

## **Lesson 3: Resource Sheet 1**

### **Plastic pollution in Bali, Indonesia**

Bali, Indonesia, a popular tourist destination. Tourists come from many places including Australian, Russia, German, China and Japan. But Bali faces an environmental problem that threatens not only the island's tourism-based economy but also the health of the world's marine environment.

When it rains the Bali's rivers fill up and the irrigation systems overflow. As it drains towards the sea, the surging water brings masses of rubbish with it: including everything anything from food wrappers and plastic bags to bottles and other household wastes. The popular tourist destination, Kuta beach, is regularly covered in waste. (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Plastic pollution on a beach in Bali



Bali is not the only place in Indonesia to experience such pollution. Indonesia is the world's second-biggest ocean polluter after China. Ten per cent of all the world's marine pollution comes from Indonesia.

The effects of plastic pollution on ecosystems and humans is well-known. Plastic can kill ocean mammals, turtles and other species that consume it. It can also poison food and water resources, as harmful chemicals leach out of the plastic and enter the food chain. These chemicals can cause cancer in humans. After being consumed by marine species, they enter the food chain, eventually ending up in fish we eat.

With tourism being Bali's main money earner and source of employment, the island's tourism operators are concerned that if the plastic problem will damage this industry. They fear tourists will stop coming to Bali if it is too polluted. Tourism operators understand that clean beaches are key in attracting international tourists to the island.

Efforts by community groups and non-government organisations to clean up Bali's beaches play a key role in protecting the island's environment. Such groups are fighting over-development and pollution through protests, clean-up events and educational programs. But this is only a temporary fix and don't tackle the causes of this global problem.

Campaigners from Bali-based environmental youth group *Bye Bye Plastic Bags* want an island-wide ban on plastic bags. While they have convinced Bali's governor to commit to make the island plastic-bag-free much still needs to be done to save the island's waterways from drowning in waste.

**Figure 2:** Community clean-up of plastic pollution on a beach in Bali

