INTEGRATED MOUNTAIN INITIATIVE

Zero Waste HIMALAYA

The Himalayan Cleanup

2025

CONTENT
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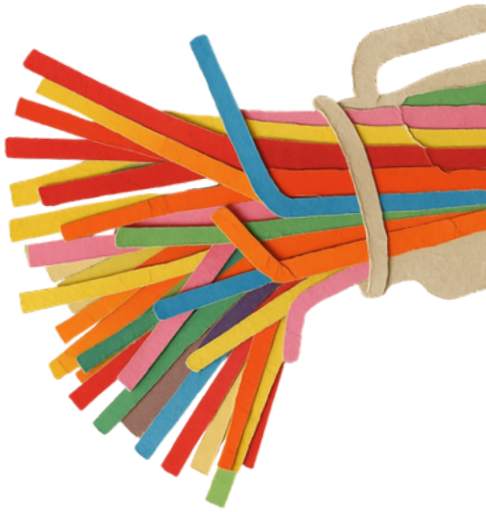


Background

Plastic pollution has not gone away, and neither will our mountain voices that are raised against the plastic onslaught. Every year since 2018, The Himalayan Cleanup (THC) calls on the need for a narrative change - hold producers accountable and invest in real solutions to redress the waste crisis in the mountains. Plastic waste crisis is a production issue and not just an end of life waste management issue, left to be dealt with by citizens. The plastic production tap must be closed to end the crisis. The movement calls for producer responsibility, systemic changes that are built on building sustainable actions at individual and community levels.

India is poised to become a top plastic producer with a high surge in the past 50 years, from 15 million tonnes (MT) in 1964 to 311 MT in 2014. This is expected to double again over the next 20 years. CSE's report the The Plastic Life-Cycle 2022 states that "India consumed 18.45 million metric tonne (MMT) of plastic in the year 2018-19" and 59% of this went into packaging." This excessive production and use of plastic, especially for single use to be discarded after momentary use is the crux of the problem. Non-recyclable plastic usage in packaging compounds the crisis manifolds, especially in the mountains.

Plastic waste is a production issue as well as a design flaw, and this is evident from high visibility of plastic waste that scar mountain landscapes. "Production, use, and fate of all plastics ever made" highlighted that of "8300 million metric tons (MT) of virgin plastics that the world produced till 2017, approximately 6300 MT (76%) ended up as plastic waste. Of this, only around 9% was recycled, 12% incinerated, and 79% accumulated in landfills or the natural environment. " (*Geyer R et al 2017*). The fact that only 9% of all plastic produced has been recycled, busts the myth of plastic recycling as the panacea of plastic pollution by bringing forth the reality of the limits to recycling.

Plastics impact human health. More than 16,000 chemicals have been identified to be associated with plastics and plastic production with 10 groups of chemicals identified as being of major concern (State of the Science on Plastic Chemicals 2024). Plastics disintegrate into smaller particles thus micro and nano plastic have become all pervasive and now found in human blood, lungs, testicles, brain and even the placenta. While the impacts on health are still under study, mounting evidence points to plastic and its additives contributing to hormonal disbalance, weight gain, infertility as well as increased risk to heart attack. We are faced with a waste and health crisis.

Waste management systems in the Himalaya are already severely challenged due to geography and spread that make collection, aggregation, linkage to treatment and recycling difficult and expensive. Tourism, religious sites and defence institutions further add to the waste crisis in the Himalaya by expanding to remote and inaccessible regions with limited waste management systems. Existing policies while being generally progressive, are not sensitive to specific issues of the mountains that make implementation ineffective. Resource allocation for mountains also do not reflect the importance, fragility and challenges of the socio-ecology of the Himalaya.

The plastic waste crisis is not a stand alone issue but one that intersects with health, food and nutrition security, biodiversity loss and the climate crisis. It is a threat to biodiversity with wildlife interacting and even eating them causing them extreme harm. Every step in the life of plastic from extraction, processing, transportation, use and disposal is polluting, toxic and contributes to the climate crisis.

OBJECTIVES AND THEME

THC is a movement, started in 2018 by the Zero Waste Himalaya and Integrated Mountain Initiative in response to the plastic waste crisis in the Himalaya.

The movement foregrounds the issue in all its complexities of production, management and individual actions. THC informs policy makers and practitioners for evidence based interventions and facilitates stewardship and solidarity of peoples, communities and institutions towards a zero waste lifestyle.

THC 2025 is taken across the Himalaya from 26 May to 5 June with the theme “Reflect Switch Demand”. Through the movement, participants reflect on the waste footprint, switch to sustainable lifestyles and demand sustainable systems, products and packaging - real solutions.

At individual level - when participants get their hands dirty to clean up, it is with the objective of deep reflection on one’s own **lifestyle** and waste footprint.

At community or institution level - Switching to adopt systemic changes that reduces waste to the landfill and improves management systems

At the production level - Pinning responsibility on plastic producers and calling on them to take responsibility for their plastic trash as well as invest in designing out problematic plastic.

THC PROCESS

Site selection
Participating organisations select their sites and finalise the date between May 26 - June 5 for cleanup and register through the online form.

Gather Volunteers
Volunteers are mobilised for joining the cleanup by the organisers

Clean up and WABA
During the cleanup, the collected waste and brand is audited following THC protocols

Data upload
Data is uploaded online for analysis and revealing of wase audit and the top polluters

Analysis and Results
The data from all the states and regions are cleaned up for errors, collated and analysed.

Waste and Brand Audit

The Himalayan Cleanup is beyond a 'cleanup and dump' exercise. It involves a waste and brand audit too, and volunteers are prepared for this exercise that requires diligence and patience. The objective of undertaking the waste audit is to inform what are the top trashed items. It also helps in identifying the items that could be reduced or banned altogether such as single use plastic items and junk food and beverage. It also enables recovery for recycling such as PET bottles, metal and glass items, cardboard, etc.

Collect

All waste collected is brought to an open space for further sorting and segregation.

Segregate

Segregation of plastics and non plastics, is the first step, and then plastic trash is segregated brand wise.

Audit

Each category of waste is counted and the numbers are noted down following the visual guide. The audit process notes down the type of plastic, type of product, numbers, and the brand / manufacturer.

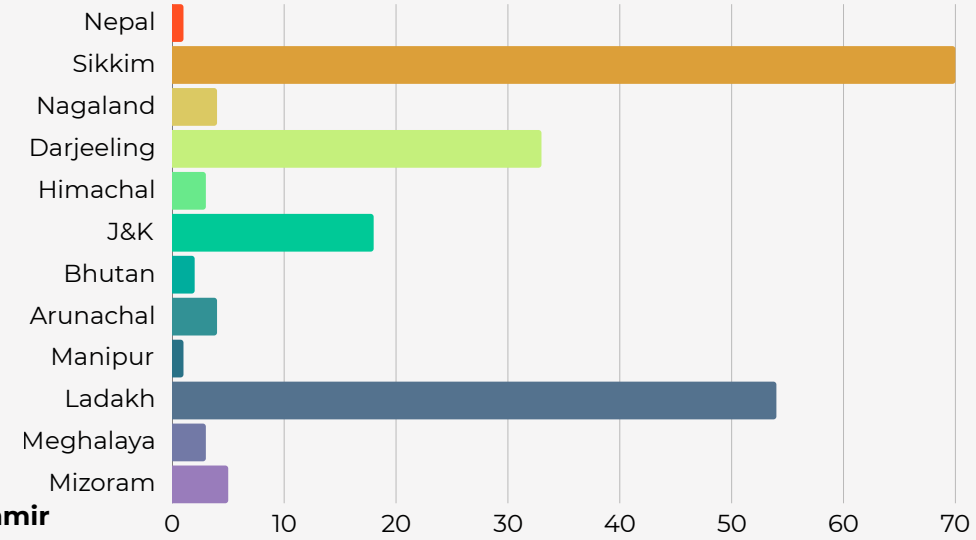
The data is entered in a format at the cleanup site, and later uploaded online through a simple form.

