

EXERCISE  
1.1B

# Bye Bye Plastic Bags Case Study

## FAQ for Interviewers

We have been grateful for all those who have interviewed us in the past and continue to inquire about doing so. We have now created an FAQ given most commonly asked questions from past interviews. Please feel free to use the answers below to better understand our journey and reflections.

### What inspired you to start BBPB?

We had a lesson in class about impactful world leaders and change-makers, such as Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Lady Diana, and others. We were 10 and 12 at the time. We went home that day thinking about what we can do living on the island of Bali as kids, that will make a difference? What can we do right now? We didn't want to wait until we were older to stand up for what we believe in, so we didn't. We started to brainstorm all the issues Bali was facing and we chose garbage because that is what most impacted our daily lives. As we would play in the rice fields or walk on the beach, we saw plastic bags clogging the gutters and piling up in the rivers, by the side of the road and in the rivers. We saw this as a realistic problem we could tackle.

Growing up on the island surrounded by ocean, we see the negative impact plastic has. There's no escaping it here. The plastic problem is SO in your face, and we thought "who's going to do something about it?" But that's just it, you often forget that YOU are that ONE person it takes to start the change.

Also, we learned that so many other countries around the world had already placed a ban or tax on plastic bags so we thought - Bali can too!

We didn't start with any clear plan. We didn't know how we were going to ban the bags, but we just knew that we wanted to and had the passion to keep going and try to figure it out along the way. And that's what we have done for nearly 5 years - we just keep going and never give up.

### When did you start your project to ban plastic bags?

In 2013. Melati was 12 years old and Isabel was 10 years old. We launched the idea of Bye Bye Plastic Bags at the GIN (Global Initiative Network) Youth Conference in Bali.

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### **Why did you choose plastic bags and not plastic bottles or straws for example?**

Plastic bags were something we saw given away every day and they are not necessary. We always bring a reusable bag with us so why can't others too? Plastic bags have already been banned in other countries around the world so we knew it was possible. Plastic bags are also something that the consumer has control over saying NO to. They can refuse a bag. It seemed like a good place to start.

### **What is your vision?**

We both share the same vision for our home. We hope that Bali will connect with its roots, we hope the people living and coming here will stay in harmony with the natural world. Bali is a magical island, so many wonderful things can and will happen here. We believe in a Bali that is free of plastic pollution. We also envision a world where more youth are taking action and standing up for what they believe in.

### **What has the journey been like?**

Wow! Filled with many highs and many challenges along the way. I don't think any of us realized it would be this hard to ban plastic bags or that we would be working to do so for so long. But it's definitely all worth it. We have learned so much over the years of campaigning and met so many amazing people in the world who want to help us, teach us, and be a part of BBPB.

Check out our [Timeline of Significant Events](#) to see the details of what has happened over the years and links to important docs we have obtained or presented to the government.

### **Do you ever feel overwhelmed and/or want to give up?**

Of course. We are human after all. ;-) I think that is part of the experience. The issue of plastic and trying to ban the bags can cause a lot of stress and can feel like an impossible mission some days, but we lean on our team, family, and friends to keep going through these days and make sure to always celebrate the successes along the way. We also try to have fun as much as possible. Having a team and working so closely with your family has been a big support through it all.

### **What has been the most important lesson you have learned?**

You can't do it alone. You need a team behind you. Team is what keep us going on the challenging days and they make it fun. Whether it's been our friends, family, or other local changemakers - we couldn't have gotten to where we are today alone. It took a team of volunteers at all ages, from all over the world, to make BBPB a reality.

**Why do you think it is so important to ban plastic bags?**

Bye Bye Plastic Bags is important to us and the world because we believe that the once our goal is reached it will have a big impact on:

- 1. **Economy:** lots of innovation for new businesses will start including the production of alternative bags.
- 2. **Global warming:** if plastic bags are no longer littered or burned, it will positively affect global warming.
- 3. Animals living in the sea will stop dying because of less trash in the ocean.

**What is the biggest challenge you face?**

One of the biggest challenges is learning to work with government. It's been a challenge to understand the complexities within government systems. We don't want to be dragged into political issues, but it's part of the process. We have had to learn to be patient and things take time. We call it dancing with the politicians. Sometimes it feels like one step forward and then two steps back. It takes time and work to create relationships that will result in long term commitment from all levels of society: team, local authorities, national government, partners, etc.

