An

ADMIN GUIDE

to

Breaking Free from Plastic

in the time of

COVID-19

#breakfreefromplastic

Flotilla FOUNDATION

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STEP 1

Understanding the need to go plastic-free. The science behind plastic, and its harmful impacts on the people and the planet

Definition of Terms

PLASTIC refers to a synthetic material made of polymers such as PVC, polyethylene, or nylon, produced using fossil fuel. One of its most distinguishing properties is malleability, which allows it to be molded into different shapes, and used in a wide range of applications - from packaging and manufacturing, to electronics and construction. Its other significant characteristic would be its durability, which makes it impossible to decompose for hundreds, even millions of years. In addition, chemicals such as colorants, lubricants, and flame retardants are added to plastic to improve its physical composition.

POLYMERS are very large molecules made of a bonded chain of simpler chemical units called monomers.

MICROPLASTICS are microscopic plastic fragments, measuring no more than 5 millimeters long. They are found in personal care products, polyester clothing, and cigarette filter, among other items. They end up in the water, get eaten by wildlife, and enter our agricultural ecosystems and our bodies. They've even made their way up to the secluded Pyrenees mountain range and down to the bottom of the Mariana Trench.

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS are disposable plastics made from fossil fuel–based chemicals. Examples would be bottles, straws, bags, and wrappers.

7 The seven categories of PLASTIC

PET – POLYETHYLENE TEREPHTHALATE

We encounter PET most often in the form of water bottles. It is intended for single use, especially because repeated use increases the risk of leaching and bacterial growth. PET is also difficult to clean, requiring harmful chemicals for disinfection.

But PET plastic is recyclable. The recycling process entails crushing and shredding the plastic, to be turned into new PET bottles, or as polyester fiber for making apparel.

HDPE - HIGH-DENSITY POLYETHYLENE

Stronger and thicker than PET and with a relatively lower risk of leaching, high-density polyethylene (HDPE is often used for making large bottles, such as juice containers, shampoo bottles, milk jugs, bleach containers, and thick bottle caps.

HDPE containers are widely recycled and are thought of as a safer option for food and drinks because of their sturdy quality. However, some studies show that they may release chemicals that disrupt the human endocrine system.

PVC – POLYVINYL CHLORIDE

PVC or vinyl is a common material for food wrapping, pets' toys, detergent bottles, blood bags, blister packaging, and hospital tubes. Its thicker version is popular for cable sheathing, as well as garden hoses and plastic pipes.

PVC used to be the second most widely used plastic resin in the world (after polyethylene, before its manufacture and disposal was revealed to be the cause of serious health risks and environmental pollution. PVC

carries such toxins as bisphenol A (BPA, cadmium, dioxins, mercury, phthalates, and lead, which may cause cancer, as well as allergic reactions among children. PVC-based products are not recyclable. While some can be repurposed, these should not be reused for food applications, or for children's use.

LDPE – LOW-DENSITY POLYETHYLENE

The most used family of plastics in the world, LDPE has the simplest plastic polymer chemical structure, making it very easy and cheap to manufacture. LDPE is a generally thinner and more flexible form of polyethylene.

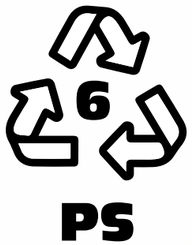
LDPE is mostly found in grocery bags, shrink wraps, frozen food bags, container lids, squeeze bottles, and coatings for milk cartons and beverage cups. Heavy-duty applications include garbage can liners and floor tiles.

While reusable and considered less toxic than other plastics, LDPE is not commonly recycled.

PP – POLYPROPYLENE

Polypropylene plastic is a tough, lightweight material typically used in the manufacture of pails, plastic bottle tops, potato chip bags, margarine and yogurt containers, straws, packing tape, rope, and disposable diapers.

Like LDPE, PP is considered a safer option for food and beverage, and can be reused. However, it is recyclable only under select programs.



PS – POLYSTYRENE

Polystyrene is an inexpensive, lightweight, and easily-formed plastic that most of us call styrofoam. It is commonly used for food containers, disposable cups, and packaging, as well as for foam insulation and sheeting in construction.

Its weak and ultra-lightweight composition allows it to easily disintegrate and disperse throughout the natural environment, posing long-term harms on one's respiratory, nervous, endocrine, reproductive, and immune systems. Polystyrene products also have a low recycling rate.

Other – BPA, POLYCARBONATE, AND LEXAN

Category 7 is a catch-all for polycarbonate (PC and other plastics, such as those that feature layers of different types. Category 7 plastics vary in their reuse and recyclability.

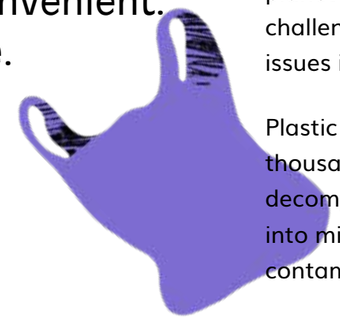
While some polycarbonate containers will be marketed as non-leaching or odor-free, they may still leach trace amounts of BPA, if used to heat liquids. Examples of polycarbonate applications include baby bottles, sippy cups, water bottles, and ketchup containers. But PC is toxic, and its BPA content has since been linked to adult-onset (Type II diabetes, obesity, increased risk of breast cancer, prostate cancer, and metabolic disorders, and fertility problems.

Also under category #7 are a new generation of compostable plastics marked PLA, made out of bio-based polymers such as cornstarch, which are reusable but not recyclable.

Going plastic-free requires understanding the differences between plastic types, as well as the options available for reuse and recycling, to bolster policy recommendations. What is clear, however, is that all categories carry risks to human health and the environment, and the wide range of their applications means a lot of work is needed to educate people about the impact of plastic use on their daily lives.

The problem with PLASTIC

Plastic is everywhere–
it's malleable and convenient.
But it has a dark side.



Plastic pollution is choking our planet and is one of the most challenging environmental issues in the world today.