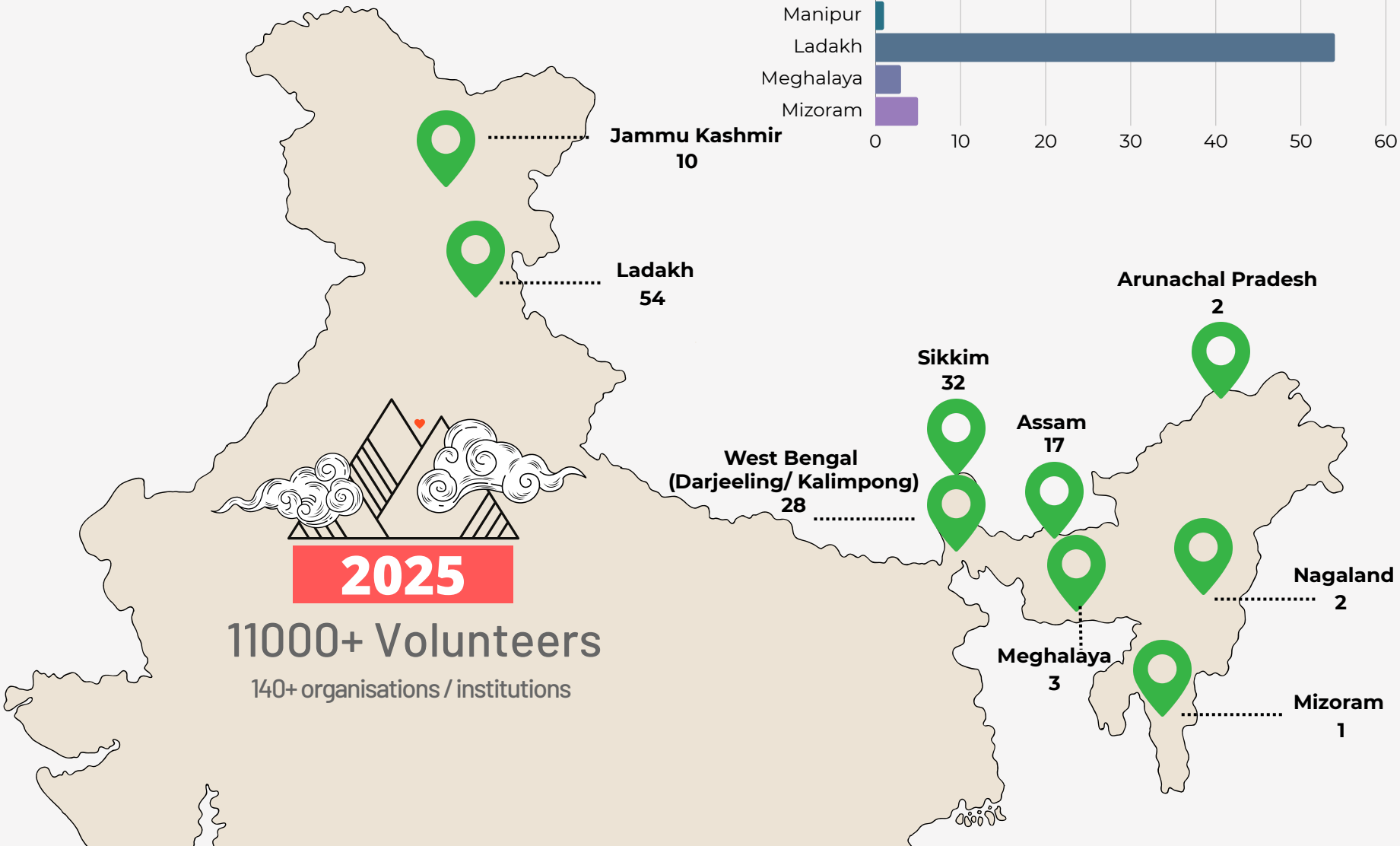
Waste and Brand Audit Data Sites THC 2025

Total:
148 Sites

9 States - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, West Bengal (Darjeeling/ Kalimpong)

2 UTs - Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh






WHAT DID
WE FIND?

PLASTICS GALORE!

The Himalayan Cleanup 2025 audited **233945 pieces** of trash with the support of **11000+ volunteers** across **148 sites** in the Himalaya. Of this total waste, **93% was plastic** waste and only 7% of the total waste picked up was non-plastic which includes paper, metal, fabric, etc.

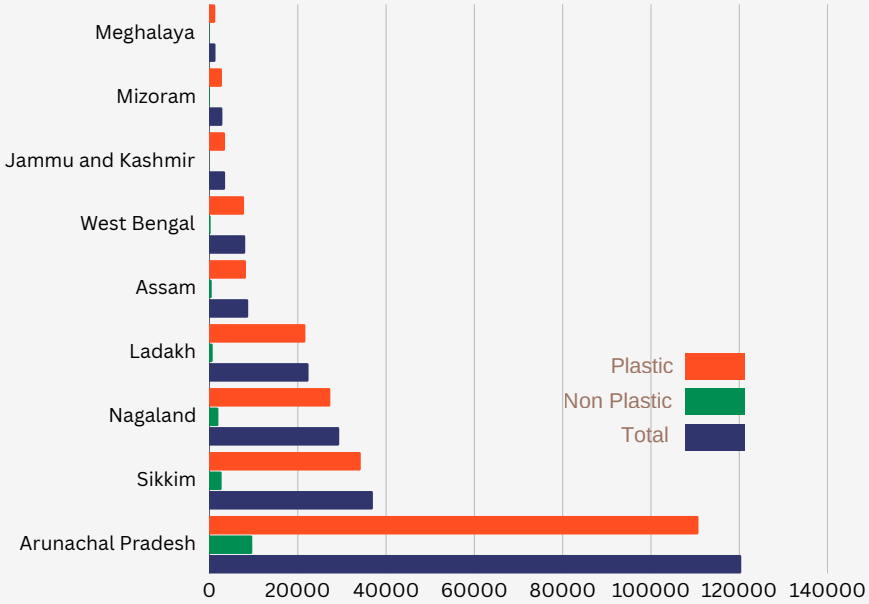
The Himalayan Cleanup focused on cleaning up diverse types of sites with most of the sites in rural areas, followed by institutional premises being cleaned up by schools and colleges. Tourist spots along with waterbodies and rivers were also important sites that were cleaned up.

217854 pieces of plastic were audited in the THC 2025 with Arunachal Pradesh auditing the highest number at 110759 pieces which is a little over 50% of the total plastic. Thus the insights that emerge from the THC2025 are biased to Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Nagaland that audited over 28% of the plastics in THC2025.

Ladakh for its unique cold dry desert and low population density audited 9.6% of the total giving unique insights of the plastic waste landscape.

