Report
on
Save Wetlands from Plastic Litter

* A celebration of *

World Wetlands Day- February 2, 2020
Location : Veer Savarkar Udyan, Sagar Vihar; Vashi, Navi Mumbai
Special Message
Shri Annasaheb Misal
Commissioner, Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC)

Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC), one of the most progressive ULB’s in India has always focused on the environmental conservation and sustainable development of the city. The measures taken by NMMC have led to Navi Mumbai being ranked 7th in India under Swachha Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) in 2019. Additionally, Navi Mumbai has been bestowed with rich natural vegetation, mangroves and wetlands which protect the city from natural calamities like floods, provides carbon sink and contributes to the quality of life in the city. However, today, like most other cities in the world, plastic pollution is a growing concern in Navi Mumbai as well, directly impacting its ecosystems and thus needing conservation measures.

I congratulate The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other project partners on their efforts to create the much needed awareness about plastic pollution and wetland conservation among citizens. I appreciate the efforts taken by the National Service Scheme (NSS) volunteers and college students for carrying this message forward to a larger group of stakeholders, thus creating a domino effect.

It was an honor to interact with diverse group of stakeholders, especially the UNEP representatives. Participation of Mr. G.S.Gill (IAS), Distinguished Advisor, TERI-WRC; and Mr. J. S. Saharia, Former Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra was very encouraging. Their guidance while developing a Policy document would be very valuable.

Navi Mumbai needs presence of motivated leaders like the citizens felicitated by event organizers. The initiatives for plastic alternatives like cloth bags made from used clothing should be replicated in Navi Mumbai on large scale. I feel motivated to see representatives from Helen Keller Institute of Deaf and Deaf blind taking active part in the program. Furthermore, I truly appreciate the organizations and citizens who have raised the saplings in waste plastic bottles and those who have agreed to nurture it further for afforestation. As part of the Eco-city Project, a joint collaboration with TERI, NMMC would be pleased to work towards the implementation of these initiatives on a larger scale with the objective of not only creating awareness but also a bigger long term positive impact.

I feel optimistic that with collaborative efforts by Government, Non-Government and Research organizations, Corporates, students and other citizens, Navi Mumbai will be able to achieve its goal of being a plastic waste free city in the near future. It is the moral responsibility of each and every individual to act responsibly and work towards making the city plastic waste free.
Special Message
Prof. Suhas Pednekar,
Vice Chancellor, University of Mumbai

The University of Mumbai, one of the oldest and largest Universities in India, has 720 kilometers of coastline under its jurisdiction. There are more than 800 colleges affiliated to the university with 176 environment initiatives being undertaken in the campuses with the combined participation of over 15,000 students. The University's National Service Scheme (NSS) unit has always been a front runner in participating in environment, social and community based programs.

Wetlands are one of the most productive ecosystems, home to rich biodiversity and are essential to human survival. As Mumbai is a coastal city, the presence of coastal wetlands such as Mangroves becomes extremely important. However, with ever increasing human footprint, developmental activities and the problem of improper waste disposal in Mumbai, these wetlands and the biodiversity within them are facing the threat of being permanently wiped out from the city’s geographical map. Thus, the conservation of mangroves through active participation of stakeholders is the need of the hour.

With our University as an official partner of TERI-UNEP’s “Promotion of Counter-Measures against Marine Plastic Litter in Southeast Asia and India” project, its’ been a great opportunity for TERI, UNEP and the University of Mumbai to come together and collaborate to address the issue of plastic pollution. Our NSS staff and volunteers have participated in various awareness activities organized by TERI under ‘Rethink Plastic’ campaign, including World Wetlands Day (WWD) – 2020. I appreciate TERI-UNEP’s efforts on emphasizing the issue of plastic pollution in each and every program and grateful for giving NSS students the opportunity to be a part of the campaign. It’s been a great learning experience for our students and it helped sensitize them to the perils of incorrect plastic disposal as well as significance of protecting mangrove ecosystem.

Further, the University shall support TERI and encourage the students to actively participate in future endeavors in environment conservation. This, hopefully, would also inspire our students to further spread the knowledge gained from such initiatives to create a much larger positive impact.
Special Message
Mr. Atul Bagai
Country Head- India Office, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The UNEP is the leading and authoritative global voice on environmental issues. It is the key driver of the environmental dimension of sustainable development, within the United Nations system. UNEP’s global campaigns ‘Beat Plastic Pollution’ and ‘Clean Seas’ are increasingly gaining traction. The India office of UNEP started operations 3 years ago. It made its mark when it organised a highly successful World Environment Day in 2018 when the Prime Minister of India, committed to phasing out single-use plastics.

