

SAVE OUR SEAS INITIATIVE



ANNUAL REPORT 2022–2023



Working with Senators Sullivan and Menendez, we passed the bipartisan Save Our Seas Act 2.0 into law in 2020. That law is guiding the federal government's start in tackling the global plastics crisis. Using funding we secured through the appropriations process and direction from SOS 2.0 to lead international efforts and build partnerships abroad, USAID launched the Save Our Seas Initiative to support implementation of Save Our Seas 2.0. Through this program, USAID has supported 14 country and regional programs in areas that represent 40 percent of total global mismanaged plastic waste. USAID has prevented over 60,000 metric tons of plastic and other materials from leaking into the environment — equivalent to over 6.5 billion plastic bottles. I thank the entire USAID team for their steadfast commitment to protecting our oceans for generations to come. There is a lot more to do, and I look forward to making progress together.

—U.S. SENATOR SHELDON WHITEHOUSE (D-RI)



I want to commend Administrator Power and the USAID team for all that they've accomplished in the first year of the "Save Our Seas" initiative. This initiative is the fruition of years of work by USAID and years of bipartisan work in Congress. In the Senate, Senator Whitehouse and I authored the Save Our Seas Act, which was signed into law in 2018, and built on that success with the SOS 2.0 Act in 2020, the most comprehensive marine debris legislation ever to become law. USAID is doing amazing work executing the mission and programs of this historic legislation, assisting countries with tailored support to ensure these governments have the tools they need to clean up and prevent waste from going into waterways, and organizing public-private partnerships to tackle this global challenge. I particularly appreciate USAID's emphasis on locally-led solutions, and on tackling ocean plastic pollution at the source. All of this work just proves the point: When you have a solvable environmental challenge, with all of the key stakeholders pulling together on the same oar—government, the private sector, international organizations you can make enormous progress. Congratulations again to USAID on the first anniversary of this great initiative, and thank you for all of your work on behalf of our marine ecosystems.

—U.S. SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN (R-AK)



SAVE OUR SEAS INITIATIVE: HOW USAID IS PREVENTING OCEAN PLASTIC POLLUTION

The Challenge Facing our Oceans

Ocean plastic pollution has reached crisis levels: every minute an entire garbage truck's worth of plastic enters the world's oceans – amounting to an alarming 11 million metric tons per year. This rate is expected to double by the end of this decade and triple by 2040. This deluge of plastic is threatening the world's delicate marine ecosystems, global industries such as fishing and tourism, food security, and ultimately human health.

Once plastic enters the ocean, it is extremely difficult and expensive to remove. The most effective way to address this problem is by stopping plastic from entering the ocean in the first place – a significant challenge in many rapidly growing countries. As much as 90 percent of waste is openly dumped or burned in low-income countries. Worldwide, one in four people – nearly two billion total – lack access to effective solid waste management systems.



In response to these mounting challenges, USAID launched the **Save Our Seas Initiative** – a global effort to combat ocean plastic pollution. Kicked off in June 2022, this initiative includes \$103 million in FY21 and FY22 funding and was designed to support implementation of the landmark Save Our Seas Act 2.0 of 2020. The Save Our Seas Initiative includes 14 national and regional USAID programs in key countries and regions that represent 40 percent of total global mismanaged plastic waste.

This first annual report of the Save Our Seas Initiative focuses on USAID as the lead agency. Achieving the Initiative's ambitious goal requires a whole-of-government approach and other departments and agencies play a critical role, such as the U.S. Department of State, the Environmental Protection Agency, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Future annual reports will reflect the intensive coordination across the U.S. Government that is already underway to combat ocean plastic pollution globally.



The Goal of the Save Our Seas Initiative

To end plastic pollution by 2040

Impact to Date



Equivalent of **6.5 billion**plastic bottles prevented from leaking into the environment. (60,000 metric tons of plastic waste managed)



9.2 million people benefitted from improved waste services through USAID's support, resulting in co-benefits such as cleaner air, water, and community health



\$108.5 million in public and private funding mobilized for local recycling and solid waste management systems

OUR APPROACH – LOCAL SOLUTIONS TO A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

The Save Our Seas Initiative focuses on where we can have the greatest impact – rapidly expanding cities and coastal areas in key countries contributing to the flow of plastic waste into the ocean. We take a holistic approach, working with everyone involved in the production, management, and disposal of plastic waste – from local governments to informal waste collectors to business coalitions.

