



Plastics x Gender

COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT

This toolkit is part of the project by the **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) - Philippines, University of the Philippines Center for Women and Gender Studies**, and **Angat Bayi**, supported by **The Incubation Network** under the Equality in Plastics Circularity program. It incorporates the results of the study conducted to assess the acceptability of women in their perceived role in the plastic value chain and the situation of our women waste workers.

From the study, the project identified three (3) key messages that the communications toolkit will focus on including:

- **Plastic pollution is real and it impacts us.** Environmental consciousness, as inferred from how online respondents share the positive impacts of reducing plastic use, is connected to aesthetics. This means that actions can be based on the desire to keep the environment clean, and not because of how it has impacted our environment and even us.
- **All should take part in practicing waste management, regardless of gender.** The study showed that segregation and recycling are commonly assigned to women, while tasks on interacting with informal waste workers and junk shops are for men. These roles have been affirmed by the women respondents who see women as the lead in their homes when it comes to segregating and recycling wastes. This, as inferred, is part of their reproductive (household) role which is in addition to their productive (work) and community extension work.
- **Waste workers are important partners for solid waste management.** The study affirmed the discrimination felt by women waste workers in their job. They are commonly regarded very lowly by community members and are often treated without respect as they complete their work.

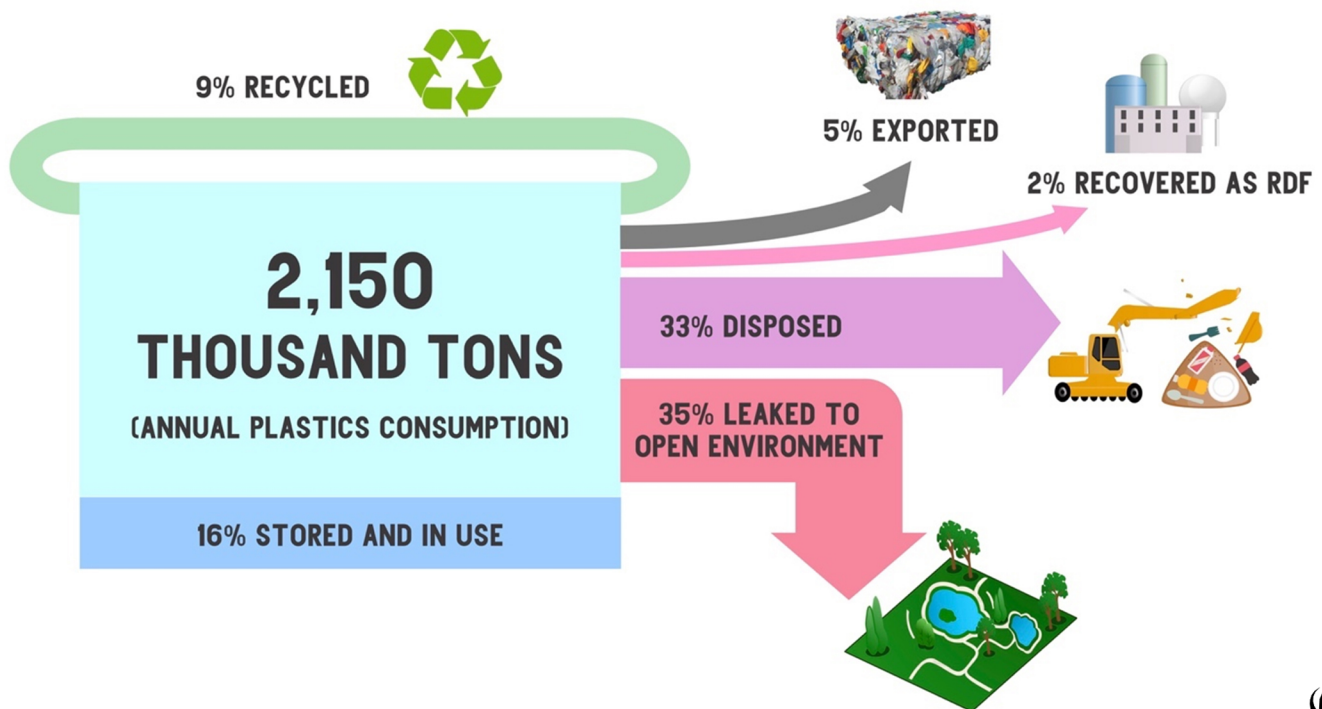
Different ways have been identified in communicating these messages which the project shall launch for increased public awareness.

PLASTIC POLLUTION IS REAL AND IT IMPACTS US.

Plastic is a global transboundary problem which requires a systematic and holistic response for all stages of the life cycle of plastics.

