

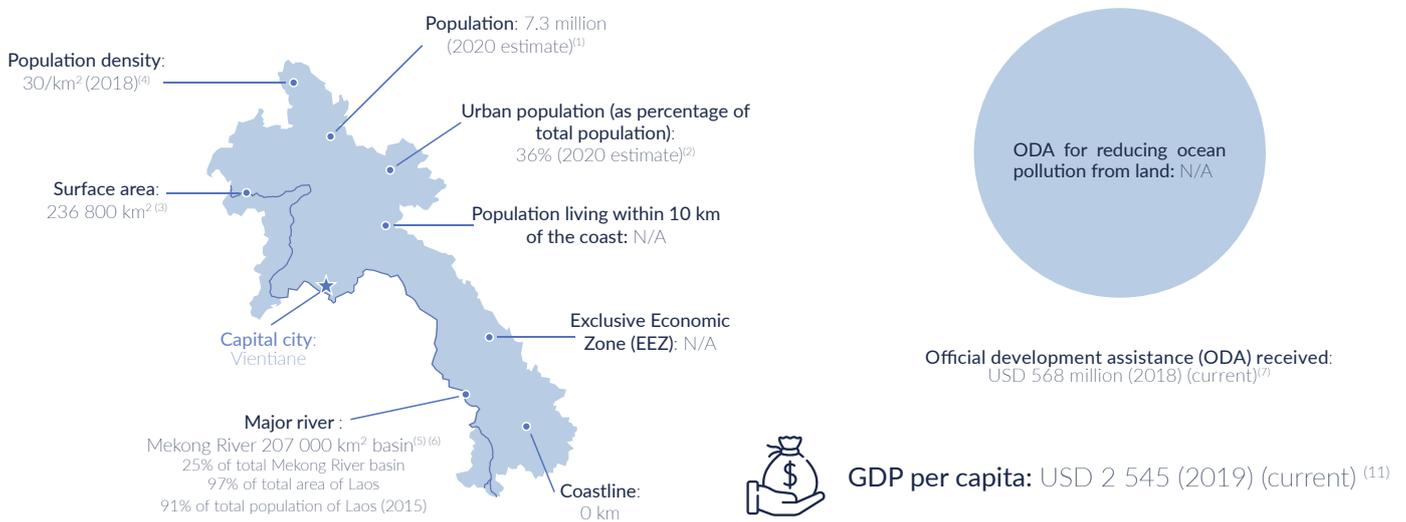
LAOS

The Mekong River serves as a pathway for plastic waste to enter the ocean from Laos.

Millions of tonnes of plastics enter the ocean every year, with tremendous environmental, economic and social costs that are difficult to quantify. However, the marine plastics pollution problem cannot be solved just by cleaning up the ocean. Most marine plastics are not discarded directly into the sea but derive from land-based sources and through the rivers. They end up in the sea due to a multitude of reasons, such as the inadequate filtering of wastewater, improper or illegal disposal, or unexpected natural disasters. Land-based initiatives are therefore essential to addressing marine plastics pollution.

The OECD stands ready to help develop policy advice and financing strategies to address marine plastics pollution in Southeast Asia, a region where this problem is particularly acute.

Figure 1. Laos: Key demographic, geographic, and economic indicators



In Laos, the following government ministries and agencies are involved in addressing solid waste management (SWM), wastewater treatment, and plastics pollution:

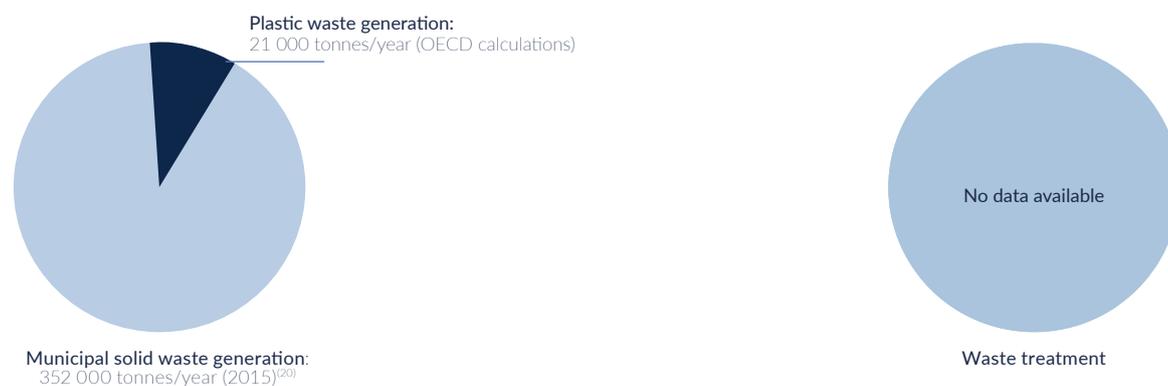
- **At the national level,** two ministries -- the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE), alongside the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT), are jointly responsible for solid waste management. While the MPWT is responsible for the implementation of solid waste management in Laos by operating waste

collection vehicles ⁽⁸⁾, the MoNRE oversees policy instruments and frameworks in development of regulations on environmental management, and monitoring their compliance with environmental laws ⁽⁹⁾. With regard to other waste, the Ministry of Public Health oversees management of medical waste; the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry develops regulations on compostable waste; and the Ministry of Energy and Mines, which plays an indirect role by developing regulations on transforming waste into energy.⁽¹⁰⁾