Total waste picked up **233945**

Total plastics **217854**



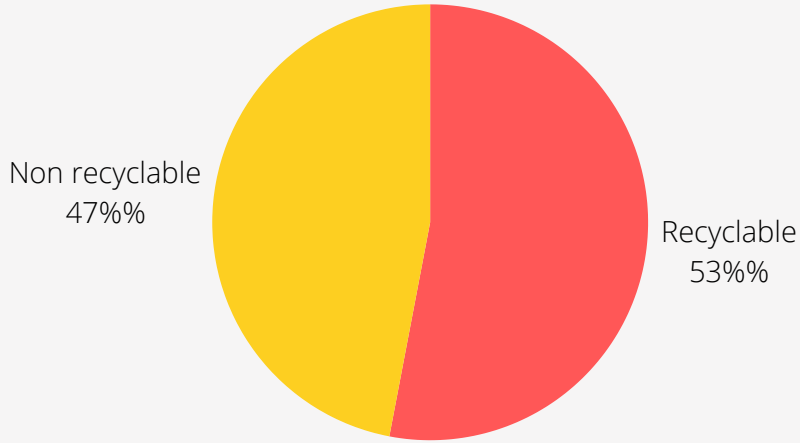
TYPE OF PLASTICS

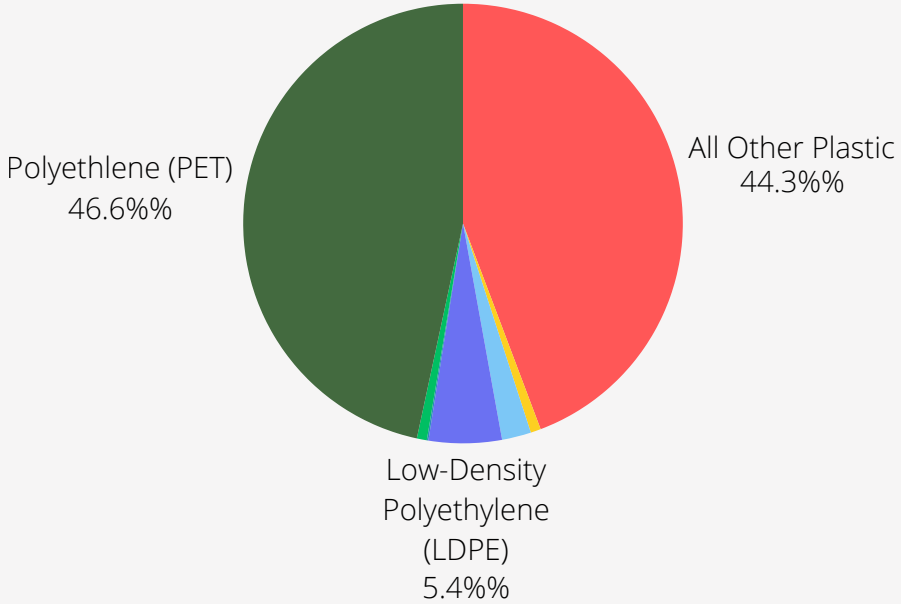
There has been a marked increase in recyclable plastic at 53% in THC2025 compared to previous years. (Recyclable plastic in THC over the years: 2022 - 28.4%; 2023 -22.6%; 2024 - 24.8%) Most of THC2025 recyclable plastic comes from Arunachal Pradesh with a large number of them being beverage PET bottles from river sides and picnic spots. Beverage bottles made up 47.57% of the total plastic audited.

A significant number of PET beverage bottles was collected across the cleanup sites. This shows the challenges of collection, aggregation, linkage and market value even of recyclable plastics in the mountains. What is important to note is that these bottles are getting smaller in size, with just a gulp in it, and priced for greater accessibility for buyers and higher sales. An increasing diversity of beverages in the market is also noted and there appears to be regional preferences like Mountain Dew in Ladakh and Sting in Sikkim and Darjeeling, all coming in PET bottles.

At 47%, THC2025 data shows a dip in non-recyclable plastics to previous years. (Non-recyclable plastic in THC over the years: 2022 - 71.6%; 2023 -77.4%; 2024 - 75.2%). This is still indicative of the high amount of non-recyclable plastics which have no solutions but to be transported to the landfills or dumping sites. Post cleanup, a significant portion of plastic waste has to be sent to the landfills, leaving participants disappointed.

This calls on the urgent need to acknowledge and address the issue in the mountains with real solutions that includes closing the plastic tap, designing out plastic, producer responsibility for their waste, reduction of plastic waste, no to all forms of single use and promotion of reusable, refillable, repair and local food cultures.

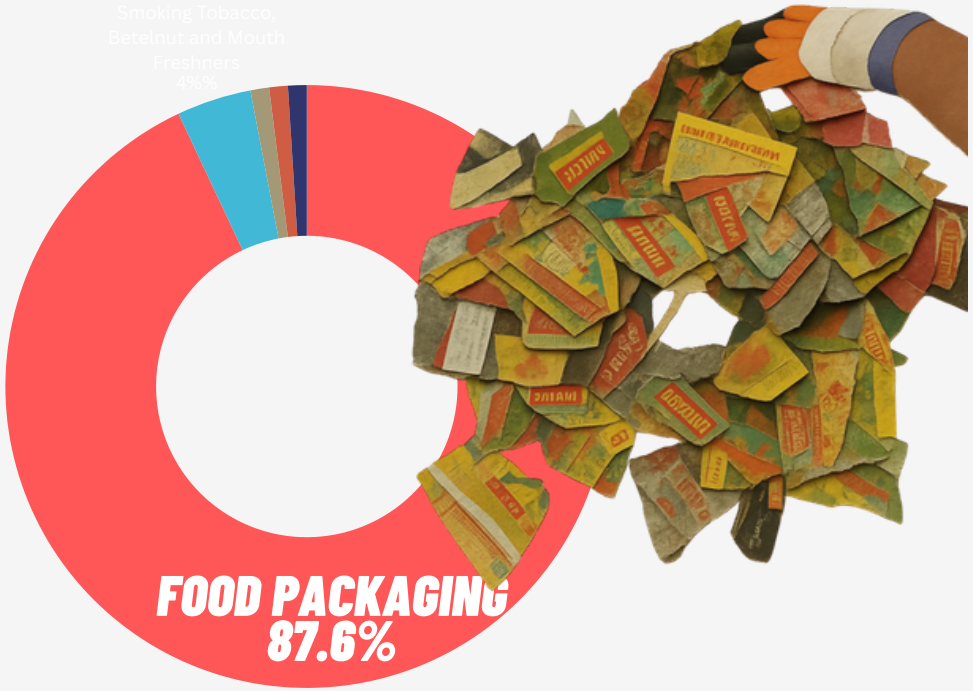




A WHOLE LOT OF JUNK!

The plastic waste was categorised products wise into 6 categories - Food packaging, household products, personal care products, smoking material, and packing material and others.

Food packaging was consistently the highest trashed item with **87.6% of all plastics** at the THC 2025. The Himalaya is eating more and more junk ultraprocessed food that is hyper plastic packaged. Thus, Big Food, significantly contributes to the waste crisis. This is a disturbing trend that continues year after year with packaged food and drinks packaging making up over 80% of the waste.

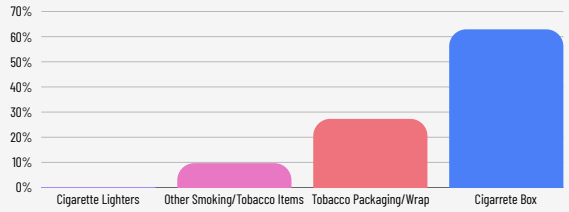


Within food packaging, **52% of plastic waste was non-recyclable** and would have to end up in the landfill even with the best of management systems in place. Recyclable plastics made up the other half of the plastic trash which highlights the limitations of recycling as a solution.

A large section of THC 2025 was taken forward by educational institutions within the neighbourhood of their campus indicating that students, including primary school students are consuming plastic packaged ultraprocessed food and beverages, including Sting (energy drink), on a regular basis. It calls on policies that limit access to these problematic products especially to children.

OTHER PLASTIC WASTE

SMOKING MATERIALS



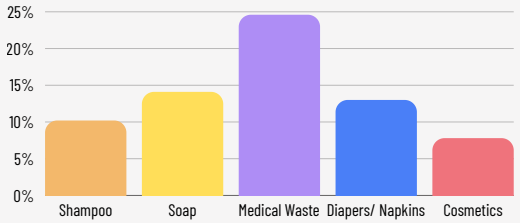
After food packaging, smoking materials were the second highest collected waste items. Cigarette packets and butts, gutka, tobacco packets, etc. were categorised under this group.

Tobacco packaging or wrap was collected in the highest numbers at 62.8% followed by cigarette butts and other tobacco items. Cigarette boxes were also collected which consisted of 27.3% of the total items.

Smoking materials prove a challenging category when it comes to waste categorisation. The cigarette packet has paper, plastic and metal in it; gutka packets tend to be MLP and tobacco packets are plastic.

The impacts of health on tobacco has been well documented and its promotion and usage highly restricted. THC shows that tobacco impacts go beyond human health and is a waste issue too.

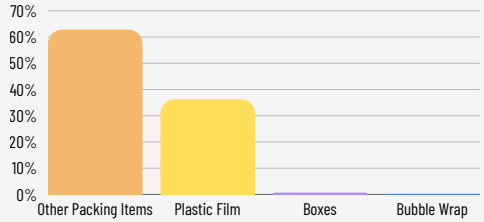
PERSONAL CARE



In personal care products, medical waste, condoms, cosmetics and shampoo sachets were found in the largest numbers. Shampoo sachets are tiny in size, invariably MLP(non-recyclable) and found near waterbodies.

