

F.No.8-10/2021-SSB
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Swachh aur Swasth Bharat (SSB) Cell

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jorbagh, Aliganj
New Delhi -110 003

Dated: - 24.06.2021

To
All State/UT Nodal Agencies
Swachhta Action Plan

Subject: Two month plastic awareness campaign regarding elimination of single use plastic with the involvement of UNEP, GIZ and FICCI launched on 8th June 2021

Sir/Madam,

I am directed to inform you that Ministry has launched a two month awareness generation of Single Use Plastics on 8th June 2021 on the eve of World Oceans Day. Shri Prakash Javadekar, Hon'ble Union Minister for Environment Forest & Climate Change, Government of India inaugurated the event on single use plastics-2021.

2. The awareness campaign is being organized in collaboration with United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), GIZ India and FICCI. The objective of the programme is to reduce the single use plastic usage and bring in the behavioral change among citizens. Accordingly, all State/UT Nodal Agencies are requested to participate in the the campaign. The contact details of the nodal persons from UNEP, GIZ and FICCI is enclosed herewith.

Encl: As above


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AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ON SINGLE-USE PLASTICS-2021

Northern Regional Event, 8th July, 2021

CONCEPT NOTE

Plastic Waste has become a serious concern globally. Despite their ubiquitous nature, plastics are becoming a threat to the ecosystem. Littered plastic waste on land and aquatic environments find its way into the water bodies, affecting the marine ecosystems. Single-use plastic items form a significant portion of the littered waste. Single-Use Plastics (SUPs) are commonly defined as plastic materials (like disposable cutlery, packaging films) that are used once, or for a very short period of time, before being thrown away. In March 2021, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) introduced a draft amendment in the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2018. The draft amendment defined a SUP item as “a plastic commodity intended to be used once for the same purpose before being disposed or recycled”. The draft amendment also identifies a list of SUP items that have been proposed to be banned in the year 2022.

High consumption of SUPs and its short-term usage leads to high disposal rates. As per global estimates, the production of SUPs has increased exponentially over the last 30 years. The per capita plastic consumption in India is much lower than the global average and also in comparison to other developed countries. India has been witnessing higher rates of plastic waste generation, owing to the fact that a huge quantum of plastics (nearly 50 percent) is dumped after its first use. Starting from inland water bodies, SUPs are making their way into the oceans at a rapid pace. The fact that by 2050, oceans will have more plastic than fish (by weight) has been rapidly resounding in conversations on plastics. On land, open dumping of these wastes leads to soil pollution while open burning leads to the release of toxic fumes in the air, causing air pollution. As they break-down, these plastics release toxic chemicals, contaminating our food chain and water bodies.

To comprehensively address plastic waste, it is important to realise that SUP production, consumption and its impact on the environment are a result of multiple activities and needs involvement of several stakeholders. This makes the challenge of managing them systemic in nature, which implies that solutions need to be built and integrated at multiple fronts.

On the regulatory front, the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules 2018 govern the management of plastic waste in India. They apply to waste generators, local bodies, gram panchayats, manufacturers, importers and producers and define the responsibilities of each of these when it comes to plastic waste management. The rules also identify Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) as a mechanism through which Producers, Importers and Brand Owners (PIBOs) can contribute to the waste collection system through their own distribution channel or the local body concerned. This approach facilitates accountable engagement from PIBOs and can significantly strengthen plastic waste management system.

The Government of India piloted a resolution on 'Addressing single-use plastic pollution' which was adopted in the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly in March 2019. Considering the high environmental cost associated with the use of Single-use plastic, particularly the adverse effect on soil, water bodies and on marine environment, Hon'ble Prime Minister has announced India's pledge to phase out Single-use plastic by 2022.

SUP management demands a systemic approach in addition to the regulatory mechanisms, there is a need to identify tangible solutions for implementation of closed loop measures like alternatives, certifications, eco-design and digitalization etc. Furthermore, citizens engagement on the reduction of SUPs, shift to existing alternatives and sustainable lifestyles to reduce consumption needs to be designed.

