

IMPACT SHEET: PREVENT PLASTICS

Promotion of sustainable production and consumption patterns in Myanmar



Awareness raising and best practices on waste management.



PREVENT PLASTICS



PROJECT BACKGROUND

Prevent Plastics was a four-year initiative in Myanmar, implemented by sequa gGmbH under the European Union-funded SWITCH-Asia programme. In addition to sequa, the project's main implementing partner, the Myanmar Banks Association, Stenum Asia, and Thant Myanmar played key roles in its success. The project's overall objective was to promote sustainable production and consumption patterns in Myanmar by raising awareness and sharing best practices on waste management.

CHALLENGE

Myanmar has been facing significant challenges in waste management. Rapid economic growth and urbanisation have led to severe issues due to ineffective waste collection, transport, and disposal systems. Between 2013 and 2018, total solid waste production in the country tripled, with an estimated 87% of plastic waste inadequately managed. Key challenges include poor waste management practices, unreliable and irregular waste services, lack of assessments on current practices and waste flows in critical value chains, absence of minimum standards for waste collection, transportation, and disposal, as well as high costs and insufficient revenue for solid waste collection. These issues pose serious risks to public health and the environment.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- In 2024, the number of targeted MSMEs and communities implementing sustainable waste management practices for plastics with EU support will increase by 50%, including gender-segregated data on women-led businesses.
- By the end of the project, waste management curricula will be available at all levels, from kindergarten to on-the-job training.
- By the end of the project, 25 MSMEs will be applying Sustainable Consumption and Production practices, including sustainable waste management, with EU support (EU RF Indicator 2.20).

The specific objectives include:

- At least 50 supported communities have introduced sustainable waste management practices.
- 400 individuals have enhanced their skills and knowledge in waste management.
- Five MSMEs provide innovative eco-friendly bag and packaging solutions, making them widely available to producers and consumers.
- At least 50 MSMEs have implemented plastic reduction schemes, offering alternatives to plastic packaging, with at least 30% of their customers adopting these options.

- By the end of 2024, there is at least a 35% reduction in the use of lightweight single-use plastic carrier bags per transaction in project associate City Mart and three other retailers.
- More than 1,000,000 consumers have increased their awareness of plastic avoidance and waste reduction.
- By the end of the project, at least 250,000 students will have been reached with educational materials on sustainable waste management.

TARGET GROUPS

Recycling service companies, (informal) waste pickers, social enterprises, NGOs, MSMEs producing eco-friendly packaging, composting initiatives, upcycled or recycled product manufacturers, the Myanmar Banks Association (MBA), consumer organisations, companies in industrial zones, industrial zone residents, rural communities, civil society organisations, private schools, monastic education compounds, youth, consumers, and retailers in Myanmar.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Industrial Waste Management

- A diagnosis report on waste generation for three industrial zones in Yangon and one in Mandalay was created and published on the SWITCH-Asia and project websites.
- Based on this report, a tailored 3R concept for sustainable waste management (SWM) was developed, incorporating best practices from India, including minimum SWM standards for MSMEs.
- Concepts for organic waste management, including a business case for organic waste-to-energy solutions, were developed and published.
- A Waste Reduction Programme (WRP) was designed and implemented, incorporating resource-efficient operations and waste audits for factories and MSMEs. 88 MSMEs participated, with 25 fully implementing the findings, making their operations greener and more sustainable. Additionally, a best practices guidebook for SCP was published on the project website.
- The Environmental Awareness Training (EAT) programme was implemented, reaching 10,348 individuals working in 486 MSMEs, primarily in Yangon and Mandalay.
- A resource monitoring platform, Ref-Track (www.ref-track.com), was developed, including reporting functions for MSMEs.
- A waste exchange platform, Waste to Wealth (waste-to-wealth.com), was developed to facilitate matchmaking between waste generators (factories, MSMEs) and waste service providers (waste pickers, recyclers, etc.).

