

Plastic, people and policy: lesson 1 of 3

Follow the sachet

Who is responsible for plastic pollution?



Plastic on a Philippine beach. Photo: MCP



The sachet economy

163 million

plastic sachets used in the Philippines every day

591

sachets per person each year

Sachets make small amounts affordable for families on low incomes, but almost none can be recycled.

How we know: GAIA, 2019



Where it ends up

7 of the top 10

rivers carrying plastic to the sea worldwide are in the Philippines, in one global model

The Pasig River came first in that model. Models carry uncertainty, but the pattern is clear.



The plastic chain

Plastic passes through many hands. Each one has some power over what happens next.

Oil and gas companies

Make the raw materials for plastic

Manufacturers

Turn it into packaging and products

Brands

Choose how their products are packed

Shops and sari-sari stores

Sell products in sachets and bags

Shoppers

Buy, use and throw away

Barangays and LGUs

Collect and manage waste

Waste pickers and junk shops

Collect and sell what can be recycled

National government

Makes the laws



Share out the responsibility

1. Your group has 100 responsibility points.
2. Share them between the eight groups in the chain, based on how much power each has to reduce pollution.
3. Be ready to defend your choices.
4. Compare with other groups. Where do you disagree most?



What the law says

The Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 made barangays and LGUs responsible for collecting, sorting and managing waste.

The Extended Producer Responsibility Act of 2022 made large companies responsible for recovering their plastic packaging, rising to 80% by 2028.

Does the law share responsibility the way your group did?

How we know: Republic Acts 9003 (2000) and 11898 (2022)



Talk about it

Is it fair to blame shoppers who can only afford sachets?

Which group in the chain has the most power? The least?

What would change if brands had to pay for every sachet found on a beach?

Next time: policy tools that work



Photos and sources

Photos: beach and clean-up by MCP. All illustrations drawn for this lesson by Marine Conservation Philippines.

Sources:

- GAIA (2019). Plastics exposed.
- Meijer, L.J.J. and others (2021). Science Advances.
- Republic Act 9003 (2000).
- Republic Act 11898 (2022).

Full links are in the teacher reading. Free to use and share for education. Made by Marine Conservation Philippines. More free lessons: marineconservationphilippines.org/resources/teachers-resources/

