Pam Ferris-Olson ([00:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=SiVhc3HYAM78yl7lklyaZhRpg21aRFcM6yQx37u6_eivTxPZK5uC24TsEljdOixGrH0LAC2jlfr1ygm14tzMha72ZX4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3.58)):

Today on the Women Mind the Water Artivist series. I am speaking with Nina Azzarah who campaigns against the illegal export of plastic waste. She's spreading the word about its ecologically catastrophic consequences. The Women Mind the Water podcast series engages artists in conversation about their work and explores their connection with the ocean. Through their stories, Women Mind the Water hopes to inspire and encourage action to protect the ocean and her creatures. I'm very pleased to speak to Nina Azzarah to the Women Mind the Water Artivist series podcast. Nina is an Artivist who uses her persona and voice to call attention to the series issues in violating global plastic waste disposal. Born in 2007, Nina has developed a voice well beyond her years, she speaks about the illegal export of plastic waste from industrial countries to countries such as hers, that have lesser environmental controls.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([01:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=bD3nKTDSoLMQBmX3mTaIjDt9O6FKtP-ARz7cDoRV__AEXAslPZYVoN8s_anxos8sVv2D3aFNa6-xrJdbNp4kZOJDyzw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=64.78)):

In her native Indonesia, plastic waste is mixed with paper with such ecological consequences as a contamination of drinking water. Nina has stepped onto an international stage to tell her truths. She spoke in 2021 at the Plastic Health Summit in Amsterdam and COP26 in Glasgow. She also has been featured in the documentary Girls for the Future and their fight against the global climate crisis. Welcome Nina, you have been doing important work in calling attention to a global problem. I believe you are sharing truth about things many people are unaware. Is wonderful to meet a young woman who has the passion and poise to take on an enormous issue of social justice and environmental justice and climate change.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([01:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=OtWaSM9YkV86HAJt83Yi4y-ROQJejBbkMllVKOpWGGM7G39cPxthsOnaKQlRwFufptgj4fcZhVaFBK8oiBYzmYtQ1nA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=117.25)):

Nina, in a previous podcast, I spoke to Elle Wibisono, another woman from Indonesia. Elle is interested in deep water fisheries. So our conversation didn't focus on pollution. However, Elle did say that Marine pollution and debris is a very large problem in Indonesia. Elle and I didn't talk about the source of the waste. So I was shocked to learn that some of it is imported from other countries. At what point did waste become an issue for you?

Nina Azzarah ([02:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=LLcfPVKwZrZpGxJGnHIOvU9q6JCM0PHVHz7d3ERhzKu0VmgzoVRWfsGCxYyFpavh-bDrNRkruGt7g22vhd-om4EX9WE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=148.37)):

Since I was in kindergarten, I often joined my parents to boating along the river to inspect the industrial pollution and trash dumps on the riverbank, because both of my parents are environmental activists. And I started doing campaign on plastic waste importation in 2019. My parents brought me to a village that called, [inaudible 00:02:52], village that become a dump site for foreign plastic trash. And I found a lot of piles of plastic trash, and we can see in front of yard of the people's house in that village. And it makes it look so dirty and messy. When I look closely to the trash and most of it were plastic packaging from the USA, from the Europe, UK, Australia, and even Canada.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([03:23](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=U4dTH4rwa2Gr_M57mo_PRNT_oTb1Jb_93dDGv8bjm80N85a_UFnIWE_KIo8D-1JDT88HZZbI4ysL8OaMWpnBPBjCn3o&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=203.02)):

Do you have any idea how much plastic waste is actually generated in Indonesia versus what is imported?

