



HISGUT KALIBUNGAN

HURUHISGUTAY 6 POLICY BRIEF

13 August 2021

SUMMARY

In *Huruhisgutay* 6, panel members discussed and analyzed the challenges and opportunities in promoting and implementing proper solid waste management (SWM), and in reducing the production and use of non-environmentally acceptable products (NEAP) in Region 8 and the country as a whole. The panel discussion set out the following recommendations to boost local efforts in pursuing a plastic-free society:

- Strictly implement existing laws on solid waste management and environmental conservation.
- Support the passage of a comprehensive law banning the production and use of single use plastics (SUPs) and regulating production of plastic products for essential uses only.
- Enhance public and private participation in promoting and implementing zero waste.
- Enhance and strengthen the SWM capacity of barangay LGUs (BLGUs).
- Explore participatory and community-based approaches to amplify efforts in promoting and implementing proper SWM and reduction of SUP use in communities, government offices, and business establishments.
- Conduct regular monitoring of the type and composition of waste generated by households, government offices, and business establishments, among others.
- Conduct research about the consumption patterns of households and public and private establishments and sectors.

INTRODUCTION

Based on 2020 data from the National Economic and Development Authority Region VIII, more than half (56%) of solid waste in Region 8 during the pandemic consisted of residual wastes. These are non-compostable and non-recyclable solid waste materials and single use plastics (SUPs) such as sachets, diapers, feminine pads, and polystyrene products that have to be disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner. Moreover, studies show that in developing countries like the Philippines, the production, distribution, use, and improper disposal of non-environmentally acceptable products (NEAP) contribute significantly to environmental degradation.

Under the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 (Republic Act 9003), local government units (LGUs) are mandated to implement effective and efficient solid waste management (SWM) strategies like segregation at source (SAS); assorted collection, transport, storage, processing, treatment and disposal of solid waste; and other waste management activities that will help prevent environmental degradation. However, the implementation of RA 9003 varies across the different municipalities in Eastern Visayas. According to NEDA VIII, only 43% of LGUs in Eastern Visayas are implementing SAS.

Improper solid waste disposal and the prevalence of open dumpsites pose great threats to the country's environment and to public health. These threats come in the form of air pollution and soil and groundwater pollution and contamination, which may lead to serious diseases and loss of biodiversity. Thus, it is important for LGUs, who are at the frontlines of SWM, to enhance their capacity to implement innovative SWM strategies. Achieving this goal however, requires greater fiscal resources and trained personnel to implement efficient and effective ecological SWM programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Huruhisgutay 6: Solid Waste Management in Eastern Visayas, the sixth episode in the *Hisgut Kalibungan* series, focused on challenges and opportunities in SWM in Region 8. Engr. Joselito R. Vasquez, Visayas Coordinator of the EcoWaste Coalition (Plastic Free Pilipinas), served as the lead discussant and Mr. Jay Scotch Betonio, Solid Waste Management Head of LGU Ormoc's Environment and Natural Resources Office, and UP Tacloban Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics Professor Leni G. Yap-Dejeto were the panel members. They discussed the following recommendations to help promote proper SWM and reduce the production of plastic residual wastes in Eastern Visayas:

1. **Strictly implement existing laws regarding SWM and environmental conservation.** Concerned line government agencies (LGAs) should encourage and help LGUs implement existing laws, particularly the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 through annual orientation seminars and workshops that will help remind the participants about their vital role in implementing such laws. The Environmental Management Bureau may also provide technical assistance regarding ecological SWM to LGUs and stakeholders. This cooperation among LGAs, LGUs, and other stakeholders, including civil society organizations, may also be pursued by providing a regular platform for discussion on emerging issues and sharing of information, especially with regard to various disposal and treatment technologies, such as waste-to-energy incineration. This will open up new avenues to more inclusive and participatory decision-making and law implementation.
2. **Support the passage of a comprehensive law banning SUPs and regulating production of plastic products to essential uses only.** Passing a similar ordinance at the LGU level can also be explored while waiting for the passage of a comprehensive law.

3. **Enhance public and private participation in promoting and implementing zero waste.** Zero waste is a way of conserving resources through responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of products, packaging, and materials without burning and without discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment and human health. To enhance public and private participation, concerned organizations may consider an annual award to LGUs with best practices based on criteria that include active cooperation with the private sector. This award can be given on the 4th week of January in time for the culmination of Zero Waste Month.
4. **Enhance and strengthen the SWM capacity of barangay LGUs (BLGUs).** Since SWM is devolved to the community or barangay level, it is important to build the SWM capacity of BLGUs and provide them with the necessary assistance to properly manage solid waste through waste diversion and recycling, among others. LGUs and other stakeholders must also extend adequate support to BLGUs to enhance existing or establish new materials recovery facilities in the barangay.
5. **Explore participatory and community-based approaches to amplify efforts in promoting and implementing proper SWM and reduction of SUP use especially in communities, government offices, and business establishments.** Community-based approaches include alternative delivery systems, SAS, and household or purok level composting. Alternative delivery systems like refilling stations and eco-stores allow consumers to use reusable containers when buying goods. This approach helps avoid purchasing NEAP and packaging, and therefore helps reduce the volume of residual wastes. Household or *purok*-level composting can contribute significantly to waste volume reduction, and the fertilizer produced can be collected and sold to plant enthusiasts and farmers to encourage more composting initiatives as a source of income. Participatory activities like clean-up drives and massive or regular information campaigns on proper SWM and reduction of plastic pollution among the locals, especially the youth sector, can also be explored. Aside from the barangay ecological SWM committees, LGUs may also explore the possibility of deputizing local SWM enforcers at the community or barangay level. Employing these approaches will help LGUs resolve problems with regard to shortage of human and fiscal resources. Ideally, these strategies should be integrated into the LGU's 10-Year SWM Plan as approved by the National Solid Waste Management Commission (NSWMC).
6. **Conduct regular monitoring of the type and composition of waste generated by households, government offices, and business establishments, among others.** Knowing the type and composition of solid waste will help authorities prepare informed plans and implement appropriate SWM strategies. Barangay SWM committees should be encouraged to conduct a waste analysis and characterization study (WCS) as part of the formulation of the SWM plan, for monitoring by the city or municipal Solid Waste Management Board and the Department of Interior and Local Government.
7. **Conduct research on the consumption patterns of households and public and private establishments and sectors.** This will help provide meaningful insights for producing alternative biodiversity-friendly products (i.e. packaging) and weaning consumers and producers away from SUPs. To this end, a publicly accessible database of all waste-related studies, ordinances, and policies, including reviews of proposed and ongoing development projects, should be established.

This policy brief has been prepared by the Leyte Samar Heritage Center of UP Visayas Tacloban College based on "*Huruhisgutay* 6: Solid waste management in Eastern Visayas," the sixth episode in the monthly online *Hisgut Kalibungan* discussion series, which aims to provide expert analysis of the most pressing environmental issues and concerns in Region 8.