts into carrier bags and making unwrapped snacks. People loved these practical sessions and found them both fun and useful.

COMMUNITY SKILL SHARE

Gulaiym's upcycled yogurt pot

PLASTIC FREE MEETUPS

We ran 12 monthly meet-ups in a local community centre on Saturday mornings, open to anyone living in and around Poplar.

During these sessions, we shared and developed ideas and skills to reduce plastic in our neighbourhood. 20 different skills were shared and more than 50 ideas were discussed.

Some sessions were led by participants who kindly taught us their skills and shared their knowledge. Regular attendee and community champion, Paul, led on how to make naturally scented candles with natural wax.

Elisabeth, a local soap maker showed us her range of homemade natural skin care products.

And Esol student Gulaiym brought a plastic yogurt pot, which she had beautifully upcycled using decoupage techniques.

Participants enjoyed learning and chatting with likeminded people and many attended multiple sessions and brought neighbours, friends, and family.



Poplar plastic free sessions were truly enriching, engaging in skill sharing and discussions with like-minded individuals on Saturday mornings at a local community space. It added a valuable dimension to my community recycling role and a pure connection with sustainability at its core alongside like-minded committed people.

PAUL

What's great about these workshops is that they are for the community. Not only you learn some new skills but you meet other local people. [since attending the workshops] I have started doing more and more and sharing what I have learned with other people.



MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

WORKING WITH ESOL CLASSES

As well as running the monthly meet-ups, we wanted to work with existing groups that regularly met for other reasons than their environmental interest.

We ran a series of 5 workshops with 4 different local ESOL classes (English for Speakers of Other Languages), working in collaboration with ESOL teachers and the Chrisp Street Idea Store, the local library.

We used Participatory Action Research methods to find out what barriers the participants were facing and their ideas to reduce single-use plastic consumption.

During each session, we ran a practical activity, sharing skills to reduce waste and plastic in our every day life such as cooking, making bags or clothes mending.

In the baseline survey most participants say they 'd like to take action against plastic pollution but are not sure how to do it. In the endline survey, half of the participants felt confident to talk about the issue of single used plastic with friends and family.



Very helpful! I have learnt ideas to replace plastic bags.

I enjoyed this workshop. it was creative, relaxing and good for the planet! No need to buy Tesco plastic bags anymore!

Esol students's feedback after a T-shirt bag making workshop







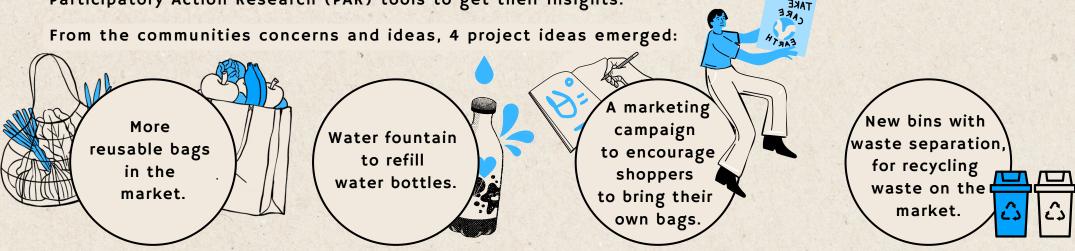
TURNING LEARNINGS FROM THE COMMUNITY INTO ACTION

A big part of the project was to work the community and facilitate community led solutions.

Our project was centred around the question:

How can we reduce single-use plastic in Poplar?

We ran workshops, joined community events and engaged with people at the market using surveys and Participatory Action Research (PAR) tools to get their insights.



These formed a community action plan that was presented and signed by more than 100 local people and businesses. We were successful in receiving further funding to test 2 of these ideas, which was developed into the Bring Your own Bag (BYOB) project -see case study on page 32.







Campaign's co-designed logo

BRING YOUR OWN BAG

TOGETHER WE CHOOSE

We applied for and were successful in receiving further funding from Tower Hamlets Community fund to address two of the community's ideas.

The first was to have more reusable bags on the market. The second was about creating a marketing campaign, to encourage shoppers to bring their own bags when shopping at the market

We ran workshops at the library, in schools and with local homeschoolers, making reusable bags from old T-shirts and scarves. We also collected heavy duty plastic bags and bags for life from participants and local charity shops and, with the help of volunteers, distributed them to market stalls and shops.