Plastic products take thousands of years to decompose. They break down into microplastics, which contaminate water and soil.

Here are some
harsh truths about plastic:

- Since plastic's mass market adoption in the 1950s, 8.3 billion tonnes of plastic had been produced, at a rate faster than that of any other material, and in a shift from durable towards single-use products.
- As of 2017, one million plastic beverage bottles are purchased every minute.
- Every year, the world uses up to 5 trillion single-use plastic bags.
- Only 9 percent of all plastic waste have been recycled, while about 12 percent has been incinerated. The rest, 79 percent, has ended up in landfills, dumps, or the natural environment.
- Over 150 million tonnes of plastic waste can be found in our oceans, with 8 million tonnes more added each year. This is the equivalent of a garbage truckload being dumped every minute.
- If nothing is done to reverse the trend, by 2050: the figures could increase to 2 per minute by 2030, and four per minute by 2050.
- There could be more plastic than fish in the sea, and 12 billion metric tonnes of plastic in landfills.

Nearly all plastics are created from non-renewable fossil fuels such as oil, natural gas, and coal. Their production thus depends on the pollutive practice of extracting these chemicals. By 2050, plastic production could account for 20% of the world's total oil consumption.

Finally, plastic is bad for health. Its components are known to disrupt human endocrine system, resulting in hormonal imbalances, even cancer and infertility.

Plastic also brings harm to animals, causing such health issues as intestinal blockages, punctured organs, and fatal intestinal blockages. Wildlife getting entangled in plastic may also damage their organs, on top of the risk of choking. And when plastic pollutes ecosystems, animals cannot establish their habitat, access the nutrients they need, and grow their population.

Plastic in the Global South

Each year, we produce about 300 million tonnes of plastic waste. The figures disproportionately affect the Global South.

According to the World Economic Forum, 90 percent of ocean plastic came from ten rivers, eight of which are in Asia. The continent is also home to the five most plastic-polluting countries: China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. In these places, there are limited waste disposal facilities, and overreliance on single-use products with low-grade plastic.

Import and dumping of waste from the Global North have only made the problem worse for Global South countries.

Since 2018, there has been a pushback from China and then Vietnam, Thailand, India, and Malaysia to place restrictions and outright ban on the importation of waste. Amendments were made in 2019 to the Basel Convention to cover plastic waste export.

But so far, this has led to even poorer countries becoming the host to the Global North's waste. A 2019 investigation revealed that the United States was sending plastic waste to Senegal, Laos, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia.

Today, the situation demonstrates how disparities between peoples and nations further the destruction of our natural environment. The fight against plastic waste is then also a struggle against inequality.

A critical approach to the plastic waste problem

Plastic waste impacts on our natural environment in a way that can seem overwhelming and intractable. But at Break Free From Plastic, we have learned how much impact a small number of large corporations have on the problem through their creation and distribution of single-use plastics.

We conducted a brand audit, which involves counting and documenting the brands of 346,494 pieces of plastic waste collected in 55 countries.

For the third consecutive year, mega-corporations **The Coca-Cola Company**, **PepsiCo**, and **Nestlé** ranked among the top plastic polluters.

The top ten companies are headquartered in the United States and Europe:

1. The Coca-Cola Company
2. PepsiCo
3. Nestlé
4. Unilever
5. Mondelez
6. Mars
7. Procter & Gamble
8. Philip Morris International
9. Colgate-Palmolive
10. Perfetti Van Melle

The plastic waste problem is also inextricably linked to developments in petroleum trade, as plastic is produced using oil. As demand for fossil fuel drops or becomes highly volatile, the industry has been turning to plastic to stave off losses.

A just, sustainable, and effective response to the crisis calls for a shift in whom we hold accountable for the proliferation of plastic. Decades-long data show that individual efforts will always be undermined by the rate at which companies extract fossil fuels to keep manufacturing plastic. We then need to focus more on demanding that companies stop producing so much plastic, than on stopping people from avoiding plastic and recycling, which will never be enough.

Individual solutions, such as encouraging reusable containers, can only be useful to a certain extent. Without equitable policy, these only perpetuate inequality by being out of reach for the poor and disadvantaged.

Consumer-focused efforts also forget that solving the plastic problem along with climate change requires a societal approach. Eliminating plastics is not simply a consumer choice, but an urgent action for our collective future.

Plastic in the age of COVID

COVID-19 has changed our world in many ways. In particular, it presents new challenges for balancing public health with climate change.

But so far, the pandemic has seen a massive increase in plastic use. Much of it, single use.

Each month during the pandemic, 129 billion face masks and 65 billion gloves have been used and disposed of each month. That's enough to cover Switzerland in mask waste.

Schools pose a big challenge for administrators and governments trying to ensure public health and environmental challenges are met.

One cannot simply exist without the other. A healthy environment helps meet our most basic public health needs. But the campaign to go plastic-free has seen a number of steps backwards during the pandemic.

Disposable kitchenware and carry bags have seen a return to favour in many places and people have reported feeling pressure to avoid using reusable items for fear of contamination. It is therefore important to keep updating ourselves about both health and environmental best practices, while insisting that safer and more environmental options are available for all.

Why go plastic-free?

Understanding why we must lessen our dependence on plastic is the first step to convincing others of the pressing need for change. This applies whether we are trying to convince fellow students, businesses, or the government.

We should build plastic-free communities, for ourselves, for future generations, for our environment, and for a sustainable economy.

STEP 2

Building the program. An introduction to program planning around the plastic-free campus campaign.

Now that we understand the importance of breaking free from plastic, it's time to lay down the work needed to carry out the plastic-free campus campaign.

School administrations are in a unique position to implement measures in an institutional approach. It can draw from its resources, from funds and manpower, to the formal structures in place, to convey messages, forge partnerships, train suppliers and service providers, and manage waste disposal systems, among others.

This section presents the basics for building the school program to shift towards a plastic-free community.