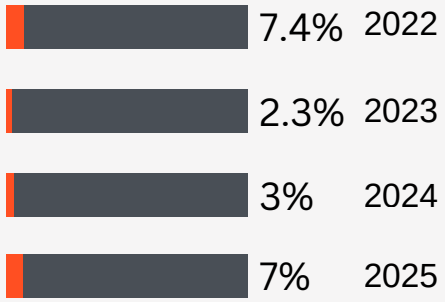
A good number of sanitary napkins and diapers were also found in the littered items and present a challenge of collection as they contain blood, urine and faeces that require specialised waste management systems. They are also MLP.

PACKING MATERIALS



Packaging materials mainly from online shopping purchases were also collected in the trash. Plastic film was found in the highest percentage followed by boxes and bubble wrap that are designed for the dump.

SINGLE USE PLASTICS



7% of plastic waste collected were banned single use items showing limits of the Single Use Plastic Ban of 2022.

HFSS - HIGH FAT, SUGAR and SALT!

Among food packaging, beverage bottles and juice boxes constituted over 50% of the total plastic waste. Every year the types and numbers of discarded bottles of sugarated drinks are picked up in increasing numbers during the cleanup. Regional preferences of these drinks were evident with Mountain Dew in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh and Sting in Sikkim and Darjeeling Himalaya. There was a significant number of packaged ORS in THC2025 along with Energy Gel for runners.

Some packaging were small as 70 ml. Ironically, many have compostable straws in plastic packaging. High amounts of sugar in all these drinks along with additives, toxic chemicals leaching and micro-plastics contribute to ill-health .

Though companies have been directed to label total sugar content, there is still limited awareness among consumers. Sugar is also masked behind misleading labels and fine print in back of package label giving the impression of health and nutrition.

STING and ENERGY DRINKS

11% of beverage bottles was the energy drink **Sting**, with very high consumption among students even though labelled "**not recommended for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers**".

THC2025 also showed an increase in the variety of energy drinks - Charge, Predator, Monster. All these have high amounts of synthetic sugar, caffeine and other additives that have physical and mental health impacts with regular consumption.

The jump shows the increasing preference for these drinks that throw additional challenges to the well-being of communities and children besides the waste issue. The example of 'Sting', shows the need for stronger front of label packaging policies that warn consumers of the dangers of these products as well as regulating their active portrayal in the media with targeted advertisements without sufficient warning of its content.

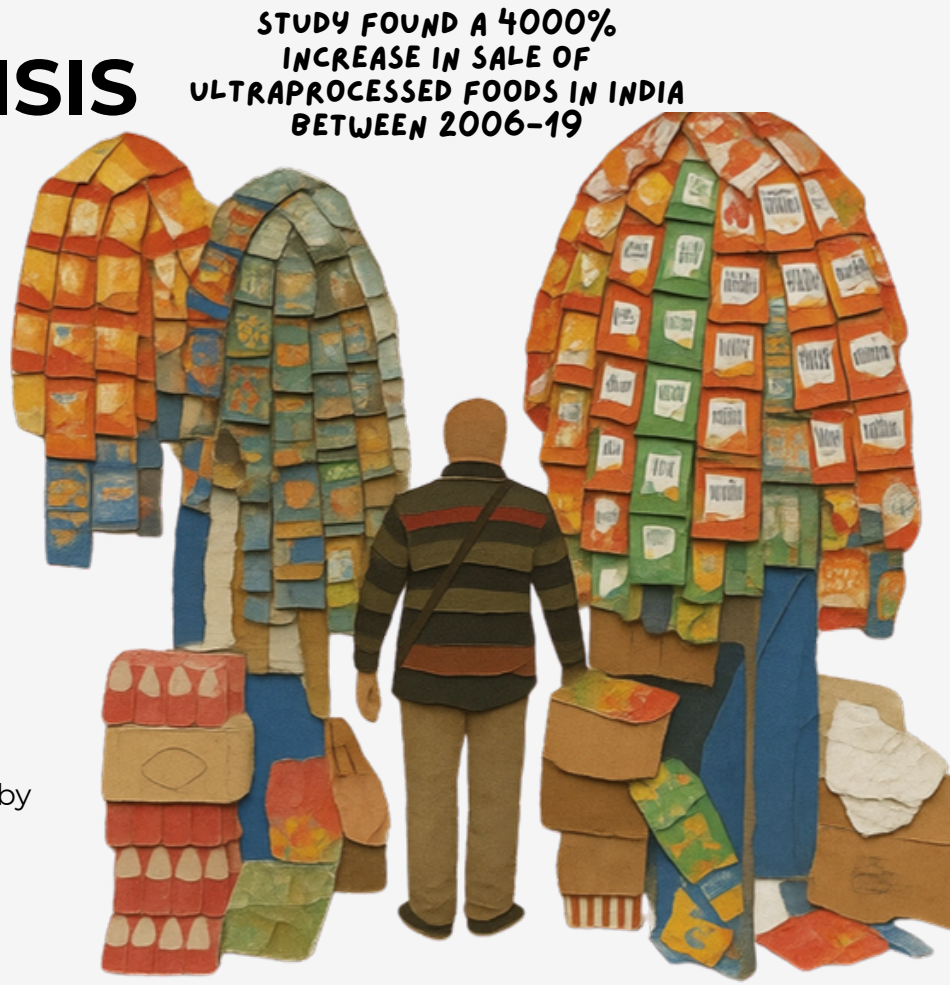
AN IMPENDING HEALTH CRISIS

There is clear evidence that ultraprocessed food and beverage is strongly linked to non-communicable diseases as well as contributing to poor mental health.

The Lancet on November 18, 2025 published a 3-paper series that reviews the evidence about the increase in ultra-processed foods in diets globally, highlighting the association with many non-communicable diseases. The papers argued that the impact of UPF consumption is wide-ranging and extends beyond nutrition loss. Industrial processes used in the production of such food, like fractioning whole foods, chemical modification, extrusion and the addition of industrial-use-only ingredients, alter food structures in ways that negatively affect metabolism, immunity and long-term health.

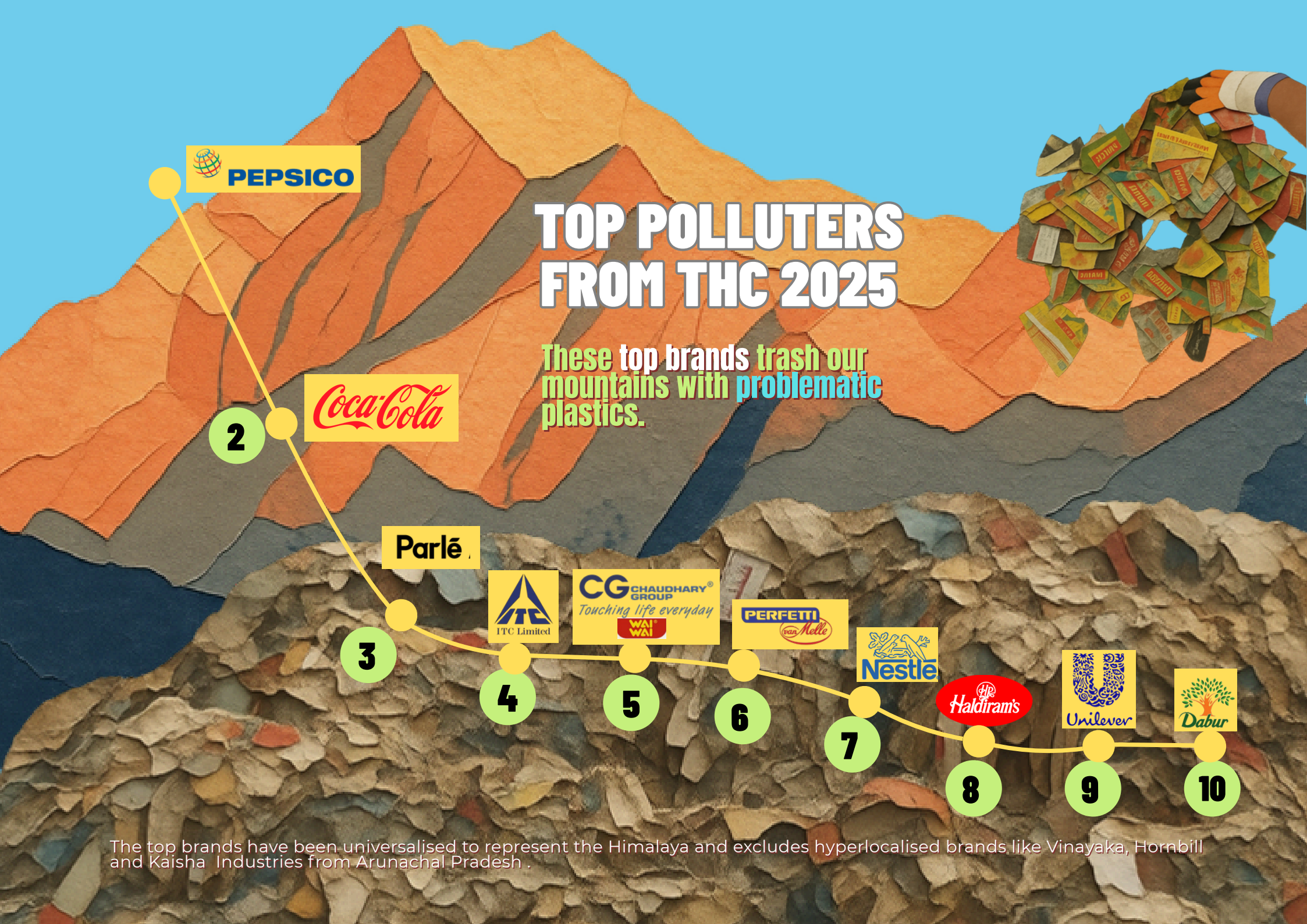
These foods lead to a higher risk of obesity, Type-2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, depression and premature death, the study found. The executive summary of the series warns that “This rise in ultra-processed foods is driven by powerful global corporations who employ sophisticated political tactics to protect and maximise profits. Education and relying on behaviour change by individuals is insufficient.”