1. United Nations Population Division. (2019). *World Population Prospects 2019*.
 2. United Nations Population Division. (2018). *World Urbanization Prospects: 2018 Revision*.
 3. United Nations Statistics Division. (2019). *Demographic Yearbook 2018*.
 4. Ibid.
 5. Mekong River Commission. (2018). *State of the Basin Report 2018*.
 6. Food and Agriculture Organization. (2011). *Transboundary River Basin Overview - Mekong*.
 7. OECD. (2020). Detailed aid statistics: Official and private flows. *OECD International Development Statistics (database)*. doi:https://doi.org/10.1787/data-00072-en
 8. Borongan, G., & Huno, S. (2020).
 9. Borongan, G., & Huno, S. (2020). *Capacity Mapping for Monitoring and Assessment of Plastic Pollution in the Lower Mekong*. <http://www.rccap.ait.asia/Publications/CapMap-PlasticPollution.pdf>
 10. ERIA Regional Knowledge Centre for Marine Plastic Debris (2020) Action Plans and Roadmaps: Laos. <https://rkcmpd-eria.org/goodpractices/26/ministries/laos>
 11. World Bank. (2020). *World Development Indicators Database*.

- **At the subnational level**, the Urban Development Administrative Authorities (UDAAs) are responsible for SWM in the provinces, in addition to district offices of MPWT ⁽¹²⁾. For the capital city of Vientiane, the Vientiane City Office for Management and Service (VCOMS) is responsible for SWM in the city, including the operation of waste collection vehicles. ⁽¹³⁾
- Government Policies**
- In 2017, MoNRE, in cooperation with the **Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Core Environment Program** of ADB, has produced the National Pollution Control Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2025, with Vision to 2030, which is focused on pollution control-- including water pollution, and pollution caused by urban solid waste.
 - Waste management in Laos is carried out through the following legislation:
 - **Environment Protection Law No. 29/NA 2013**, which calls for separation of general waste based on the concept of recycling, reuse, reprocessing, and elimination ⁽¹⁴⁾;
 - **Industrial Waste Discharge Regulation No. 180/MIH 1994**, which prohibits any solid materials, including plastic, from being disposed of in the environment and into public water sources ⁽¹⁵⁾;
 - **Decree on Waste Management for Healthcare Facilities No. 1706/MOH, 2/7/2004**, which lays out mechanism of waste separation, collection and storage, management and internal relocation for healthcare facilities ⁽¹⁶⁾.
 - Several **targets** exist for waste reduction and management, in accordance with the **National Pollution Control Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2025, with Vision to 2030**:
 - Reduction of waste generation in municipal areas by 30% between 2015 and 2030 ⁽¹⁷⁾;
 - Proper waste separation in 50% of households in six priority provinces and households along National Road 13 by 2030 ⁽¹⁸⁾;
 - Effective and efficient waste collection systems along main roads and in main public areas in municipalities and major tourist sites ⁽¹⁹⁾.

Figure 2. Laos: Waste and plastics waste statistics ⁽¹⁹⁾



12. Akenji, L. et al (2019). *Circular Economy and Plastics: A Gap-Analysis in ASEAN Member States*. https://www.iges.or.jp/en/publication_documents/pub/policyreport/en/10382/FINAL_CE+and+Plastics+-+A+gap+analysis+in+ASEAN+Member+States_1004.pdf

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. MoNRE. (2015). *MoNRE Vision toward 2030: Natural Resources and Environment Strategy, 10 Years 2016 - 2025*. <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/lao170969.pdf>