Nina Azzarah ([03:30](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=hhnX5CKywnUBsCt6DXmI6x9poLKr1575H-gI2tsajmGSXCE5sGfN3w9LBPJYfemlUq71EVJPBczM12mDwUhP9zSI5vY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=210.47)):

So, the total imported plastic waste can be 10 to 15% of our domestic plastic waste generation. But the pollution impact of this important plastic waste are localized at industrial area, near the paper and plastic recycling industries that will destroy the local environment and harm the people's health with toxic chemicals like plasticizer and also dioxin.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([03:58](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=xuyxzPHa1xR9s852RapzgCTPf0LmLS19ABQgAJ2s8Nin9Sz2YrTUknv0K6sDc0SZ8Ik49K3pq3C1_fhkplv54gTpQwg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=238.33)):

All right. Can you visually tell the difference between the waste generated locally from that imported, besides reading the labels? Is it different kinds of trash?

Nina Azzarah ([04:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=yZKgTHWr0QQHX3FAgZ6dHw-Xv61Q1EJU3QZaCiNVijYj05xbMTfCnkgJioAFyV_2hgEdHpSk_fGjYMYBm6A644N5zts&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=249.76)):

Yes. It's clearly can be seen visually. So, the trash were mostly plastic packaging of food, waste, household products, personal care products that has brand, has company name and country where it produced. You're going to find this brand to be sell here in our market. And it also wrote clearly like, "Made in USA, made in Germany, made in Netherlands." So we can see it clearly. Yes.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([04:36](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=c_yni9HgF8KxAL6OLwDkn0OtvpW1gFymItO_Oq0pCHpPNXpSctq8NHZJFa7O9p31x7GfpNxWNeY346cvgAliaEwsLEo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=276.93)):

Okay. So how does the illegal waste get into your country? It seems that the volume of waste would be difficult to hide.

Nina Azzarah ([04:45](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=oTe9hOV6H-QPZvX0BNY_F3Wg3g8slzA2blbXPigxd4iKJLwBodv9jQwALIsex9zPsWiZcgoqms4oHPi87rQbQIAGuZo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=285.89)):

I heard that only about 10% of sample containers are being checked. In 2018 in when China stopped importing plastic scrap, the imports of paper bills in Indonesia in increase almost 50% and dominated by unexpected paper waste that contain high level of contaminants. So the campaign against plastic waste imports, in Indonesia, we have to push the government to strengthen plastic and paper waste imports inspection. And now Indonesia already send back some hundreds of containers of 30 plastic waste to Australia and USA. And so, I'm very happy that now Indonesia has strengthened the importation law and customs at the sea port and force strict, [inaudible 00:05:38]. And I was told that paper mills now only import cleaner paper bills and uncertain paper waste has been declined significantly.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([05:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=kAaPtRvXhjbkcelY6lLajy_lQEyHjj6Ks-j_5zGb_Yarp3-FKSJlkBuLAEls4f19YIEuVyENSrIC9bpWw4ez02SfV98&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=347.58)):

All right. So am I understanding you to say that they mix the plastic that they're importing into Indonesia with paper and that paper isn't looked at, so that's how the extra waste is sneaking in?

Nina Azzarah ([06:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=BXIvE9gh3LCbcN5pauOP1aJ_Gzscg1a3sxLaZMqZQCpRPclstx_pzS2geokeA8zi31due1206-lL3M4Y70Swvvg0OFo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=364.4)):

Yes. So we just buy the paper waste, but the exporter countries, they smuggle the plastic waste. We didn't buy the plastic waste. That's the, [inaudible 00:06:16].

Pam Ferris-Olson ([06:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=QFz8c-7A1xR-RTFuccLvi7K-8yu5tgDqtmvsY-VfWpIYcW8jLGCh85EmVCIJaBYHQD7IQe2548K3jXA1IYsJEjne1G4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=376.16)):

So, I guess countries like Australia and the US need to have is someone like you, who's calling attention into, we try and ship it out and it's coming back. I don't know what happens to it when it comes back. That's an important question, I guess, for Americans to ask, our government should check into. So, for people who don't know, how does the disposal of the plastic and paper waste lead to contamination of drinking water?