Bales of collected plastic waste in Vietnam.



Since 2016, USAID has supported more than 60 grants in dozens of cities across Asia, the Pacific Islands, Latin America, and the Caribbean. This allowed us to field test a wide variety of approaches to combating ocean plastics in different countries and contexts – yielding tremendous learning on what works and what doesn't. We are applying those lessons under the Save Our Seas Initiative in two ways:

- 1. Scaling up effective solutions in key countries. We are building on previous work in Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Dominican Republic, and Peru to scale up successful models to achieve greater impacts. We are also replicating successful models into new geographies like India and the Eastern and Southern Africa regions, where we are launching new activities that incorporate lessons from our previous work.
- 2. Partnering with the private sector and pooling funds with allies for greater impact. We are expanding and deepening our partnerships with private sector partners, like impact investor Circulate Capital, which includes over \$100 million in investments from leading U.S. and international businesses such as PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, Dow, Danone, Unilever, and Coca-Cola. And we are partnering with donor countries like Norway and South Korea to pool and focus resources on the most promising and effective solutions.

USAID's technical approach to stemming the tide of ocean plastics is based on five building blocks



Data-driven policies for circularity

Promoting evidence-based policy and regulatory reforms.



Sustained behavior change to reduce single-use plastics

Encouraging sustained behavior change for increasing recycling and reducing demand for single-use plastics.



Effective solid waste services and investment

Supporting capacity for waste collection and processing and investments in recycling infrastructure and sanitary landfills.



Green jobs and local innovations

Developing markets for locally viable innovations and technologies.



An inclusive and equitable system

Supporting all members along the solid waste management chain – informal waste collectors – with safe working conditions, livable wages, and by empowering women and other marginalized groups.

Clean Cities, Blue Ocean is USAID's flagship program under the Save our Seas Initiative that works to combat pollution directly at its source in rapidly urbanizing countries across the globe. The program provides partner countries with deep expertise from a global team of technical experts in solid waste management, with more than forty years' experience designing state-of-the-art waste solutions across the United States and consulting with countries around the world.



AT A GLANCE

\$53 million, global program to tackle ocean plastics pollution at the source

Working in over 25 cities across 10 countries in Asia, the Pacific Islands, Latin America and the Caribbean

Advancing local solid waste management systems to create cleaner cities, healthier oceans, and reduce waste-linked contributions to the climate crisis



THE SAVE OUR SEAS INITIATIVE IN ACTION

Scaling Up Effective Solutions in Key Countries

Spotlight on Vietnam

With a growing population of nearly 100 million and a coastline of 2,100 miles, Vietnam is a key player in the fight against ocean plastic pollution. Its expanding urban populations, rising demand for consumer goods, and dependencies on single-use plastics continue to outpace its waste collection capacities. Recognizing this challenge, the Government of Vietnam issued a National Action Plan on Marine Plastic Debris Management in 2019, which aims to reduce plastic litter in oceans by 50 percent by 2025 and by 75 percent by 2030. This made Vietnam a natural partner for one of the first major bilateral programs funded under the Save Our Seas Initiative. In 2022,



USAID awarded the Vietnam Action Against Plastic Pollution program - a \$23.5 million program that will work in partnership with Vietnam's Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment to reduce ocean plastic pollution through data-driven policies, capacity building for local governments, and promoting technology and innovations. This new program will build on and scale up the lessons learned from USAID's Municipal Waste Recycling Program and Clean Cities, Blue Ocean, which have been piloting a range of solutions to combat ocean plastic pollution in Vietnam since 2016.

USAID Administrator Samantha Power visits a recycling collection site in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, where a waste collector shows her how the VECA scrap buying and selling app is used. The USAID-supported app is boosting the efforts of freelance collectors to increase urban recycling and help prevent plastics from entering the ocean.