Fundamentals of a program

The Plastic-Free Campus program must have the following:

Message

A campaign must first of all be driven by a message, which would in turn be based on its proponents' goals (see Step 4 for a more thorough discussion on setting goals). On top of being SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely, these goals need to be crafted based on a careful assessment of the school's situation in relation to plastic use, as well as the needs and expectations of the school community.

The campaign message is then best formulated following the conduct of the plastic audit in the campus, a consultation with the school's various stakeholders, and the review of the resources at its disposal.

Organisational Structure

The program needs a working structure that will be in charge of leading the campaign, delegating tasks, pooling the resources, and implementing the measures.

Depending on what its members agree on, it could take the form of a special task force within the school, or a committee with representatives from the different stakeholders (see next section for details), or simply a program coordinator. This coordinator can be an existing school staff whose role will be expanded to accommodate the additional tasks, or a consultant who will then regularly meet with school administration representatives to ensure that each phase of the program ios promptly and rigorously implemented.

The key is to designate a group of people to establish the foundation of the campaign, and monitor its progress.

Resources

The plastic-free campus program can only be launched and sustained with resources, which come in the following forms:

Funds. The campaign will need financing, for expenses related to communications and awareness-raising (e.g. printing of information materials), procurement of plastic alternatives for the school facility, and the conduct of training for school staff.

The funds can come from the school's budget, or be supported by grants from the local or national government, or non-profit organisations working in the waste management arena, or donations from businesses or chambers of business looking to support environment-related programs.

Manpower. This resource can be provided by any of the stakeholder group, depending on the campaign activity in question. Manpower refers to the time, expertise, and physical effort that the campaign will call for, including: the conduct of plastic audit, the development of a concept for plastic reuse in the campus, and the meetings with local businesses to tap their support.

Some of these activities can be accomplished by school staff in their official capacities, while others may need to be formalised.

Information. The campaign will benefit from the use of existing resources on the subject, especially those that come from the same community. The local council may be able to provide information material on the types of plastic items being accepted at local recycling facilities. The students can offer details about the brands that contribute the most plastic waste in the campus. Collating these kinds of information systematically and strategically will strengthen the campaign.

Finding people to engage in the program

Realising the shift to a plastic-free campus calls for everyone's participation. An important next step would then be identifying all members of the school community who need to be engaged in the campaign.

The list will include:

- Local council
- School district officers
- Vendors/suppliers/service providers
- Local businesses
- School concessionaires
- Maintenance staff
- Students
- Student leaders
- Parents

Each of these stakeholder groups have their particular needs, interests, expectations, and values. The school administration would do well to conduct a consultation with each, to know their concerns about the shift, determine their potential contributions, and secure their commitment.

Building and sustaining the program

After holding consultations, the school's plastic-free campus program can begin. It can feature any combination of the following components, depending on the campaign's goals.

Awareness-raising

The foundation of the campaign will be an informed school community. Once its members understand why plastics are bad, and what they can do to help make the shift possible, progress is guaranteed. It will especially be helpful to present the shift as part of an overall effort towards waste reduction.

Awareness-raising efforts in the school can cover these topics, drawing from the Step 1 of this manual:

- The harms of plastic
- What the community can do about plastic pollution
- The kinds of plastic
- The alternatives to plastic
- Where to source environment-friendly packaging and containers within the community
- The ideal community waste management system

Moreover, they can come in the form of:

- ***Multimedia content development.*** Various information, education, and communication (IEC) materials can be developed by the school and disseminated through its official channels - for instance, its Facebook page, or mailing lists. Examples of such materials would be instructional videos, infographics, and teasers.
- ***Public visuals campaign.*** Posters about plastic can be put up at strategic locations within the campus, especially where they dispose of their garbage, as well as choose products to buy, to inform their decision-making.
- ***Contests.*** Students can also be invited to join competitions for crafting these materials, or for hitting targets, e.g. class sections that generated the least plastic waste.

Training

The Plastic-Free Campus campaign calls for behavioral changes, driven by a shift in mindset. To facilitate this shift, the school administration can organise seminars or training workshops for members of the school community, tailored according to the needs of each stakeholder group.

Here are some examples of seminars/workshops that can be conducted:

- ***For students:*** Building a student movement around plastic-free campuses
- ***For school staff:*** Conducting a plastic audit
- ***For vendors:*** The alternatives to plastic
- ***For parents:*** The benefits of shifting to a plastic-free campus

Alternatively, or to complement its training workshops, the school administration can also initiate the development of a toolkit for each stakeholder group, to support their initiatives to contribute to the campaign.

Policy review and changes

Following comprehensive consultation, the school must institute policies to promote its efforts towards eliminating single-use plastics in the campus. Tasks related to formalising a plastic-free campus approach may include:

- Review of the school's procurement policy, to ensure the selection of the most environment-friendly options
- Enforcing a ban on single-use plastics for meal packaging among the students.
- Obliging school concessionaires to shift to reusable or biodegradable utensils.
- Acquisition of equipment and supplies that encourage reuse and refilling practices (e.g. drinking stations, instead of allowing the sale of bottled water in-campus)
- Inclusion of a lesson on plastic pollution in science, social studies, and other related subjects

It can also incentivise efforts by various stakeholders to contribute to the campaign, through such measures as:

- Working only with partners (from the school canteen concessionaires, to suppliers of office needs) that express - in writing - their commitment to the shift towards a plastic-free campus. Contracts with vendors can, for example, include a clause prohibiting single-use plastic packaging.
- Giving class credits to students engaged in innovative plastic reduction/ elimination projects.

Resource generation

To sustain the campaign, the school needs to officially set aside a portion of its budget towards measures for shifting to a plastic-free campus. Requests for support may be sent to the local council or local businesses, and the school can welcome direct monetary support, or supplies (e.g. donations of utensils for the school canteen).

Setting up the campaign in the COVID era

While the schools remain closed or in limited operations in the time of COVID, the Plastic-Free Campus campaign goals can be modified, to prioritise the establishment of its foundations - such as its supporting structure and resource base.

