



ON THE PATH TO ZERO WASTE



LEAFLET ON WASTE REDUCTION
FOR THE PUBLIC



Global warming, plastic islands in the ocean, depleting natural resources.

These are only few examples of the challenges we face nowadays when we talk about waste management and environmental protection. The problems are real and are man-made. This can be a shock and we can feel overwhelmed by the responsibility it puts on us, but our main goal is to show what we can do to leave a sustainable future for future generations.

WHERE IS THAT AWAY WHEN YOU THROW SOMETHING AWAY?

Every household has at least one garbage bin where the inhabitants dispose the waste of their everyday life: kitchen waste, packaging waste, textiles, old or broken gadgets etc. Waste is basically the by-product of our activities. Everything we buy sooner or later becomes waste and ends up in the garbage bin. But what happens afterwards?

Waste management in Armenia is considered underdeveloped compared to many other countries in the world. Every waste ends up in a so called landfill where it is dumped and then flattened using huge trucks so more and more waste can be brought in until it becomes a hill of waste. This seems like a simple and cheap solution, but it causes many problems.

First of all, it has a huge environmental impact. In many cases landfills are not closed systems, therefore waste and hazardous chemicals can leak into the ground our food comes from, into the water we drink and into the air we breathe.

Moreover, garbage is basically a waste of resources. A lot of energy and raw materials like ore, wood, fossil fuels are put into a product and when a product ends up in a landfill, its potential for further use is forever lost. Again and again new materials have to be mined, but this cannot go on forever as we live on a finite planet. Economically it is a waste of money and on a long term we are taking away resources from future generations.



EARTH OVERSHOOT DAY

It is the date when humanity's resource consumption for the year exceeds the Earth's capacity to regenerate those resources. It illustrates how much resources we use up from future generations. Each year the date is earlier, for example in 1990 it was on 7th December, in 2005 20th October and in 2017 it was on 2nd August.

What else could be done with the waste? Many claim that burning them is a solution, but incineration of mixed waste can cause bigger problems (air pollution from toxic smoke) and precious material are still lost. It is called an end-of-pipeline solution, as it doesn't answer the main question. How can we save natural resources from becoming waste?

CLOSING THE LOOP

As a solution for the problematics of resource depletion and increasing amounts of waste the idea of recycling came. With the separate collection of waste by materials (e.g. paper, metal, glass, plastic) these can be sent to a facility where waste is shredded and melted and turned into secondary materials. This way, primary materials are saved while the amount of waste being landfilled is minimized. In many countries worldwide separate collection and recycling plays a huge role in waste management.



However good recycling is, the most environmentally-friendly solution for waste is reuse and reduction. The less waste we produce, the less work needs to be done with it. Namely recycling is still an energy consuming activity and as long as transportation is involved we have to consider the impact on climate change and the use of fossil fuels.

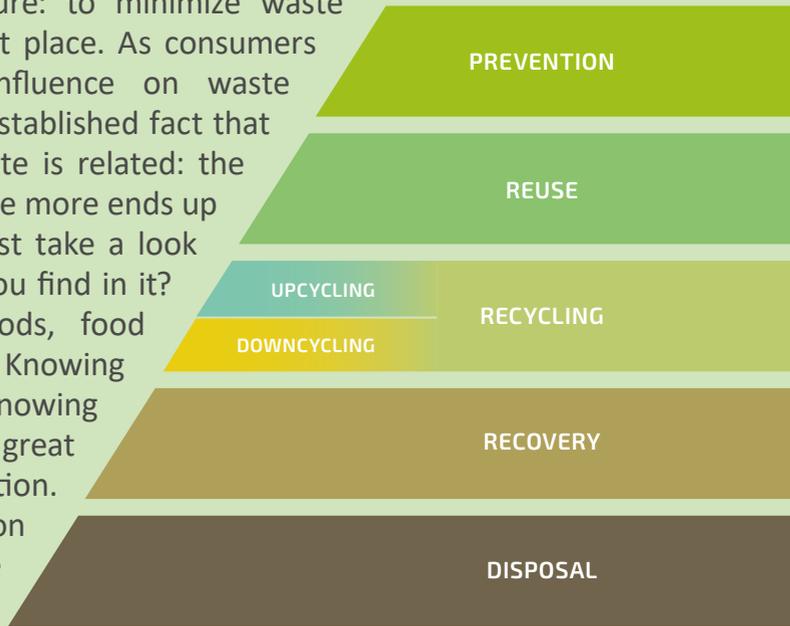
THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL

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SOLUTION: ZERO WASTE

Reaching zero waste sounds utopist, but it is the only viable solution for a sustainable future: to minimize waste production on the first place. As consumers we have a great influence on waste production. It is well established fact that consumerism and waste is related: the more things we buy, the more ends up in our garbage bin. Just take a look into yours! What do you find in it? Mostly consumer goods, food scraps and packaging. Knowing you waste means knowing your habits and it is a great start for waste reduction. Here are a few tips on how you can contribute to zero waste.

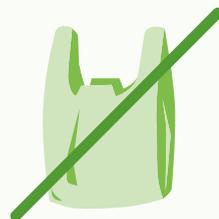


1. LISTEN TO YOUR OWN NEEDS

In many cases we buy more than we need. Advertisements manipulate us to spend money on stuff we don't need or to buy more (e.g. buy 2 for 1, sales). Write a list beforehand when going shopping and don't go on an empty stomach. Not only do you minimize waste, but you also save money.

2. REDUCE PACKAGING WASTE

Choose products without or with less packaging and favor natural materials like paper or glass. Bring your own bag when shopping and say no to plastic bags!



3. REUSE

In today's throw-away society we are told that we always have to follow the newest trends. In many cases this means buying new stuff even though we have a perfect piece at home. Reuse means that we use our things as many times and as long as possible. If something breaks, we repair it. If we are not using something anymore and it is in good condition, we give it away to someone who needs it. Or if we need something we ask around if someone already has it or we buy it second-hand. Again it is a much cheaper option than buying everything brand new.



4. DO COMPOSTING

A significant part of our waste is organics coming from the kitchen and/or garden. By composting them at home or at a community composting site, we already reduce our waste by 30-50%.

COMPOST

Dark brown material with high organic matter content and smell of forest soil made from biodegradable waste through the activity of microorganisms and environmental factors.

What do you need for it? A corner in the garden, a bin which lets the air flow, biowaste and "workers" that will help turn the heap into soil (mostly microorganisms, earth worms and other soil organisms). After one year, the composting is done and the end product can be used as natural fertilizer in your garden. What are you waiting for? Go zero waste!

The leaflet is the outcome of an international project between NGOs from Visegrad countries and Armenia. The main aims are knowledge sharing and capacity building in the field of waste management, composting and organic agriculture, furthermore to create network of direct cooperation between farmers and consumers with support of local authorities and NGOs. Partners: Polish Ecological Club Gliwice Chapter (Poland), Sosna (Slovakia), Humusz (Hungary), Sdruzeni SPLAV (Czech Republic) and Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment (Armenia)

Written by:

Humusz Waste Prevention Alliance, Hungary

Translated by:

Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment

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