In March 2023, the Bring Your Own Bag marketing campaign was launched at Chrisp Street Market. We distributed signs and stickers that were co-designed in our workshops. We liaised with market stall holders and shop owners to promote the campaign and invited everyone to bring their own bags.

The shops owners have reported a reductions of numbers of plastic bags they had to buy as a result of this campaign.

INTERVIEW OF SIRAZ, SHOP OWNER

INTERVIEWER MAUD
TRANSLATOR TANJINA

What did you think about the BYOB campaign?
It is really important. I talk to people every day about plastic bag reduction. I show the sign to customers and encourage customers to bring their own bags. It reinforces what we are saying and gives some sort of authority, like if it is official.

Do you feel the BYOB campaign has affected the way the market operates? ??Yes it shows people we all care about plastic reduction.

How do you think you can get people to stop using plastic bags? We need more education, campaigning. It need to come from the government, from policies, bans. If there is a ban we will adapt.

Have you signed the community action plan? What do you think of it.

Yes, it is great! I would like to have a bigger BYOB sign or a poster for the shop.



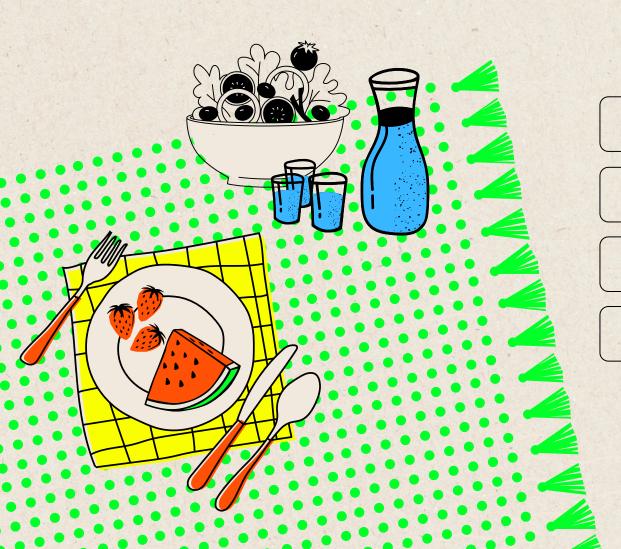








TIME TO CELEBRATE



Sustainable Ramadan

Plastic-free Iftar

Spooky Green Halloween

Summer Salads Picnic

CELEBRATING LEARNINGS AND SHARING THE JOY

Our events and workshops are always aimed at bringing a sense of joy and wellbeing to our participants and to the wider community. The strong values of the project ensured that all felt welcome, valued and at ease to take part. This friendly atmosphere keeps people coming back, not just for the skills they learn, but also for the fun conversations and the cups of fruit peel nettle tea. Participants often brought friends, and new friendships were formed along the way.

We participated in many local community fairs and celebrations, and we also hosted our own seasonal events to bring people together to rethink and reshape our traditions in a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly way.

Preparing and sharing food played a big part in achieving this, as it broke down barriers and brought lots of joy.

The staff and volunteers were amazing at sharing their skills and communicating their enthusiasm and passion for their community and the environment.

We created a recipe booklet and distributed it everywhere to continue planting plastic-free living seeds in our community and beyond.









WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS OUR PROJECT MADE?