Despite the best efforts, and the spotlight on plastics, our understanding of its science is limited. Assessment of sources of plastic waste, its content, accumulation hotspots, leakage pathways, are approximate. Most importantly we are still grappling with challenges of technology and finance for its management.

UNEP is currently implementing the Japan Government funded “Promotion of Counter Measures against Marine Plastic litter in South-east Asia and India” project in Agra, Haridwar, Allahabad and Mumbai, as well as a Norway Government funded project where we are supporting the high-level Marine Litter Cell in the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change. UNEP shall be working closely with the Ministry to develop a national road map on marine litter and plastics.

The Counter Measures project is a first ever project in this part of the world that targets collecting ground-level data on plastics. The project also attempts to reach out to a spectrum of stakeholders, both to increase their understanding of the issue, as well as to embed and institutionalise sustainable initiatives for reduction and improved management of plastic waste.

UNEP has partnered with TERI for project implementation in Mumbai. Through the “Rethink Plastic” campaign, we have reached out to more than 5000 people through perception surveys, pledge campaign, treasure hunts for waste bottles and saplings, awareness and training activities. We deeply value this partnership and hope to strengthen it in times to come, to strengthen UNEP’s vision and leadership on marine plastic litter.
Special Message
Dr. Ajay Mathur
Director General, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)

I am glad that TERI’s Western Regional Center (WRC) has been celebrating World Wetlands Day (WWD) in Mumbai for the past 12 years with diverse stakeholders and in collaboration with the Ramsar Convention. The reports of all these events are available on the Ramsar website (https://www.ramsar.org/). The WWD-2020 celebration on the theme 'Save Wetlands from Plastic Litter' by TERI was in collaboration with United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC), and National Service Scheme (NSS).

NMMC has been partnering with TERI for various environmental and sustainable development initiatives under the Eco City project since 2012; whereas TERI is currently the outreach partner for the UNEP sponsored project titled ‘Promotion of countermeasures against marine plastic litter in Southeast Asia and India’ in Mumbai. As part of this project TERI- WRC is implementing an action oriented campaign ‘Rethink Plastic’ (November 2019 - March 2020) to reach out to various stakeholders and urge them to Refuse, Reduce Reuse, Recycle and Rethink plastic responsibly.

I am overwhelmed to see the large participation of youth representing the NSS and other educational institutions like Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil College, Vashi, South Indian Education Institute (SIES), Nerul, Maharshi Dayanand College, Parel, India Culture League Education and Society (ICLES) Motilal Jhunjhunvala College, Vashi, in this event. I was informed that over 300 participants were a part of the event; and more than 100 kg of plastic was collected from the mangroves just in an hour. It was heartening to note that all participants have taken a pledge against single use plastics and many of them drafted roadmaps against plastic pollution. These suggestions will be collated and submitted to the Hon’ble Chief Minister of Maharashtra by TERI, UNEP and other project partners; requesting him to develop a roadmap against plastic pollution in the state. The participation of representatives from Helen Keller Institute for Deaf and Deaf blind was a true value addition to the event. I am happy that TERI handed over 100 saplings of native trees raised in waste plastic bottles to them for nurturing and use in afforestation. Further, TERI’s commitment to prepare a Braille booklet on Plastic Pollution is a noteworthy initiative to spread the message against plastic pollution to the differently abled students.

I congratulate and thank all the participants, partners and media representatives for undertaking such an illustrious initiative with an objective to minimize single use plastic and also conserve wetland ecosystems.
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1. Inaugural and Interactive Session
Dignitaries on Dais

(From L to R): Smt. Shaila Sam, Media and Communication Specialist, UNEP; Shri. Lovish Ahuja, Vice President, Governmental Affairs – India, TOMRA; Smt. Saloni Goel, Consultant, Plastic Pollution Programme, UNEP; Shri. G.S. Gill (IAS), Distinguished Advisor, TERI-WRC; Shri. Annasaheb Misal, IAS, Commissioner, NMMC and Shri. J.S.Saharia, (IAS), Former Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra (GoM)
a) Welcome and Event Introduction

While explaining the concept of ‘Rethink Plastic Campaign’, Dr. Anjali Parasnis, Associate Director, TERI-WRC emphasized on the innovative approach of **raising saplings of native trees and nurturing them in waste plastic bottles** thereby practicing reuse and recycling of plastic. It’s also a great way to **offset the carbon footprint**.