Legally defining UPFs and High in Fat, Salt, and Sugar (HFSS) foods, banning UPF advertisements during peak viewing hours, warning labels on the front of the packaging and restricting sale of UPFs in schools are some of the suggestions made in the study. “UPF are advertised addictions. A ban on their advertising and sponsorship is needed,” Prof Srinath Reddy, Chancellor of PHFI University of Public Health Sciences, told the Tribune, adding that India needs strong regulatory measures on production and marketing of such food.



“Deteriorating diets are an urgent public health threat that requires coordinated policies and advocacy to regulate and reduce ultra-processed foods and improve access to fresh and minimally processed foods.

WHO TRASHES OUR MOUNTAINS?



The top brands have been universalised to represent the Himalaya and excludes hyperlocalised brands like Vinayaka, Hombill and Kaisha Industries from Arunachal Pradesh .

THC - CALL TO ACTION

The Himalayan Cleanup, since 2018 has been calling out companies that are the top polluters of the mountains to take action and responsibility for their waste. The burden of cleaning up cannot be just the responsibility of consumers and waste managers alone. A narrative shift is required to redress the Himalayan waste crisis where the producers take commensurate responsibility for their waste.

THC calls for policies, incentives, investments that design plastic pollution out of the system. These actions are to be taken not just at the local but at the national and global levels which include the Global Plastic Treaty.

Extended Producer Responsibility, 2022 (EPR) under the Plastic Waste Management Rules brought about an important narrative shift - Producers have to take responsibility of their waste. While touted as a panacea, lack of appropriate resources and no specific targets allocated for the mountains, EPR implementation has not taken off in the IHR. What could have potentially provided resources for mountain regions to improve their waste management systems has remained largely ineffective. Specific contextual affirmative action for the Himalaya is extremely essential.

THC calls on the top polluters of the Himalaya to take forward the Extended Producer Responsibility with specific focus in the IHR. It is critical that mountain specific targets for EPR be delineated and enforced.

THC waste audit has consistently shown that most of the plastic trash collected comes from food packaging. These are single use plastics and also are non-recyclable. These ultra processed food known for their health impacts are pushed to children and communities through targeted advertisements.

THC calls for front of package labeling for consumer awareness and a stricter legislations against false claims being made by companies. There has to be a stop to targeted advertisements of UPF to children. To counter plastic pollution, THC advocates for a clear shift to refillables and reusables instead of single use packaging as well as the promotion of local food cultures.

For mountains, there are gaps that do not acknowledge the importance, fragility and challenges of the mountain socio-ecological systems. This is exemplified by the push for waste to energy and incineration in the mountains. Such technology would spell doom for the mountain’s ecology that is already been pressured by climate change.

THC calls for policies that limit false solutions in the mountains such as waste to energy and incinerators.

It calls for longer term vision that builds on decentralised solutions through community involvement. THC calls on the need to acknowledge the unique socio-ecology of the Himalaya and allocate appropriate resources.

THC PARTNERS AND DETAILS OF CLEANUP SITES

State	Lead Organization / Institution	Cleanup Site
Arunachal Pradesh	**AMYAA**	Eze River, Roing
	Youth Mission for Clean River	IG Park, Itanagar
Assam	**The Midway Journey**	ANAND ACADEMY GUWAHATI
		Barengbari LP School (Assamese Medium)
		Barengbari LP School (bodo medium) + bodo suba
		Bogapani elephant corridor
		Gandhi Mandap
		Manas Anchalik Jatiya Vidyalaya
		Manas National Park (Lachit ME School)
		Manas National Park (Seuj Jatiya Vidyalaya)
		Manas National Park (1st gate to 2nd gate)
		Manas National Park (Manas ME School)
		Namphake village
		Navagraha Temple
		Railway colony school , Bamunimaidan
		Roharpam, Barengbari village
		Teen Jhanda Temple
		Tipam Hills

Jammu and Kashmir	**Dept. Of Environment,sustainabillity and climate change iust Awantipora**	University Campus to Townhall, Tral
	Faculty of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry, SKUAST-K	Boys Hostel / Faculty Park
	GDC Rajpora	Rajpora Pulwama
	GDC Sopore, Boys	College Campus
	Government college for women	College Campus
	Govt. College for Women M.A. Road Sgr.	College Campus
	Govt. Degree College Kokernag, Kashmir Little Green World	Campus and parks of the College
	Indira Memorial Academy, Jassore	Jassore to Kalali Tibba
	Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry, SKUAST-K	Students canteen backside
Ladakh	**Bhartiya Vidya Niketan School**	Sindhu Ghat
	GMS Chazar Zanskar	School premises
	GMS Langmi Rejing	Techa khasar
	Government girls middle School, Disket	Disket market and mini stadium
	Government Higher Secondary school Disket, Nubra	School Campus and staff quarters area

	Government Higher secondary school Skrbuchan, kargil	School premises
	Government Higher Secondary school, Skirbuchan	School Campus
	Government Higher Secondary school, Turtuk	Turtuk village
	Government middle school Gardong Apati, Leh	Gardong apati
	Government middle school group Minjee, Kargil	School premises
	Government middle school lobar ,Kargil	Lobar Choskor
	Government middle school yokma, Tharumsa	School premises
	Government Primary School Baroo Thang	School premises
	Government Primary School Sharbatgond, Kargil	Sharbatgond yourbaltak
	Government Primary School Spangstoth Lalung, Leh	School premises
	Government Primary School Thango Apatea, Leh	School premises
	Government Primary School Ufti, Zanskar	School premises
	Government, Primary School Thango Apatea, Leh	School premises
	Govt Boys Middle School Akhchamal & Little Green World	Akhchamal
	Govt Girls Higher Secondary School Leh and Little Green World	Leh Market

	Govt Girls Middle School Baroo and Little Green world	Baroo
	Govt High School Gia Leh and Little Green World	Gia
	Govt High School Housing Colony Leh and Little Green World	School Premises of Govt High School
	Govt High School Parkachick Kargil and Little Green World	Choukjouk spang Parkachick
	Govt Higher Sec School Sumoor, Nubra and Little Green World	Sumoor
	Govt Higher Secondary School Bogdang Nubra	Bogdang market
	Govt Higher Secondary School, Temisgam Leh and little green world	school campus of Govt Higher Secondary School, Temisgam Leh
	Govt Middle School Broklungma Wakha Kargil and Little Green World	Zeebrok, Broklungma Wakha
	Govt Middle School Kargyak Zanskar	School premises
	Govt Middle School Munthang Chanigound and Little Green World	Mohallah Munthang and sourrounding
	Govt Middle School Rantaksha Zanskar	School premises
	Govt Middle School Shargole Kargil	Shargole
	Govt Middle School Tingdoo Kargil	School Area
	Govt PM Shri. Middle School Karith	School premises and local area
	Govt Primary School Groung Choskore, Kargil	Groung Choskore

