

2018 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Children's Category – Honorable Mention]

The Change I Want to Make

(Original)

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On the 30th March 2013, flash rain (150 mm of rainfall in one hour) submerged Port Louis, the capital of Mauritius, killing 13 people. This tragic event was a first in its kind and the population was shocked. Initially, there was a general feeling that the meteorological station did not possess adequate equipment to detect such rain. However, inquiry revealed that the main canal that drained rain water from the capital was blocked by concrete waste emanating from the renovation of the motorway. An irresponsible act!

Since then, frequent floods were recorded in different regions in the country during heavy rainfall. The floods were mainly due to overflow of rivers that were blocked by waste materials, thrown away by careless people. These events impact negatively on the economy as schools and offices were closed during these periods.

With a population of 1.28 million inhabitants, Mauritius generates around 1200 tons of waste daily. At this rate, the unique landfill of the island, the Mare Chicose Landfill, is expected to reach its saturation point next year. The annual spending on waste management for the country is around US\$ 42 million. Sixty four percent of the waste produced by the country are organic waste. Burying of organic (vegetables or fruit peels) waste is not only a waste of resource but also generate methane, which is twenty five times more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

Despite the various measures taken by the government to address the issues, I strongly believe that it is the concern of each and every citizen of this country. We must develop a sense of belonging to the country and a culture of responsible citizen. As president Kennedy rightly said, 'ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country'. It would be great if I could reduce the amount of solid waste produced by the country. However at my level, I can initiate several measures in my immediate environment, that is at home and at school.

At home, I can reduce waste by adopting practical measures such as reduce, reuse and

recycle. I can reduce the amount of organic waste through composting. These compost will be helpful for my garden, where I have a couple of fruit trees and some vegetables. The usage of reusable cloth bags instead of plastic bags can be encouraged.

Old cloth at home can be reused for cleaning purposes. Instead of throwing plastic bottles, I can reuse them by transforming them into beautiful home decorations and flower pots. Along with my friends, we can collect plastic bottles at school and convert them into work of art. It will be both an entertaining and enriching experience. Examination scripts and plastic bottles at schools may be sent to appropriate factory for recycling. Interclass competitions may be organised at school to aim at zero rubbish on a particular day or week, that is the class with the least rubbish wins. I will motivate my friends and relatives to adopt the same measures. I truly believe that as an individual, these measures can be easily achieved.

Social media is a very powerful tool for sensitizing people to reduce their waste. I will create a page on Facebook as there are around seven hundreds thousands Mauritians registered users. Small clips and photos will be uploaded on the page to demonstrate practical actions that can be undertaken so as to reduce waste.

Finally, the incentive to tackle the global challenge of zero waste and leading a sustainable lifestyle is all about a question of change in self to make the difference. To become resource smart, a change in my attitudes and practices may bring about a change in my surrounding, my friends, my family and my teachers. Eventually this change may flow through the community as a whole.