Further, she also explained about the **importance of mangroves for coastal cities** like Mumbai and Navi Mumbai and emphasized on their better management and conservation.

Dr. Anjali Parasnis
Hon’ble Chief Guest planting the Native Sapling (*left*) and unveiling the collage made from Plastic waste (*right*)
Welcoming the Dignitaries with Native Tree Saplings

Mr. Lovish Ahuja, Vice President, Governmental Affairs, India, TOMRA

Mr. J.S. Saharia, Former Chief Secretary, GoM
b) Key Address by the Chief Guest

- The Commissioner, NMMC appreciated the TERI-UNEP initiative to counter marine plastic pollution.
- He highlighted the need of individual efforts by all citizens to make the city free from plastic pollution.
- He urged the youth to actively take action to tackle plastic pollution; and encouraged citizens’ participation in cleanliness initiatives like the Swachha Bharat Mission (SBM).
- He also mentioned that change in behaviour and thinking is extremely important in solving the menace of plastic pollution; and highlighted the role of media in raising awareness and sensitizing citizens about environmental issues.
- Talking about NMMC’s initiatives against single use plastic, he told that the NMMC head office is single use plastic free; and the corporation shall continue to work towards managing plastic pollution in the city through concrete policies and action against the same.
c) Address by the Dignitaries

- Shri. J. S. Saharia (Guest of Honor) appreciated TERI and UNEP’s efforts towards creating awareness and sensitization among the citizens through action oriented programmes being conducted under the ‘Rethink Plastic campaign’.
- He specifically emphasized that all citizens especially youth must take concrete steps against plastic pollution, both at individual and institutional level.

- Shri. G.S.Gill emphasized on continual work towards creating awareness and conducting impactful activities.
- He mentioned that involvement of youth in environmental and sustainable development initiatives is of great importance.
- Towards this, he also submitted a proposal to NMMC, on behalf of TERI for a long term project against plastic pollution for the city of Navi Mumbai.
c) Address by the Dignitaries

- Smt. Saloni Goel, gave insightful details about the UNEP project ‘Promotion of countermeasures against marine plastic litter in Southeast Asia and India’ being implemented in 4 Indian cities namely Agra, Prayagraj (Allahabad), Rishikesh and Mumbai to tackle plastic pollution.
- She also highlighted that lack of knowledge and awareness about the intricacies of plastic like different types of plastic is a key concern in managing plastic pollution.

- Smt. Divya Gaikwad highlighted the need of outreach events to raise awareness and motivate the community for environmental betterment.
- She urged the citizens to stop using single use plastics and switch to eco-friendly alternatives and encouraged the young participants to actively act against plastic pollution.

- Shri. Lovish Ahuja specifically highlighted that the real solution to the waste is segregation at source while technological and end of pipe solutions can mitigate only ~30% of the waste problem.
- He also mentioned about the importance of life cycle analysis of each and every product we consume, specially with respect to the amount of waste generated by those products.
d) More than 300 participants took Pledge against Single Use Plastic

As a good citizen of my country and a responsible resident of the planet Earth, I pledge to Refuse, Reduce, Recycle, Reuse, Repair, Re-gift, Recover and “Rethink plastic”, to the best of my efforts by doing the following:

- I shall say “NO” to single use plastic items (Straw, carry bags, cutlery etc.)
- I shall always carry a cloth bag, reusable cutlery, straw and cup.
- NOT purchase fruits and vegetables wrapped in plastic films
- Sensitize peers, friends and family about minimizing single use plastic
- Sort my waste for recycling and disposal
- Ask restaurants NOT to send plastic cutlery when ordering food online
- Purchase usually what can be either recycled, reused, refilled or repaired
- NOT accept gifts/bouquets wrapped in plastics
- Avoid sachets as much as possible
e) Felicitation: Exemplary Initiatives for Environmental Betterment

1. Smt. Neeta Karnik (Aapli Pishvi Initiative)

She works with local women residents to make cloth bags from old sarees, dupattas and dresses and distributes them to vendors and customers to promote the use of cloth bags. She aims to make at least one Municipal Market in her locality, free from plastic bags.
2. Shri. P. S Lokhande

He started **PSL Waste Management LLP** to collect, segregate and effectively manage municipal waste.