Nina Azzarah ([06:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=x-TbE2P2uO6T5MSBnZ5nMHawXQYOcROfpF86g5bcquvOZpXWvPeeS5t2HqzVG0i6RbutRTdlI9FUVVQtpgB0xXvBGB4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=409.94)):

So it come from microplastic. well plastic waste, basically plastic will break down into tiny pieces that called microplastic. It have same sense with planting. So it's very easy for us to breathe, to drink, to eat. And also microplastic in the wastewater of the paper and plastic recycling factories in the village. Well, the plastic scraps are also dumped on the river banks and plastic recycling home industry, chop and wash the plastic trash and discharge the, [inaudible 00:07:24], waste water in the river and killed a lot of fish in there. And in, [inaudible 00:07:30], village, they didn't use river as drinking water source anymore because it's already too dirty because of the plastic recycling factory. And microplastic like magnet, it will absorb pollution.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([07:48](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=eFex8Xkdj7FRZ5zrEhA7pPFKPGulMdNRjQqC-UknBHxfLE7SFPoiG2ehYUq-uIDzM8qbpUHBTHd97UcdZTu-q8DZq2g&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=468.46)):

So, did you ever think that someone more politically connected or better known than you would have more impact or that just doesn't stop you? Clearly, it doesn't stop you.

Nina Azzarah ([08:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=VHfavblZZUupZrx5kPJ88190bVuzjxu_aOF1bOqh9grOU4yWODmLq9WYq_C-f9jtSA0MLt3kI-thPAVSb0c3G-JNCHA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=480.22)):

So during the march in July, 2019, when I wrote letter, I got media attention like, [inaudible 00:08:10], and the message media publication connected me with the political leaders. And it's made me very happy and such as parliament member meet me and invite me to speak with other teenagers to fight against plastic pollution. It made me so happy. And then I was contacted by Germany, film documentary, filmmaker to profile my action in documentary Girls for the Future that brought me to meet the German's Ambassador in Jakarta. And I have to speak with many journalists. And then I was invited to speak at, [inaudible 00:08:46], that provide wider global connection, and give me more chance to speak up. And also last month I was invited to speak at G-7 preparation meeting in Germany. I hope my voice can reach more political leaders so they will stop this plastic colonialism and take responsibility to treat their own plastic waste and not dump it to the other countries.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([09:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ibMsaO1r8NpXGjfZnBX4FmJry_LNYH_y6UbC1Gb1zSBZS8LSE0KPOXDTXWgJb_XObUkj56t7J8UFB9GTfDPXIjrhGa8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=555.21)):

Clearly your voice has resonates with all kinds of people. What do you think makes a successful campaign?

Nina Azzarah ([09:24](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=6dy4Np7ElPPzf486Q95yHgOOdJElba_283VpzD_YT00zYBDU5GsGke6bLRJH-2ROBcNU4lN2Ku7H8GBAfSQrT_fc2zA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=564.3)):

Media publication and also documentary movie filmmaker, it helped me a lot. And I was also invited by international NGO network in Gaia and also, [inaudible 00:09:38], from plastic to join their campaign to refuse single use plastic, Plastic Free World. And I also use my own social media in Instagram to raise the issue of plastic pollution. So, I often ask the youth, the young people, so I educate them with my Instagram account. So I have to make something attract the young people.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([10:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=swXsdZmDztPIoaqZxG1C2tvVHDOwnRomZ9suGGBNcsLE_wU9AXsnrc5sXa_dG5cM6qfMRv9ueVSgG5IJkUayq4FlFLI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=605.82)):

I think that I can see what the answer to my question is, it's your passion. You clearly have a passion and that's infectious. I think that's wonderful. So have you had a chance to talk to other young women activists? I know it's really difficult to speak on difficult topics because a lot of people don't want to hear or they get angry. Would you think it would be helpful to have others to lean on and learn from?