Partnering with the Private Sector for Greater Impact

Spotlight on Circulate Capital

While the public sector is critical to tackling the ocean plastic pollution crisis, funding and technical expertise from private players are also needed to drive innovation, catalyze investment towards waste management and recycling infrastructure, and create more sustainable business models. Under the Save Our Seas Initiative, USAID is partnering with impact investment firm Circulate Capital to incentivize private sector financing for waste management and recycling infrastructure and businesses across South and Southeast Asia. USAID and the U.S. Development Finance Corporation partnered to provide Circulate Capital with a partial loan guarantee to help de-risk up to \$35 million of investments. This guarantee has helped Circulate Capital go well beyond that target, raising over \$106 million in private sector funds from leading U.S. and global businesses.

66

We are proud to have supported Tridi Oasis' growth and together, raised the bar in Indonesia's recycling ecosystem. Tridi Oasis' journey is a perfect example of the potential that can be unlocked when local innovators – which often require a combination of derisked financing and technical assistance to scale – receive the right support and funding. It is an important validation of our blended finance approach."

ROB KAPLAN
 FOUNDER & CEO
 CIRCULATE CAPITAL

USAID and the U.S. Development Finance Corporation partnered to provide Circulate Capital with a partial loan guarantee to help de-risk their investments. This guarantee helped Circulate Capital raise capital from the private sector. Circulate Capital has been investing these funds in promising businesses like Tridi Oasis, an Indonesia-based, women-owned recycling company. Circulate Capital's investment and technical support helped Tridi Oasis to rapidly expand their facilities and operations. In two years, Tridi Oasis had improved its cash flows and productivity, targeting an increase in annual processing capacity to 11,000 metric tons of plastics by 2022.

Most importantly, Tridi Oasis's business outgrew the need for Circulate Capital or USAID's support. The company's growth enabled it to attract an experienced strategic partner and pursue further expansion. In August 2022, Tridi Oasis entered a joint venture with a major global recycling company to establish a food-grade recycled polyethylene terephthalate (rPET) plant – marking a successful transition from start-up to a profitable and growing business providing valuable environmental services.

Building on their successes in Asia, Circulate Capital announced in May 2023 that they will be expanding to Latin America, bringing much-needed impact investment to this critical region.



HIGHLIGHTS AND RESULTS

From Open Dumps to Sanitary Landfills - Technical Assistance in Action in the Dominican Republic

Until recently, most of the over 11,000 metric tons of daily waste generated in the Dominican Republic has been discarded in over 350 informal and open dumpsites. Plastic waste often leaked from these unlined sites and made its way into the ocean, where it joined with the 11 million metric tons of plastic pollution entering our oceans globally every year. Through the Save Our Seas Initiative, USAID is providing technical assistance to support the Dominican Republic to transition to sanitary landfills, where recyclable materials can be separated and cleaned and non-recyclable waste disposed of safely. Starting in one province, USAID has provided technical support on the proper remediation of two long-standing open dumpsites, and the design of waste transfer stations and a new regional landfill, with funding for construction provided by the Dominican Government. These changes have resulted in the safe management of more than 357,000 metric tons of waste - including over 47,000 metric tons of plastic, the equivalent of five billion plastic bottles. This solid waste management model is expected to be replicated across the country's hundreds of legacy open dumpsites and introduced nationally as part of a new approach to solid waste management planning that will reimagine the way waste is managed in the country.

BY THE NUMBERS

357,000

metric tons of waste safely secured so far

equivalent plastic bottles prevented no...
leaking into the environment (47,000 metric tons of plastic waste safely managed)

85,000

people with improved solid waste management services and reduced air and water pollution







Aerial views of before and after USAID-supported remediation of the Las Terrenas dumpsite in the Dominican Republic.



Supporting Businesses to Boost Recycling in Indonesia

Like many rapidly urbanizing countries across Asia, Indonesia's cities are faced with the challenge of managing and recycling growing volumes of waste without the infrastructure they require. This problem is compounded by the challenge of collecting waste across an archipelago of more than 17,000 islands. The Save Our Seas Initiative is supporting local Indonesian waste management and recycling companies, like PT Prevented Ocean Plastic Indonesia, 1 to grow and expand. With USAID and Circulate Capital's support, PT Prevented Ocean Plastic Indonesia doubled its capacity to collect plastic waste for recycling from 4 or 5 metric tons per day to over 10 metric tons per day — and is on track to exceed its target of 30 metric tons per day by mid-2023, a six-fold increase. It has also become a regional hub for waste aggregation and is helping to grow a profitable, self-sustaining local market for recycling.



