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International POPs Elimination Project

*Fostering Active and Efficient Civil Society Participation in
Preparation for Implementation of the Stockholm Convention*

Ecological Waste Management Demonstration Project at the 23rd Southeast Asian Games to Reduce POPs by Preventing and Reducing Waste, Dumping and Burning

**Ayala Foundation, Cavite Green Coalition, Concerned
Citizens Against Pollution, Global Alliance for
Incinerator Alternatives, Greenpeace Southeast Asia,
Mother Earth Foundation, Smokey Mountain Resource
Recovery Systems, Soroptimist International of Makati,
and Zero Waste Philippines**

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About the International POPs Elimination Project

On May 1, 2004, the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN <http://www.ipen.org>) began a global NGO project called the International POPs Elimination Project (IPEP) in partnership with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). The Global Environment Facility (GEF) provided core funding for the project.

IPEP has three principal objectives:

- Encourage and enable NGOs in 40 developing and transitional countries to engage in activities that provide concrete and immediate contributions to country efforts in preparing for the implementation of the Stockholm Convention;
- Enhance the skills and knowledge of NGOs to help build their capacity as effective stakeholders in the Convention implementation process;
- Help establish regional and national NGO coordination and capacity in all regions of the world in support of longer term efforts to achieve chemical safety.

IPEP will support preparation of reports on country situation, hotspots, policy briefs, and regional activities. Three principal types of activities will be supported by IPEP: participation in the National Implementation Plan, training and awareness workshops, and public information and awareness campaigns.

For more information, please see <http://www.ipen.org>

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I. Summary

The Ecological Waste Coalition of the Philippines, Inc. initiated and implemented a waste prevention and recycling program geared at making the 23rd Southeast Asian Games (SEAG) more earth-friendly. In collaboration with the Philippine SEA Games Organizing Committee (PHILSOC) and key stakeholders, the Coalition dreamed and pursued a waste-free SEAG with the following objectives in mind:

1. Raise the awareness of the 23rd SEA Games stakeholders about the need to lessen the environmental consequences of the competition through adherence and practice of ecological waste management, which is integral to sustainable tourism and development.
2. Educate and train facility staff as well as the volunteers of the 23rd SEA Games on the steps and benefits of managing discarded resources in an ecological and sustainable manner in the frame of the country's Ecological Solid Waste Management Act and the Stockholm Convention on POPs.
3. Facilitate and supervise a waste prevention and recycling scheme in Luneta (site of the opening and closing ceremonies) and designated venues that will minimize waste and simplify recycling efforts.

The heart of this collaborative project was the implementation of basic waste separation system at the different venues, so as to avoid and minimize waste, conserve and maximize the recovery of resources through composting and recycling, while providing supplementary income to marginalized families.

Luneta, site of the massive opening and closing ceremonies, was the centerpiece of the waste-free SEAG initiative. The Coalition put up some 100 "recycling stations" throughout the huge area where the public could conveniently put their biodegradable and non-biodegradable discards into their respective receptacles. The system prevented the mixing of materials and facilitated the efficient and safe recovery of waste resources - by the Smokey Mountain community recyclers - for recycling and composting.

Overall, the waste-free SEAG project was a considerable success in many aspects, such as in:

- a. mobilizing over 200 dedicated community and NGO volunteers –the force behind the project’s triumphant completion;
- b. mainstreaming ecological waste management as a legitimate concern for sport bodies, athletes and all sport fans and spectators.
- c. amplifying our message “panalo ang bayan kung di talo ang kapaligiran” (“the nation will triumph if the environment is protected”) with the added voices of popular sport personalities who said "we prevent POPs by saying NO to health-damaging disposal methods";
- d. increasing the Coalition’s visibility and profile as a solution group that is constructively finding ways to address the country’s waste problems;
- e. providing supplementary income for marginalized community members;
- f. recovering almost 2,000 kilos of recyclable and compostable discards;
- g. demonstrating the superiority and viability of ecological waste management;
- h. working with chosen venues to put up basic waste separation system; and
- i. generating essential funds and logistics to defray the project costs.

Comprising the Coalition’s Task Force for a Waste-Free SEAG were the: Ayala Foundation, Cavite Green Coalition, Concerned Citizens Against Pollution, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, Greenpeace Southeast Asia, Mother Earth Foundation, Smokey Mountain Resource Recovery Systems, Soroptimist International of Makati, and Zero Waste Philippines.