- An industry-wide dialogue for private waste collectors was established, with regular meetings. Eight private waste collectors across Myanmar received in-depth consultations.
- A toxic waste handling training guidebook was published, and 165 informal waste pickers received training on its use.
- Collaborated with MSMEs to develop eco-friendly packaging options, leading to the creation of 20 financially sustainable businesses in this field.
- 50 MSMEs switched to eco-friendlier packaging, reducing plastic use by at least 30%.

Community Waste Management, education and awareness raising

- A concept for urban and rural community waste management was developed, including minimum standards for community waste management.
- Community Waste Management Programmes were designed and implemented:
 - Rural Waste Management Programme (RWM) to establish sustainable waste management (SWM) systems in rural villages.
 - Monastic Education Schools (MES) initiative to educate and implement SWM practices in monastic compounds.
- Three educational curricula were developed and are actively in use, reaching a total of 368,090 students:
 - Myanmar School App for KG to 9th grade (with 331,161 downloads).
 - Higher Education Programme for university students.
 - Doh Kyaung Curriculum for private & monastic education.
- 26 consumer awareness events on plastic reduction and eco-friendly alternatives were conducted, engaging more than 31,530 participants.
- Several social media campaigns reached a total audience of 14,980,028 consumers.
- A plastic reduction strategy, developed in collaboration with City Mart, is being implemented across City Mart and three other retailers, already resulting in a 7% reduction in single-use plastic bag consumption per transaction.
- The Youth Environmental Action & Hope (YEAH) Programme was launched, with 50 graduates successfully completing the initiative.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Prevent Plastics initiative faced significant challenges from the outset due to highly unfavourable timing. Just before the project's commencement on 1 May 2020, Yangon International Airport suspended its operations as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Myanmar. This decision hindered the arrival of international project staff, including the team leader, thereby delaying the project kick-off. Nevertheless, through remote coordination and adjustments, sequa managed

to initiate the project, and by August 2020 the Prevent Plastics team was fully assembled and had begun implementing the first-year work plan.

In 2021 the project needed to shift its focus to a grassroots approach driven by community initiatives. This transition led to the development and implementation of tailored programmes—such as the Waste Reduction Programme (WRP) and Environmental Awareness Training (EAT)—that directly engaged micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) as well as local communities. By launching Rural Waste Management (RWM) initiatives and other activities, Prevent Plastics was able to work directly with communities and civil society organisations (CSOs) on sustainable waste management (SWM). Although this shift required additional resources, including comprehensive due diligence and follow-up reports for each beneficiary, it enabled the project to offer customised solutions. As a result, MSMEs, communities, retailers and consumers were better equipped to tackle their waste challenges, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful and sustainable implementation of project recommendations.

In hindsight, the ability to pivot quickly to a community-led approach was crucial to the project's resilience. The experience highlights the importance of flexibility, proactive community engagement and robust collaboration with local partners in advancing environmental initiatives, particularly in rapidly changing contexts.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENT

- Sustainable Waste Management (SWM) practices were introduced to 817 MSMEs and 18,424 individuals increased their capacities on waste management.
- 78 supported communities implemented SWM in which over 70% of the organic waste is composted and 100% of the waste has a designated disposal place.
- 22,559 individuals have increased their knowledge and capacities on waste management
- 20 MSMEs are offering additional eco-friendly packaging while 50 MSMEs implemented a plastic reduction scheme and/or changed their packaging.
- Over 14,120,000 consumers were reached by campaigns, events and social media.
- 24 CSOs and 2 INGOs received training on Rural Waste Management (RWM).
- 10 consultants, 7 waste auditors and 124 master trainers were trained and are implementing Environmental Awareness Trainings (EAT), Waste Reduction Programme (WRP) or Trainings of Trainers (ToT) on the project curricula.
- 388 teachers were trained with the Prevent Plastics curricula, and 386,090 students were reached (including online activities).
- 36 consumer campaigns and events took place during the project, decreasing single use plastics usage and promoting eco-friendly alternatives.



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sequa



Prevent Plastics started as a project but evolved into a brand, driving real impact through a strong community. We reached nearly 15 million consumers, supported 148 MSMEs in eco-friendly packaging, and reduced the use of 2.77 million single-use plastic bags. Through solid waste management initiatives in rural areas and schools, over 4,500 tons of waste were diverted. By empowering businesses, educators, and recyclers, we have laid the foundation for a greener, more sustainable Myanmar.



