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CLEAN CITIES, BLUE OCEAN MALDIVES

KEY FACTS

Over **750** tons of waste generated each day
280,000 plastic bottles used per day in Male alone
104 million plastic bags imported each year

THE CHALLENGE

The Maldives generates over 750 tons of waste each day and, as an island nation, faces a unique set of challenges in managing a rapidly growing volume of waste across its more than 1,200 islands—approximately 200 of which are inhabited. Given its geography and a host of other unique challenges—which include an extremely limited amount of land to store waste and being home to one of the most densely populated cities in the world—the country has been overwhelmed to not only manage its own domestic waste, but also the marine debris generated from other countries that is carried in by currents.

The Maldives' total land area (115 sq mi) makes it the smallest country in Asia, although it is one of the most geographically dispersed countries in the world, spread over almost 35,000 square miles—roughly the area equivalent to the country of Portugal. This dispersion has proven to be extremely challenging for solid waste management, and has led to a number of models being deployed that range from central and regional waste management dump sites, hybrid systems for resorts, and a series of informal practices for local communities. While some have operated with success, **coordinated system development and implementation, increased local government capacity, and strengthened and alternative markets for recycled and reusable products** are required to reverse current environmental impacts that threaten community health, natural resources, and the country's tourism industry which contributes over 30% of the Maldives' GDP.

OUR APPROACH

To address these challenges, USAID's Clean Cities, Blue Ocean (CCBO) program offers **state-of-the-art international technical expertise** and **sustainable, locally-led solutions through its local grants program**. CCBO seeks to develop, test, and implement new models that promote reducing, reusing and recycling (3R) practices and enhance solid waste management (SWM); facilitate partnerships and investment around key needs, such as infrastructure; and strengthen local systems to build the Maldives' resiliency and self-reliance. CCBO seeks to learn from and expand on the success of proven initiatives by local government, non-governmental organizations, and other international donors and development agencies.

CCBO's four guiding objectives are to:

- **Promote 3R practices and strengthen local and regional markets** for recycled plastics;
- **Build social and behavior change** for 3R's and sustainable SWM;
- **Increase capacity and effective governance** for SWM and recycling systems; and
- **Facilitate public-private partnerships** and multi-stakeholder alliances to bolster the program's impact, scalability, and sustainability.

Informal waste collectors (IWCs), of which a large portion are women, play a significant role in SWM. Through waste collection and sorting, they divert waste away from landfills and contribute to communities' local economies, public health and safety, and environments. Despite their critical roles, they are commonly underrepresented, face poor working conditions and social stigmas, and women working in the sector earn far less than their male counterparts. Across its approach and activities, CCBO works to support and enhance the livelihoods of IWCs, as well as advance women's economic empowerment as part of the Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) Initiative by improving social and economic conditions that impede women's ability to work successfully in SWM and recycling jobs.

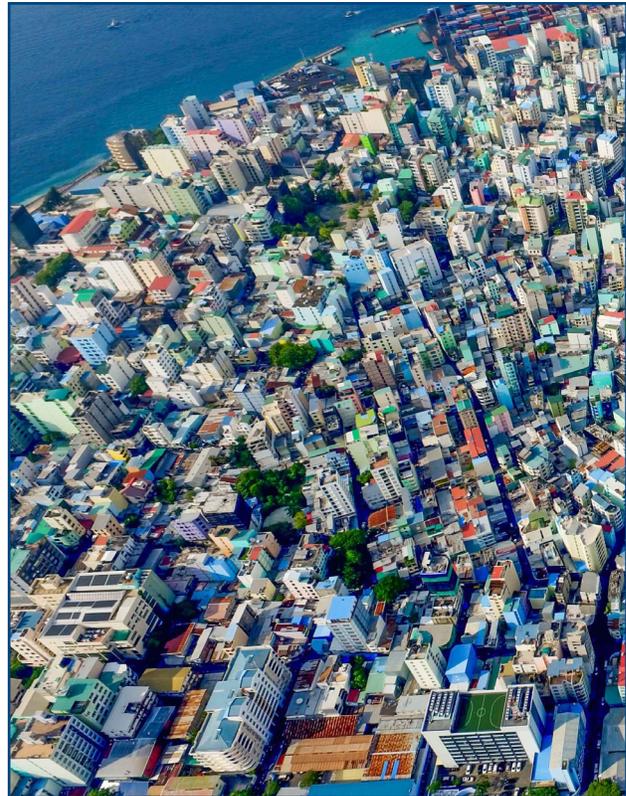
ENGAGEMENT SITES

In the Maldives, CCBO is piloting solutions to stop the flow of plastic pollution to the waters within and surrounding the country through work in Malé. Malé is the capital city of the Maldives and one of the world's most densely populated towns, with residents that generate more than two times the amount of waste each day than those on the nation's other natively-inhabited islands. Malé is the largest contributor to the Thilafushi landfill—a former lagoon that is now known as “Rubbish Island.” In Malé, the tide is beginning to turn with the emergence of recycling and reuse initiatives, as well as growing educational programs. CCBO seeks to build upon and support these initiatives, as well as pilot new solutions that can be adapted to other island applications.

ACTIVITIES

CCBO will design, implement, and scale holistic, watershed-specific strategies that address each step in the waste value chain—from production to its end use—prioritizing the most inclusive, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable solutions in primary environmental leakage. In the first year of the project, CCBO will:

- Conduct critical **site-level research** to understand engagement sites' specific challenges in SWM and enforcement, behavior change, and barriers to private sector investment;
- **Award grants** to local partners to begin implementing effective, locally-led solutions to achieve program objectives; and
- Provide **additional technical assistance and capacity building** support using international and local program staff.



CCBO will be working in Malé, the capital city that produces far more waste each day than the Maldives' other islands. Credit: Unsplash/Ishan

ABOUT CLEAN CITIES, BLUE OCEAN

USAID's Clean Cities, Blue Ocean is a five-year global program (2019-2024) to combat ocean plastic pollution. CCBO is the Agency's flagship program on ocean plastic pollution, working at the global level and in specific, rapidly urbanizing focal countries to target ocean plastics directly at their source. The program is implemented by Tetra Tech, in partnership with a consortium of organizations that include the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), The Manoff Group, and Ocean Conservancy. Other partners include national and local government, members of the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and local women's and youth organizations.

Sources:

Asian Development Bank. Proposed Grant and Technical Assistance Grant and Administration of Grant Republic of Maldives: Greater Malé Environmental Improvement and Waste Management Project, 2018.

UNICEF. Ending plastic pollution: the FenFulhi Launch Events in Addu City and Fuvahmulah Island, February 2019.



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