We raised awareness on single-use plastic

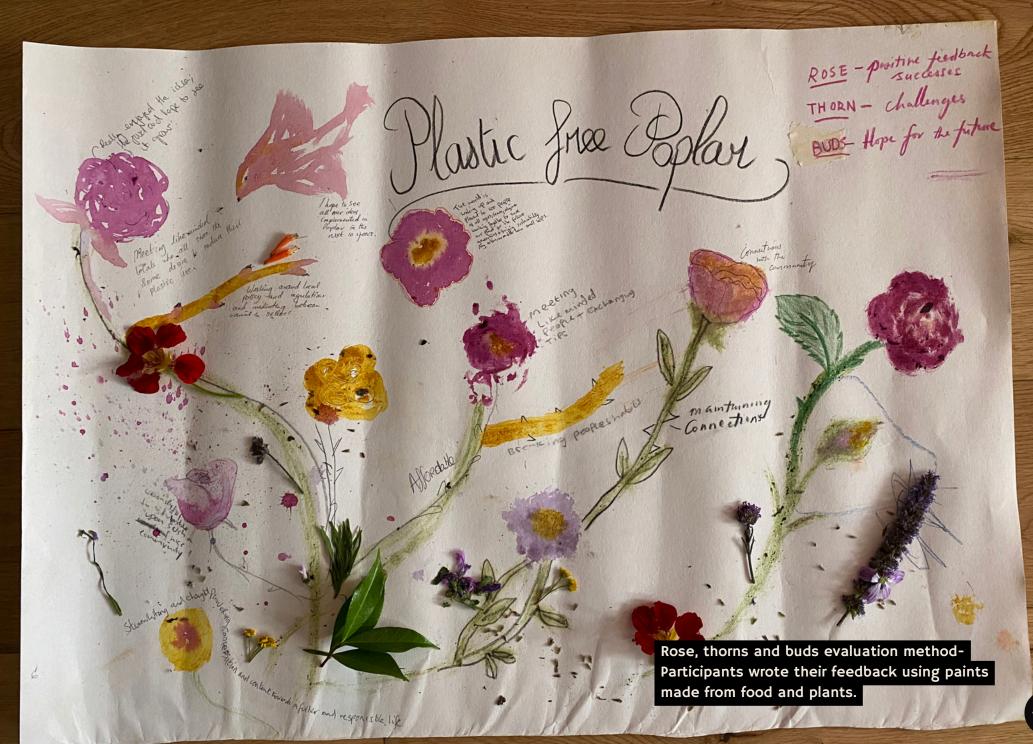
In the 3 years of the project, we ran 88 events and engaged over 2,000 local people in activities promoting the use of reusable items and raising awareness on the harmful effects of single-use plastics. Our school artwork installation and marketing campaign reached even more people, further increasing the project's visibility and impact. We shared monthly newsletters and weekly posts on our Plastic Free Poplar facebook group and Sunny Jar's Instagram account with an audience of 2000 people. Our instagram reels that directly related to Plastic Free Poplar had an average of 600 individual views.

Participants have developed more sustainable behaviours by learning new skills and sharing ideas to live more sustainably and be less reliant on single use plastic.

We found that offering practical and creative activities related to plastic-free living inspired people to care for the environment and reduce waste. Participants talked to each other, recommended our workshops and joined other local eco-initiatives, as new opportunities for sustainable living began to emerge around Poplar.

Over 80% of participants that completed our surveys thought that the workshop helped them to reduce their waste, 90% to improve health and wellbeing and 75% to save money. All participants said they would recommend this workshop to friends and family.

Many participants have continued learning by joining more of our eco-workshops. As a result of the project, we have been invited to run eco-workshops for schools and homeschooling groups, by local housing association Poplar HARCA and other local organisations, showing the importance and the drive to create a more sustainable neighbourhood, which we feel is due to increased awareness and the opportunities to learn and change created by the project.





Reduction in the use of single-use plastics and plastic packaging

We surveyed 8 business owners on the numbers of plastic bags they bought every week, at the start and at the end of the project. Although every person interviewed has stated a significant reduction, some of our collected data is contradictory. However everybody we interviewed were really positive about the reduction and from the numbers collected by Rice Marketing (who ran a project directly working with the market stall owners during the first year of Plastic Free Poplar), we can see a significant reduction for most of the stalls, including from 3000/4000 bags bought, to 1000 a week for the largest fruit and veg stall.

The reductions in plastic bags being bought by the businesses as well as our own observation of the number of people carrying reusable bags when shopping, demonstrate how people have been increasingly reusing and bringing their own bags to the market.

Our plan to keep track and assess the number of other single-used plastic items used by workshop participants was unsuccessful. Participants found it hard to keep their waste and record it, so we stopped tracking this after a few trials. However, we collected data through other means, such as surveys and discussions to ask if individuals had reduced their waste.

The answers were mixed. A majority of the participants said that they were already reusing their plastic bags as bin bags at the beginning of the project and half of the participants said they started reusing carrier bags at the end of the project. Three participants stopped using plastic bottles as a consequence of the workshops. Four people started making their own deodorants and body creams. In addition to the surveys and participatory action research, participants made pledges to reuse their plastic bags or bring bags for life to the market or stop buying water bottles.

Quote from business owner M Miah



We are buying a lot less plastic carrier bags than we used to, we pause before offering a bag to the customer.



Quote from Esol teacher, Shah after the series of 5 workshops with his English class



The sessions made a fundamental difference to the learners, not just a shift in mindset but also how they took on the advice in their daily lives. In session one, learners came to class with water in a plastic bottle. By session 5, most learners had a steel water bottle which they regularly refilled. Learners also started carrying out 'bags for life' from supermarkets which they could re-use as opposed to disposable plastic bags. Learners also spoke about how they want to be involved in litter picking in the future.





