

INFO ZONE

PART 1

Waste background

What is waste?

Anything that is thrown away after use is called waste. In English, we also use the words rubbish or trash which have the same meaning like waste! Over seven billion people are currently living on our planet and every person creates waste after using a product. Waste can be paper, unwanted food, cans, broken glass, plastics, old toothbrushes... whatever we throw away!!!



Find out where waste is coming from in Zanzibar - think about your home, school, working place and community!

Types of waste

Biodegradable waste can break down or rot naturally when attacked by small organisms like bacteria. Examples are paper, vegetable and fruit peels, food leftovers and garden waste. **Non bio-degradable waste** will NOT break down naturally (or won't for many, many years). Examples are plastics, metal and glass.



Are YOU bio-degradable? Yes, people are part of nature and nature has ways of effectively dealing with dead animal bodies: soil organisms break them down, and nutrients and minerals are being recycled.



Waste that pose a threat to the environment including substances that are toxic, corrosive, explosive or otherwise chemically reactive are called hazardous waste. Hazardous waste can be in solid, liquid or gaseous form, and comes from different sources such as home (e.g. batteries, paints, motor oil), agriculture (e.g. pesticides), or industries (e.g. chemicals).

The problem: where does it all go after you throw it?

Long time ago, small groups of hunter-gatherers had simple lifestyles, and moved from place to place. Nature was therefore able to deal with their waste. People ate bio-degradable raw food, and tools were made of bones or stones. When people started to settle as farmers, they developed the practice of burning their waste to keep the home clean and free of pests. In their fields, burning put nutrients back into the soil. Since the industrial revolution we have been making more and more things that nature cannot break down.

Waste products of our modern world create major problems:

① Too much waste

Waste is thrown everywhere. People throw waste on the ground, in gardens and in the ocean. Is this the right thing to do? No, it isn't!

“The lifestyle of each one of us produces on average about 1 kilogram of waste per day!!!” How much waste do YOU produce per day?



② **Pollution:** involves many dangerous substances that are released into the soil, water, ocean and air where they can harm the planet, human and animal health.

2.1. Land pollution

Most of the waste we generate at home or in school is either burned or dumped in areas, known as landfills. A **landfill** is a hole in the earth which is filled with waste until there is no more space. Around Stone Town solid waste is taken to municipal and community landfills such as Jumbi but in the rest of Unguja there are a lot of open dumping sites which attract rats and crows. When harmful chemicals from things like paints, batteries or pesticides go into the soil, they are not broken down but build up inside plants, animals and people that eat these plants. This can seriously affect our nature and our health.



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2.2. Water pollution

Water-carried waste is called wastewater or sewage. Sewage often contains urine and untreated human waste which contains bacteria and can cause deadly diseases such as cholera or typhoid. Zanzibar has no sewage treatment to make sewage safe. Few people use pit toilets and in many cases people have little choice but to go in the forest or on the beach. The latter is often littered with dirty diapers! YEK!!!



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2.3. Marine pollution

Zanzibar is surrounded by the Indian Ocean. Not surprisingly that waves, tides and winds are often washing away our waste from the beach. How convenient!! But is it really gone because we can't see it anymore?? NO!!! Waste that ends up in the ocean has terrible impacts on our marine life such as fish and corals.

Many plastics in the ocean can easily confuse animals that are searching for food. For example, to a sea turtle, a floating plastic bag looks like a jellyfish, and small pieces of plastics sometimes look like fish eggs to seabirds. This mistake can cause problems in their stomachs and eventual death. Also fishing nets break often loose and get stuck in coral reefs where they can kill marine animals such as dolphins or sea turtles.



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2.3. Air pollution

Air becomes polluted through **burning waste** which is still a very common practice in Zanzibar. When we burn plastic, rubber and batteries we get toxic smoke that can cause serious health problems such as lung problems, skin and eye irritations.

③ Using up natural resources

Large amounts of energy and natural resources are used when making all the products that end up as waste. **Natural resources** are things provided by the earth that we use and need to live such as wood, water, oil and minerals. As the number of people on the planet has increased, some natural resources such as oil will not last forever.

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