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# Strategy to Eliminate the use of Plastic Bags

# Introduction

The use of plastic bags has become a significant environmental concern, as they pose a threat to wildlife and ecosystems, contribute to climate change, and create litter and pollution in communities around the world. Many countries and local governments have implemented policies to restrict or ban the use of plastic bags, but the challenge remains to find sustainable alternatives that are cost-effective and meet the needs of businesses and consumers.

This strategy paper is intended to provide a set of recommendations for a comprehensive policy to eliminate the use of plastic bags. The paper will examine the environmental hazards of plastic bags, identify stakeholders and their responsibilities, and propose a range of policy options to promote sustainable alternatives. The recommendations are based on a thorough analysis of the current state of plastic bag use and the best available practices for reducing their negative impacts.

The ultimate goal of this strategy paper is to provide a roadmap for policymakers and stakeholders to work together to create a more sustainable and environmentally responsible future. By eliminating the use of plastic bags, we can reduce our impact on the environment and protect the natural resources that sustain our planet.



# History of Plastic Bag

Plastic bags have become ubiquitous in modern society, but their history is relatively short. Plastic bags were first introduced in the 1950s, and their popularity has grown steadily since then.

The first plastic bags were made from polyethylene, a lightweight and durable plastic that was discovered by accident in the 1930s. Polyethylene was initially used to make insulation for electrical cables, but it was quickly recognized as a versatile material that could be used in many other applications, including packaging.

The first plastic bags were introduced as a replacement for paper bags, which were heavy and bulky. Plastic bags were lightweight and durable, making them ideal for carrying groceries and other items. They were also cheaper to produce than paper bags, which made them a popular choice for retailers.

The popularity of plastic bags continued to grow in the 1960s and 1970s as advances in manufacturing technology made it possible to produce plastic bags in larger quantities and at lower costs. By the 1980s, plastic bags had become the dominant type of shopping bag used by retailers and consumers worldwide.

However, the environmental impacts of plastic bags began to emerge in the 1990s and early 2000s. As plastic bags became more prevalent, they began accumulating in landfills and waterways, posing a significant threat to wildlife and ecosystems. Concerns about the negative impacts of plastic bags led to increased calls for regulation and sustainability.

Since then, many countries and local governments have implemented policies to restrict or ban plastic bags, promote reusable bags, or impose taxes or fees on plastic bags to discourage their use. This has led to a growing awareness of the environmental impacts of plastic bags and a greater emphasis on finding sustainable alternatives.

# Environmental Hazards of Plastic Bags

Plastic bags are one of the most common forms of litter found in the environment. They significantly threaten wildlife, natural habitats, and human health. The hazards associated with plastic bags are numerous and can have far-reaching environmental consequences.

One of plastic bags' most significant environmental hazards is their contribution to pollution. When plastic bags are discarded improperly, they often end up in waterways, where they can cause damage to aquatic ecosystems. The bags can trap and suffocate aquatic animals, clog waterways, and create breeding grounds for disease-carrying insects.

Moreover, plastic bags take hundreds of years to decompose, and in the process, they break down into smaller pieces called microplastics, which can contaminate soil and water sources. Microplastics can be ingested by wildlife and accumulate in their tissues, leading to harmful health effects and ultimately affecting the food chain.

The incident of flash floods in E-11 sectors in Islamabad this year is a prime example of how plastic bags can exacerbate environmental hazards. The flood occurred due to heavy rain, but plastic bags and other waste materials clogged the drainage system, leading to waterlogging and extensive damage to homes, businesses, and public infrastructure. Plastic bags were abundant in the drainage system, and their non-biodegradable nature meant that they continued to block the system, leading to a prolonged period of waterlogging.

In conclusion, the environmental hazards associated with plastic bags are severe and far-reaching, affecting wildlife, habitats, and human health. The flash floods in E-11 sectors in Islamabad serve as a stark reminder of the urgent need to eliminate plastic bags and other single-use plastics from our daily lives. Governments, businesses, and individuals must work together to promote sustainable alternatives and reduce our reliance on single-use plastics to protect the environment for future generations.

# The Rationale of Strategy

The rationale for the strategy to eliminate the use of plastic bags is based on the growing concern about the negative impacts of plastic bags on the environment. Plastic bags are a major contributor to litter and pollution in communities worldwide. They are difficult to recycle, and many end up in landfills or waterways, where they pose a significant threat to wildlife and ecosystems.

In addition to their environmental impacts, plastic bags also contribute to climate change. The production and transportation of plastic bags require significant amounts of energy and resources, which contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, the disposal of plastic bags in landfills releases methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change.