Community members have increased resourcefulness, and upcycling skills as a result of this project.

We ran 67 workshops sharing different skills, some directly linked to reducing single use plastic waste, like making reusable bags from T-shirts, plastic-free snacks, plastic-free cleaning or making skincare products. Some workshops were linked to reusing or upcycling plastic, like making decorative flowers from plastic bags and soft plastic, turning tetra pack cartons into bug hotels or seasonal decorations, or reusing and decorating plastic pots as planters and other useful objects.

Over 2000 people in total attended our events or took part in an activity. 20 plus skills were taught.

The workshops' feedback were very positive. People felt very happy and proud to master new skills. Most people surveyed said they feel confident to use their new skills and to pass them down to other.

Feedback from facilitators and volunteers:

Svena, a returning participant, told me that she now only uses her homemade deodorant since we made it together during one of the PFP meet ups last year.

A few people had never repaired [glued broken plastic toys] before and were surprised that they could do it. Everyone had a successful mend!

Workshop feedback from Rachael Fitzgerald, Programme Tutor, LETTA

I just wanted to say a big thank you for teaching our saturday school pupils this month- the children really enjoyed their sessions and the outcomes were excellent. They were especially happy to be able to take their bags home with them after working hard on them. Thank you also for the plastic free slides, which we have used over the term.





Participants feel better networked and connected with each other

Our events and workshops aimed at bringing a sense of joy and wellbeing to our participants. The participants enjoyed the sessions not only for the skills they learned, but also for the people and the atmosphere. It led to new connections and friendships.

In our workshop surveys, we asked if people felt part of a community and connected to each other and most of the people we asked said they were. Most people already attended other classes or were part of social groups such as faith groups, however only a small number had been involved in eco-projects. Lots of people realised that they were not alone caring for the environment and enjoyed being part of an eco-community.

Participants' quotes:

- A fuller realisation that others all also empowered to take action with me, a real sense of community.
- I love learning new skills but what I prefer is feeling part of a movement

Comment from our workshop facilitator:

People who met during the workshop went for coffee together afterward, including two ladies who never met before. Two participants also joined us at Chrisp Street in the afternoon after being invited by their friends who attended the morning session.

We had a lot of verbal feedback on the importance of creating social connections...







88 HOSTED

100+





2000 BAGS AVOIDED WEEKLY

Estimation from the number of plastic bags bought by

IDEAS SHARED business owners between July 2021 and November 2022

3 PROJECTS INITIATED BY THE COMMUNITY

500+

I.5 TONNES CO2e PER YEAR

EMISSONS SAVED

BAGS

REDISTRIBUTED

Second-hand and hand-made bags were collected from the community and redistributed to market stalls and shops

Estimation from the number of plastic bags avoided at production each year. Emissions avoided from saving plastic from incineration is excluded from calculations (difficult to quantify)

200+ **LETTERS** WRITTEN LOCAL MP

Primary school children wrote a letter to their MP demanding action to reduce single-use plastic pollution in Poplar

324 **BAGS**

MADE

in workshops, upcycling Tshirts into tote bags or customising and decorating existing tote bags

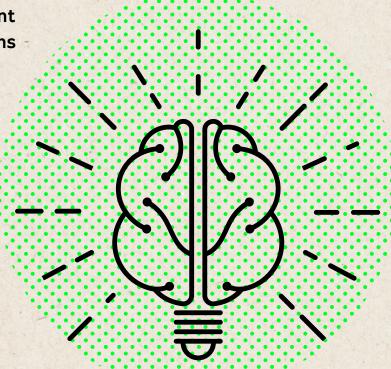


TIPS FROM OUR LEARNING

The time and energy spent in creating strong relations with the community is totally worth it

Most people care and want to be involved

Libraries and community centres are great partners.
They will offer space and access to groups and support your project.



It is really important to make strong connections with other local initiatives as it will insure the long lasting impact of your project

Local businesses are eager to get involved once you build a rapport with them.and see that you genuinely cared about them and the neighborhood.