Also keeping our team engaged and motivated has been a challenge. Trying to ban plastic bags is a big job and being teenagers and students still at school - we have a lot of things going on. Bali is also a transit environment so people are coming and going all the time. Having said that, it is great to work in a group that is continuously getting fresh and new input, ideas, to keep our campaign going too.

**What types of activities are you involved in?**

**1. Spreading Awareness and Education**

We believe very strongly that education is the key to change. A big part of our campaigning is spreading awareness about the plastic issue because if people are not aware of the problem - how can we expect them to do something about it? We spread awareness through school and community presentations, workshops, setting up booths at community events, various campaigns.

We have spoken to over 16,000 students in 12 different countries in 8 languages.

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### EDUCATIONAL BOOKLET

In 2014, BBPB completed version 1 of their educational booklet. This 25-page booklet was created for primary-aged students in Indonesia to learn about the harms of plastic. The book was printed in color, distributed among 30 schools across Indonesia, and shared freely in [PDF](#) form.

By the beginning of 2018, BBPB seeks to publish version 2 of this booklet with 50-pages of extended material and activities. Version 2 will include more about the importance of waste management, marine debris, with links to the UN development goals. The booklet will also use resources from local partners, such as Tasini and [Merah Putih Hijau](#), to help share solutions and educate the youth.

### 2. Creating Policy and Regulation with Government

It is important to work through issues from the bottom up, as well as down. BBPB works with the government to push for new regulation on plastic bags. Implementing a charge on plastic bags is the first step towards a total ban and changing mindsets.

Check out our [Timeline of Significant Events](#) to see the details of what has happened over the years and links to important docs we have obtained or presented to government. [INDONESIAN language version of timeline](#)

### 3. Showing Solutions

We believe in being part of the solution by showing how to be the solution. Below are some examples of how we are part of the solution.

### PILOT VILLAGE

In 2014, Pererenan Village in Bali became our pilot village where we worked to create an example of a plastic bag-free village. We took the time to meet with local government to get support to make this village our example. We then did many school presentations and met with community through various meetings. We got alternative bags donated, which we distributed every Saturday for years and still do at least once a month so the village does not have to give out plastic bags. The village is still not 100% plastic bag-free, but they have reduced the amount of plastic bags drastically.

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### ONE ISLAND ONE VOICE

This campaign started as a sticker campaign to highlight the shops, restaurants, and hotels that were plastic bag-free. Originally, we would award the organizations that were plastic bag-free with a sticker and then publish a picture with them and their name on our social media and through a monthly local magazine. This was a way to promote all those local eco champions who were already saying NO to plastic bags. One Island One Voice has grown into an alliance of all of those on the island who support our mission to ban plastic bags. In February 2017, organizations and individuals from all over Bali came together to participate in Bali's biggest beach clean-up. We mobilized 12,000 people over 55 different locations around Bali to clean-up 43 tons of trash in one day.

### MOUNTAIN MAMAS SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PROJECT: MAKING ALTERNATIVE BAGS IN THE MOUNTAINS

Desa Wanagiri Kauh lies at the base of Batu Karu in Bali and has always been a special place for Melati and Isabel. The Wijzens built a number of small houses there and enjoy spending time there with family and friends. In 2017, BBPB committed to starting a social enterprise project with the women from the village. The women will be making alternative bags using collected and donated cloth materials, such as old hotel sheets, clothes, etc. The bags will be sold in retail shops across Bali.

Bringing the circular economy to life, BBPB is excited to be part of the solution by reusing materials that may otherwise be wasted, creating job opportunities for women to support themselves, and producing a lifetime bag for consumers to use as an alternative. PLUS for every one bag sold, one bag will be donated to a local community member. In exchange for these bag donations, BBPB requests the support of waste management education, which BBPB will deliver through their education booklet. It's a win-win for all!

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### RIVER BOOMS

Melati and Isabel have partnered with the [Ocean Recovery Alliance](#) and the [Global Alert Project](#), to build river booms in several of Bali’s southern river mouths. River booms collect trash that would otherwise flow into the ocean or get stuck on the coastline. Data are then collected on what is flowing through the river mouths and uploaded to the Global Alert database, which is a phone app and desktop application to track trash hot spots. With photos and locations of the bigger areas, we can then use this to guide clean-ups, and talk to officials or other sponsors to help us prevent this from happening in the future. Here are two short videos: <http://bit.ly/GlobalAlert> and <http://bit.ly/GlobalAlertIntro1>

#### 4. Growing the Movement

BBPB has grown far beyond Bali now. In 2016, BBPB launched their first team outside of Bali and in 2018 we have nearly 20 teams outside of Bali with the same mission to ban plastic bags. We have created a [Starter Kit](#) to get teams started and understanding the plastic scene in their community and once they complete this, we send them the [official BBPB Handbook](#) with all of our learnings and expectations of each BBPB Team.

