

ARE BUSINESSES READY TO BEAT PLASTIC POLLUTION



Versatility, flexibility, resistance to the elements and strength are a few attractive qualities of plastic that have led to its over-production. However, some of these qualities also pose the biggest challenge when plastic-based products are discarded as waste.

Global plastic production has increased steadily and has reached 320 million tonnes a year. Of the estimated 8.3 billion tonnes of plastic produced since the 1950s, only 9% has been recycled and another 12% incinerated. Over the last two decades, the fast-moving consumer goods and processed food industries have become the biggest consumers of low-value plastics for their packaging and delivery systems. Policies aimed at regulating single-use plastics have faced stiff opposition from the plastics and manufacturing industries, which have historically linked the plastic problem exclusively to consumer behaviour and poor waste management.

India's commitment to phase out non-recyclable multi-layered plastics by 2018 through its Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016 was hailed as a bold step in the right direction. However, this decision was reversed in March 2018 through an amendment that effectively allows manufacturers of multilayered plastics and plastic bags to continue with business as usual. This raises several ethical questions about the commitment of the government and the private sector in solving the plastic crisis.

Management through interventions like plastic roads, pyrolysis, cement kiln co-incineration and waste-to-energy incineration are often promoted as solutions to the crisis. However, despite a decade or more of research and development to improve these technologies, they remain underdeveloped, experimental, and pose a significant risk to public health.



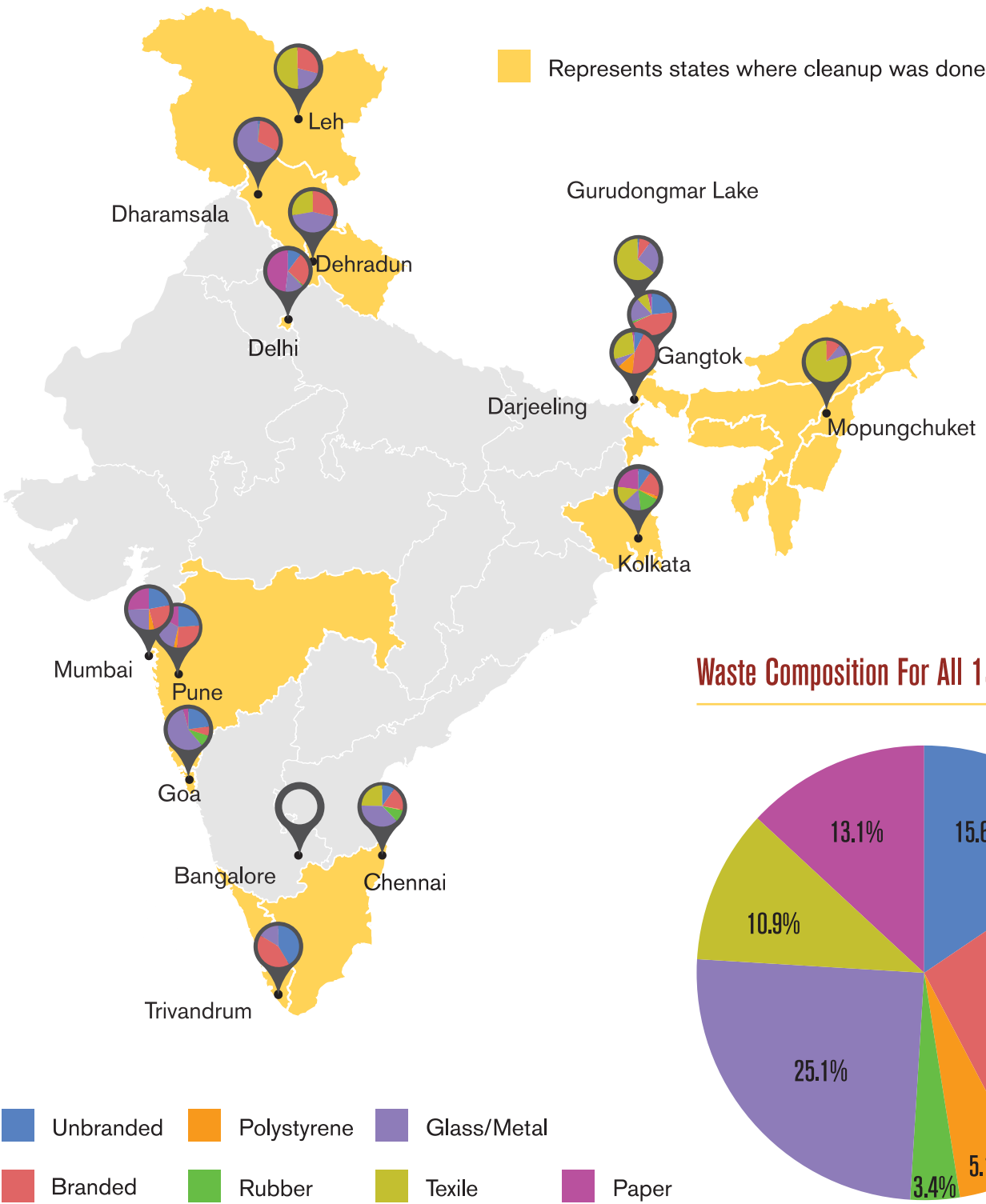
Global Anti-Incinerator Alliance
Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives

The pan-India waste and brand audits were supported by funds from the Plastic Solutions Fund, and the views contained herein do not necessarily reflect PSF's views. The full report with references will be available at www.no-burn.org. This is an abridged version. For more information, please contact info@no-burn.org.