	JK Northen Public School Kargil	Megawatt, Kurbathang Kargil
	Lamdon Model Seniour Secondary School Leh	Lamdon school
	Little Green World	Nakpothang
		Sindhu Ghat
	Little Green World - Govt Middle School Grongyul Hardass, Kargil	School premises
	Little Green World- Govt Middle School Kurbathang Kargil	School premises
	Little Green World- Govt Higher Sec School Nyoma, Changtnag	Near by School
	Little Green World- Govt Middle School Bagh E Khomani Kargil	School premises and adjacent village
	Little Green World- Govt Middle School Thang Hardass Kargil	Thang Hardass
	Little Green World- PM-Shri, Govt Middle School, Doks-Chutumail	Localities and Street O of Chutumail
	Little Green World- SaveChangthang	Sindhu darshan shey
	Little Green World-Govt Middle School Bhimbhat Drass	Bhimbhat Drass
	Local Future, Women Alliance and Magic Bus and Little Green World	Chubi
	Mahabodhi Residential school choglamsar, Leh	Ghanglas Ice Climbing

	Govt Primary School Laroo Kargil	School premises
	Govt Primary School Shagran Yourbaltak	Shagran youlbaltak
	Govt, Middle School Goma Minji Kargil	Minji School
	Middle School Abran Zangskar, Kargil	School premises
	PM Shiri High School Tacha and Little Green World	Tacha Brog
	Zangla Nunnery, GHS Zangla, Ama Group and Little Green World	Zangla village and spring water area
Meghalaya	**Martin Luther Christian Unirversity**	Nongrah & Lapalang
Mizoram	**Waste Solutions Mizoram**	Baganpara Helipad, Kamalanagar, CADC
Nagaland	**Living For Environment (LiFE)**	Railway Station
West Bengal Darjeeling / Kalimpong	**BAL SURAKSHA ABHIYAN TRUST**	INDUSTRIAL PARK, KALIMPONG
	Camellia School	Dr. Zakhir Hussain Road
		Tumling, Near Maneybhanjang

West Bengal Darjeeling / Kalimpong	**GYANODAY NIKETAN**	RAJBARI AND SHYAM COTTAGE DARJEELING
	Kamlesh Rai, Coordinator, Green Campus Campaign	Mahakal Mandir
	Loreto Convent Darjeeling	Darjeeling Town area
	TRINITY YUWA JHUND (TYJ)	Gol Tar Tourist Spot, Simana Bazar, Sukhia Pokhri
	DLR Prerna	Brindavan Boarding School
		BSA, Kolbong Murmidang
		Little Angel School
		Magnolia Nursery school, Latpanchor
		Oxford English School
		KN Memorial Academy, Shelpu
		Mahanadi Gaon Samaj
		63 Line Gaon Samaj
		Cambridge Academy

SIKKIM	**Swachha Bharat Mission (**	Sadam to Namchi Road
	Rural Development Dept	Office surroundings
	02 Lingchom Tingda GPU	Road side & office surrounding
	02-Lingmoo Paiyong GPU	SUNTALAY KHOLSA
	03 PHENSONG GPU	TINGSHIM GUMPA & TINGSHIM THUDEY
	04- Men Rongong GPU	Tashi View Point & Chawang Ward
	06 NAVEY SHOTAK GPU	TASHI VIEW POINT
	07-LINGDOK NAMPONG GPU	School institutions
	19 sardong Lungzik GPU	dentam pelling road, sardong lungzik
	20-Bongten Sapong, GPU	Changay water falls
	22-Kyongnosla GPU	Village site
	24 Sukrabarey Suntaley GPU	Village site
	25-Mangmoo Dentam GPU	Lower Mangmoo to Dentam Bazar
	33-Yangsum GPU	School to smriti van
	Beng Phegyong GPU	Kagyud Gumpa
	BAC, Regu	REGU BLOCK ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER
	Sangkhu GPU	Sangkhu village

Sikkim	**Namli GPU**	Mela Bhir Khimsithang
	KABI RONGPA GPU	Village side
	Sumin Lingzey GPU	Sacred Site Middle Sumin Gumpa
	Urban Local Bodies	
	Jorethang Nagar Panchayat	Green Park, Car Parking Plaza & Bus
	Mangan Nagar Panchayat	Pentok and Power Colony
	Namchi Municipal Council	Samdruptse, Rock Garden (Ward no. 07)
	Nayabazar-Jorethang ULB	Green park, Car parking Plaza and Bus
	RANGPO NAGAR PANCHAYAT	RIVER SIDE IBM WARD NO 02
	Institutions / Organisations	
	SIR TASHI NAMGYAL SEN SEC SCHOOL. GANGTOK	OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL PREMISES
	Zero Waste Duga	Duga Ward - Central Pendam GPU
	Kanchendzonga Conservation Committee	Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya
	Khanchendzonga conversation committee	Legship Market
	Zero Waste Himalaya + Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College + Guru Ku Bum Monastery + Deorali Girls School	Chorten, Deorali + Taxi stand

ARUNACHAL

Organising team

AMYAA NGO, a grassroots organization working for the holistic development of tribal communities with a focus on children, youth, women, and farmers. In May 2025, AMYAA led the organizing efforts for The Himalayan Clean-Up 2025, in Roing mobilizing a diverse team and community network.

Team AMYAA included project leads from the Mobius Young Professionals, Wipro Earthian Project, and LIC HFL CSR Sangam Project, along with youth leaders, school students, and volunteers. **North East Waste Collective** and **Youth Mission for Clean River** also led THC 2025 in other parts of Arunachal.

Partner organisation

The campaign was supported by Ai Green Foundation, DUDA, SHGs, ITBP jawans, and local community members. Together, they undertook clean-up drives, awareness campaigns and waste audits to promote environmental responsibility and sustainability in the Himalayan region.

Clean up sites selected

The Eze River, a prominent tributary of the Dibang River, flows through Roing town in Lower Dibang Valley district. It is a crucial lifeline for surrounding communities, supporting daily water needs, agriculture, and local biodiversity. The river also holds cultural and ecological significance for the tribal population of the region. Two main locations were selected for the clean-up: the riverbanks near Eze Bridge and the DUDA View Point, a popular public spot overlooking the river. These areas had become littered with plastic waste, wrappers, and non-biodegradable materials due to regular public gatherings and urban runoff. The clean-up aimed not only to restore the natural beauty of these locations but also to raise public awareness on responsible waste disposal and the importance of protecting water bodies.

Impact expected

The impact of this year's cleanup is expected to be both immediate and long-term:

- Improved cleanliness and visual appeal of the Eze River banks
- Removal of accumulated plastic and non-biodegradable waste
- Heightened public awareness and behavior change among visitors and vendors
- Stronger multi-stakeholder collaboration on local waste management
- Youth-led action continuing beyond the event through local environmental clubs and initiatives
- AMYAA envisions that these efforts will not only restore the ecological integrity of the site but also build a sustainable model for community-led river and town cleanliness in the region.

Main findings and insights

Single Use Plastic, Beverage waste and Food packaging material were found in high numbers.

A notable amount of branded plastic packaging from non-local and national-level FMCG companies was found. This suggests that even remote areas like Roing, are flooded with high-volume, non-biodegradable, single-use packaging, which lacks take-back or waste responsibility mechanisms.

Some thermocol (polystyrene) plates and cups was found—despite being banned indicating either a lack of enforcement or low awareness among shopkeepers and vendors.

There was minimal presence of glass bottles, tins, or e-waste**,** indicating that the area's pollution is overwhelmingly dominated by plastic - both in volume and variety.

Key challenges

Lack of civic responsibility is leading to visible environmental degradation and the Eze River shows alarming signs of pollution - Floating plastic waste, Foul odours, Overflowing dustbins, and unmanaged waste collection systems.