- **Conducting online research on:**
  - the existing policies on plastic use in the school community
  - the state of plastic consumption in the locale/province/country
  - organisations who can be the school's campaign partners
- **Preparing communication materials for the eventual launch of the plastic-free campus campaign, including:**
  - invitation letters
  - solicitation/fundraising letters for local council/businesses
  - posters
  - infographics
  - concept note for the training workshops
- **Organising virtual introductory discussion sessions:**
  - with potential campaign coordinators and supporters
  - with resource persons for the upcoming training workshops related to building plastic-free campuses
- **Developing a database for resources on plastic-free campaign:**
  - links to best practices/case studies in shifting to plastic-free communities
  - a bank of images that you can use for campaign visuals
  - sample petitions, policy research, and other advocacy materials

Through this phase of the campaign, the school administration will be able to build its staff's capacities, clarify its goals and messages, and develop an initial set of information materials for the campaign.

As with the rest of the world, this break before the school community's return to campuses should be a good opportunity for the school's administrative staff to learn how to maximise technology for the campaign activities - from gathering the latest data, to holding virtual meetings and communicating the messages to the target audience.

In the meantime, they can master the following tasks:

- **Holding online meetings through platforms like Zoom**
- **Creating shared documents and spaces through Google Drive and the like.**
- **Building communication platforms to keep everybody up-to-date**
  - Email lists for school community, local press, members, allies, etc.
  - Facebook pages and groups
  - Accounts on Instagram, Twitter, etc.
  - Newsletter
- **Creation of good online content for social media**
  - Basic photo editing and layout
  - Composing catchy posts
  - Determining the right hashtags and keywords

STEP 3

Knowing the situation. How to determine where your community is at in terms of plastic use.

Principles in conducting situation analysis

A good campaign will depend on a comprehensive analysis of the situation. This analysis will establish the baseline, or where you're at, so that you can understand what needs to be changed. In short, you need to know where you're coming from, in order to know where you're going.

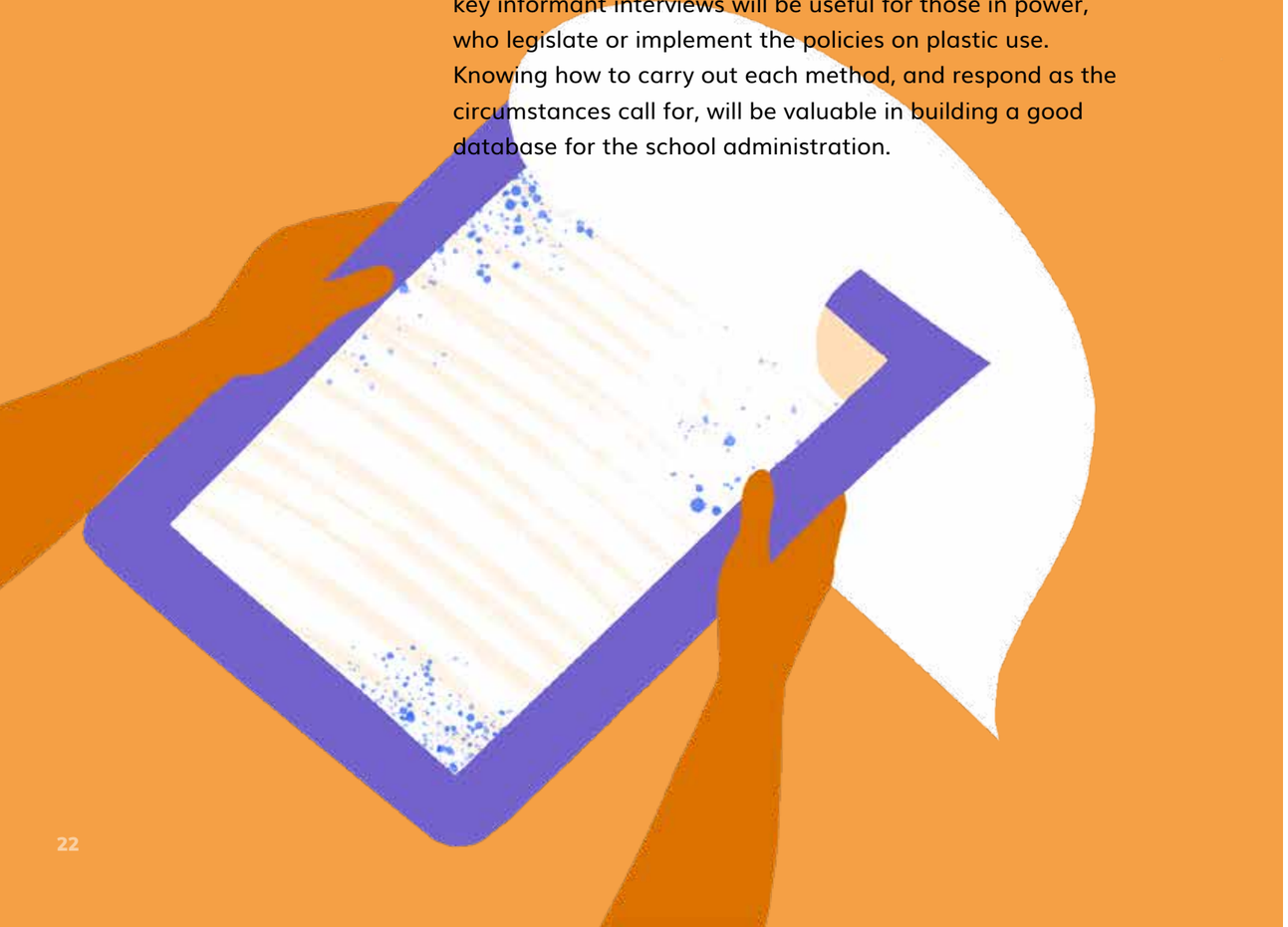
To carry this task out effectively, you will need to be guided by the following principles:

BE THOROUGH. The plastic-free campus campaign is founded on science and data. We advocate the shift because we believe it is the path towards humanity's survival, because it is what is right for the people and the planet, based on the harms that plastics bring to the soil, air, and water, and to human and animal health. Campaigners must be thorough and painstaking in their research. They should ensure the accuracy of the data they are using, especially by choosing references well, and fact-checking claims big and small. This discipline in conducting research will be the foundation of a campaign that is evidence-based, has integrity, and is then worth supporting.