II. Major Activities Carried Out

Objective # 1: Public Information, Education and Communication

- One press conference held on 7 November 2005 at the PHILSOC Secretariat
- 14 press releases issued in both English and Tagalog
- Two radio/TV advisories issued prior to the opening and closing rites
- 130 streamers carrying waste-free messages displayed in Luneta and designated venues
- Waste-Free 23rd SEA Games publicized on one website (www.no-burn.org)
- Short talks at the SEAG mall tour (SM South Mall and SM Mega Mall)
- Short talk at the Gawad Kalinga volunteers’ rehearsal

Objective # 2: Volunteers’ Mobilization and Training

- Seven task force planning and coordination meetings held in October-December 2005

- 227 community, school and NGO volunteers mobilized and trained
- One general training for Smokey Mountain volunteers on 19 November 2005
- Several briefings on ecological waste management held with venue staff

Objective # 3: Waste Separation and Recycling System in Luneta and Venues

- 100 recycling stations set up in Luneta
- Segregated waste from Luneta hauled to Smokey Mountain for screening, recycling, composting
- Sport venues guided on waste separation systems
- Visits made to regional venues (Angeles, Olongapo, Cebu, Danao, Mandaue, Bacolod)

III. Crucial Problems Faced

Some of the more outstanding challenges that the Coalition dealt with in the process of implementing the waste-free SEAG are the following:

Lack of more specific details in the Memorandum of Agreement entered into by PHILSOC and the Coalition, and the inefficiency of PHILSOC in ensuring timely transmittal of this MOA to all the venues, resulting to some snags that could have been easily prevented.

Unclear assignment as to the precise Committee within the PHILSOC bureaucracy that had the responsibility for looking after the needs of the Coalition's volunteers.

Most of the PHILSOC-assigned venue coordinators were not known to venue management and staff, and most reported to the venues only a few days before the start of the Games, leading to some confusion in the accreditation of Coalition volunteers.

Change of venues for certain sports without proper notification from PHILSOC.

Poor support from national politicians (representatives and senators) whom we approached for financial assistance. Out of the over 50 politicians, only two granted our request: Sen. Pia Cayetano and Sen. Manny Villar.

Eleventh hour resolution by PHILSOC of essential logistics such as the separate waste bins for Luneta and other government-run venues, and the volunteers' t-shirts and food allowances.

IV. Major Achievements Reaped

Broad mobilization of NGOs and volunteers

The legendary bayanihan spirit propelled the formation of a diverse 9-member NGO task force for a waste-free SEAG as well as the mobilization of over 200 volunteers – with age ranging from 14 to 77 - from Smokey Mountain, University of the Philippines-Los Baños, Chiang Kai Shek College and the participating NGOs. By and large, the volunteers, representing a cross section of the Philippine society, provided inestimable

enthusiasm and energy resulting to the project success. The focused leadership of Sonia Mendoza as overall project coordinator and her skills in communication and negotiation proved very helpful. Designated NGO coordinators for the selected venues dutifully delivered what they were supposed to accomplish in spite of initial hiccups. PHILSOC commented: “The well-organized recycling scheme proved effective in minimizing waste. Hats off to our ‘green’ volunteers for making the Luneta rites waste-free!”

The breakdown of the SEAG’s “green” volunteers is as follows:

Smokey Mountain: 132

UPLB: 18

Chiang Kai Shek College: 45

NGOs: 32

Determined mainstreaming of ecological waste management as a sports issue

We scored a significant victory in introducing ecological waste management as a legitimate area of concern for sport bodies and for the athletes and their leagues of supporters. The presentation made by Abi Jabines before the sport officials, the subsequent signing of Memorandum of Agreement between PHILSOC and the Coalition, and our media exposures proved that we have significantly penetrated the world of sports. In one press release, we asserted that sports development and environmental protection are inseparable. We explained that "the quality of air, water and soil will have direct impact on the athletes' satisfaction and performance of their chosen sports. Exposure to harmful chemicals from open dumps, waste burners, smoke-belching vehicles, and dirty industrial processes will have negative effects on athletes and the surrounding communities.”

Creative amplification of the waste-free SEAG message

Notwithstanding our limitations, we managed to connect and work with top sports personalities who happily helped us in amplifying our message “panalo ang bayan kung di talo ang kapaligiran” Translation: “...the nation will triumph if the environment is protected.”. The endorsement of seven SEAG ambassadors, namely Allan Caidic (basketball), Monsour del Rosario (tae kwon do), Weena Lim (badminton), Paeng Nepomuceno (bowling), Elma Muros-Posadas (athletics), Akiko Thomoson (swimming), and Onyok Velasco (boxing), truly raised the project’s profile, especially in the print media. The SEAG ambassadors’ letter to the editor, which got published in three national dailies, urged the public to “rally behind a waste-free SEAG and together work for a clean and healthy environment for our communities and for the Filipino youth and children.” Some of the country’s sport icons wrote: “We prevent persistent organic pollutants (POPs) by saying no to health-damaging disposal methods.” The added support from showbiz celebrities Richard Gomez and Pia Guanio, and from the tae kwon do and arnis (Filipino art of hand, foot, and stick fighting) demonstration teams enabled us to obtain spots in the extremely limited sports sections of the tabloids.