3. Smt. Jyoti Nadkarni

She collectively **works with housing societies in Kharghar**, Navi Mumbai to help collect and segregate household waste **at source**.
4. Shri. Prakash Chandra Joshi

Individually **collected more than 1500 waste plastic bottles** for the campaign.

5. Smt. Kalpana Chhatre

A member of **Mangrove Marshal Group**, Navi Mumbai. The group organizes **weekly mangrove cleanup activity** at Sagar Vihar and Mini Sea Shore, Vashi, Navi Mumbai.
f) Commitment of Differently Abled

• The Helen Keller Institute of Deaf and Deaf blind engages their students in raising and nurturing saplings.
• The institute adopted 100 saplings of native trees raised by students of ICLES Motilal Jhunjunwala College, Vashi in waste plastic bottles as part of the TERI-UNEP ‘Rethink Plastic’ Campaign, at the hands of Dr. Anita Jadhav, Associate Professor, ICLES Motilal Jhunjunwala College, Vashi.
• TERI also committed to prepare a Braille book and Touch and Feel kits for these special students to introduce them to Plastic and its impacts on health and environment.
• A draft of the Braille book was handed over to representatives of Helen Keller Institute of Deaf and Deaf blind by the Hon’ble commissioner, NMMC.
g) Panel discussion : Youth Vision on Plastic Pollution

A 6 membered panel including 3 experts and 3 young volunteers led a very interactive discussion with participants.
Use paper bags instead of plastic bags as bin liners

Is there any alternative to plastic that can be used for waterproofing?

Need for developing sustainable alternatives to Multi Layer Plastic packaging

Stakeholders Expressing their views on Plastic Pollution
Key Points Highlighted During The Panel Discussion

As the participants voiced their concerns and opinion on Plastic Pollution, there was consensus on the following points:
• Use of Single Use Plastic should be banned. However, alternatives to plastic should be practical, affordable and easily available
• In depth research on life cycle of different materials being used as alternatives to plastic to be carried out
• Policies need to be strengthened
• Usability of plastics in areas like food and medicine packaging, electronic equipment, medical instruments, automobiles and others cannot be neglected.
2. Mangrove Cleanup Activity - Sagar Vihar
Mangroves
act as buffer against extreme weather events such as hurricanes, coastal floods.
They stabilize coastline and slows down soil erosion rate.
Act as source of livelihood for local communities – fishing, collection of honey, tannins and wax.
Act as a Carbon Sink.
Mangrove roots are a complex system that accumulate organic and inorganic nutrients and thus, act as a breeding ground and nursery for various marine organisms. However, plastic litter in mangroves is a cause of concern as it gets trapped in the mangroves.
The cleanup activity was carried out in order to collect plastic waste trapped in the mangroves and dispose it off responsibly.
Participation of 100 NSS volunteers, University of Mumbai

- All participants were provided Personal Protective Equipment (Gloves and Masks)
- Instead of plastic bags, Gunny bags were used for waste collection
Weighing of the collected Waste

More than 100kg of Plastic waste was collected in 1 hour time
3. Parallel Sessions
The Chief Guest
Appreciating the exhibition Area
a) Collage from Waste Bottle Caps

Rationale

- Waste plastic needs to be properly channelized to prevent it from ending up in the terrestrial and marine ecosystems.
- Caps of waste plastic bottles were used to convey an important message.
  - Plastic can be reused.
  - Single used caps to be recycled and channelized for responsible disposal.
- **SAVE OCEANS from single use plastic.**
Volunteers used bottle caps to create the display of the message ‘Save Oceans’. These caps were pasted on Duck shaped cardboard cut outs to depict the plight of aquatic animals and birds.
b) Wetland Conservation Messages Through Art

1. Rangoli - A Traditional Art
The volunteers enthusiastically showcased their creative skills to convey the message of wetland conservation using the traditional art form.
A vibrant array of posters was made by the volunteers. Each poster artistically conveyed the importance of wetlands and the need to save them from plastic pollution.
c) Pledge and Perception survey

Perception Survey- Rationale

- Perception of individuals is very important to understand the behavior, practices and awareness of the citizens as well as to carve out a way forward.
- The perception survey on ‘Plastic Use and Management’ was designed to assess the opinions of individuals regarding plastic use, management of plastic waste and awareness about alternatives to plastic and impacts of plastic pollution on health and environment.
- The results of the survey are important in formulating policy recommendations to tackle plastic pollution for the state of Maharashtra.

