

# STATUS OF PLASTIC BAG BANS IN IHR

A REPORT ON PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION





*“ANNUALLY,  
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PLASTIC BAG JUST HAS  
AN AVERAGE ‘WORKING  
LIFE’ OF 15 MINUTES” -  
PLASTIC OCEANS  
INTERNATIONAL*

The campaign for International Plastic Bag Free Day is observed globally on 3 July. It was initiated in 2008 by Zero Waste Europe, with the purpose to raise awareness against the use of this non-biodegradable material which is one of the most widely used single use plastic items. Now, the campaign is part of the broader Break Free From Plastic movement, which brings together an international movement of plastic pollution fighters to build a future free from plastic waste.

The fallout of the rampant use of plastics is highly evident in our mountains, with choked drains and waterways leading to innumerable life taking landslides, agricultural fields getting clogged and wildlife getting seriously impacted. Plastic litter is also widespread in the mountains and is impossible to retrieve.

Plastic bags epitomise the use and throw culture that we have embraced, one that focuses on individual existence superseding our communal well-being. Among a long list of single-use plastic products that pile up in landfills and pollute our soil and water; plastic bags may be the most visible and vilified. It must have seen the most number of campaigns launched against it, a poster child of environmental movements, and yet it refuses to go away.

Many state governments and local authorities have notified complete bans on plastic carry bags but almost all have failed in implementation. What does this inability to stop plastic bag use then say about the mountain states' will and ability to tackle the plastic crisis?

# SURVEY OBJECTIVES

An online survey on plastic bag bans and its effectiveness across the Indian Himalaya Region was undertaken by the Zero Waste Himalaya and Integrated Mountain Initiative with 315 responses representing Tripura, Nagaland, Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Assam, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and UTs of Ladakh and J&K.

A total of 305 people participated in the online survey on plastic bags from 13 Himalayan states and other states of India (listed as others) in Figure 1. The highest response was from Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim and West Bengal from the Himalayan States with more than 40 responses per state. Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Nagaland and Mizoram had the lowest responses with responses less than 10 per state.

UNDERSTANDING THE STATUS OF PLASTIC BAG BANS IN THE MOUNTAINS, AND PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BANS;

THE TYPES OF PLASTIC BAGS BEING USED ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS

The results of the survey are limited as it was conducted in English and also online which excludes the diversity of peoples of the mountains without English language skills as well as the ones who have no access to technology and internet. The survey was also snowballed within ZWH networks thus got restricted to like minded people but this also meant that the people who undertook the survey were engaged in issues of waste so are well informed.

The questionnaire covered the respondent's awareness and perceived effectiveness of the plastic bag ban. Availability of different types of plastic bags in various outlets and charging for plastic bags was also covered in the survey (Annexure I)

**A STATE WISE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS HAS ALSO BEEN PRESENTED ALTHOUGH THE RESULTS MAY BE SKEWED BECAUSE OF UNEQUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE STATE IN THE SURVEY.**



# AWARENESS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF BAN ON PLASTIC BAGS

82 per cent of the respondents were aware of some form of ban on plastic bags. 10 percent were unaware of the ban and 8 percent were not sure if there was any ban that had been put in place in their states.

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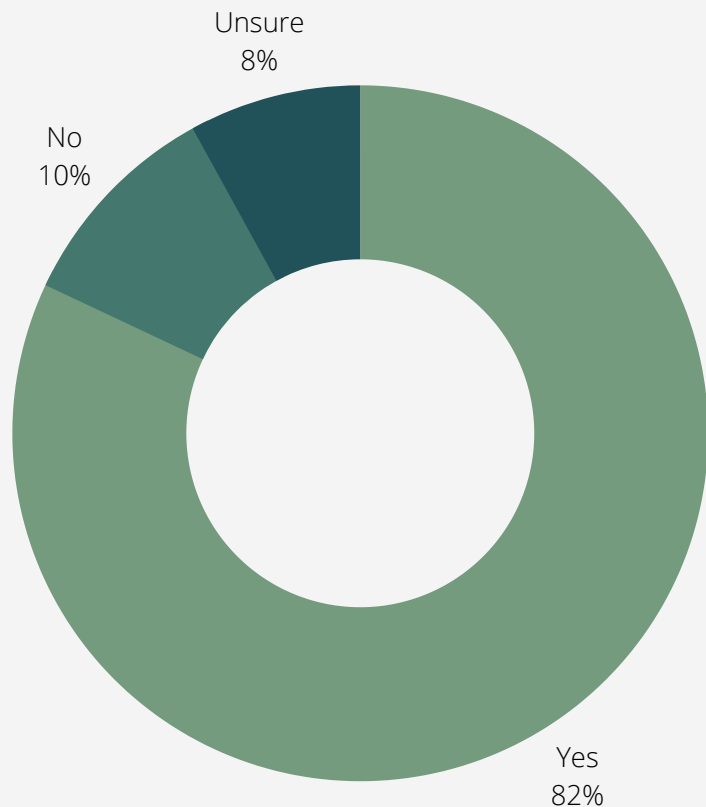


