



USAID
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VIETNAM

CASE STUDY

Cleaner Vehicles, Cleaner Air

New fuel and emission standards improve the health of city dwellers



Photo: Doan Van Huu

Today, Vietnam's cities are crammed with cars, trucks and motorcycles.

"My colleagues and I have learned that preventative measures can minimize air pollution in rapidly growing cities," says Tran Duc Hoa of the Ministry of Science and Technology. "We don't want Vietnam left behind other countries."

Challenge

Ten years ago most urban Vietnamese rode bicycles, but over the last decade rapid industrialization has contributed to a sharp rise in the use of motorized vehicles. Vietnam's cities are now crammed with cars, trucks and motorcycles; Ho Chi Minh City alone has more than 3 million motorbikes for just over 5 million people. These vehicles create emissions containing lead, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, ozone and fine particulate matter — and cause significant health impacts. Exposure to outdoor air pollution is associated with a range of health problems, from chronic asthma to respiratory and cardiovascular disease. Young children are especially vulnerable. Elevated lead levels in the blood, for example, stunt brain development and reduce learning ability.

Initiative

In 2001, USAID began working with the Ministry of Transportation to improve urban air quality. The government formed a partnership with the private sector and, in less than a year, had phased out leaded gas nationwide. Building on this success, USAID supported workshops and conferences with Vietnamese air-quality experts on the importance of developing tighter vehicle emissions and fuel standards. Vietnam recently enacted cleaner EURO 2 standards for new motorbikes. USAID is also promoting increased awareness among government officials, industry leaders and the public about the links between stricter standards, better air quality and human health.

Results

The phase-out of leaded gasoline has reduced lead exposure for millions of city dwellers — particularly the poor, who tend to live along congested roads. Since motorbikes represent 90 percent of vehicles, the new EURO 2 standards ensure that the estimated 10 million new motorcycles expected on Vietnam's roads in the coming decade will emit less pollution. Looking still forward, USAID is supporting further development of a "roadmap" to gradually phase in even cleaner standards for automotive emissions and fuel quality. With USAID's support, Vietnam is taking proactive measures to keep its skies blue and its people healthy.