Ocean plastic pollution has reached a crisis level, threatening the world’s delicate marine ecosystems, major industries such as fishing and tourism, food security, and ultimately human health. Every minute, the equivalent of an entire garbage truck of plastic makes its way into the world’s oceans—roughly eight million tons annually.

**USAID’S APPROACH TO REDUCING OCEAN PLASTICS**

Stopping plastic pollution at the source is the most effective way to address this challenge. The majority of plastic ocean debris comes from rapidly growing cities and towns along rivers and coastal areas in the developing world—where waste management systems, infrastructure, and governments struggle to keep pace with growing populations and increasing amounts of trash.

The 2018 Save our Seas Act encourages U.S. agencies to work with countries that discharge the largest amounts of solid waste into our oceans. In response, USAID is leveraging its extensive networks, expertise, and experience across the developing world to improve waste management and plastic recycling in cities in key countries that are among the largest contributors to the problem. USAID uses a collaborative, cross-sectoral approach in working with cities and local governments, promotes locally-led solutions, and engages the private sector in addressing the plastic waste challenge.

Examples of USAID’s work on addressing ocean plastic waste in South and Southeast Asia.

In towns along the Gin Ganga River in Sri Lanka, USAID supported training in at-source waste separation. The reduction in improperly disposed plastic waste has contributed to a decline in dengue fever cases (close to 80%) by eliminating breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

In Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, USAID supported a local civil society partner in advocating for new solid waste management regulations that require households to segregate waste for recycling, contributing to the redirection of 1.8 million pounds of plastic waste from the ocean.

In Bacolod City, Philippines, USAID is helping to establish model zero-waste convenience stores where consumers can buy household products through a dispensing system that uses inexpensive, reusable containers.

In the Raja Ampat islands of Indonesia, USAID support is creating economies of scale through coordinated small community-based bank sampah (waste banks) that feed 9 metric tons per month of plastic waste into a central recycling center.

**KEY**

- Top 10 countries ranked by mismanaged plastics
- USAID Municipal Waste Recycling Program sites

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A FOCUS ON CITIES AND LOCAL SYSTEMS

Waste management is typically the responsibility of local governments. Solving the problem of ocean plastics requires strengthening local waste management and recycling systems. USAID builds the capacity of local governments who need to promote 3Rs—reducing, reusing, and recycling—while better monitoring and managing their solid waste. USAID also improves collaboration among the local actors responsible for waste management and recycling. USAID supports training independent waste collectors and connects them to the recycling value chain, and engages community-based organizations, women’s organizations, schools, and small businesses who are instrumental in creating behavior change.

PARTNERING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The private sector is involved in all stages of waste generation, collection and processing so they are a key stakeholder in reducing and better managing plastic waste. Waste management solutions offer tremendous potential for innovation, economic growth, and job creation. Recognizing this opportunity, USAID partners with the private sector to identify market-driven solutions to strengthen the plastics recycling industry value chain while empowering women and youth, building social inclusion, and strengthening resilience.

USAID is partnering with the Alliance to End Plastic Waste—an international organization that brings together more than 45 leading companies from across the plastics value chain that have collectively committed to investing $1.5 billion towards solutions to end plastic waste. Through our Clean Cities, Blue Ocean program, USAID and the Alliance will deploy innovative, locally-appropriate technologies, infrastructure, and business models to improve waste management and recycling in cities and communities at the heart of the ocean plastics pollution crisis.

CLEAN CITIES, BLUE OCEAN PROGRAM

USAID’s Clean Cities, Blue Ocean (CCBO) is the Agency’s flagship program on ocean plastic pollution. The five-year, global program (2019-2024) is working in rapidly urbanizing focal countries across Asia and Latin America to target ocean plastics directly at their source. CCBO works to improve solid waste management systems in areas that are at the heart of the global plastic pollution crisis, build capacity and commitment for the 3Rs, and promote sustainable social and behavior changes. In support of these objectives, CCBO partners with local and multi-national corporations to effectively leverage private sector expertise, investment, and supply chains.

MUNICIPAL WASTE RECYCLING PROGRAM

USAID’s five-year (2016-2021) Municipal Waste Recycling Program (MWRP) reduces land-based sources of ocean plastic waste in four of the top five contributing countries—Indonesia, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

Through MWRP, USAID has provided 30 grants and technical assistance to a variety of local actors, such as NGOs and recycling entrepreneurs, for innovative, local, and sustainable solutions to improve solid waste management and waste recycling efforts in and around targeted cities. As a result, people across the four countries are benefiting from cleaner and healthier cities with improved waste management services. Having recognized their effectiveness, local governments plan to extend and replicate these approaches.

PARTNERSHIP WITH CIRCULATE CAPITAL

In June 2019, USAID launched an agreement leveraging more than $100 million in a private-sector investment strategy managed by Circulate Capital and funded by multinational companies, including PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, Dow, Danone, Unilever, and Coca-Cola. USAID provides a $35 million, 50 percent loan-portfolio guarantee through the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), which is used to incentivize private capital investment in the recycling value chain in South and Southeast Asia. At least 50 percent of the total facility must be used for loans in the four countries that align with USAID’s MWRP (Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and Sri Lanka).

Circulate Capital is now launching investments in companies like Tridi Oasis, an Indonesia-based, women-owned recycling company. Tridi Oasis recycles plastic bottles into new packaging and textile products. This investment, backed by USAID and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, will enable the company to set up a larger recycling facility and expand operations to recycle additional types of plastic.

For more information, contact oceanplastics@usaid.gov

In Ho Chi Minh City, USAID provides independent waste collectors, including Pham Thi Thanh Ngoc and her husband Nguyen Thanh Liem, with support and training. The couple now recycles 360 kilos of waste per month —about one-third of it plastic.