

3R - Reduce, Reuse and Recycle to minimise waste leakage in the Mekong Delta

Turning the tide against plastic waste leakage: Improving waste prevention and management along the value chain, from Mekong Delta to ASEAN

Context

Population growth, rapid economic development, and changing patterns of production and consumption have led to a massive increase in the volume of global waste. A significant proportion of this waste, consisting of millions of tons of plastic, finds its way into oceans every year, settles into the deepest trenches of the world and concentrates in large areas on its surface. Its durability, combined with inadequate waste management and recycling, jeopardises both ecological and socio-economic systems. Degradation and modifications of marine systems via entanglement, toxicological effects, starvation, suffocation, etc. are associated with loss of ecosystem services and value. Consequently, this persistent contaminant affects socio-economic aspects of human life through its negative impacts on agriculture, tourism, and human health.

In Viet Nam, about 3.1 million tons of plastic waste is discarded on land annually, with between 0.28 and 0.73 million tons entering the oceans. According to a World Bank study, most plastics polluting Viet Nam's waterways are single-use, low-value items such as plastic bags, food containers, and straws.¹ In another study by Meijer et al. (2021), Viet Nam ranked eighth globally for plastic emissions into oceans.² The main reasons for this issue include the manufacturing of commodities, poor waste management and limited environmental awareness among individuals and businesses.

Project name	Reduce, Reuse and Recycle to Protect the Marine Environment and Coral Reefs in ASEAN (3RproMar)
Country package	3Rs - Reduce, Reuse and Recycle to reduce waste leakage in the Mekong Delta
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	ASEAN (Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Viet Nam)
Lead executing agency in Viet Nam	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
Implementation partners	Viet Nam Agency of Seas and Islands (VASI)
Duration	07.2020 – 06.2025

Existing and adopted policies, legislation, regulations, and initiatives at global, regional, and national levels play a vital role in reducing waste in the marine and coastal zones. In this regard, the Vietnamese Government has introduced important strategies and policies, including the Revised Law on Environmental Protection (in 2020), the National Strategy on Integrated Solid Waste Management up to 2025, and the National Action Plan for Management of Marine Plastic Litter by 2030, among many others. The private sector has also signalled its increasing interest in and commitment to plastic waste management through the joint establishment of the Packaging Recycling Organization Viet Nam (PRO) (2019) and the development of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) mechanism (2020).

¹ The World Bank, *Vietnam: Plastic Pollution Diagnostics*, East Asia and Pacific Region: MARINE PLASTICS SERIES, 2022

² Meijer, Lourens & van Emmerik, Tim & Ent, Ruud & Schmidt, Christian & Lebreton, Laurent, *More than 1000 rivers account for 80% of global riverine plastic emissions into the ocean*, Science Advances. 7, 2021





Plastic items from everyday household waste

Photo: © GIZ/Nguyen Thi Minh Ngoc

Within this context, the regional project “Reduce, Reuse and Recycle (3R) to protect the Marine Environment and Coral Reefs in ASEAN” (3RproMar) will support strengthening the collaborative efforts between public and private stakeholders in their endeavour to combat waste pollution.

Objective

The project aims to improve the implementation capacities of ASEAN Member States (AMS) to reduce land-based waste leakage, thereby protecting the marine environment.

In Viet Nam specifically, the project's objective is to strengthen the technical, institutional, and cooperative capacity of relevant stakeholders, enabling them to effectively implement 3R strategies to control plastic leakage.

Approach

To achieve these objectives, the Vietnamese component works on:

- Enhancing regional cooperation and knowledge management among the representatives of the ASEAN Working Groups dealing with marine litter and plastic pollution.
- Developing national measures for waste leakage reduction in Viet Nam and converting them into strategies at the local level.
- Improving implementation conditions for private sector engagement throughout the value chain to reduce waste leakage into the sea.
- Piloting projects along the plastics value chain from sustainable consumption to enhanced waste collection and recycling in the Mekong Delta region. These local-level projects aim to establish best practices in the fields of policy development and implementation.

Expected Results

- Representatives of participating ASEAN Working Groups will improve their understanding of feasible solutions for reducing plastic waste leakage into the sea by engaging in various forms of regional exchange within ASEAN.
- Representatives of participating ASEAN Working Groups will contribute strategy documents and field reports on feasible solutions aimed at reducing land-based marine waste to the regional knowledge hub.
- One stakeholder forum will be organised annually, with a focus on promoting gender equality and addressing the concerns of disadvantaged populations.
- A stakeholder analysis will be developed, considering the informal sector, and this analysis will encompass a description of the procedures for implementing national plans at the local level.
- The volume of inadequately collected, treated, or recycled plastic waste in the pilot communities will be reduced by 20%.
- Private and/or public organisations will conduct joint implementation steps to improve waste prevention and plastic waste management.

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