BE CRITICAL. Breaking free from plastic demands a critical approach to policymaking around economics, waste management, production system, and governance, among other domains. To be able to present the most useful and compelling

information to their audience, campaigners should know the right questions to ask, and go beyond the whats, whens, and wheres of the matter, to the more incisive ones such as *How did this happen? Who suffers and who bene from the current state of affairs? Who has the power to change it?* Campaigners must understand that current practices are maintained to favour one segment of the population over the others, and it is their duty to bring this dynamic to light. That said, information should be presented along with its significance, and points the audience to what should be done about it.

DETERMINE THE BEST METHOD TO FIND THE DATA YOU NEED. Drawing certain kinds of information from a certain sample may require a particular approach or methodology. Maybe a focused group discussion will be best for gathering student views about the campaign, while key informant interviews will be useful for those in power, who legislate or implement the policies on plastic use. Knowing how to carry out each method, and respond as the circumstances call for, will be valuable in building a good database for the school administration.



Conducting plastic audit in school

The school can then delegate research tasks based on these guiding principles, as well as the researchers'.areas of expertise.

Questions to ask

These are some of the questions to ask in such an audit. You may add or remove some items, as your school's particular context calls for. Check out the Annex A for a sample form.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Where do the members of the school community presently obtain information about waste management/recycling/plastic pollution? What is the quality of such information?

What information do the students/staff/vendors/concessionaires still need to enable their transition to a plastic-free campus?

Which are the best platforms to use to reach them?

POLICIES, LAWS AND REGULATIONS

What is the current waste/plastic/recycling strategy of the school? Is there a refill or reuse system?

What policies, laws, and regulations apply to the school's waste management?

Who crafts these policies, law, and regulations? Which parties influence the process?

Who implements these? How effective are they at implementing?

Which parties monitor the implementation? What tools, resources, and capacities do they have to support their efforts?

PLASTIC USE

What plastic products are currently used in the school?

Which of these are single-use? What are the other categories?

Which companies/suppliers produce/supply these plastic products?

How much plastic is recycled?

What are the needs of each school community stakeholder group that are related to their ability to go plastic-free?

COVID-19 CHALLENGES

What challenges exist in terms of sanitation in the campus?

Has there been a change in the school's waste policy or laws and regulations since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic?

What new plastic products are being used due to the pandemic?

ALTERNATIVES

What are ways to improve the school's plastic waste and recycling policy?

What aspects of plastic management are not covered in the existing policies?

What plastic alternatives exist?

How accessible and affordable are these alternatives, considering the situation of the school and the community demographic?

What additional resources will be needed to implement the plastic-free campus campaign?

After conducting the audit, write up a report that summarises the data. The resulting document will be your reference for when you set goals, and plan actions. After all, actions should always be based on evidence.

The report should be revisited and updated every so often, to reflect developments in your community. For example, new policies regarding plastic waste management may later be adopted by the school, and suppliers of alternatives may soon become available in the neighborhood.

Here as well is BFFP's Brand Audit Toolkit, which will guide campaigners like you in identifying companies responsible for massive plastic pollution in your area. It features information about brand audits around the world, as well as a page where you can register your own.

STEP 4

Setting goals, crafting messages. Learning how to set realistic and resonant campaign goals and messages.

Goal-setting will be the most critical aspect of your campaign. Your goals will determine what you will aim for, as well as the metrics by which your success will be measured.

Setting goals around going plastic-free

When setting goals, it is important to make sure they are **SMART**, or:

S **SPECIFIC** The goal must clearly state its particular target ("To develop a proposed school policy on plastic reuse") and not be too vague, such as, "reducing plastic waste." Or it can be formulated in more general terms, but be followed by specific indicators or proofs of success.

M **MEASURABLE** It must be possible to determine the degree to which you have achieved your goal. For instance, the success of "building a strong campaign following on social media," can be tracked using such parameters as the number of followers and rate of post engagement.

A **ACHIEVABLE** The goals should feature only the factors that are within the campaigners' control, and which are then realistically attainable for the community. The legislation of a total ban on all plastic products within a year may not be achievable, but setting a consultation session with community leaders about plastic recycling in three months would be.

R **RELEVANT** The stated goal must be meaningful to the members, based on the overall mission of turning their school into a plastic-free campus.

T **TIME-BOUND** Goals must be formulated based on a timeline, e.g. To reach a membership of 1,000 in the school organisation by December 2022.

SMART goals are the foundation of a meaningful and effective campaign. It sets the expectations well, and will thus be able to inform you if you are making progress.

A requisite to formulating SMART goals would be knowing who you are trying to influence and to what end, which entails breaking down the school community into different stakeholder groups. In turn, this will mean developing a strategy that responds to their needs and interests, and therefore garners their support and participation.

Knowing the parties to influence

The campaign must be based on a thorough understanding of each part of the school community, related to the proposed shift to a plastic-free campus. The data for this should be drawn during the audit.

These are the different stakeholder groups to consider:

- Students
- School administration
- Local council
- School district officers
- Vendors/suppliers/service providers
- Local businesses
- School concessionaires
- Maintenance staff
- Student representatives
- Parents

As goals should be based on your school community's particular contexts, this guide will only present examples, which have been categorised under the different components of a campaign.

