Why talk about Plastic?

Plastic is non-biodegradable and releases harmful dioxin in the air. A study by ‘The Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists’ disclosed that people who work in plastic industries are at a greater risk of cancer and other diseases. Discarded plastic is an urban nightmare because it doesn’t rot and turn into compost. Plastic bags when discarded in fields decrease the productivity of arable land. The most dangerous feature of plastic is its toxicity with black coloured polythene bags which are the worst offenders, say environmentalists. Coloured plastic bags contain harmful toxic metals like chromium and copper, which can cause allergies. They block drains and sometimes this leads to floods as well. Have you all realized that the Mumbai floods were a result of drain clogging primarily due to plastic!

Gobar Gyan

It is a proven fact today that most plastic bags are the prime cause of environmental breakdown which impacts plants and animal life in both the land and the sea. And while the statistics are incomplete, some conservationists estimate that at least 100,000 mammals and birds die from them each year, felled by the estimated 500 billion and more plastic bags that are produced and consumed around the world. The number of fishes killed by them are unknown, but they are sure to number in millions! Plastic bags of less than 25 microns are a great nuisance. Not only can they not be recycled but they have a shorter life span and hence are disposed of, quickly, sometimes clogging drains and leading to floods!

Activity 1

It is true that plastics are a major part of our daily life. Can we think of a day without plastics? Well if we are adamant we can do without plastics. Let’s start with a small survey in your school. Check whether your school has a NON-POLY BAG ZONE?

(A) Find out whether your school is a non-polybag zone?

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

(i) If your answer is ‘Yes’ _____________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

Hi! I am Pandit Gobar Ganesh. You will find me in Gobar Times—a magazine that tells you how your everyday life is linked to the world around you. Hooked, huh? If you want to know more about me and GobarTimes visit us at: www.gobartimes.org
(B) Find out how many students and school staff members actually contribute to this initiative?

☐ Student
☐ Teaching Staff
☐ Non-teaching Staff
☐ Visitors

(C) Write in detail how are you contributing to this initiative by not carrying plastic bags to your school?
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________________

(ii) If your answer is ‘No’ _______________________________________________________

(A) Share the idea with your eco-club members. Then speak to your teachers and principal about the importance and also making your school “non-polybag zone”.

Eco-club members’ opinion: ______________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Teachers and Principal’s opinion: _____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

(B) Start an awareness campaign in your school with the management’s permission. Make posters, charts and signs for the campaign. Put them up around the school, so everyone makes an effort to stop using the plastic bags. Request your school principal to announce your institute as non-polybag zone in the assembly.

Activity 2

PLASTIC AUDIT

Plastics are an easy access, so we usually don’t carry our own bags for shopping. Ultimately each plastic we take from the shopkeeper, add to the ever growing pile of plastic grocery bags. To reduce the use of plastic bags we first need some information like how many plastics we use everyday, how many times do we reuse plastic bags and so on. What better than doing a Plastic audit at home?

(A) Count the number of plastic bags at home. ________________________________________________

(B) How many plastic bags are being reused? ________________________________________________

(C) How many plastic bags are just lying about? _____________________________________________

(D) What do you do with the bags after you have used them? _________________________________

    (1) Sending them for recycling ______________________ if yes, how many _________________

    (2) Reusing them __________________________ if yes, how many times __________________

    (3) Throwing them away ____________________, if yes where do you throw it? _________________
(E) How many family members use plastic bags regularly? ___________________________________________

(F) In a week, how many plastic bags do you and your family _____________________________________
   a. Acquire ____________________________________________________________________________
   b. Reuse _____________________________________________________________________________
   c. Throw away ________________________________________________________________________

You may wish to extend this survey in your neighbourhood to find out the quantum of plastic used by the society. Find out how many people take their own bags to the grocery store and how many accept fresh plastic bags every time? Share the result of the survey in the Residence Welfare Association/Society meetings. Also interview the grocery store owner and ask him number of plastic he uses in a day

_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

**Activity 3**

During the eco-club meeting discuss with members the alternatives which can be used instead of plastic bags? Write down the alternative.
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

When you buy vegetables or may be clothes, plastic bags are given free of cost. Hence it is now important to calculate cost of the alternative bags, which can replace plastic. Also discuss, if these alternative bags can be made available at cheaper price or can be made at home.

_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

Discuss in your class how harmful are the plastic bags, and in what way can your class help to stop the usage of Plastic Bags?
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

Try your hand in stitching up a cloth bag yourself: [www.gobartimes.org/20100815/gobar_scope.asp](http://www.gobartimes.org/20100815/gobar_scope.asp)

*Prepared by: Mr. Rothin Datta*

If you found the activity sheet interesting, E-mail us at eeu@cseindia.org or write to:
Activity Sheet, Centre for Science and Environment, 41 Tughlakabad Institutional Area,
New Delhi-110062 or Call 29955124 Extension 219