Figure 1 Awareness on plastic bag ban

**17 PER CENT**  
Bans highly Effective

**35 PERCENT**  
Not effective at all

**31 PERCENT**  
Effective only for sometime

**16 PERCENT** unsure

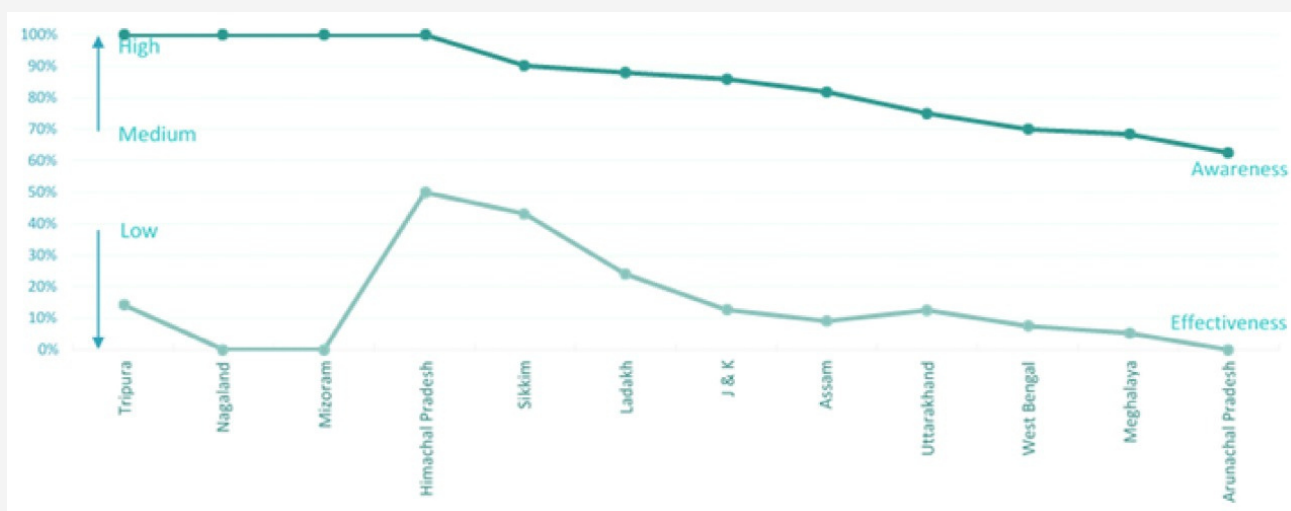


Figure 2 Awareness and Effectiveness of Plastic Bag Ban

Name of state	SUP ban status	REMARKS	AWARENESS	Effectiveness of ban
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	COMPLETE BAN	Only carry bags	Medium	Low
ASSAM	COMPLETE BAN	Plastic carry bags, banners, buntings, cups, cling films, flex, flags, plates, sheets (used for spreading on dining tables - irrespective of thickness. Items made of thermocol and plastic which use plastic microbeads.	High	Low
HIMACHAL PRADESH	COMPLETE BAN	Carry bags (irrespective of size), polythene, non biodegradable material, disposable plastic, cups, plates and glasses	High	Medium
J AND K	COMPLETE BAN	Carry bags, plastic sheets or like, cover made of plastic sheet, plastic packaging and MLPs less than 50 microns in thickness	High	Low
LADAKH	PARTIAL BAN	Plastic water bottles and other plastic made objects in Government Offices and other institutions	High	Low
MANIPUR	NO BAN		Medium	Low
MEGHALAYA	NO BAN		Medium	Low
MIZORAM	NO BAN		High	Low
NAGALAND	COMPLETE BAN	Only carry bags	High	Low
SIKKIM	COMPLETE BAN	Carry bags and styrofoam in eateries and fast food	High	Medium
TRIPURA	COMPLETE BAN	Complete ban on sell , use , storage, transportation and import of plastic carrybags, (including non woven pp - fabric type), plastic tube to pack or cover any book including magazine and invitation / greeting cards	High	Low
UTTARAKHAND	COMPLETE BAN		High	Low
WEST BENGAL	PARTIAL BAN		High	Low

