



Value from waste: A designer makes furniture out of plastic packaging. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Upcycling plastics into furniture

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Interior designer Wilhelmina Garcia has spent years attempting to find solutions to the worsening problem of plastic waste.

Recent studies reveal that approximately 8 million tonnes of plastic are dumped into the world's oceans every year, destroying marine biodiversity and causing significant environmental and economic damage across the globe.

According to a report by the non-profit organisation Ocean Conservancy, the Philippines is among the top contributors of plastics dumped into the world's oceans.

Ms. Garcia established JunkNot Eco Creatives, a social enterprise that produces furniture, bags and other accessories out of discarded plastic packaging. She tapped a local community on the volcanic island of Taal, a popular tourist spot south of Manila, to produce plastic rope, which serves as the centerpiece of her designs.

In addition to offering an alternative to plastic waste, the programme also provides a livelihood to as many as 60 locals, many of whom are housewives with no other income.

In just a few years, the community came up with a collection system that reduced plastic waste in waterways. Some locals in the programme were able to use the extra income to buy solar panels to light their homes, since there is no electricity on the island.

Ms. Garcia's designs have been exhibited and received recognition in the Philippines and abroad. She hopes they will enter the mainstream market, so that her company can grow and help more communities deal with the plastic problem.

<http://junknot.ph/>