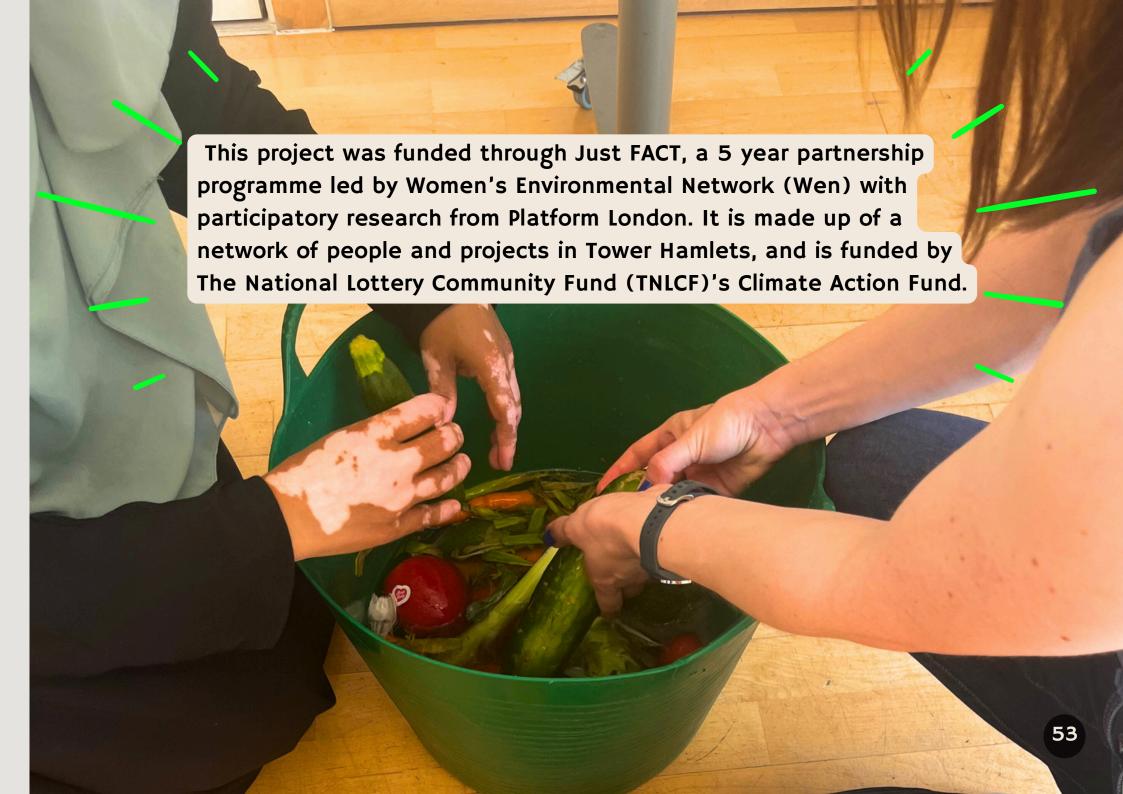
They appreciated our approach, noting that it was a refreshing change from the usual methods of the council.

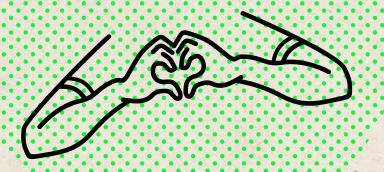
Offer free workshops and activities to community groups, such as scouts, knitting groups, walking groups. They are often very keen but don't often have the budget to pay for extra activities

Support people in getting their voices heard.

While individual efforts and small changes are important, campaigning for a single-use plastic ban is crucial.

It helps share the responsibility with decision-makers and industries, who should be the ones bearing the primary responsibility for environmental sustainability.





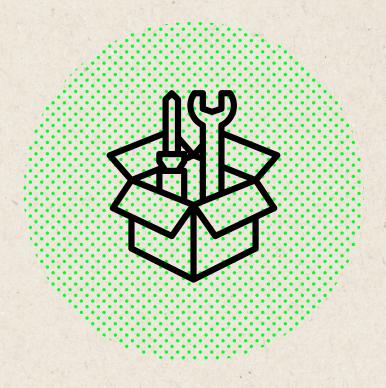
THANK YOU AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

We would like to thank our community of Poplar and all our wonderful partners, without them this project would not have happen.

We would like to express our gratitude to our funders and the fantastic JUST FACT team for their trust and continuous care. We felt truly supported and appreciated from the beginning to the end of the project and we are very proud to be part of such a brilliant group of people and organisations.

Lastly, a big thanks to the Sunny Jar team working in the background, staff, freelancers and volunteers for all their hard work and dedication.

Find all our project's resources and material on <u>our website</u> www.sunnyjarecohub.com





This report was designed by the Sunny Jar team using Canva, with low-ink printing design principles