Given the significant environmental and social costs associated with plastic bags, there is a need for comprehensive policies to address their use. Such policies would not only help reduce the negative impacts of plastic bags but also promote sustainable alternatives and create economic opportunities for businesses and communities.

Eliminating the use of plastic bags is an essential step towards creating a more sustainable future. By doing so, we can reduce litter and pollution, protect wildlife and ecosystems, conserve natural resources, and mitigate climate change. The recommendations outlined in this strategy paper provide a practical roadmap for policymakers and stakeholders to work together to achieve this critical goal.

# The Goal of the Strategy

The goal of the strategy to eliminate the use of plastic bags is to create a more sustainable and environmentally responsible future by completely eliminating the use of plastic bags. This goal is based on the recognition of the significant negative impacts of plastic bags on the environment, including litter, pollution, harm to wildlife and ecosystems, and contribution to climate change.

The strategy aims to achieve this goal by promoting the adoption of sustainable alternatives to plastic bags and encouraging individuals, businesses, and governments to make the switch to more eco-friendly options. By eliminating the use of plastic bags, the strategy seeks to reduce waste, conserve natural resources, and protect the planet for future generations.

Ultimately, the goal of the strategy is to create a world where the use of plastic bags is no longer necessary and where sustainable alternatives are the norm. This will require a collaborative effort among all stakeholders, including individuals, businesses, and governments, and a commitment to promoting sustainability and environmental responsibility.

## Objectives of the Strategy

The objectives of the strategy to eliminate the use of plastic bags are:

1. To reduce the negative environmental impact of plastic bags, including litter and pollution, and protect wildlife and ecosystems.
2. To promote sustainable alternatives to plastic bags, such as reusable bags, that reduce waste and conserve natural resources.
3. To reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with the production and disposal of plastic bags and mitigate climate change.
4. To create economic opportunities for businesses and communities by developing sustainable alternative materials and products.
5. To increase public awareness and education about the environmental impacts of plastic bags and the importance of reducing their use.
6. To engage stakeholders, including government agencies, businesses, consumers, and environmental organizations, in a collaborative effort to eliminate the use of plastic bags.
7. By achieving these objectives, the strategy aims to create a more sustainable and environmentally responsible future that benefits society and the planet.

# Stakeholders

Stakeholders are individuals or groups who have an interest or concern in an organization or issue. In the context of eliminating the use of plastic bags, the following are some of the stakeholders and their potential responsibilities:

- 1. Government:** The government is a key stakeholder in the policy to eliminate the use of plastic bags. They may be responsible for implementing and enforcing the ban, providing incentives to businesses and individuals, and investing in research and development for sustainable alternatives.
- 2. Businesses:** Businesses that produce, distribute, or sell plastic bags must transition to more sustainable alternatives. They may also be responsible for educating their employees and customers about the negative impacts of plastic bags and promoting eco-friendly practices.
- 3. Consumers:** Consumers are responsible for reducing their use of plastic bags and adopting sustainable alternatives. They may need to be educated about the negative impacts of plastic bags and the benefits of eco-friendly alternatives.
- 4. Environmental groups:** Environmental groups are responsible for raising awareness about the negative impacts of plastic bags and advocating for policies and practices that protect the environment. They may also provide education and resources to businesses and consumers to help them adopt sustainable practices.
- 5. Recycling industry:** The recycling industry is responsible for properly managing and disposing of plastic bags that are still in use. They may also need to develop and implement recycling programs that allow plastic bags to be properly recycled and turned into new products.
- 6. Academic and research institutions:** Academic and research institutions are responsible for conducting research on sustainable alternatives to plastic bags and educating the public about these alternatives' benefits.

Overall, the responsibility to eliminate the use of plastic bags is a shared responsibility among stakeholders, including the government, businesses, consumers, environmental groups, the recycling industry, and academic and research institutions. Each stakeholder plays a role in promoting sustainable alternatives and protecting the environment.

# Use of the Strategy

This strategy to eliminate the use of plastic bags can be used by governments, businesses, and other organizations as a roadmap to develop and implement policies and initiatives aimed at reducing or completely eliminating the use of plastic bags.

The strategy provides a comprehensive overview of the environmental hazards of plastic bags, identifies the stakeholders and their roles, and proposes a range of policy options and recommendations to promote sustainable alternatives. It can be used to inform policy development and decision-making, to guide the adoption of best practices and technologies, and to support the development of new markets for sustainable alternatives.

