

SGP Afghanistan

Knowledge Products

Ushering in a ‘Green’ Bags Culture, Saying No to Plastic Glut in Afghanistan



UNDP Afghanistan/Naimatullah Zafary: Ibrahim, the owner of a bakery in downtown Kabul is proudly displaying the new cloth bags in his store

UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme Promotes Fabric and Paper Bags To Save Environment

Faced with the growing menace of plastic glut in provinces from Herat to Helmand, Mazar to Maidan Wardak and practically every city, small town and village of Afghanistan, a non-governmental organization in Kabul is showing the way towards a shopping life with fancy, re-usable cloth and paper bags.

Ibrahim, the owner of a bakery in downtown Kabul is a recent convert to the cloth bags culture. Proudly displaying the new cloth bags in his store, he says, “All store-owners need to turn to cloth bags and junk plastic bags. This will have a big impact.”

Highlights

- Decades of conflict have had a devastating impact on Afghanistan’s people, economy and environment.
- With a USD 50,000 assistance from the UNDP-Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme, Zazai started a small Self-Help Group enterprise comprising 30 disadvantaged girls and women carefully selected from homes in the inner-city areas of Kabul that had seen death and destitution during the long years of civil conflict in the city.
- The plastic shopping bags menace is serving to add another dimension to the rapid degradation of the natural resources in the country.

Mr. Abdul Khaliq Zazai, the Executive Director of Accessibility Organization for Afghan Disabled (AOAD) and the driving force behind the ‘green’ shopping bags initiative says it would be best for the environment if shoppers brought their own reusable bag to the vegetable store.

Still, most Afghans take plastic bags for granted. Hakimullah Nawabi, a 34-year-old teacher in the Shor Bazaar area of Kabul says he picks at least 50 plastic bags from various stores every week. “It is really too much. We need a new awakening about how plastic is turning out to be a major pollutant in our country. All we need are bags that we can use and re-use until they are torn and non-usable. That would be great for the environment”, says Nawabi.

Zazai dreams of a day when all shoppers will go green in the cities and provinces in Afghanistan, seeking greener shopping bags and banishing plastic from their lives. With a USD 50,000 assistance from the UNDP-Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme, Zazai started a small Self-Help Group enterprise comprising 30 disadvantaged girls and women carefully selected from homes in the inner-city areas of Kabul that had seen death and destitution during the long years of civil conflict in the city.

Farzana, the master tailor who has rented out a part of her residential premises for the centre says since the centre became operational in August this year, the trainees have shown great promise in learning measurements and cloth-cutting for making of the cloth bags. “These girls and women are being taught not just tailoring bags but also to mentor others in their acquaintance. Once a market is created for the re-usable cloth bags, these artisans can make decent living supplying bags for the market, she says.

Decades of conflict have had a devastating impact on Afghanistan’s people, economy and environment. Disputes over the management of natural resources such as land, water, timber, minerals and drugs underlie and drive many of these conflicts, and often serve to further aggravate existing ethnic, political and regional divisions. The plastic shopping bags menace is serving to add another dimension to the rapid degradation of the natural resources in the country.

Since their introduction some 30 years ago, plastic bags in their billions have created a modern menace that often winds up choking rivers and drifting in oceans. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has already issued calls for outlawing these bags world-wide. "A reusable bag is better for the environment regardless of what it is made from, as long as it is used at least four times, according to a 2004 study by the French retailer Carrefour". Established in 1992, the UNDP - GEF Small Grants Programme embodies the very essence of sustainable development by "thinking globally acting locally". Since the launch of Afghanistan SGP on 23 October 2012, Seven Civil Society Organizations (CSOS) have been awarded with grants for their proposed projects in the areas of sustainable land management, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation in Afghanistan. These projects are currently under implementation.

Press Release

Focus on Building Capacity For Grassroots Action in Protection of Environment in Afghanistan

Kabul:

Representatives from 40 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from Afghanistan participated in a _Global Environment Facility (GEF)-Small Grants Programme (SGP)-led exercise aimed at enhancing their technical capacity for development of projects for natural resource management, climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation.

SGP has built coordination and partnership with the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA), the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), Wild Life Conservation Society (WCS) and other relevant partners for developing the capacity of CSOs in the country. Representatives from UNEP and WCS co-facilitated the workshop. Contributed.

The CSOs were encouraged to take proactive role in issues of environmental conservation in the country and become the champions of environment in their communities. The workshop stressed the need for grassroots organizations to come up with a initiatives that lead to community benefits while conserving the environment.

The issues of transparency and accountability were highlighted, and it was emphasized that each initiative should be based on local priorities in accordance with the needs of people. Monitoring and Evaluation should be the integral components in order to ensure the project sustainability.

Established in 1992, the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP) provides small grants of US\$ 50,000 to support the local CSOs for conserving and restoring the environment while enhancing people's well-being and livelihoods.

Since the launch of Afghanistan SGP in 23 October 2012, seven grants have already have been awarded to eligible CSOs to support their initiatives in different provinces. The second round of concepts submission by the CSOs is in progress.

The workshop was opened with welcome remarks of Mr. Fazal Rahman Tasal, UNDP Programme Officer for Sustainable Development and Mr. Aimal Khaurin, the SGP National Coordinator in Afghanistan.