These issues are severely impacting aquatic life, riverbank biodiversity, the aesthetic and recreational value of the area. The situation is particularly bad around DUDA View Point, where heaps of plastic, bottles, and non-biodegradable waste have accumulated due to careless visitor behavior and insufficient infrastructure.

Without immediate intervention - such as strengthening waste management systems, raising awareness, installing and maintaining dustbins and promoting responsible tourism - the ecological integrity and tourist appeal of the Eze River are at serious risk.

Volunteer insights

"THC is not just about picking up waste—it's about holding up a mirror to our daily choices. What we throw is a reflection of what we consume." – AMYAA Project Coordinator

"As a force posted in the Himalaya, we believe it's our duty to protect both the borders and the environment. Participating in THC was our way of giving back to the land we serve."
ITBP Officer, Roing Unit

"It was eye-opening to see how much plastic we collected in just a few hours. I'll think twice before buying anything in single-use packaging again." – Student Volunteer

"This event helped us realize that real change comes when the entire community gets involved, not just a few individuals." – Mobius Young Professional Fellow

"We need to move from cleaning up once a year to living responsibly every day. That's what THC taught us." – Youth Volunteer Leader

Way forward

AMYAA NGO plans to scale up its efforts through more structured and sustained interventions through campaigns with Educational Institutions, Local Community Organizers and SHGs. Recognizing that THC is more than just a clean-up event, the organization is committed to conveying that THC is a reflection of our collective consumption patterns and civic behaviour - a wake-up call to shift from one-time clean-ups to long-term environmental responsibility.

NAGALAND

Organising team

Living For Environment (LiFE), is a data-driven organization dedicated to mitigating environmental degradation through research and multi-stakeholder initiatives. LiFE had been part of the first THC in 2018 spearheading the cleanup in Dimapur in collaboration with the Dimapur Municipal Council.

Partner organisation

YouthNet – an NGO focused on empowering youth in North East India, E-Circle – a business entity for tackling e-waste. Green Guard - a business entity for addressing waste management, Kuda Waste Solutions - a waste management business entity and Tamlu Town Council

Clean up sites selected

Dimapur Railway Station and State Stadium at Dimapur. Both of which are high footfall areas with the former being one of the State's most significant gateway; and the latter, one of the largest public spaces. These are frequented by the public, resulting in unbridled littering and open dumping.

Market Complex, OPIOD SUBSTANCE THERAPY, Nyeichong Ward and Panglem Ward at Tamlu.
Tamlu, like all the ULBs of Nagaland, struggles with the modern waste generation and lack of knowledge and face a lot of problems, in addition to public ignorance.

Key challenges

In all the sites, the main challenge was the indiscriminate plastic waste disposal, especially SUP and MLP, resulting from lack of monitoring and routine waste collection.

Finance was the major challenge for organising the cleanup. In Nagaland, though it might be the same everywhere, free volunteering is difficult to find and also, bringing institutions on board require revisits.

With lack of support from the government and community, follow-up could not be done. Though the areas were visited again, it was just to assess the situation.

At the start of the THC, the response was overwhelming but as the audit began, the volunteers, including some of the partners, started to purchase snacks or gutka.

Main findings and insights

High numbers of smoking materials were found to be littered.
Increase in footwear and cloth waste, indicative of the rising fast fashion.

Volunteer insights

- All the volunteers were shocked and dismayed by the amount of plastic waste collected.
- The audit was an eye-opener to all and though most gave up midway as they found it too taxing.


THE
HIMALAYAN
CLEANUP
2025

MEGHALAYA

Organising team

Department of Environment and Traditional Ecosystems, Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong. Established in 2005 in Shillong, as the first Christian university in India with a non-theological focus. They have a strong emphasis on community development, the university integrates education with real-world engagement in areas such as public health, environment, gender studies, and indigenous knowledge systems.

Clean up sites selected

Nongrah and **Lapalang** villages, semi-rural localities situated in East Khasi Hills district are microcosms of how peri-urban indigenous communities manage increasing environmental pressures. Traditionally, these Khasi localities maintained sustainable lifestyles with low levels of waste production, relying heavily on organic materials, community land use, and shared resource management. With rising population and growing consumerism there has been a visible shift in waste patterns—from biodegradable waste to increased generation of plastic, electronic and packaged household waste. Challenges of waste segregation, informal dumping, clogged drainage and waste burning pose both environmental and public health risks.

Studying waste generation in Lapalang and Nongrah thus offers critical insights into how indigenous settlements at the urban fringe respond to environmental degradation and how traditional knowledge, modern practices and civic engagement can intersect to address the growing waste crisis.

Key challenges

Conducting a cleaning drive in Lapalang and Nongrah presents several challenges that can hinder its effectiveness and sustainability. Community participation can also be inconsistent, with some residents showing reluctance or viewing waste management as someone else's responsibility.

Most households do not practice waste segregation, making cleanup efforts more difficult and less impactful.

Limited awareness about the environmental and health consequences of improper waste disposal further reduces the drive's long-term effectiveness. Logistical difficulties, such as organizing volunteers and sourcing necessary tools, add to the complexity.

Main findings and insights

The site revealed a significant accumulation of plastic waste, with a predominant presence of multi-layered plastics (MLPs), commonly used in food packaging and consumer goods.

Brands like Parle Agro, Hindustan Unilever, Pepsico appeared dominantly.

Volunteer insights

- Visible Impact – Volunteers experienced the satisfaction of making an immediate, visible difference in the cleanliness of streets and public areas.
- Lack of Tools & Gear – Many volunteers noted a shortage of gloves, masks, tongs, and garbage bags, which affected safety and efficiency.
- Health & Sanitation Concerns – Exposure to mixed waste, including hazardous materials, emphasized the health risks tied to poor waste management.
- Need for Awareness – Volunteers realized that one-time efforts are not enough; educating residents on daily waste practices is critical.
- Logistical Challenges – Organizing transport, disposal, tools, and volunteer coordination was time-consuming and revealed the need for better pre-planning.
- No Waste Segregation – The absence of household-level segregation made waste collection less efficient and more labor-intensive.
- Need for Post-Drive Strategy – The drive underscored the importance of follow-up initiatives like awareness workshops, composting programs and regular clean-up schedules.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Organising team

The 2025 edition of the THC (The Himalayan Cleanup) witnessed active participation from higher educational institutions across Jammu & Kashmir, reflecting an increasing institutional commitment toward plastic waste governance, environmental stewardship and behavioural change among youth.

Participating institutions included Department of Environment and Sustainability and Climate Change(IUST, Awantipora), Faculty of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry (SKUAST-K), Government Degree College (Rajpora), Government Degree College (Sopore), Government College for Women (MA Road, Srinagar), Government College for Women, Government Degree College (Kokernag), Indira Memorial Academy (Jassore), Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry, SKUAST-K, spread across 10 sites.

Clean up sites selected

The cleanup sites represented diverse ecological and environmental interfaces, spread across 10 sites:

- Campus peripheries and drainage systems
- Roadside drains and parking spaces
- Garden patches and institutional blind spots
- Water channels (notably Watrad Nallah)
- Rural-urban transition zones

The selected sites were socio-ecologically sensitive due to their connectivity with irrigation systems, urban drainage networks, agricultural landscapes and areas of animal movement, increasing the risk of plastic leakage into terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

Key challenges

Waste accumulation in drainage channels and water bodies indicates high plastic leakage in the downstream. Open dumping and open burning continue as prevalent disposal practices, particularly in peri-urban and transitional settlements.

Most campuses lacked:

- Source segregation systems
- Dedicated dry waste bins
- Composting infrastructure
- Waste signage

The co-disposal of biomedical waste with municipal and plastic waste represents a significant environmental health risk.

Main findings and insights

The site showed severe pollution mixing household, medical, and FMCG waste—highlighting a public health and environmental hazard. Across all sites, the waste profile showed a clear dominance of:

- Multilayer Plastic (MLP) packaging
- Flexible packaging (LDPE-based wrappers)
- PET bottles
- HDPE and PP containers
- Personal care product packaging


GPS Map
Camera Lite


GPS Map C

DARJEELING

Organising team

DLR Prerna, a Darjeeling-based experiential, innovative, lab-to-land organisation (non-profit, non-governmental) that has been partnering with marginal communities of Darjeeling and Sikkim since 1996. DLR Prerna is a core team member of the Zero Waste Himalaya platform and have facilitated The Himalayan Cleanup since 2018

Ms Kamlesh Rai, Coordinator, Green Campus Campaign, facilitated numerous volunteers, organisations and sites in Darjeeling that included Blend of Hope, Save Earth for Life, Hayden Hall, Nepali Girls' High School, AIWC, Mahakal Mandir Committee, DLR Prerna CHHIP Communities, Gyanoday Niketan, Camellia School Assembly of God School, Darjeeling and Zero Waste Himalaya.