Prevented Ocean
Plastic Southeast Asia is
partnering closely with
USAID's Clean Cities,
Blue Ocean program to
stop plastic from entering
the ocean, build the
infrastructure required
to sustain a circular
economy, and improve
coastal communities'
well-being."

DANIEL LAWCEO, POLINDO

¹ PT Prevented Ocean Plastic Indonesia was established as a subsidiary of Prevented Ocean Plastic Southeast Asia in July 2022 through USAID's partnership with Circulate Capital to develop recycling facilities in underserved communities across Indonesia.



Jailyn Danguen and her fellow waste pickers in Puerto Princesa City, Philippines, wear USAID-supported uniforms to protect them from the extreme heat and exposure to dangerous waste items.

Empowering Women in Waste Management

In 2021, USAID launched the Women in Waste's Economic Empowerment activity in the Philippines, offering women a comprehensive training program on business, leadership, and empowerment, along with a small business incubator program that provides mentorship and funding opportunities to establish or expand women-owned recycling or waste businesses. In 2022 under the Save Our Seas Initiative, the activity was expanded to the city of Semarang, Indonesia. To date, over 400 women have graduated from the Women in Waste's Economic Empowerment training program, and 26 women have received grants to expand 14 businesses. These women have prevented an estimated 40 metric tons of waste from entering the environment, equivalent to 4.3 million plastic bottles. They have also reported a new sense of agency, confidence, and community.

BY THE NUMBERS

equivalent number of plass bottles prevented from entering the environment from 40 metric tons of waste safely managed equivalent number of plastic

500+

Independent waste collectors across the globe engaged by Clean Cities, Blue Ocean to increase their capacity, agency, and confidence in their work

women have graduated from Women in Waste's **Economic Empowerment's** business and empowerment skills training.



Improving Efficiency Delivers Big Impacts in Peru

Around the world, municipal governments are challenged by limited institutional capacity and resources—financial, technical, and human to manage the collection of solid waste in their growing cities. The coastal city of Pisco, Peru has a population of nearly 81,000, and generates over 70 metric tons of solid waste daily. The city lacks formal waste collection routes, and their large garbage trucks are unable to collect waste along narrow, dead-end, or deteriorated streets. Thus, they end up traveling longer distances, using more fuel, costing more money, and collecting less waste. These inconsistent and inefficient collection practices, along with low recycling rates, lead to large quantities of waste ending up in the sea—polluting the coastline and impacting tourism. USAID partnered with the local government in Pisco to develop a reliable and effective waste collection system, including new routing plans for all of the city's eight districts, expanding waste services to nearly 12,800 additional residents—reaching 100 percent waste collection coverage. With the optimized routes, the city can collect an additional 12 metric tons of garbage per day. This model can be tailored to individual cities' needs, and USAID has initiated similar efforts in Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

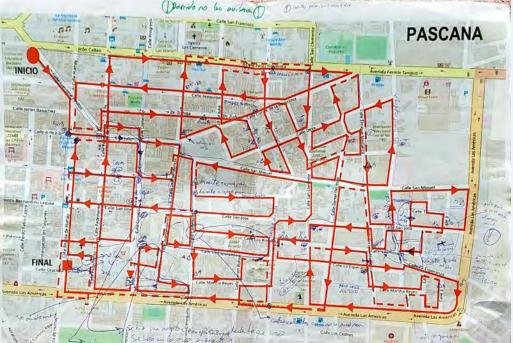
Thanks to USAID's support we are restructuring the entire collection process. We have followed the routes for years, but there has never been a study to define optimal routes and to be efficient in the service, increasing collection coverage in different sectors. We want to provide a better service for citizens and for tourists to feel comfortable."