Nina Azzarah ([10:35](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=2IcUirnjJL6Wg8A7tOf4ZLc_eFj1sucNzZ8MWK4YzP_ShZdMJxyoSIZ71dKiLFM1Co-BnfkcYovKPVdu7WVUcJ1tNOI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=635.38)):

Yeah. Well, I want to have more opportunity to talk with other young activists. Well, at COP26 I met with Francisco and also Louis, [inaudible 00:10:46], from Germany and I'm so happy that I can be connected and we keep in touch until now. And I hope we can still support each other in our campaign. So after I went to the Amsterdam in Plastic Health Summit and also at COP26, I have a lot of young activists, woman activists that we are campaigning at the same issue. We are together wanting to save our environment, we want to save our future. So it's motivate me a lot.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([11:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=YtvpRM8LQ0p_Kl7rRa0rgNmhRGNADvdd2M_G2r3IOyIQB-P2-eluTaMo1phO6rFBFIdeVeE7QlEh4xnS7-JKBm2mAE4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=676.97)):

So, what skills or tools do you want to develop to help with your campaigning?

Nina Azzarah ([11:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=UEpYEwuRXfxDlnCqXfiz3rOY1RQGAVfCrhm3TFNgdjgcFc0SILHsWMVvzUUPpc0YAocD_dazy-b5NYjF5b79j3L45eU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=682.72)):

I think communications and also writing and graphic design. So we have to make cute posters, making videos, making photos in Instagram and also photography, videography, anything also. So, I usually target the young people, so I have to following the trend.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([11:48](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=YZJduFqqUUxIDnm7nQCdPYel9YuupQtRMLqZASl_s8jUNEqORywfOTa9CPSkmakl6wq9AGBzw3BkrU8z1A0IDmoK3BE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=708.1)):

So, Nina you've spoken truth to some very powerful people and I'm interested in the responses. Did you get any particular response that you thought was really interesting?

Nina Azzarah ([12:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=_gSF4uVyrNaDfjsl4xlzBUj8YjUZ4C2IJf34STfaiapCtk2SL9ccXPtt2waq4DiRi9PNhUAeva6iiubmHhnXIMAa6Xc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=721.76)):

Well, for me, it's the German Ambassador. They promised to strengthen the port inspection in Germany and it makes me really happy. And also from Australia, they're developing a rule that they will not send in their waste to the other country.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([12:25](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=UFj1SJYoLd9KV9UPbVOtIWxWoyDFBfsNrLJWss05mLjDM7N36DMo78R91Wjn2LARrhG7XihhWptta9A7L9ffn2HvByI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=745.72)):

Do you think that the process is too slow? How do we speed it up or doesn't seem to be making a and it's stopping fairly quickly?

Nina Azzarah ([12:35](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=stZpjPKB_vDyBcsXoa_n8ZdvQ5LrMqbN61uiLLNWQm_ChUyq2WzqoPiTuLOqg24DT1c39tWmrJEPaQ5zEPD1WKjGtGE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=755.72)):

Kind of slow. Because maybe they're still focusing on something because I know that environment, it's not their prioritize number one. They still have a lot of problem in our countries, in their countries. So, that's okay. But we still have to keep asking to the government about the environment. Environment have to prioritize.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([13:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=M_LuVqojmuLrlIoLWGaF6ITkPdk3DFR1QVe36qIcX7ErEWoWCwxyr7jcP04AsF4x9U8oha2Vtfi76XtA4e59KlbSeWo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=781.21)):

What's next for you. Do you have a plan for the rest of the year?

Nina Azzarah ([13:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=bUTvL40Do_SzrRuvi3BRAADgiemWtdQ1RBqOvu6hWFH-eXccn13yXR-W_j7_UgJPexDRKjuSY-oC1hRmpbDOCVN2aMQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=787.1)):