Prolific use of the various media to raise public awareness and increase Coalition's profile and visibility

In spite of our lack of well-oiled machinery, we succeeded in penetrating the sports sections of almost all the broadsheets and tabloids in Metro Manila. Additionally, news and announcements about the waste-free SEAG appeared in several radio and TV programs. Our press releases carried quotes from Sonia Mendoza and other task force members, namely Elsie Brandes de Veyra, Luz Sabas, Eileen Sison, and Tony Villacorta. On the whole, our media work enhanced the profile and visibility of the Coalition and our work on waste and pollution in the interest of public health and the environment.

a. Newspapers. The SEAG ambassadors' letter to the editor was published in full in the opinion sections of the Philippine Daily Inquirer (the country's #1 newspaper), Manila Standard Today and Philippine Star. From 21 October to 10 December 2005, 46 waste-free SEAG news and photos were published in 6 broadsheets and 14 tabloids from 21 October – 10 December 2005.

b. TV. Waste-free SEAG news/announcements were made at the various programs of ABC5, ABS-CBN, ANC and GMA 7. Sonia Mendoza was guest at ANC's Top Story about the SEA Games on 20 November 2005. Showbiz personalities Butch Francisco and Richard Gomez called on the public to support a waste-free SEAG at GMA7's Star Talk and S-Files on 19 and 20 November 2005, respectively. On 1 December 2005, Elma Muros was seen being interviewed on Channel 5 wearing the Coalition's waste-free SEAG t-shirt.

c. Radio. A dozen radio stations were requested to announce the waste-free SEAG public advisory, which was faxed prior and during the opening and closing rites. Merci Ferrer of Health Care Without Harm discussed the initiative, among other matters, at the DZRJ program of Gemma Cruz-Araneta.

d. Banners. Some 130 streamers containing "Panalo ang Bayan kung di Talo ang Kapitaligiran" and other slogans were displayed in various sport venues, Quezon Memorial Circle and Luneta for the opening and closing ceremonies.

We also hung twelve streamers along EDSA, including one at the historic People Power Monument.

e. Posters. Some 1,300 copies of the "reduce your waste size" posters were disseminated in various places.

f. Text Messaging. We circulated this text message prior to the opening of the SEAG: "Sa parating na SEA Games, iwasan natin ang pagkakalat at paglikha ng basura't lason, panalo ang bayan kung di talo ang kapitaligiran, aim for a healthy waste-free nation." In English, "in the upcoming SEA Games, let us not litter and create waste and pollution, the nation will triumph if the environment is protected..."

Gratifying provision of economic benefits to marginalized families

The enlisted community volunteers from Smokey Mountain received P650 each for their services during the opening and closing events. Additionally, they were provided with 2 shirts, 5 kilos of rice, and a little extra from the sale of recyclables. Project savings enabled the Coalition to host a Christmas “salo-salo” in Smokey Mountain on 20 December 2005.

Successful recovery of recyclable and compostable waste

Through the waste-free SEAG, we managed to recover 598 kilos of recyclables and 1,275 kilos of compostables, thus preventing these discarded resources from being wasted, dumped or burned, and causing environmental pollution.

Winning demonstration of the ecological alternative for managing discards

The waste-free SEAG project showed renew the viability of ecological waste management as an alternative to the destructive practice of dumping and burning of discards, and presented advocates and practitioners with another success story to be proud of.

Productive coordination with the designated sport venues productive

Despite initial hitches with certain venues, the overall coordination with the facility management and staff went well. By and large, the venues were very welcoming and receptive to the effort to make the Games waste-free, and the assigned NGOs proved very flexible, versatile and skillful in negotiating with the concerned personnel for the minimum requirements for a waste-free SEAG. Several venues expressed interest in cooperating with Coalition members for possible post-SEAG workshops.

Considerable success in mobilizing essential resources

- a. Fund Raising. A total of over P320,000 was raised from NGO, corporate and individual sponsors. Our success in raising the necessary funds allowed us to augment the Smokey Mountain volunteers’ allowance for the opening and closing rites from P200 to P325, which is the minimum wage for the national capital region.
- b. Donations in Kind. Supportive NGOs, corporations and individuals provided over 100 streamers, while one food company donated 100 sets of the recycling station signage. PHILSOC supplied 300 t-shirts, 231 big blue plastic drums and 231 small white plastic drums, which were used as waste bins in Luneta, Rizal Memorial Sports Complex, GSIS Theater, GSIS Gym, and Philsports Multi Sports Complex (formerly ULTRA). The Aristocrat Restaurant also provided adobo sandwiches for the Luneta volunteers at the closing ceremonies.

V. Salient Recommendations

Seize future opportunities for demonstrating the viability of zero waste: target the upcoming cultural festivals in 2006 and the 2007 national elections.

Sustain the relationships forged with sport associations, facilities and personalities. For example, continue working with friendly managers in transforming their venues into ecological centers for health, wellness and athletic excellence.

Team up with other relevant advocacy groups for new media spins and expanded public outreach. Cultivate relationships made with journalists in the course of the campaign.

Coordinate more closely with local government units to benefit from their influence over publicly-owned venues as well as tap into their manpower and logistical resources.

Prepare “sponsorship packages” for individual, institutional and corporate sponsors to make it more attractive for them to support future projects.

Write to the Department of Education, Gawad Kalinga Youth and Couples and Singles for Christ to draw their attention to what we have observed at the opening rites from some youth participants (littering, stepping onto the flag, non-respect to the national anthem)

Improve the design of the recycling station signage and the labels for the waste bins for increased visibility.