YESENIA SEGOVIA
 FORMER MANAGER
 OF SERVICES TO THE
 CITY, ENVIRONMENT
 AND PUBLIC SAFETY
 OF THE MUNICIPALITY
 OF PISCO



Our Impact in Peru





With technical assistance from USAID, the city of Pisco, Peru prioritized their waste collection routes and developed routing plans for all eight districts in the city.



80 metric tons of plastic and other low-value waste secured from leaking into the environment through local recovery and recycling efforts



72,000 households
participating in or
benefitting from new and
improved solid waste
services through their local
government's partnership
with USAID



1.3 million people reached through program interventions and outreach to improve their waste services and increase their awareness of ocean plastic impacts and solutions



\$250,000 in grant funding awarded to local organizations to implement effective, locally led waste management solutions

Supporting Local Governments on the Front Lines of Plastic Pollution

Just like in the United States, solid waste management is typically the responsibility of the local government in most countries. However, many local governments lack sufficient funding and expertise to manage effective solid waste management systems. To address this challenge, USAID supported development of the Solid Waste Capacity Index for Local Governments (SCIL) tool to enable local governments in 17 cities to assess their solid waste management capabilities and pinpoint where training is needed to create and sustain more economically and environmentally sound systems to manage solid waste. SCIL focuses on six core components: planning, policy and legal framework, financial management, service delivery, human resources, and community engagement. Once a SCIL Assessment is completed, local governments can develop an accompanying roadmap for improvements, recommending training and identifying forward-looking policy and operational changes. The SCIL "score" also allows them to measure and monitor their improvement over time when they repeat the self-assessment.

BY THE NUMBERS

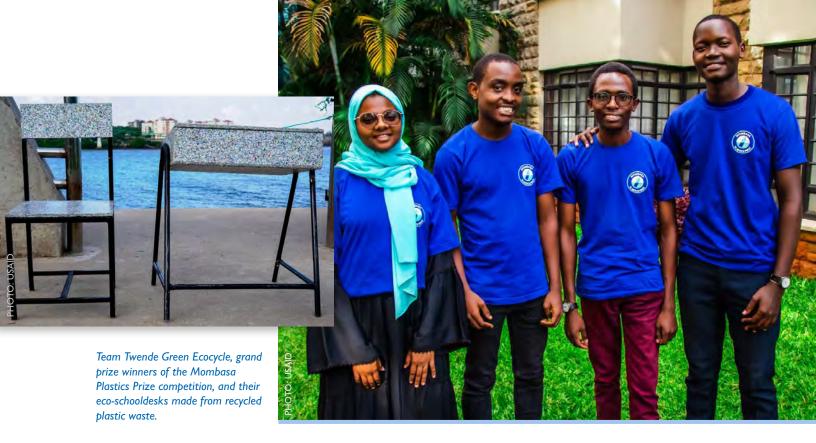
SCILs completed in seven countries with local governments in communities as small as 15,000 people and as large as 3 million people

300+

local individuals have already collaborated on SCILs, **increasing their capacity** to plan, build, and operate effective solid waste management systems

USAID Clean Cities, Blue Ocean staff visit a dumpsite in Indonesia





Spurring Innovations to Curb Pollution on Kenya's Coastline

The coastal city of Mombasa – Kenya's second largest city – generates approximately 120 metric tons of plastic waste every day, of which only 5 percent is recycled. A significant portion of this waste is dumped into the ocean. To raise awareness of the problem and foster innovative solutions, the Save Our



Seas Initiative and Global Affairs Canada are funding the first ever Mombasa Plastics Prize. The inaugural competition, which launched in September 2022, invited teams of young people aged 18-25 to propose innovative solutions to tackle plastic waste mismanagement within informal settlements. In May, three top teams were selected to win over \$70,000 in cash prizes, with the first place team, Twende Green Ecocycle, taking home \$30,000 for their proposal to use advanced recycling technology to transform discarded plastic waste from informal settlements into durable, lockable eco-desks for students and teachers. Select teams have now been invited to participate in a follow-up initiative — the Mombasa Plastics Prize Incubator Program, which will provide seed funding, coaching and training to help promising innovators further develop and scale their ideas and aid in tackling Mombasa's waste over the long-term.



