



# COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH STUDY BRIEF

## Purpose

This brief summarizes the Collective Action for Environmental Health study which aimed to understand why and how the Clean Air Green Cities activity, funded by USAID and implemented by Live and Learn, led to collective action to reduce beehive cookstove use in Hanoi, Vietnam. It explored the factors and process that led to collective action and environmental policy adoption, providing insight on how collective action may be used in other contexts in future USAID programming.



The Signs say "BẾP" (stove), "THAN" (coal), "KHÓ" (difficult), and "THỞ" (to breathe). Photo: Live and Learn.

## Method

The study's findings are derived from a desk review, direct observation, key informant interviews, and a data validation workshop with diverse stakeholders in the sector.

## Background

Many of today's development challenges, such as environmental pollution and public health, require a non-conventional partnership of non-traditional stakeholders if the intervention is to be maximally effective and operationally and financially sustainable. Recognizing this, USAID/Vietnam incorporates collective action as a core approach in its Country Development Cooperation Strategy. Collective action is a coordinated engagement among interested parties within an agreed-upon process in support of common objectives. Vietnam Clean Air Green Cities implemented by Live and Learn, is piloting a collective action approach to address beehive cookstove in Hanoi to establish networks and strengthen linkages among local actors working on air quality and associated health issues.

## Pilot to Reduce the Use of Beehive Cookstoves

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Air pollution presented an **opportunity**, and the **political will** from Hanoi City leadership to address it **triggered collective action** to reduce the use of beehive cookstoves.



A **critical mass** of participating organizations and the facilitator's capacity to bring in additional organizations with **diverse capabilities in reducing air pollution** supported the elimination campaign. However, participating organizations did not have clear **roles and responsibilities**, an agenda, or an agreed-upon list of shared goals, leading to tensions that hindered the collective action.



**Coordination** and **communication** among stakeholders and affected communities were critical to mobilize support and change behavior. However, stakeholder participation was **ad hoc**, raising concerns that the network was not growing sustainably and may not be replicable city-wide.

## Adoption of Environmental Policy

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An **analysis** of beehive cookstove use, along with a **senior-level mandate** to eliminate beehive cookstoves, triggered the policy process.



Unlike the beehive cookstove reduction campaign, **only a few stakeholders** from the collective action efforts engaged in policy formulation and adoption. The Hanoi Environmental Protection Administration mostly drove the action.



**Strong political will** transformed the policy into action and outweighed the other collective action factors. However, members of the network did not verify or follow up on results, raising **concerns over the credibility** of the results and worries about the **risk of beehive stoves returning** in the future.

## How can collective action be applied in future USAID programming ?

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- Define and utilize the **framework of collective action**, with a participatory process to identify and prioritize issues for collective action, analyze and connect local stakeholders, and improve decision making and the capacities that sustain collective efforts and impacts.
- Select the **backbone organization** to facilitate collective action that has credibility in the sector; strong network linkages, particularly with GVN; coordination, communication, and leadership skills; and knowledge of government procedures.
- **Build flexibility into mechanisms**, allowing implementers to adapt to the context.
- Within the Vietnamese political context, successful collective action requires the inclusion of GVN. The **interventions should be aligned with the government's policy agenda and existing political will**.

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To read the full report, please visit [here](#).

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