Cleanups in Darjeeling were also led by Anugyalaya, Trinity Yuwa Jhund and various educational institutions in other sites.

Clean up sites selected

Mahakal Temple, the most sacred site, located at the top of Darjeeling town, is also a vital "natural water tower". The ancient trees and forest on the sacred hill's slopes help to soak in mist and rainwater replenishing underground water sources and springs that are crucial for supplying water to the town. Waste generated from the mandir comprises mainly offerings of the Shola Shringar (a set of sixteen embellishments that today plastic) and synthetic scarf offerings.

Rural communities of Darjeeling-Maneydara, Marybong, Mahanadi, Kolbong, Latpanchar, Gopaldara across 4 blocks of Darjeeling-Pulbazar, Kurseong CD, Rungli-Rangliot, Sukhia Pokhari-Jorbunglow. Surroundings and premises of various schools.

Key challenges

- Packaged foods commonly sold near schools and most of the schools do not have proper systems for waste segregation hence separating the bio-degradable waste and non-biodegradeable waste was a challenge.
- Mandir committee throwing their own mountain of unsegregated waste bags. Offerings that come in plastic.
- Since the site is pretty big tourist and along with local residents visiting the place throw away plastic bottles, chips packets, food packaging where ever they like and collecting it is a problem.
- No proper waste management system in place especially for religious offerings.

Main findings and insights

Even though cleanup drives are conducted in different parts of Darjeeling every year, a persistent trend that can be observed is that the top polluters have remained the same throughout the years in all the audits, with single-use plastic bottles being a major contributor.

Plastic waste is not just an urban issue as local brands are widely available in rural shops near the schools indicating rural areas are equally affected by plastic waste.

Producer responsibility is a major factor which needs to be highlighted as a significant share of waste comes from large corporations whose products reaches even the remotest schools and villages.


Grandey


THE BAND OF HOPE
MULTILAYER
PLASTICS

SIKKIM

Organising teams

Swachha Bharat Mission (Grameen) was one of the key organisers of THC 2025 through whom various Gram Panchayat Units organised the cleanup.

Urban Local Bodies of the state also took the campaign forward through the SBM - Urban in their own areas.

Khangchendzonga Conservation Committee with Young Climate Leaders in collaboration with various Educational Institutions led cleanups in West Sikkim.

Zero Waste Duga organised a cleanup with the Block Administration in Duga.

Zero Waste Himalaya team in collaboration with Forest Department, Govt of Sikkim undertook clean up in Gangtok with NBB Degree College and Deorali Girls School. Sir Tashi Namgyal Sen Sec School oganised the other cleanup in Gangtok.

Clean up sites selected

Across the state, multiple sites were cleaned up and the waste audited. Some of the key sites are Khangchendzonga Waterfalls in Yuksam, and Legship town surroundings. Tashi View Point and Chorten Monastery and Deorali Taxi Stand in Gangtok SIngtam, Rangpo Bazaar, and Duga.

Some of these sites were tourist sites, while others were important market spaces and school surroundings.

Key challenges

- Absence of proper waste management systems in places .
- Littering of plastic waste was a key observation made across all cleanup sites.
- Most of the cleanups conducted in SIkkim ended up being just cleanup exercises and the waste and brand audit were not given proper focus.
- During cleanups, volunteers are more interested in picking up the trash and the task of conducting the waste and brand audit gets lower priority.

Main findings and insights

- Culverts, isolated spaces, dark alleys, etc. were hotspots for waste dumping even if the visible areas seemed clean. Car parking areas in the taxi stand needed special attention for future waste management through engagement of taxi drivers association.
- Increasing number of new beverage and juice brands as well as energy drinks.
- In most places, food packaging was in highest numbers with fewer personal care and household waste.
- Flavoured water bottles of 1 liter were also found among the littered waste.

“This campaign was not only about cleaning places but also about cleansing our mindset, replacing apathy with awareness and responsibility.”
Young Climate Leaders (KCC)

‘The waste and brand audit were highly insightful which provided a glimpse into our consumption habits and pushed us into reflecting on our lifestyles.”
Zero Waste Duga


THE HIMALAYAN CLEAN UP 2025
ECO CLUB
Zero Waste HIMALAYA
GOVT. SECONDARY SCHOOL MELLI-ACHING


THE HIMALAYAN CLEAN-UP
Our Mountains Deserve Better
Zero Waste
INTEGRATED MOUNTAIN

LADAKH

Organising teams

Navikru Eco Foundation and **Little Green World** are environmental education and zero-waste action organizations working with schools and communities in Ladakh to build awareness, strengthen participation, and turn waste data into practical climate action, who have been leading THC in Ladakh for the past many years.

For The Himalayan Cleanup 2025, they collaborated with the Education Department of Ladakh and helped train more than 250 teachers, mobilize more than 2,000 volunteers, and audit 22,000+ waste items.

Clean up sites selected

The site brief was focused on school campuses and nearby public spaces, where the team carried out waste collection, segregation, and brand audits rather than a simple cleanup, consistent with THC's official process of collect–segregate–audit–record.

Key challenges

The main challenge was the volume and composition of waste: the audit data is dominated by single-use packaging, especially food wrappers and beverage containers, with many items falling into non-recyclable categories, which shows how strongly daily consumption habits are shaping litter in mountain regions.

Main findings and insights

- The THC 2025 audit in Ladakh revealed that a handful of major brands dominate the plastic waste landscape. PepsiCo (15.84%), Perfetti Van Melle (9.88%), Coca-Cola (8.53%), and Nestlé (8.45%) together contributed more than 40% of the branded plastic waste found across sites.
- These were mostly snack packets, beverage bottles, and candy wrappers—items linked to tourism and everyday convenience consumption.
- Local and national brands such as GCMMF, Dabur, ITC, Parle Agro, Mondelez, and Haldiram's also featured prominently, showing the widespread reach of single-use packaging. The remaining 41.5% came from a mix of smaller, unidentifiable, or local brands.
- Alarmingly, banned products like Cool Lip (tobacco) pouches were also found, revealing regulatory gaps and weak enforcement. The findings highlight the urgent need for region-specific plastic policies, stronger monitoring, and producer responsibility to prevent Ladakh from becoming a dumping ground for cheap, non-recyclable plastics.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Himalayan Cleanup 2025 is extremely grateful to the countless individuals, organisations, institutions and departments whose stewardship ensures the campaign and movement to raise the voice against plastic pollution in the himalaya.

Thank you for your passion and commitment to do the cleanup and taking the lead; sticking with the crticial audit processes and believing in the power of solidarity and volunteerism among mountain peoples.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the many educational institutions, the dedicated teachers who lead the students and spread the learning beyond THC into their everyday lives. This special love is a blessing and gives hope to all.

For THC 2025, we are grateful to Sikkim's Education Department, Rural Development Department and Urban Development Department who officially took on THC, bringing in participation from all corners of the state. The IMI State Chapters have been supportive of the campaign throughout and taken the lead in many sites.

We are indebted to the many ULBs and PRIs who partnered with us in THC2025 as well as enabled the disposal of waste that have have no solutions. Thank You, the many informal waste pickers and aggregators who have enabled the recyclables to be connected to the treatment chain.

#BreakFreeFromPlastic and GAIA have been our allies and partners at the National, South Asia and Global levels, from whom we draw much energy, knowledge and solidarity. Thank You.

THC acknowledges all the individual stewards of the mountains who rise up to the call every year to show their love for the mountains. It is your motivation, interest and enthusiasm that keeps THC moving forward each year. Thank You

Let's keep raising our voices and lets commit to take action against plastic pollution.

TEAM THC, 2025


THE
HIMALAYAN
CLEANUP
2025
May 25 - June 5
OUR MOUNTAINS DESERVE BETTER