Melati and Isabel are also esteemed speakers at a variety of environmental events around the world - always standing for youth and giving this generation a voice at the table.

#### What is the most successful part of the Bye Bye Plastic Bags campaign?

We are a group of young changemakers. We have the energy and motivation to be the change we want to see. It’s up to us, our generation is here, and we are ready to have an active part in the decisions that are being made today. It’s our persistence, commitment, and pure passion and intention, not money-driven, no ego, that allowed us to get this far!

#### What changes have you seen happen in Bali?

The changes that we have seen happening is the crazy amount of growth in awareness with the visitors to the island, but especially the youth on Bali who start to understand that the plastic is a real threat to the future of the island. We see a change of mindset and approach towards garbage with the local authorities, they are starting to realize the value in waste. The amazing growth and change that BBPB itself has gone through from a small local initiative to a recognized and well-known NGO driven by youth, not just here in Bali but around the world.

**What are you most proud of?**

There are many things we are proud of, as a team we have been through a really wild ride of different experiences. But I think one of our highlights is being able to inspire other youths around the world. Being a voice and a message: proof that kids CAN do things. Sharing that yeah, it's tough sometimes and it's a lot of hard work...but it's worth it. Bye Bye Plastic Bags has really embodied the message of Youth Empowerment, and we love the idea that we have the ability to inspire and awaken the changemaker within some of the brightest young minds out there and set them on a journey of their own.

**How did you get in touch with the Governor?**

The short answer - we went on a hunger strike. The more detailed answer is... we were invited to India for our first international talk at INK Talk. Our parents took us to Mahatma Gandhi's house, now a museum. He is one of the significant people we were inspired by when we started BBPB. As our parents waited outside, we went through the house to learn about his story and how he got things accomplished. We learned how he always did things in a nonviolent manner through hunger strikes and peaceful marches. So when we returned from India, we decided that we wanted to go on hunger strike until the Governor agreed to meet us.

Some people thought this was quite extreme so we met with a nutritionist and came up with a good alternative. We would go on a hunger strike from sunrise to sunset. We started and by day two there was a lot of attention and media coverage on us and it was successful because we got a call from the Governor's office with the message that although the Governor was off island he would love to meet with us! On the third day, our parents picked us up and we went to the Governor's office. We met in a private room with him. He said he was very proud of his Indonesian girls and that we had his full support to reach the goal of making Bali free of plastic bags by the year 2018.

**How do you manage your time between school and Bye Bye Plastic Bags?**

We are really lucky to be students at the Green School, so our school time can be flexible as they believe with Bye Bye Plastic Bags we learn a lot with everything we do outside of school. Last year we only went to school 35 days because we were so busy with BBPB work and events. But this was okay because we set up individualized learning plans. We get to work with GS to make up credits based on the work we do outside of GS.

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It's still a lot to manage sometimes though. We still go to school and have homework for math or have to read books. We like that part of school that is actually not related to BBPB so we're doing something different. But usually I go to school and then come home to work on BBPB stuff like emails, social media, preparing for speeches, etc. It's a lot of work. But I love it.

**What is your message/advice for the youth?**

Find that one thing that you are passionate about, and go for it. Focus on a realistic target and have fun with it, don't let anyone tell you you're too young or you don't understand. It won't be easy, but it will be worth it! And remember... us kids may only be 25% of the world's population, but we are 100% of the future. GO FOR IT!

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**Where do you see yourself in 10 years?**

Melati- I want to continue standing up for the environment and being an activist. Youth empowerment is what I am most passionate about. Isabel- My passion lies in theater and performance and exploring the arts more.

*Source: This document was reprinted from the "Media Kit" on the Bye Bye Plastics website ([www.byebyeplasticbags.org/media](http://www.byebyeplasticbags.org/media)) in February 2022. Because it is a primary document, it has not been edited by PRB.*