Sample Goals

Awareness:

- To hold an online campaign launch
- To establish online platforms (social media, website, mailing lists) for the campaign
- To forge media partnerships with local news organisations

Policy advocacy:

- To arrange consultations with school administration regarding its plastic waste policy
- To develop a proposed plastic-free community policy for the local government

Resource-generation:

- To establish a partnership with the local council for funding the shift to plastic-free campus
- To raise X amount of funds for the campaign

Crafting messages around the plastic-free campus campaign

Again, your goals and messaging should depend on your school community's situation. But here are some ideas for change that you may want to adopt for your campaign:

Express the school administration's commitment to:

Move to limit or end:

- Single-use plastic
- Disposable containers, cutlery, cups, and straws
- Products that are supposed to be compostable but which are lined with plastic or bioplastics
- Plastic products across all areas of procurement

Promoting good waste management practices throughout the campus

- School communication platforms will be used to raise awareness on reuse, recycling, and plastic ban
- Lessons on plastic pollution will be included where relevant in the school curriculum
- Funds will be allocated towards in-campus reuse and recycling practice

Support student-initiated efforts around the plastic-free campaigns

- Student efforts around the campaign will be incentivised
- Student campaigners will be provided the available platforms, information, guidance, and other forms of support

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These can be the school administration's demands to these other stakeholders:

Supply chains/ businesses creating and using plastic must:

- Shift to plastic-free alternatives where possible
- Eliminate unrecyclable/uncompostable elements from otherwise recyclable/compostable products.
- Promote plastic-free lifestyle as a necessary shift for the entire community, and not as a matter of consumer choice.
- Integrate plastic waste disposal into supply chain/ business plans

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Governments must:

- Lead efforts to introduce or ensure increase in plastic recycling, green waste disposal, and plastic-minimising and plastic-free practices
- Provide funding for plastic-free initiatives
- Allocate budget to ensure equitable access to plastic-free alternatives among disadvantaged individuals and institutions

COVID-related measures

Keeping staff and students safe. Prevention is better than cure, in terms of both individual health and environmental impact. Every new case of COVID-19 means added pressure on health systems and the use of resources, so the following measures highlight a preventive approach to the disease.

- Provide all students reusable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) e.g. cloth masks.
- Make paid sick leave available for staff with symptoms to get tested and self-isolate to eliminate financial disincentive.
- Encourage all school community members to practice social distancing and wear reusable cloth masks, where appropriate
- Ensure contractors who enter school campuses are bound by public health provisions and protocols around COVID-19.

Sanitation. Cleaning practices can be modified to adhere to the goals of a plastic-free campus campaign. Some of the steps to consider are:

- Use a DIY sanitising solution. This not only cuts down on plastic use but provides a cheap method of sanitisation for budget-conscious schools. Keep sanitisers away from food items and use label that contents should not be consumed.
- Other cleaning products should be bought in bulk, where practical. Glass jars and hard plastic containers are great for storing leftovers.
- Provide refillable soap and sanitiser dispensers around campus, ideally touch-free.

Reopening the canteen. Food storage is among the most common applications of plastic. Rethinking plastic use in school canteens can then yield significant results for the shift to a plastic-free campus. Promote reusable items, through such messages as:

- BYO or bring your own containers, etc.: Encourage students and staff to supply their own clean food and drink containers to be filled and returned
- Implement a container return system, where canteens own the food and drink containers that can be returned after use. The cost of this could be offset by a deposit system, if necessary.
- If disposable is necessary, compostables are best. Invest in 100% home compostable packaging, such as those made of sugarcane, paper, or cardboard. The pandemic recovery period is an opportunity to start or expand composting within the school.

Dispelling myths about plastic in the time of COVID

Myths around COVID-19 and going plastic-free abound, and they are often shared by people without researching the truth. To prevent misinformation from derailing your campaign, gather frequently asked questions on the subject, and make sure these are thoroughly answered.

Here are some FAQs around COVID:

Should we avoid reusable products during COVID-19?
False. Over 125 health professionals from 19 countries have signed onto a statement of Greenpeace USA and UPSTREAM - both members of the Break Free From Plastic movement - that defends the safety of reusable plastic. The document notes that household disinfectants are effective on hard surfaces, like those of reusable containers and cups.

Aren't single-use items safer?
No. Bacteria and viruses can exist on all surfaces. What's important is to observe good hygiene standards and practices. Reusable items can be rid of viruses through normal dishwashing. Single-use items, on the other hand, often cannot be washed and just add to the world's waste problem.

Won't going plastic-free cost too much?
Not necessarily. Minimising plastic can mean trying to reuse items many times over. It also promotes buying only the necessary products in bulk, from local sources, and finding DIY solutions to today's problems. This approach can be implemented in cost-effective stages and over time will save both money and the environment.

Isn't going plastic-free just about individual preference?
The devastating plastic waste problem described in this manual goes well beyond any individual choice. Unequal wealth distribution and control of major industries show us that we must demand systemic change in our schools, institutions, and governments to achieve a socially just and sustainable future. Our campaigns should then always seek to help address these societal imbalances to facilitate the widest adoption of the alternative. This can be achieved by making sure students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds receive support to lessen the financial burden of the shift, and that schools receive funding from governments to implement changes.

Effective messaging 101

In crafting and promoting your messages around the plastic-free campus campaign, strive to make sure they are:

Accessible

Share your messages in a way that is easy to understand, with simple language that is immediately relatable to your target audience.

Informative

Messages should equip the audience with the data they need to understand the urgent need to go plastic-free, and to be able to convince others in the community to support the cause.

Fun, hopeful, and positive

The messaging should convey how good the changes will be for everyone, and that your campaign is driven by hope for a better world, not by spite or hate.

Inspiring and empowering

The audience must feel inspired and empowered when they receive the campaign's communication. They should see the importance of commitment and continuing to push for change, as well as ways to hurdle or bounce back from challenges. They should also feel that the campaign goals are immediately achievable and not simply a far-off dream.

Presented in creative and popular forms

Be willing to meet the audience where they are, whether that be on social media, schoolyard activities, or wherever else. Present your material in a way that is fresh and catches people's attention.

STEP 5 Taking action. A quick guide to launching actions – from raising awareness to fighting for institutional reforms around plastic use, including getting agreement

Different types of actions around going plastic-free

After determining your campaign goals and messages, you can now plan your actions.