In order to facilitate this, MoEFCC along with GIZ India, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and FICCI are organizing a pan-India awareness campaign on SUPs. GIZ (on behalf of Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, BMU) is one of the key technical partners, supporting the campaign under the new Indo-German Technical Cooperation Project on "Circular Economy Solutions (CES) preventing Marine Litter (ML) in Ecosystems". UNEP supports the Ministry on various environmental aspects and one key area under chemicals and waste portfolio is plastic waste management. Currently, UNEP is implementing three projects in the country with a focus on plastic waste management. Two projects namely India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative and Japan funded Counter Measures for plastic free rivers focus on reduction of marine litter. The third project is the Tide Turner Plastic Challenge which seeks to engage youth across the country to address the issues of plastic pollution in the country through behavioural change. The awareness campaign on single-use plastics was launched by the Hon. Minister, Sh. Prakash Javadekar on World Oceans Day, June 8, 2021. The virtual event was also attended by Shri R P Gupta, Secretary, MoEFCC, Mr. Jochen Flasbarth, State Secretary, BMU and Dr. Dechen Tsering, Regional Director, Asia and the Pacific, UNEP along with the presence of Secretary General, FICCI, Head, UNEP India Country Office and Country Director, GIZ India.

This awareness campaign aims at creating awareness on SUPs, in a systemic manner, by not only talking about SUPs but also identifying and engaging with stakeholders that are closely related to plastic waste management. It is awareness generation that is requisite for bringing about a behavioural change with respect to the usage of single-use plastic items. The campaign has identified the following themes to build this comprehensive engagement: (i) Information on SUPs, (ii) Alternatives to Plastics and Rethinking Packaging, (iii) Value Chain Actors and (iv) Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system.

Information on SUPs: Before delving into the various sectors/areas, a comprehensive understanding of SUPs is pertinent for all the stakeholders. Some of the questions that will be answered through this campaign are:

1. Why are SUPs a major concern, especially with regard to marine litter? What are the health and environmental repercussions of littered SUP items?
2. What are the SUP items proposed to be banned and why is the ban being introduced by the Government of India?

Alternatives to plastics and rethinking packaging: Transitioning from SUPs require replacements, not only in terms of alternative materials, but also alternative design-based and service-based solutions. This is particularly relevant if India is to achieve its circular economy goals. Circular economy identifies 'designing out waste' and 'keeping products and materials in use' as its two integral principles. Through its regional events, the campaign will engage with actors who are currently working on innovative solutions across the country, their viability in varying socio-economic demographics and understanding the measures needed to up-scale them. Some of the questions that will be answered through the campaign are:

1. What are the viable or potential alternatives in the country and at what scale are they being sold?
2. In addition to alternative materials, what are the alternative service-based models that can help reduce plastic consumption?
3. What are the avenues to be explored in the realm of sustainable packaging and eco-design?

Value chain Actors: The informal waste sector which includes ragpickers, informal waste workers etc. forms an integral part of waste management in India. Strengthening plastic waste management in India therefore requires understanding their role, their challenges and measures through which their livelihoods can be enhanced. Some of the questions that will be answered through the campaign are as follows:

1. How does 'inclusive' value chain promote potentials for job creation through circular economy? What are the learnings from the existing, decentralized innovative models in selected cities/ states?
2. What is the role of civil society organizations in supporting and enhancing the role of informal waste workers?
3. What are the opportunities for the Producer Responsible Organizations (PROs) and recyclers to create a collaborative framework to mainstream the informal value chain actors?

Extended Producer Responsibility: By engaging with various PIBOs and government representatives, the campaign will answer the following questions:

1. What is EPR and how it can be instrumental in managing plastic waste effectively in the country?
2. How is EPR implementation monitored and enforced to create better material collection, take back schemes, improved recycling and recovery rates?
3. How does EPR act as a mechanism for tackling the challenge of plastic leakage from the value chain finally ending up in waterbodies?
4. How can a successful EPR model be operationalised in India? Who are the key actors who can support innovation in addressing better design and material alternatives in EPR implementation?