Plastic pollution has reached gigantic dimensions worldwide. Approximately 4.8 to 12.7 million tonnes of plastics are entering the ocean yearly. This has been attributed to continuous plastic production and the lack of sound waste management, especially in low- and middle-income countries, such as the Philippines - the top 3rd country in the world for plastic leakage. [Jambeck et al., 2015]

Plastic holds the third largest share in the overall generated waste in the Philippines at 2,150,000 tonnes p.a. in 2019. (WWF, 2020)



AMH Philippines – Manila Water Total Solutions (2020)



Plastic holds the third largest share in the overall generated waste in the Philippines at 2,150,000 tonnes p.a. in 2019. (WWF, 2020) This estimate might have increased during the pandemic with the rise of e-commerce and deliveries.

Country's plastic recycling rate is low at 9%, with 35% leaking into the open environment and 33% disposed of in sanitary and unsanitary landfills (WWF, 2020). Significant to the recycling rate is the contribution of waste workers with helping in plastic waste recovery and diversion. Efforts should be made to fully recover the high - value plastics constituting about 37% of the plastics consumed by Filipinos for selling.

So what?

PLASTIC POLLUTION: A Serious Challenge to our Natural World, Society & Global Economy

Environmental Impacts



Entanglement



Ingestion



Habitat damage

Social Impacts



Unregulated plastic waste management



Human plastics ingestion



Soil and water contamination

Economic Impacts



Fisheries



Maritime trade



Tourism



WWF-Dahlberg Report, 2019, citing various studies

Plastic has become an ubiquitous material creating a serious challenge for the natural world, society and global economy.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Entanglement: Wildlife entanglement has been recorded in over 270 different animal species, including mammals, reptiles, birds and fish. Entanglement in plastic debris often leads to acute and chronic injury or the death of affected animals. It is estimated that a minimum of a thousand marine turtles die every year due to entanglement in plastic waste, which includes lost or discarded fishing gear.

Ingestion: Ingested plastic is damaging to the health of animals. Records have documented more than 240 different animal species ingesting plastic. These animals are often unable to pass the plastic through their digestive systems, resulting in internal abrasions, digestive blockages, and death. Further, toxins from ingested plastic have also been shown to harm breeding and impair immune systems. This is of particular concern for endangered species with small populations that are exposed to multiple stressors in addition to plastic ingestion.

Habitat damage: Plastic waste has been found in soils, rivers and oceans where it can degrade or destroy wildlife habitats. Microplastic pollution has been shown to alter soil conditions, which can impact the health of fauna and increase the likelihood of harmful chemical leaching in the soil. Plastic waste is also accelerating coral degradation. Abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear can smother fragile reefs, and the microbial colonies that form on plastic waste can lead to higher rates of disease in corals.



SOCIAL IMPACTS

Plastic pollution has effects on air quality, water systems, and soil conditions. The most common direct impacts are related to unregulated plastic waste management, human ingestion of micro and nano-plastics, and plastic contamination of soils.

Unregulated plastic waste management: In 2016, 37 per cent of plastic waste was mismanaged through unregulated waste management processes, including open incineration, open dumping, and uncontrolled recycling. These processes, particularly open incineration, release toxic gases, halogens, as well as nitrous and sulphur oxides, all of which can affect air quality. Open dumping also pollutes nearby aquifers, water bodies, and settlements. Additionally, plastic-related compounds associated with poorly regulated incineration or open burning have been shown to heighten respiratory ailments, increase the risk of heart disease, and damage the human nervous system. Communities located close to inadequately controlled waste management facilities are particularly at risk.

Human plastics ingestion: Although humans are highly likely to ingest micro and nano-plastics, the direct health impacts are unknown. Humans can ingest plastic by consuming foods contaminated with micro and nano-plastics. This is most likely to occur via seafood, particularly shellfish, mussels and oysters. There are many other sources of contamination. A recent study of bottled water found microplastic contamination in 93 per cent of bottles, sourced from 11 different brands across nine countries.

Soil and water contamination: Microplastics released during clothes washing and nano-plastics used in cosmetics products can accumulate in wastewater systems. Wastewater treatment processes remove many of these plastic particles as a sewage sludge byproduct. This sludge is often used as field fertilizer causing several thousand metric tons of microplastics to end up in soils each year. Wastewater treatment plants, however, are currently unable to remove all plastic particles from wastewater before it is released back into the environment or municipal water systems.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

The total economic impact of plastic pollution is not yet known, although most research so far has focused on the impact on oceans. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates the economic impact of plastic pollution on oceans at US\$8 billion per year. It is also estimated that there is four times more plastic pollution on land than in the oceans, suggesting that the total economic impact of plastic pollution is actually much greater. While our understanding of the total economic impact is still emerging, below we highlight the existing impact on specific industries.