18. Ibid.

19. Data from World Bank (2018) unless otherwise stated.

20. Akenji, et al., 2019

Waste collection and disposal

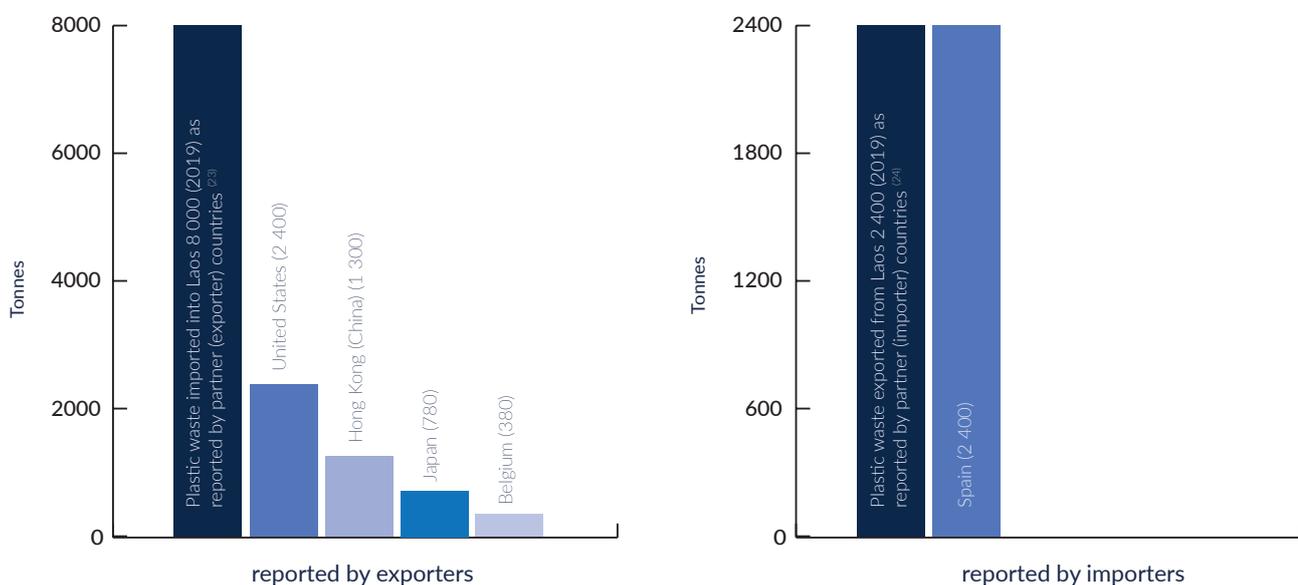
For the capital city of Vientiane, the Vientiane City Office for Management and Service (VCOMS) operates its own fleet of waste collection vehicles. In addition, it has contracts with eight private collection companies to help with waste collection in the city ⁽²⁰⁾.

For the rest of the country, waste collection is

largely informal and is carried out by door-to-door waste buyers, waste pickers in public areas, and landfill scavengers ⁽²¹⁾. Separation at source is not practised. No recycling infrastructure exists in the country ⁽²²⁾, and most of the sorted plastics are sold to recycling facilities in neighbouring countries, such as Thailand and Viet Nam. Laos lags behind the rest of the ASEAN countries in establishing a recycling industry.

Figure 3. Laos: Key plastics waste trade indicators

Major exporters and importers of plastic waste



Measures to address marine plastic waste

As a landlocked country, marine plastic waste is not a major concern in Laos ⁽²⁵⁾. Moreover, there is very little information on plastic waste in general, as there is no Action Plan nor target specific to plastic waste ⁽²⁶⁾. However, the Mekong River, which serves as pathways for plastic waste to enter the ocean, plays a major role in the economy of Laos, and therefore more needs to be done in order to survey

and monitor the status and extent of river-based plastic pollution in the country.

Education and awareness-raising efforts have been underway to fill the institutional and policy gaps that exist in Laos with regard to plastic pollution. The Asia Foundation, a non-profit international development organisation based in the USA, launched the *Love Laos: Keep it Clean* campaign in 2016 to promote recycling, composting, and the prevention of littering in

20. Ibid.

21. UNEP. (2017). *Waste Management in ASEAN Countries*. <https://environment.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Summary-Report-Waste-Management-in-ASEAN-Countries-UNEP.pdf>

22. Akenji, L., Bengtsson, M., Kato, M., Hengesbaugh, M., Hotta, Y., Aoki-Suzuki, C., . . . Liu, C. (2019). *Circular Economy and Plastics: A Gap-Analysis in ASEAN Member States*. https://www.iges.or.jp/en/publication_documents/pub/policyreport/en/10382/FINAL_CE+and+Plastics+A+gap+analysis+in+ASEAN+Member+States_1004.pdf

23. UN Comtrade (2020). *UN Comtrade Database International Trade Statistics*

24. Ibid.

25. Lyons, et al. (2019) *A review of research on marine plastics in Southeast Asia: Who does What?* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-review-of-research-on-marine-plastics-in-sea-who-does-what>

26. ERIA Regional Knowledge Centre for Marine Plastic Debris (2020) *Local Regulations: Lao PDR*. <https://rkcmpd-eria.org/goodpractices/26/local/laos>

regional cities including Bolikhamxay, Luang Prabang, and Khammouane ⁽²⁷⁾. In the education sector, a partnership between the National University of Laos and the Hanoi University of Sciences (Viet Nam) alongside three European universities from Denmark, German and Austria, launched the “Sea-Plastic-Edu Erasmus + Project” in 2018 ⁽²⁸⁾. With the objective

of supporting universities in Laos and Viet Nam to modernize and improve the university curriculum in waste management, the project aimed to establish a formal training network for waste recycling, as well as to connect professionals from the academic and industrial sectors in the field of waste management.

27. Ibid.

28. Sea Plastic Edu (2019), *Launching ceremony of Sea-Plastic-Edu project*, <http://plastic-edu.com/en/2019/08/13/launching-ceremony-of-sea-plastic-edu-project/>