Your aim is to let key stakeholders know the importance of going plastic-free, your proposals towards the shift, the steps the administration is taking, and how the rest can contribute. You would also want to influence the school's supply chains, as well as local councils and governments, to help your school achieve its plastic-free goals.

Here are sample actions, along with tips for effective conduct.

Digital efforts

Explore what social media platforms are popular within the school community. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok are all great starting points and can host messages posted in a number of different formats.

- Create pages (website, blog, vlog) for your plastic-free campaign where people can show their support and stay up-to-date with developments. In these spaces, you can post examples of plastic alternatives, or feature plastic-free initiatives.
- Use hashtags like #plasticfree, #plasticpollutes, and create others to draw attention to the issue in your school and community. Short and witty hashtags work best to attract attention.

- Be visual. Make sure your content features photos, infographics, memes, and videos, among other materials to make your message stand out.
- Encourage the members of your school community to contribute their own creative works towards the campaign.

Posters

Put up posters around the campus both when you are campaigning for change and while it is being implemented. Gather poster designs from the school community to promote the cause.

Petitions

Get support from the community by creating a petition outlining your demands to the local business or the local government. This can be created online using change.org to avoid contact during COVID-19.

School newspapers and newsletters

Publish articles explaining the plastic problem and how your campaign is seeking to address it within the school and beyond.

Media work

Contact local and national media to cover your cause and gain broader public support. You can also write letters to the editor of newspapers to achieve this aim.

Presentations at meetings & assemblies

Organise spaces where you can take your message to greater numbers of students, staff and community members. Produce a slideshow and use video to highlight your cause.

Classroom-based efforts

Liaise with the heads of departments to discuss how the plastic-free message could be integrated into the curriculum.

The arts

Organise within the school community to hold a concert, play, dance routine, flashmob, etc. that highlights your cause. Or maybe an art exhibit on the problem with plastic, and the alternative.

Anything else? The sky's the limit!

Think about other activities that will not only draw already interested parties but also new participants. This cause needs all kinds of skills and talents to influence the future direction of our planet.

Once you have determined the actions to implement, sit down with key staff to plan their conduct: when to hold, whom to involve, and where to get resources, among others. Sample tasking and resource planning sheets are in Annexes B and C!

Linking goals, messages, and actions

A good campaign is one that features strong links between goals, messages, and actions. In this manual, we presented goals as the foundation of the campaign, upon which the school administration must draw the messages to convey to the target audience.

The campaign goals should drive the actions, which should aim to spread the messages as strongly and as widely as possible.

Activities should not be held for their sake; they must be the result of careful planning, during which the campaigners thoroughly discuss how their conduct will advance the shift towards a plastic-free campus.

The same is true for campaign messages. Information about the benefits of going plastic-free or how to go about the change must be dispensed with care: they should target particular audiences at a given point and using the appropriate form, too, so that there is focus of efforts and resources, and the impact will be more readily observable. Such targeting will be informed by planning around the campaign goals.

Knowing when to negotiate, with whom, and how

As earlier discussed, the campaign towards going plastic-free will be met with opposition at some points, like most endeavors that propose change.

Negotiating is key, because campaigners need all the help they can get from each member of the school community. Negotiating may entail presenting a better alternative to the other party's proposal. Or extending the timetable for the change, but securing a stronger, more sustainable commitment. Finally, it can mean offering to provide them the support they need, should they express hesitation in taking on the challenge.

For instance, if school concessionaires worry about the extra costs of shifting to reusable plastics instead of disposables, the school can offer to promote them among the students, by "certifying" them as student-approved plastic-free choice.

Key to effective negotiation would be a careful analysis of the interests of the stakeholder group in question, the resources at their disposal, and the power they wield within the community.

Every commitment secured from a stakeholder group is a win, and the objective must then be to find more opportunities for pushback, for compromises where possible and not antithetical to the principles of the campaign.

Documenting and reporting actions

Holding campaign events is not enough. These must be promptly and properly documented, to enable you to assess the conduct and determine rooms for improvement.

Take note of these details when documenting, among others:

Viewers/participants. How many attended (targeted vs. actual)? What is their composition? How did they learn about the event?

Impact: What is the overall feedback of the participants? What are the actions/results expected after the event? What are the chances of these being realised?

Messages and positions: What messages and positions were articulated during the activity? Were there disagreements? Who are the parties involved?

Resolutions: What were commitments made or agreements reached during these activities? What are the ways forward?

Documentation may cover the following:

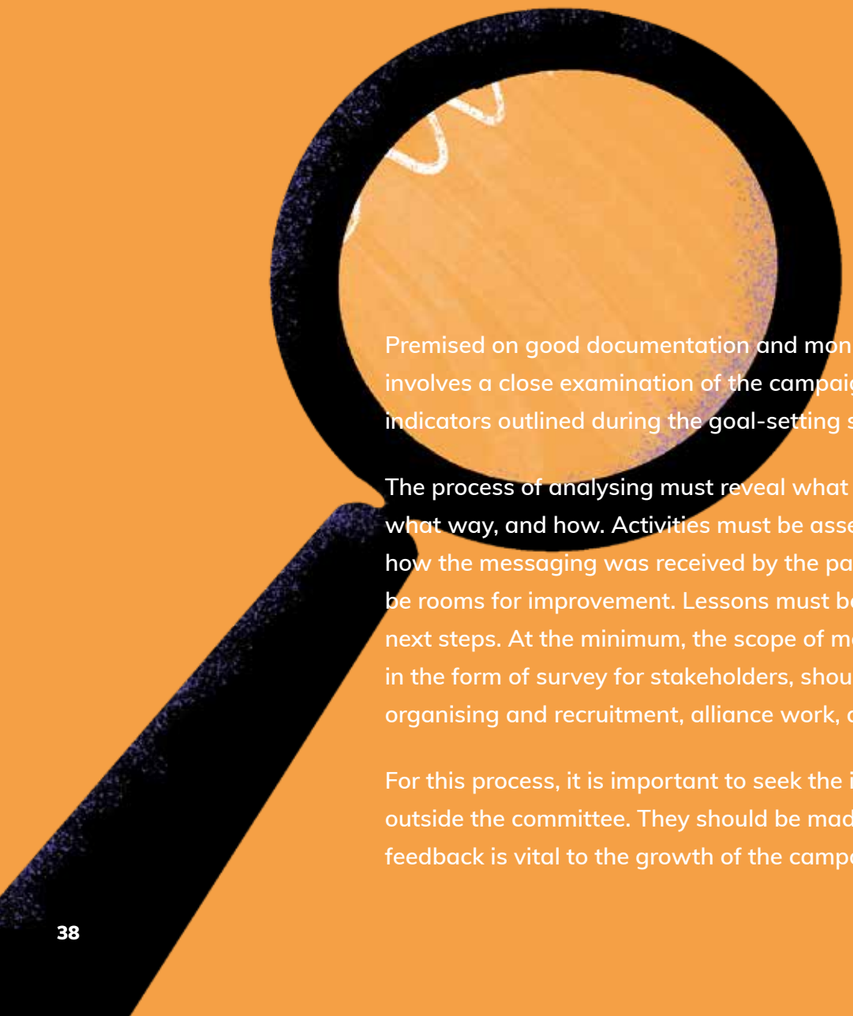
- Attendance sheet
- Transcription of audio recordings of meetings
- Video summary of the event
- Photos with caption
- Feedback form participants