Long-term project sustainability

The engagement with monasteries has proven to be highly sustainable, as principal monks view it as their calling to teach not only within their monasteries but also in surrounding communities and villages about eco-friendly and clean living practices. During numerous monitoring visits, we observed that their involvement extended beyond the project's activities, with some monasteries independently implementing complete bans on single-use plastics within their compounds. A similar trend was seen in villages, where many continue to operate their waste collection and sustainable disposal systems long after the project's implementation. Additionally, the project's strong focus on Training of Trainers (ToT) has contributed to its long-term sustainability. ILO trainers were trained by Prevent Plastics to incorporate the Environmental Awareness Training (EAT) Programme into their work in Myanmar. Furthermore, 124 master trainers were trained across different project activities to expand outreach and ensure the continued impact of the initiative.

Project contributions to Climate Change Mitigation and SDGs

The implementation of sustainable production operations and circular economy practices in MSMEs directly contributed to SDG 12 by promoting responsible consumption and production. Additionally, activities focused on community waste management, particularly waste segregation and sustainable management of organic waste, significantly reduced methane gas emissions from landfills, a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

The project contributed directly to [SDGs 4, 8, 11, and 12](#) while addressing key cross-cutting topics. In poverty reduction, it indirectly supported employment and income generation by promoting over 800 MSMEs in waste management and the circular economy, while also enhancing education through rural monastic communities, the YEAH programme, and an educational app. In environmental sustainability, it fostered sustainable production and consumption patterns to protect natural resources. Though its initial good governance efforts were disrupted by the coup, the project strengthened civil society by working with local NGOs like Thant Myanmar and raising awareness among monastic leaders, laying the groundwork for future public-private dialogue. It also built development partnerships with the private sector, including key collaborations with companies such as CityMart, Myanmar's largest retailer. Lastly, while human rights law does not explicitly guarantee environmental rights, the project contributed to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, aligning with the UN General Assembly's 2022 recognition of this right.



Impacts at a Glance

Economic Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,288,000,000 MMK (297,307 EUR) potential savings identified. • 20 new MSMEs for ecofriendly packaging (egg boxes/bags out of paper waste, upcycled bags out of umbrella waste) created and are still operational.
Environmental Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,554 Tonnes of waste diverted, 529 tonnes plastic waste recycled and 336,42 plastics waste reduction during the project. • Reduction of Single Use plastic bag usage in the 4 biggest retailers. “Green Growth” campaign finished successfully: 2,770,500 SUP bags reduced and 74,580 Trees planted. SWM systems in rural areas and monastic education schools implemented.
Social Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Curricula developed and in use, reaching a total of 368,090 students and 364 teachers were trained on project curricula. • In total 78 communities are composting at least 70% of organic waste and 100% of waste has a designated disposal place. • TOT on Project activity “Rural Waste Management” to 24 CSOs and 2 local NGOs, which implemented SWM in more than 100 villages across Myanmar. 80 Master Trainers received ToT, raising awareness on SWM. • 4 Months education Programme (YEAH) with 50 graduates, over 392,288 students reached with project curricula, Myanmar school app with 325.000 downloads
Green Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Finance Guidelines developed and published in collaboration with the Myanmar Banks Association (MBA). • Green Loan Guidebook published. • 2 Position Papers on ESG and Stakeholder engagement. • ESG Workshop with MBA.
Target Group Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22,458 persons (65.1% Women) from 815 MSMEs were reached by workshops or awareness raising trainings. • 4 recycling MSMEs & 3 organisations joined study tour to India. • 20 MSMEs received support to start their business. • 50 MSMEs & manufacturers changed packaging, reducing plastic waste by at least 30% through project consultation. • 13 Recycling companies received in depth consultations and are implementing activities. • 14,980,028 consumers were reached over social media activities.





FUNDING

EUR 2,070,000
(EU Contribution: 90%)



DURATION

2020 - 2024



PARTNERS



sequa



Myanmar Banks Association



Stenum Asia



Thant Myanmar



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