The strategy can be used as a reference tool by policymakers, environmental organizations, and other stakeholders involved in advocating for **eliminating** plastic bags. It can also be used by businesses and consumers to guide their purchasing decisions and **promote adopting** more sustainable practices.

Overall, this strategy provides a framework for collaborative action **toward** achieving the goal of eliminating the use of plastic bags, and can be adapted and tailored to specific local or regional contexts. It is intended to be a living document that evolves with the changing landscape of sustainable development and can be used to inform ongoing efforts to promote sustainability and environmental responsibility.

The strategy to eliminate the use of plastic bags will be presented to the relevant ministries and departments responsible for environmental and climate change policy development and implementation. These may include the Ministry of Climate Change, the Ministry of Environment, or similar agencies depending on the country or region.

Furthermore, presenting the strategy to relevant ministries and departments **allows one** to engage with key stakeholders, including policymakers, industry leaders, and environmental advocates. It can help build awareness and support for the strategy and foster greater collaboration and partnership **toward** its implementation.

# The Eight-Point Strategy

Here are some policy suggestions to eliminate the use of plastic bags:

1. Implement a comprehensive ban on the manufacturing, sale, and distribution of plastic bags across the country. This ban should include all types of plastic bags, including biodegradable and compostable bags, as they have been shown to have adverse environmental impacts.
2. Encourage the development and use of innovative, environmentally friendly alternatives to plastic bags, such as reusable bags made from natural fibers or recycled materials.
3. Till the time a comprehensive ban is imposed, high tariffs should be imposed on the import of raw materials used in the production of plastic bags. This would help to increase the cost of producing plastic bags, making sustainable alternatives more competitive. A high tax should be imposed on the sale of plastic bags, to discourage their use and encourage consumers to switch to more sustainable alternatives.
4. Increase public awareness through a nationwide campaign highlighting the negative impacts of plastic bags on the environment and promoting the use of alternative bags such as cloth, paper, or jute bags.
5. Enforce the ban by imposing strict penalties, fines, and legal action against individuals, businesses, and organizations found violating the ban.
6. Collaborate with manufacturers, retailers, and other stakeholders to ensure the smooth transition to eco-friendly alternatives, and provide incentives such as tax breaks or subsidies for businesses that adopt sustainable practices.
7. The local government should spearhead the campaign to eliminate the use of plastic bags, along with the support of the district administration. The campaign should include a focus on identifying "friends of the environment," including celebrities, influencers, and active citizens, to act as ambassadors for the cause and promote the adoption of sustainable alternatives.
8. Literature against the use of plastic bags should be included in the primary school syllabus. This would help to instill a sense of environmental responsibility and sustainability in young students and encourage them to be more mindful of their consumption habits and their impact on the environment.

Overall, the policy should aim to create a culture of responsible consumption and waste reduction, with a focus on promoting sustainable alternatives to single-use plastic bags.

# Monitoring the Implementation

To monitor the implementation of the strategy to eliminate the use of plastic bags, a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework should be established. The M&E framework should include clear performance indicators, targets, and data collection methods to track progress and identify areas for improvement.

The following are some key steps that could be taken to monitor the implementation of the strategy:

- 1. Establish baseline data:** Baseline data should be collected at the beginning of the implementation phase to provide a reference point for measuring progress. This could include data on the production, distribution, and consumption of plastic bags, as well as data on the adoption of sustainable alternatives.
- 2. Set performance indicators and targets:** Performance indicators and targets should be established to measure progress towards the goals of the strategy. For example, indicators could include the number of plastic bags produced, the amount of plastic waste generated, and the percentage of consumers using sustainable alternatives. Targets should be set based on realistic expectations for what can be achieved within a given timeframe.
- 3. Regular data collection and reporting:** Data should be collected on a regular basis to monitor progress towards the targets. This could be done through surveys, audits, or other data collection methods. The data should be compiled and reported in a transparent and accessible manner, so that stakeholders can easily track progress.
- 4. Evaluation and feedback:** Regular evaluations should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the strategy and identify areas for improvement. Feedback from stakeholders should also be solicited to ensure that the strategy is meeting their needs and expectations.

By establishing a robust M&E framework, policymakers and stakeholders can track progress towards the goals of the strategy and make data-driven decisions to improve implementation.



# The Company

MAHER Consulting is the premier consulting firm supporting governance, business, and not-for-profit sectors. Its focus is program development, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Strategic Planning for the non-profit sector. It also specializes in training for grant proposal writing, result-based management, and action research on governance issues.

The purpose of MAHER Consulting is to inspire social and business sectors and continuously improve our clients' capacity to manage their project cycle through the best business solutions and knowledge-based products.

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