Source \* – Notification for banning, manufacture, use, sale, import and handling of single use products. (Parliamentary Response from MoEFCC - 12/2/21). Does not represent data from district or local bodies

\*\* Study on status of plastic bag bans, 2021

# AVAILABILITY OF PLASTIC BAGS

57 percent of the respondents said that plastic bags were available in all of the stated (all the above) places that are Local Vegetable Markets, Local Stores, Fish and Meat markets and Big Super Markets.

The availability is highest in Local Vegetable Markets and Local Stores with 17 percent each of the respondents stating availability of plastic bags. 6 percent said Fish and Meat Markets has availability of plastic bags. Big Super Markets have the lowest availability of plastic bags with only 3 percent only.

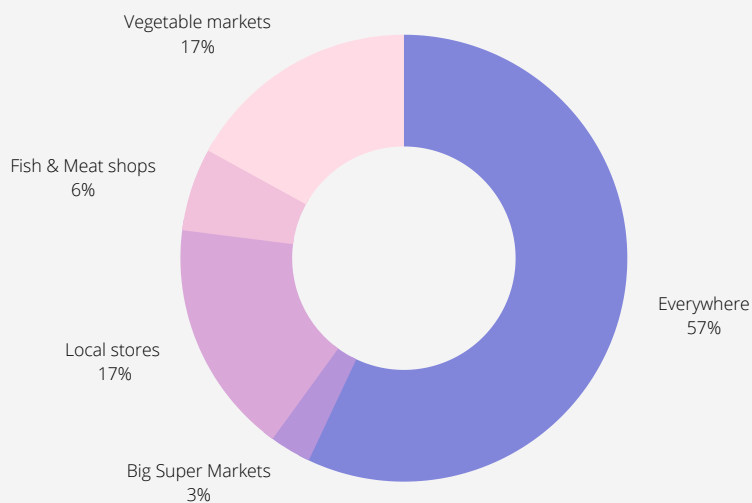


Figure 4 Availability of Plastic Bags

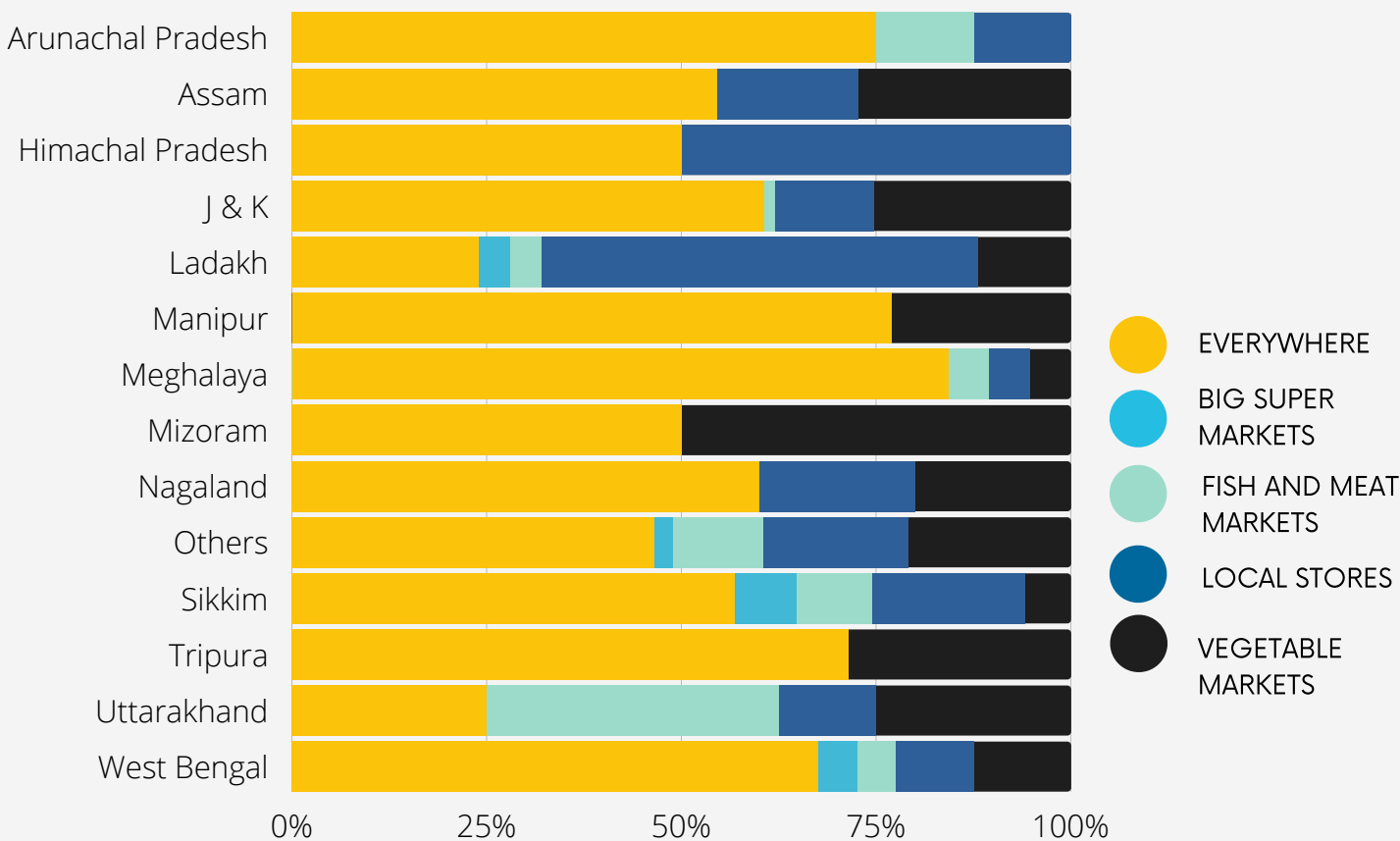
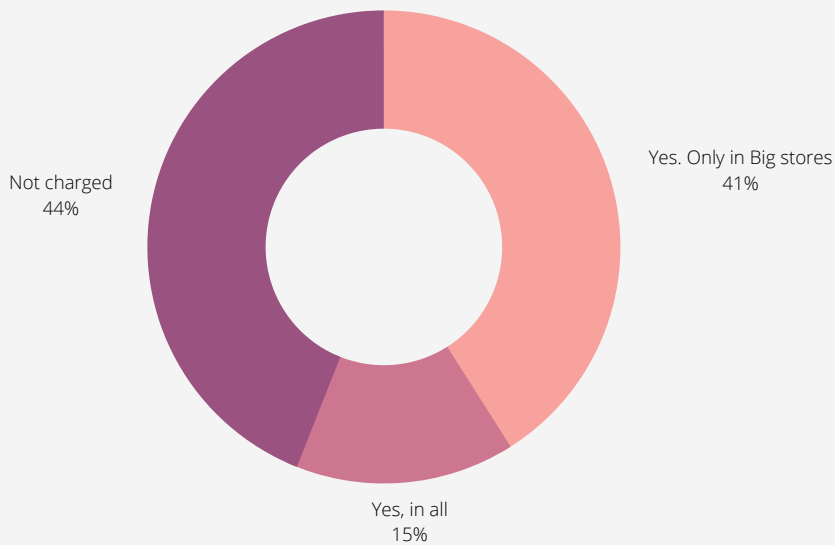


Figure 5 State wise Availability of Plastic Bags

# CHARGE FOR PLASTIC CARRY BAGS



44 percent of the respondents said that shops and outlets do not charge for plastic bags.

41 percent said that big stores and shopping malls charge customers for the plastic bags

Only 15 percent said that all other shops charge extra for plastic carrying bags.