Like in other growing urban areas, plastic pollution in Mombasa is a huge challenge... The youth are a critical cog in the wheel of progress towards marine plastics elimination, and we laud this initiative, which seeks to engage them to solve the challenge at a community level."

 FRANCIS FOLENI THOYA DEPUTY GOVERNOR OF MOMBASA COUNTY

Supporting Key National Policy Reforms in Sri Lanka

USAID helped design and implement an Extended Producer Responsibility system in Sri Lanka – a policy cornerstone necessary to enable a circular economy. Extended Producer Responsibility systems put the responsibility for the cost of the safe collection and disposal or recycling of plastic waste back on the producer - not the consumer or the local government. This type of initiative helps reduce the cost of waste management for local governments and incentivizes producers to redesign their packaging to reduce waste, be more easily recyclable, and use more recycled content. In Sri Lanka, USAID helped establish a new National Steering Committee to coordinate efforts on Extended Producer Responsibility. USAID also provided essential advisory services to local companies through the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and supported the government in drafting regulations through the Public Interest Law Foundation. These efforts helped Sri Lanka develop a tailored Extended Producer Responsibility Roadmap, two pilot programs, and a voluntary online reporting portal for companies to track their plastic use and reduction. As of June 2023, this system has helped track the safe management and recovery of more than 460 metric tons of plastic - equivalent to 23 million plastic bottles.

Extended Producer
Responsibility is a
powerful tool – but it is
very hard to get right.
USAID is helping us get
the government and the
business community on
the same page and design
a system that is effective
and sustainable."

SAROJINIE JAYASEKARA
 DIRECTOR SOLID WASTE
 MANAGEMENT, CENTRAL
 ENVIRONMENTAL
 AUTHORITY, SRI LANKA

USAID Clean Cities, Blue Ocean grantee, Ceylon Chamber of Commerce, is working to develop an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme in Sri Lanka.







USAID Clean Cities, Blue Ocean grantee, Soneva Namoona, carries out waste management audits and activities on four islands in the Maldives.

New Mindsets to Reduce Single-use Plastics

Reducing single-use plastics and improving solid waste management systems often require businesses and people to change their long-held habits—for example, purchasing alternative products or separating their waste properly. Through the Save Our Seas Initiative, USAID is collaborating with partners in rapidly urbanizing cities to promote social and behavior change campaigns to reduce single-use plastics, which are informed by applied research tools such as the Trials of Improved Practices and other best practices. The academic journal Practicing Anthropology devoted their entire Spring 2023 issue highlighting USAID's social and behavior change approaches to reduce plastic pollution. For example, Small Island Geographic Society in the Maldives documented the journey of households encouraged to replace single-use plastic items like carrier bags, bottles, and diapers with reusable options.

Based on surveys of residents of three islands in the Maldives, USAID partner Soneva Namoona tested a new waste segregation system that ultimately resulted in the recovery of over 38 metric tons of waste, of which nearly 6 metric tons were plastic. The research resulted in recommendations for local government incentive programs and future social and behavior change strategies, while also reducing single-use plastics among participating households.



LOOKING FORWARD

Building on the lessons from the first year of the Save Our Seas Initiative, USAID will scale up its effective approaches and expand programs and partnerships to additional cities and countries for greater impact.

At the Our Ocean Conference in 2023, USAID announced \$40.5 million in additional funding for programs to combat ocean plastic pollution at the local level under the Save Our Seas Initiative in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Pacific Islands. This includes \$10 million to expand Clean Cities, Blue Ocean, which now works in 25 cities across 10 countries.

Over the next year, the Save Our Seas Initiative will launch additional bilateral programs with this funding in key countries such as India.

USAID's catalytic investments will also help attract and pool additional funds from partner organizations. In 2022, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation announced an investment of \$3.36 million into funding for Clean Cities, Blue Ocean in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. USAID plans to announce additional high impact partnerships in the coming year.

USAID will also expand private sector partnerships under the Save Our Seas Initiative, including supporting Circulate Capital's expansion into Latin America.

Together, these efforts will help stop the tide of plastic entering the world's oceans.





COVER PHOTOS: QUANG NGUYEN VINH, PIXABAY; USAID (VIETNAM); USAID (PHILIPPINES)

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