Fisheries: Oceanic plastic pollution reduces both the supply of, and demand for, seafood due to animal deaths and concerns that animals have ingested plastic. Plastic pollution, including abandoned fishing gear, can also clog boat engines leading to disruption of the fishing industry. Costs from the interruption of business due to plastic pollution in the European Union were estimated at 0.9 per cent of total industry revenues, which amounts to €61.7 million per year.

Maritime trade: Commercial shipping vessels are also extremely sensitive to collisions with plastic pollution, as damage to the vessel could endanger human lives. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) estimated the cost of litter damage to commercial shipping at US\$297 million per year.

Tourism: Plastic pollution can reduce income and increase costs in the tourism industry. For example, plastic pollution has led to reduced tourist numbers in Hawaii, the Maldives and Korea. Further, removing this plastic pollution imposes additional costs for governments and businesses. The French city of Nice, for instance, spends €2 million each year to keep municipal beaches clean.

All should take part
in practicing waste
management,
regardless of
gender.

Waste segregation and recycling have been attributed to women. It is expected that women lead the segregation in their homes as part of their reproductive role. Women are also expected to participate in community activities related to plastic waste management which is part of their community work. Both roles are on top of their productive role to help their household income.

The study also confirmed that women accept these roles due to their expected qualities including being patient, organized, and being that role model for her children. They regarded these practices as something that “starts at home” which are covered under their expected responsibilities.

It seems apparent that the role of women is bound by societal norms that needs to be addressed through public awareness. The project need not educate about gender but integrate the need for actions on solid waste management to be genderless which leads to the **#lahatdapat** hashtag.

WASTE WORKERS ARE IMPORTANT PARTNERS FOR SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT.

Waste workers have been vital in the country's recycling rate - currently at 9%. They have been helping households in recovering recyclable wastes for selling to junk shops, which households are mandated as per RA 9003. However, waste workers experience challenges including discrimination, health risks, and low wages especially for women.

Findings show that waste workers feel discriminated against with the low regard of community members to them and their work. They have shared that community members often tell them to get all the wastes even if they only need those that can be sold. Moreover, they shared that they are often not included in government programs that can incentivize them or provide an alternative livelihood. The pandemic has also placed the waste workers at risk of contracting COVID - 19 during work, especially those that more often do not have protective equipment or any medical assistance program.

Social media cards you can use:

Women are burdened with waste segregation at home.

#Lahatdapat nagsesegregate

NABUBULOK DI-NABUBULOK NARESIKLO PAPEL

Gender roles force women to solely lead recycling efforts at home.

#Lahatdapat nagrerecycle

Source: Research Fundamentals on the Gendered Division of Domestic Work and Women's Obligations to Reduce Plastic Consumption in the Philippines

Our studies have found that women are obligated to reduce plastic consumption at home.

#Lahatdapat nagrereduce

Source: Research Fundamentals on the Gendered Division of Domestic Work and Women's Obligations to Reduce Plastic Consumption in the Philippines

Should women be solely responsible for solid waste management?

No. #Lahatdapat

Source: Research Fundamentals on the Gendered Division of Domestic Work and Women's Obligations to Reduce Plastic Consumption in the Philippines

Women constitute the majority of the informal waste sector - vital in the country's recycling rate.

Salamat pero #Lahatdapat

Source: Research Fundamentals on the Gendered Division of Domestic Work and Women's Obligations to Reduce Plastic Consumption in the Philippines

Waste workers are our partners in solid waste management. Support them!

Yes. #Lahatdapat

Source: Research Fundamentals on the Gendered Division of Domestic Work and Women's Obligations to Reduce Plastic Consumption in the Philippines

Social media cards you can use:

Support waste workers' rights to necessary protective equipment.

Yes. #Lahatdapat

WWF ANGAT BAYI The Incubation Network Center for Women's and Gender Studies UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES

Support waste workers' rights to receive medical benefits/welfare.

Yes. #Lahatdapat

WWF ANGAT BAYI The Incubation Network Center for Women's and Gender Studies UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES

Support waste workers' rights to access better livelihood opportunities

Yes. #Lahatdapat

WWF ANGAT BAYI The Incubation Network Center for Women's and Gender Studies UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES

"Magandang gawain ang pagrecycle para sa buong pamilya"
- Batangas FGD respondent

#Lahatdapat

WWF ANGAT BAYI The Incubation Network Center for Women's and Gender Studies UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES