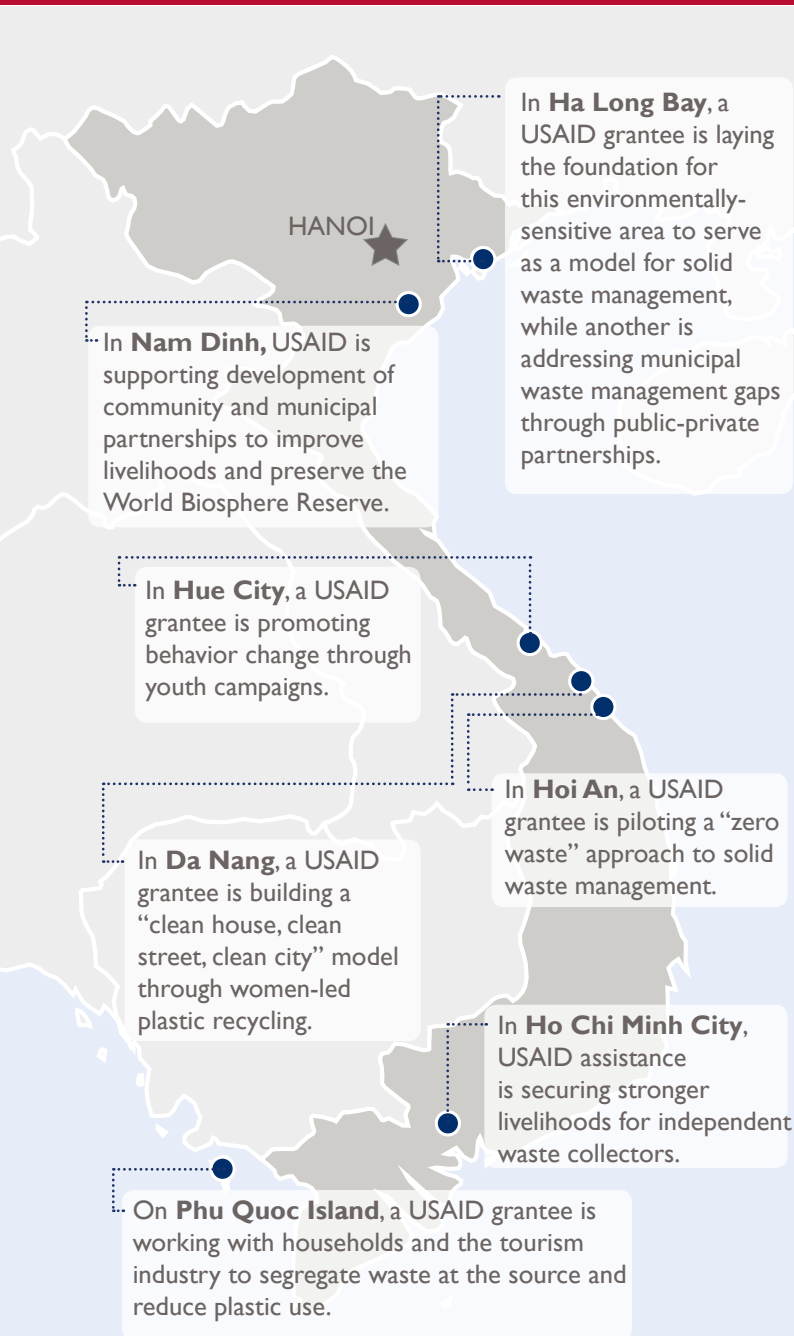




PARTNERING WITH CITIES TO REDUCE OCEAN PLASTICS

THE MUNICIPAL WASTE RECYCLING PROGRAM | VIETNAM



THE CHALLENGE

The global crisis of ocean plastic pollution—each year eight million metric tons of plastic pour into the ocean—has local origins in poor waste management in cities of the developing world. Vietnam is the **world’s fourth largest plastic polluter**¹ to the marine environment, contributing approximately 730,000 metric tons annually.

In Vietnam, rapid urbanization and industrialization have led to economic growth; however, with this growth has come **10 to 16 percent annual increases** in urban waste generation. Municipalities’ ability to manage waste has lagged, leading to negative consequences: uncollected waste is frequently disposed of in rivers and seas, polluting marine resources and endangering community health. These challenges threaten Vietnam’s economic development, tourism industry, and cultural heritage, and exacerbate the global crisis of ocean plastic pollution.

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT APPROACH

The 2018 Save our Seas Act encourages U.S. agencies to work with countries like Vietnam that discharge the largest amounts of solid waste into our oceans. Stopping pollution at the source is the most effective way to address this challenge, while also reducing the impact of plastic waste pollution on national and global economies.

A five-year (2016-2021) USAID-funded initiative, the Municipal Waste Recycling Program (MWRP), works in Vietnam, as well as Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Indonesia, to reduce and prevent land-based sources of ocean plastics pollution. The program provides grants and technical assistance to local organizations for improving solid waste management and increasing waste recycling.

1. Jambeck, J.R. et al. (2015). Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean. *Science* 347(6223), 768-771. doi: 10.1126/science.1260352

IMPACTS OF THE MUNICIPAL WASTE RECYCLING PROGRAM IN VIETNAM

With an investment of **\$1.5 million** funded through US assistance, **eight MWRP grantees** are undertaking innovative approaches to improving solid waste management in cities across Vietnam. These grants have directly benefited **over a million individuals** who receive improved solid waste management (SWM) services or who engage in improved SWM practices. These efforts are anticipated to create **cleaner, healthier communities** for millions of residents in areas where MWRP works, ultimately contributing to cleaner oceans worldwide.

While MWRP activities are ongoing through 2021, the program has already made impacts in:

- **Partnering with the Private Sector:** Across Da Nang, Ha Long Bay, and Phu Quoc, grantees are engaging with fisherfolk, market vendors, tourist services, hotels, and restaurants to increase recycling and incorporate sustainable waste reduction and management practices into their businesses. In Ho Chi Minh City, the program is improving the livelihoods, health and working conditions of **1,561 independent waste collectors**. In Ha Long Bay and on Phu Quoc Island, MWRP is connecting private sector enterprises to municipal partners to generate innovative approaches to waste management and form new partnerships.
- **Empowering Women:** In Da Nang, grantees collaborate with the Women's Union to **collect over 17 metric tons per month** of plastic waste that previously went uncollected. In this inclusive approach, the grantee invites representatives from the Women's Union to project planning meetings and district-level meetings, and works with **female neighborhood leaders to ensure community buy-in**. In Ho Chi Minh City, women have been elected to lead two of the nine independent waste collector unions/cooperatives since the start of the program, **increasing women's leadership from 0 to 22 percent**.
- **Effectively Managing Costs:** The local system approach of MWRP activities reduces plastic pollution while effectively managing costs. The Da Nang local government estimates that it saves \$4.73 per cubic meter of waste in reduced haulage and landfill costs, amounting to **\$88,000 in savings each year**. In Nam Dinh, bamboo waste traps provide a low-cost solution to solid waste capture in rivers.



PHOTO: NGUYEN MINH DUC FOR USAID

Mr. Du, an independent waste collector in Ho Chi Minh City. USAID supports collectors like Mr. Du with safe workwear, accident insurance, health insurance, and training on occupational safety, first-aid, communicable disease prevention, and gender equality.

In Ho Chi Minh City, a city of more than 10 million people, USAID supported a local civil society partner in advocating for new solid waste management regulations that **increased citywide plastics recycling from 40% to 65%** since the project's start, while raising monthly incomes for waste collectors from \$130 to \$215.

- **Scaling Solutions:** In Da Nang, the success of the grantee's **participatory, household-based approach** of "clean house, clean street, clean city" has drawn national attention. Leaders from other coastal provinces including Khanh Hoa (population 1.3 million) have expressed interest in **replicating the project model**. In Nam Dinh, USAID supports the design and **piloting of alternative models** to collect and treat solid waste, identifying the most effective to replicate and scale.
- **Developing Effective Policies:** USAID's work in Da Nang has had significant impact locally and on national policy. According to a local official, "*Da Nang was the most polluted port in this region in Vietnam. Now, fishing crews understand they should not pollute the seas but rather bring back plastics bags and nylon gear. My staff collects these plastics from the boats.*" The local grantee is collaborating closely with the Vietnam Administration of Seas and Islands to ensure that lessons from Da Nang **inform the country's new national action plan for ocean debris management**.