

# **Engagement and Behavior Change in Community-Based Municipal Solid Waste Management Initiatives in Vietnam**

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## **1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES**

Solid waste management is a major challenge facing developing countries like Vietnam. Research on solid waste management in Vietnam has shown that major challenges include lack of awareness of the issue, inappropriate methods of waste disposal and low engagement by communities. However, little is known about community engagement in municipal solid waste management in Vietnam. The paper focuses on engagement and behavior change in two community-based municipal solid waste management initiatives in the cities of Danang and Hoi An in central Vietnam. The research objective is to assess the role of community engagement in behavior change by residents and identify the challenges to changing individual knowledge, attitudes and behavior to improve waste management. The research also analyzes the role played by various stakeholders in promoting participation and behavior change in the two initiatives.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A mixed-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative tools was applied to collect data. This began with a literature review on solid waste management activities and community engagement in Vietnam and other developing countries, followed by visits to the two sites for key informant interviews and a focus group interview. Then household surveys were conducted among 61 households to obtain quantitative data; the surveys included two open-ended questions for further understanding on their engagement. The key informant interview was conducted with a Women's Union leader in Danang while in Hoi An it was conducted with the project management board representative, to understand more about how communities can be engaged in good solid waste management practices. The site visits were conducted from September to November 2016 to conduct a pilot study on the surrounding environment, residential households, management of waste, and other community activities. This was followed by a visit in September 2017 for primary data collection.

## **3. RESULTS AND CONCLUSION**

In both projects community engagement has played a role towards behavior change by promoting awareness of the issue and providing incentives for change. Residents came to understand the value of waste management for the sake of hygiene and human and environmental health as well as some economic and social capital benefits. In Cam Ha and Cam Pho communes in Hoi An city, and in Da Nang, communities were engaged in the following activities: separating waste at the source, organic waste composting in their family garden, cleaning up the streets and digging the roads, and education on reuse and recycling waste. The active involvement of both the community, government and other stakeholders is vital; in Hoi International organizations such as JICA and collaborative activities and local research institutes are involved, so expertise and funding are available, but in Danang the initiative is still in its early stages and not many stakeholders are involved so long-term sustainability is unsure.