Figure 6 Charge for Plastic Bags

# TYPE OF PLASTIC BAGS USED

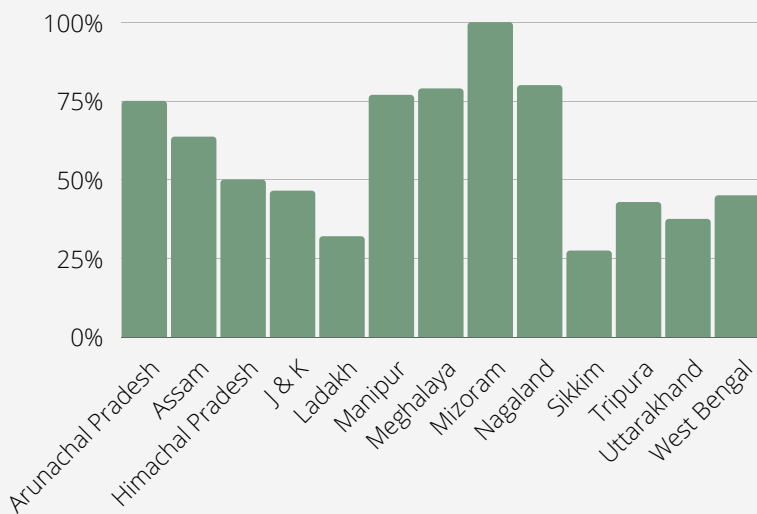


Figure 7. Use of thin plastics (> 50 microns)

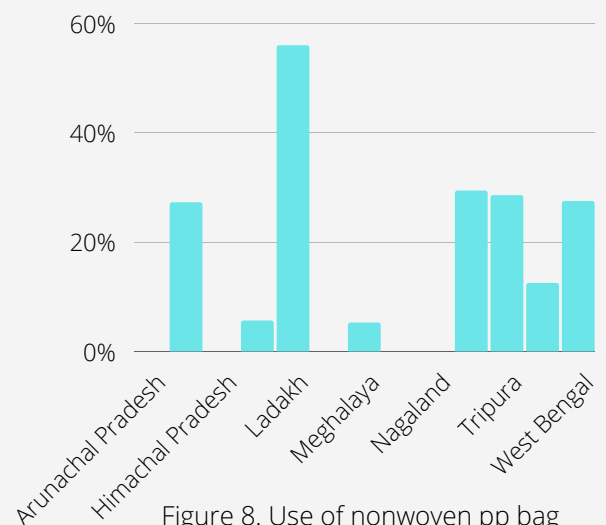


Figure 8. Use of nonwoven pp bag

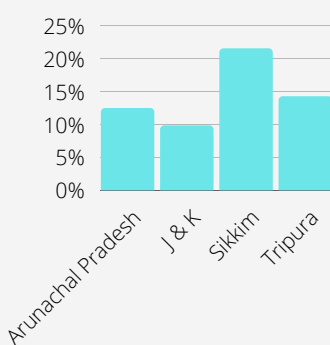
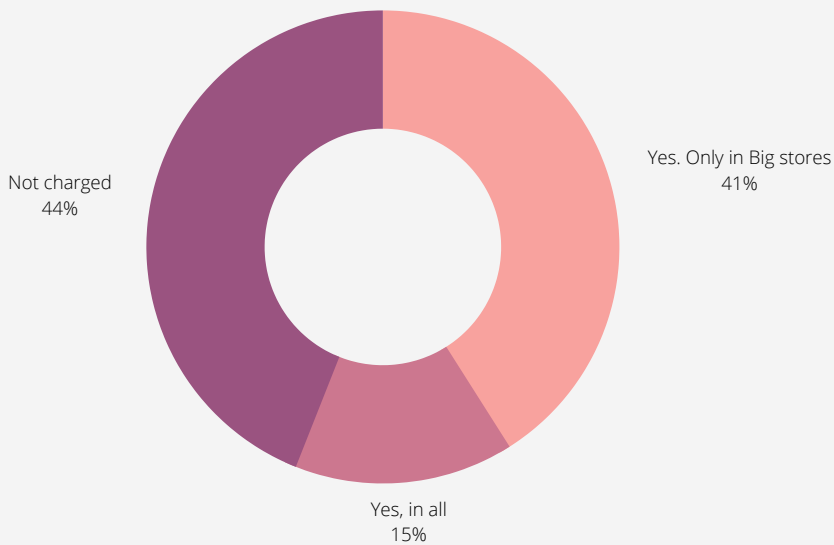


Figure 9. Use of oxo biodegradable/compostable bags

Ladakh has the highest use of Non-Woven Plastic Bags at 56 percent and Himachal Pradesh has the highest use of Thick Plastic Bags (above 50 microns) Sikkim, Ladakh and Uttarakhand have the lowest use of Thin Film Plastic Bags at 27, 32 and 38 percent respectively.

biodegradable bags are at times more problematic as some of these are just plastic with additives that accelerate the disintegration into microplastics. Compostable claims made are also false, as our landfills where these bags invariably end up, do not provide adequate conditions to biodegrade.

