



Micro-loan program for the informal recycling sector in ASEAN countries



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■ Team name

Etsu Color

■ Team Introduction

We are a team of 5 master students from Vietnam Japan University. Our university philosophies are liberal arts and sustainability, so we are all trained with research methodologies and informatics for various sustainable development issues. From diverse backgrounds, we have skills in project management, task analysis, information sourcing, knowledge transferring and communication design.

■ What goal do you want to achieve

We would like to promote recycling rate and at the same time supporting informal recycling workers in developing countries in ASEAN through this idea.

Hanoi, the city that all team members are currently residing, generates about 5,500 to 6,000 tons of domestic waste daily. 95% of this waste is transported to landfills, with the rest incinerated or recycled

at craft villages. Traditionally, Vietnam has a culture of saving and recycling materials, and in the countryside, it is still being observed. However, city lives do not permit the space and the time for such activity to be done without a proper recycling system. The recycling materials collection and separation is still not done at households level due to lack of regulations.

At the moment, in Hanoi, the domestic waste are to be put outside on the streets at end of working day hours, and the city waste collectors will gather the waste from across the city with time ranging between end of working day hours till midnight. Including in these household wastes are recyclable materials. The garbage pickers or the informal recycling workers then come and take apart the plastic bags with these recyclable materials, and often they would leave the bags open with all other contents spilling out, affecting the quality of life of everyone else. Without these workers though, almost none of recycling of domestic waste will be done. This problem is due to the lack of a formal system of recycling, the lack of awareness from the garbage pickers, as well as the lack of support from the community, government and other players. Most garbage pickers are actually people with many disadvantages in their living conditions and chose the job as a necessity to make ends meet.

Similar conditions can be observed in other Vietnamese cities and ASEAN countries, and we would like to first start with Hanoi and then expand to other locations.

■ How will you achieve the goal

Changing attitude and culture of recycling and the recycling system is not a simple task. Many Government and NGOs' programs in Vietnam are addressing the problem of recycling; nevertheless, they mostly focus on the consumers and the everyday citizens and not on the garbage pickers. We would like to address the problem with proper funding and opportunity to expand the job as a trade career instead of a stigmatized job.

The micro-loan program will be conducted with requirements for the recycling workers to attend training regarding the requirements for proper recycling system, the etiquette to keep the city clean, the application of new technology to acquire business opportunities and the tools and other access for additional funding where they can expand their business. The seed money from the program will support the living conditions of these people and promote the training for better recycling procedures.

Through the program, we want to bridge the knowledge gap for garbage pickers to utilize more modern technology in their business. Currently, in Ho Chi Minh City, we have an application called VECA which supports the matching of garbage pickers and people who want to sell recyclable materials. This is one of the partners that we would really like to collaborate. A smartphone is necessary though for this usage and not all garbage pickers have the access or even know about the app. The price of a Vietnamese made smartphone is actually not large, standing at about 50\$ to 100\$, which a micro-loan program like ours can help support.

■ What effect is expected after you achieve the goal

Through the micro-loan program, we would like to reach the informal recycling sector first in Hanoi and then in other cities in Vietnam and other ASEAN countries. The support from the micro-loan program can help accelerate the recycling system evolution and speed up the change in both the garbage pickers' lives and also alter the market place to create strong and resilient recycling businesses.