PAN-INDIA WASTE AND BRAND AUDIT

India is home to many critical and innovative solutions to prevent and manage waste. Despite initiatives to implement holistic waste management solutions, however, management of residual waste, particularly plastics, has posed an ever increasing challenge. To highlight the pervasiveness of plastics and to ascertain responsibility for the proliferation of problematic plastic packaging in the environment, waste and brand audits were conducted in 250 sites across 15 cities in 18 Indian states in 21 days in May 2018.

Cities That Undertook Waste And Brand Audit (City-wise Waste Composition)



METHODOLOGY

Participating groups conducted the audits in different sites such as public parks, water bodies, and resource recovery centres. Waste was classified into seven main categories (unbranded plastics, branded plastics, polystyrene, rubber, glass/metal, textile, and paper/cardboard), then measured by weight and volume. Random samples of branded plastics were further audited to record the brand and identify the manufacturer. They were also categorised into product types (food, household and personal care), and type of plastic packaging (single layer, multilayer/composites/laminates, polystyrene, expanded polystyrene, hard plastics, polyethylene, foil, and others).

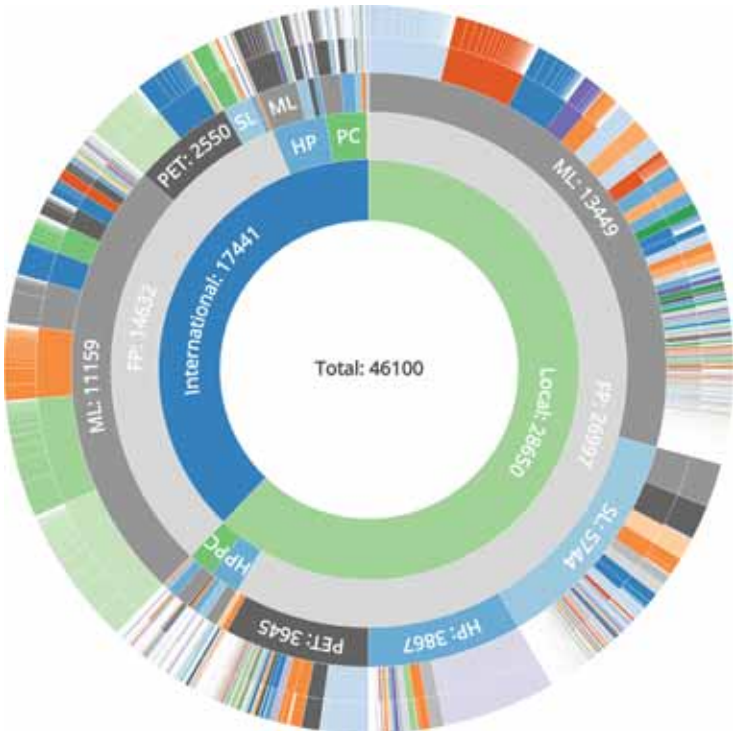
Top Polluters (International)



Top Polluters (Local)



Types Of Waste Classified By Products, Packaging, Manufacturers And Brands



- Product categories:**
FP - Food packaging
HP - Household packaging
PC - Personal Care packaging
- Packaging categories:**
SL- single layer
ML- multilayer/composites/laminates
PS - polystyrene
ES - expanded polystyrene
HP - hard plastics
PET - polyethylene
F - foil
O - others

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Our findings show that there is too much plastics—particularly low-value, disposable plastics—contaminating all of our habitats, from the mountains to the coasts. A cohesive, holistic and sustainable waste management framework is required—one that not only includes management of products and packaging at their end-of-life, but more importantly, has at its core a singular and committed effort towards a materials economy that designs waste out of the system. While plastic waste management should be seen as part of this larger management framework and the roles of producers, manufacturers, governments and consumers should be clearly identified within this framework, it is crucial that we address primarily the production, and not merely the disposal of waste.

- Drastically reduce plastic production, particularly of single-use, low-value, disposable plastics. Recycling has been used as a crutch by the plastics and manufacturing industries to divert attention from the increasing production of plastics, but recycling will never be enough to solve the plastic crisis. The India government must rescind the recent amendment to the Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016 that allowed for recoverability, and reinstate the target to phase out multi-layer packaging by 2018. The government must be steadfast in its mandate to protect public health and the environment and not be swayed by industry pressure.
- Redesign products and delivery systems to ensure that materials and packaging can be fully reused and are toxic-free, and that products and packaging are readily re-absorbed into existing production processes with little or no toxic by-products.
- Support and strengthen the existing, invisible, unsupported, and unregulated recycling sector that currently operates on the fringes with appropriate policy and financial instruments from the government and private sector.
- Implement a comprehensive Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policy that will clearly identify accountability and responsibility all through the life of a product. Interventions at different stages of the production and waste management systems will influence the value and quality of plastics and determine its reusability and recyclability.

EPR can be executed through a variety and combination of different policy instruments, a lot of which are being implemented successfully in other countries. These instruments range from product take-back schemes, "pay-as-you-throw" or waste users' fees, advance disposal fees, deposit refund schemes, and recycling and composting incentives. Inappropriate and unsustainable technologies, such as cement co-processing and waste-to-energy, should not be considered as solutions for reducing plastic waste.

CONCLUSION

The success of any waste management programme depends on the distribution of responsibility across all involved actors, such as the **consumer** (responsible purchase and consumption, source segregation); **policy makers** (craft holistic policies with inputs from all stakeholders); **local bodies** (provide the required infrastructure support for setting up recycling and collection facilities); **regulators** (ensure strict and impartial law enforcement); **waste management companies** (ensure efficient collection with zero dumping/leakage); **recyclers and waste processors** (follow all environment and safe work conditions norms); and others. However, since the producer has maximum influence on how a product is designed, packaged, delivered, consumed, and discarded, their role in preventing plastic pollution is paramount.



Stree Mukti Sanghatana
(Womens Liberation Organization)



Citizen consumer and civic Action Group