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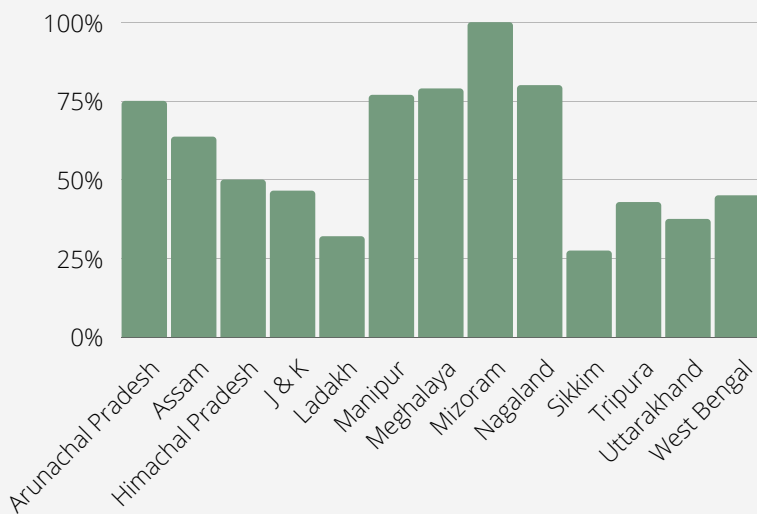


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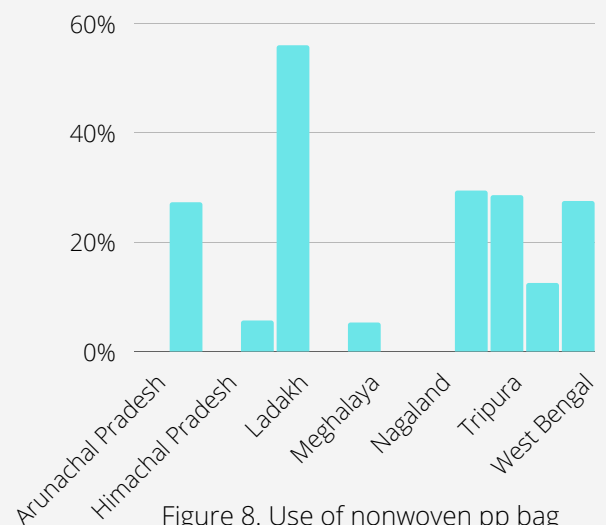


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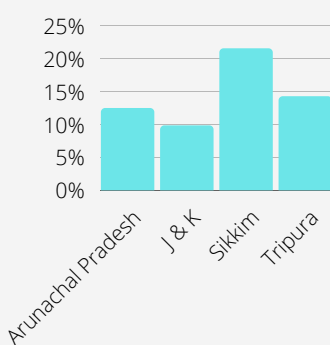


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# CONCLUSION

- Plastic bag bans have not been effective in any mountain state, and plastic bags are being used widely in all types of shops / markets.
- New types of plastic/plastic bags have emerged in the market that are being promoted as non- plastic.
- Most bans have been promulgated without clarity in implementation procedures and institutional capacities to vigorously and continuously monitor the ban.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.Promulgate effective and appropriate laws to ban the production and sale of all types of plastic bags or
- 2.Re-examine and strengthen existing plastic bags bans. Ensure strict and continuous monitoring and implementation with inclusive community participation.
- 3.Explicitly include non-woven PP bags and garbage bags within the purview of the plastic bag ban.
- 4.Stop State subsidy and support to false solutions like biodegradable, compostable, oxo-biodegradable bags.
- 5.Incentivise reusable bags usage by State promotion and patronage of local livelihoods economy to make natural fibre bags.
- 6.Mandate stores/establishments and brands to use locally made reusable bags.
- 7.Undertake long term education and awareness campaigns that manifest the bans into individual and community action.
- 8.People in position and power to lead by example that will positively influence people.

# A REUSE REVOLUTION IN THE MOUNTAINS

India has declared that the country would be free from single use plastics by 2022. This vision can be made possible only by bringing in a reuse revolution to replace all single use plastics and open up avenues for local groups to engage through green skills and services.

There is a powerful message conveyed through the simple act of carrying one's own reusable bag - a message that rejects the use and throw mindset while embracing a sustainable lifestyle choice of reuse. For change to happen, multitudes of people need to embrace the reuse revolution for our individual actions to add up to a larger whole. People in positions of power and influence must lead by example for others to emulate.

Plastic bag eradication is the stepping stone to single use plastic eradication in the mountains.