A sample documentation report form is available in Annex D.

STEP 6 Building on gains. How to scale the campaign up or down, or redirect efforts, based on what has been achieved.

Analysing the results of the campaign.

What worked/what didn't?



Premised on good documentation and monitoring work, this step involves a close examination of the campaign's impact, based on the indicators outlined during the goal-setting stage.

The process of analysing must reveal what goals were achieved, in what way, and how. Activities must be assessed against the plans, how the messaging was received by the participants, and what could be rooms for improvement. Lessons must be drawn, along with the next steps. At the minimum, the scope of monitoring, which may come in the form of survey for stakeholders, should cover communications, organising and recruitment, alliance work, and policy advocacy.

For this process, it is important to seek the input of people inside and outside the committee. They should be made to understand that their feedback is vital to the growth of the campaign and its goals.

Scaling the campaign up or down

Knowing what you're trying to achieve will help you decide when your strategy needs to change. If something is not working, or when you fail based on your set indicators, determine if there's a way to adapt or change what you're doing to achieve greater results in a specified time period. If something is successful, can it be replicated or expanded upon to achieve further goals?

Scaling up or down can be in terms of the use of resources, or of audience reach, among other aspects. Perhaps after already achieving so much among the student population, you would like to scale down your campaign and switch to a specific, smaller sector in the school community. It all depends on what you find in your honest and thorough review.

Moving beyond isolation:

Engaging other schools and community institutions working to go plastic-free

Explore other schools, institutions, or interest groups in the community that could take up the plastic-free campaign. The larger the body, the more likely they will have access to funds and influence to contribute towards a plastic-free environment. Your school's experience with the campaign can be used as a small-scale case study of what's possible.

A decisive shift to a plastic-free community will be based on the strong links between strong regulations, adequate monitoring, and tough enforcement. When you plan your next actions and reach out to other parties, determine how your efforts can help strengthen these links.

Perhaps another school can help you prove the replicability of your shift in a slightly different setting. Or a nonprofit can be your partner in monitoring the practices in your community. Or a local politician can be your champion in pushing for plastic waste elimination.

Periodically review your campaign progress, then aim for more success whenever you achieve a milestone. And when you do, lead the school community in celebrating!

@M @C L ḪM FT ḪCD SN AQD@J ḪMF EQDD EQN L OK@RS ḪB ḪM SGD S ḪL D NE BNU ḪC,08

Annex A

School audit form

School:
Date of audit:
Reference persons:

Community Awareness

Community stakeholder group	Level of awareness re: going plastic-free	Information needed to drive engagement	Most used communications platforms

Policies on plastic use

Policy	Date established	Reference	Remarks *(e.g. for review, under protest)*

Plastic Use

Domain	Item	Plastic category	Supplier	Remarks *(e.g. use is widespread because of affordability)*
Waste disposal				
Food storage				
Sanitation				

Parties involved in plastic waste management

	Unit	Person in charge	Remarks *(e.g. responsive to plastic-free shift)*
Policy development			
Implementation			
Approving body			

Alternatives to plastic

Domain	Item *(e.g. bins, glass jars, organic disinfectants)*	Potential suppliers	Relevant links	Remarks *(e.g. high price point)*
Waste disposal				
Food storage				
Sanitation				

Annex B

Tasking Sheet

	Task	Deadline	Person in charge	Resources needed	Remarks
GOAL 1					
GOAL 2					
GOAL 3					

Annex C

Resource planning sheet

Goal	Resources needed	Possible providers/ partners	Timeline for gathering	Remarks

Annex D

Activity Documentation Report

Organisation:
Date:
Activity/Update:

Purpose/objectives	
Highlights	
Resource persons	
Participants	
Resolutions	
Activity assessment points	Things we did well: Rooms for improvement:
Ways forward *(next steps planned, decisions to be made, new contacts to tap, etc.)*	
Link to photos	
Relevant links *(resources used, websites to check into, etc.)*	

Annex E

Campaign monitoring report

Period covered:
Goals:

	Details	Remarks
External context *(e.g. the plastic-free movement is gaining ground in the country, a new law on the subject was passed)*		
Internal context *(e.g. the school has gaps in s OVID)*		
Major accomplishments		
Activities conducted		
Major assessment points		
Outputs		
Ways forward		

Special thanks to:

The Post Action Network
http://postlandfill.org/

Plastic-free Campus
http://plasticfreecampus.org

Gallifrey Foundation
https://gallifrey.foundation/

Surfers Against Sewage
https://www.sas.org.uk/

#breakfreefromplastic

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