

Manila 'trash bin' waterway choked with plastic

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A thick layer of garbage lies atop a creek flowing between the makeshift homes of a Manila slum

The blanket of trash on a creek that flows between the makeshift homes of a Manila slum is so dense it appears one could walk across it like a paved street.

However, the thick and fetid mosaic of [plastic bottles](#), takeaway containers and [plastic bags](#) is just a porous layer atop the filthy water of Estero de Magdalena.

It is one of the tributaries that run into Manila's most important and heavily polluted waterways, the Pasig River.

City officials blame the slum's residents for using the creek as an open-air dump and have installed massive strainers in the water that keeps the trash from flowing downstream.

"They (residents) are turning the creeks into a trash can," said Lorenzo Alconera, an official with the city engineering department.

"We want to block it at that point so we can easily collect the garbage. We do not want it to flow into the Pasig River," he added.

Trash that makes it into the river can then be swept out into the South China Sea or be sucked back by tides into the Laguna de Bay, the country's largest lake.

Plastic pollution is a major problem in the Philippines, which along with China, Vietnam and Indonesia is frequently listed among the world's worst offenders.



City officials blame the residents of the Manila slum for using the creek as an open-air dump

The city says it periodically uses heavy equipment to scoop the rubbish from the water and ends up with five to 10 truck loads of waste to haul away.

That is of little consolation to the impoverished families who live in homes cobbled together from pallets, scraps of wood and corrugated steel stained with rust.

Authorities say the [trash](#)-choked creek is a breeding ground for preventable illnesses like cholera and typhoid fever.

Beyond concerns over the infections that thrive in the waterway, residents also have to deal with a constant and unavoidable concern: its stench.

"We cannot properly sleep because of the garbage. Whether it rains or is sunny, there are the smells," 35-year-old vendor Marlyn Estrada Calderon told AFP.



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