Pledge against single use plastics- Rationale

- Single use plastic is a rising global concern. Invented for the sake of convenience, today it is an environmental hazard.
- In order to reduce dependence on single use plastics and promote use of alternatives, the participants were encouraged to take pledge against single use plastic.
TERI created special electronic interphase- **QR Codes** to take the pledge and perception Survey which were displayed at the event venue, to reduce paper wastage and keeping in mind the tech savvy young participants.

More than 300 individuals took the Pledge against Single Use Plastics and filled in the Perception survey.
d) Plant a Sapling in Waste Plastic Bottle- Rationale

- Native trees saplings raised in waste plastic bottles when used for afforestation will help offset carbon footprint towards production of these bottles.

- This would also demonstrate a responsible reuse and disposal of waste plastic bottles.

Sapling of Indian Almond Tree (*Terminalia catappa*)

- Benefits of using native tree species for afforestation include:
  1. They survive well in local climate
  2. No threat of invasion
  3. Support native biodiversity

Around 630 mature trees are required to offset Carbon footprint towards production of 1 lakh PET bottles
Why plant Native saplings?

**Banyan (Ficus benghalensis) (Vad, Bargad)**
- Medicinal properties: leaf, bark, seeds and fig cure disorders like diarrhea, polyuria, dental, diabetes and urine disorders
- Wood: making door panels, boxes
- Bark: making paper and ropes
- Figs: edible
- Habitat for numerous bird species

**Sacred Fig (Ficus religiosa) (Peepal, Pimpal)**
- Host for Lac Insects
- Fodder for goats and cattle
- Figs: edible
- Bark: extraction of reddish dye; cure inflammations and glandular swelling
- Medicinal uses: beneficial for eczema, asthma, blood purification, digestive ailments

**Neem (Azadirachta indica)**
- Medicinal uses: effective for skin infections, intestinal problems, diabetes, malaria,
- Neem oil: pesticide for grain storage
- Twigs: used for brushing teeth
- Bark fiber: rope making
- Requires less water for growth
- Provides shade

Other suggested native species: *Ficus racemosa* (Umbar), *Terminalia catappa* (Kadwa Badam)
Volunteers planting saplings of native tree species (collected from roadsides/ cracks of walls and buildings) in waste plastic bottles prepared as planters.

30 volunteers participated in this activity
e) Display of Cloth Bags - Aapli Pishvi

A display of cloth carry bags made using old clothes was set up by the representatives of Aapli Pishvi initiative.

They gave away the cloth bags free of cost to the participants in order to promote the use of cloth carry bags and reducing plastic carry bags.
4. Media Coverage
Clean-up drives carried out on World Wetland Day

Navi Mumbai: The civic body, in association with The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), conducted a number of clean-up activities along the vast wetland and mangrove fringe of Thane creek line in Sagar Vihar, Vashi. This was done on the occasion of World Wetland Day, which was observed on Sunday. Hundreds of volunteers joined hands to highlight the need and importance of protecting wetlands and mangroves. TERI and UNEP have jointly begun a campaign called ‘Rethink Plastic’ which began from November 2019 and will go up to March 2020. — B B Nayak

Times of India_03.02.2020

PANAPATHA JANA VACHAVIGNYASHANTI UKPRAM

Mumbai: Kharghar Purnima was an opportunity to start a new journey for the citizens. The event was organized by the Kharghar NCP office and the civic body. Part of the program included a clean-up drive at the wetland. The event was attended by a large number of people. — Tarun Bharat_04.02.2020

Loksatta_05.02.2020
Media Coverage

Mumbai Chauffer_05.02.2020

Maharashtra Times_04.02.2020

Navrashtra_05.02.2020
5. Take Home Message
“Save Ocean to Cherish and Don't Leave it to Perish…”
“Restrict Single Use Plastic”
Acknowledgement

We would like to express our gratitude to:

• Project Partners, Sponsors, NSS volunteers, College students for actively participating in all the activities.

• Local citizens and all participants for making this event successful.

• Media personnel for covering the event and helping us reach out to greater audience.

• Each and Every one who has been associated with us in this endeavor

THANK YOU