Actually I'm making a program called Letter for the Future. [foreign language 00:13:16]. Letter for the Future. So we make a letter. Well, I just basically ask the young people from maybe Zoom webinar like this. So I teach them, I ask them to write a letter to the government, to the people they want to target. Well, actually we have a step-by-step first. So the first is three A, the first one called analysis. So we have to observe what pollution is happening right now in front of us. And then ambition. So have to target who are going to be our target, maybe government, young people and what do we want? What are we going to change? And then the last one action. So the action, I ask them to make a letter. So, I will teach them by Zoom webinar like this and then I will teach them how to make a letter. And then, just invite children in Indonesia to letter on plastic pollution and share our ideas to solve the plastic and climate crisis.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([14:26](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=X7WvaSAno2m-v1uT_w_8l1xQRuHHuIxJlH8tWcGc3pQbms97NSOuM2VauXxo2HSXXW9sQHsoTMswkxQtszLNSebzjdc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=866.81)):

That's very smart. You're building a community of young people who are going to speak out. Wonderful. So what I want to know is, do you ever have time to just be Nina? Can you clear your mind of the issues and just have some fun?

Nina Azzarah ([14:45](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=k7JYS_sDOpfLxTwlTm_NKGXDogTgj1cBXqY8N-fWkIxsd0QKylYMJ4YTCv9XL6D4DcoajNjrZzc_MhepKOSxOA3XS8g&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=885.91)):

Yes. Maybe to chat with my friends, making TikTok videos, biking, and swimming. But even though, if my parents, if they wasn't environmentalist, as in environmental activist, maybe I will still reading and just looking for the environmental information.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([15:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=SAzsg63Do6VZoDGjD3r-dqI85J-dKa-DzAEsa9Nu_LuFLHL0R13fyNvlNeX9KEzIUbbisU6ROOtzgHY3dmwyMMYJd-s&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=908.92)):

Finally, what would you like to say to our listeners? What can they do to stop their countries from shipping waste to another country?

Nina Azzarah ([15:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=HTKBgOk2qZzQWBR9MSoQWWUIfSeyP_n-IYcdTwNpMauv9BzEwbYaZDCp71a9WcV01hn0XubrpK88sN3XA9ftlzc6RsM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=917.05)):

Okay. So maybe first for the youth, for the young people here. So as youth, we are the heroes of this earth and we are the ones who going to live in this earth. So, if we keep letting the present generation, the government right now, keep exploiting our water, keep exploiting our earth oil sources and then keep polluting our water, our air, our soil, and keep building industries that will pollute the environment and keep destroying our river, sea and forest. This will make a very scary, very bad impact to us, that impact to the environment. So we are going to deal with those pollution.

Nina Azzarah ([16:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Wz9Jvgvkp_P4XZAxU6opph2U7B-n_UFnwGowj-jmnhm1RUH43_iTdowGY-duP3LCZvO8Iw5r7YcBMkFJzcgZdxySw34&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=968.68)):

That's why we have to save our earth and we have to take action right now. Let's start from ourself. And our future is in our hands. For the exporters country, I just wanted to say that you have to be responsible of your own waste. So you produce your waste, you have to recycle it by your own way in your own country. And doesn't pollute the developing countries. Because we, as a developing country, we already have a lot of environmental issue that we even can't solve it ourself and you add another burden to us. It really makes me sad. So I really wanted you to stop exporting your plastic waste to Indonesia and take back your trash from Indonesia.

Pam Ferris-Olson ([16:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=fubqfMNcT5oDA0_VoA2IiaYTO2wDO4NIkFWzoWXpzVkh2c9PPl0G6kqHRfJjn9xoNlwZDvBkeIHOTicDrhAW6PUSdeQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1012.83)):

Nina, it's been wonderful talking to you. I'm exhausted. You have so much energy and passion that none of us can keep up with you. You keep it up. As they say, "You go girl." I hope listeners have been inspired to hear a young woman talk about issues of environmental justice and the consequences of using plastic. I'd like to remind listeners that I have been speaking with Nina Azzarah for the Women Mind the Water podcast series. This series can be viewed on womenmindthewater.com. An audio version of this podcast is available on the Women Mind the Water website, on iTunes and other sites. Women Mind the Water is grateful to Jane Rice for the use of her song, Women of Water. All rights for the Women Mind the Water name and logo belong to Pam Ferris-Olson. This is Pam Ferris-Olson.