

Plastic pollution, also known as "white pollution", is a tremendous problem in many countries around the world, including Vietnam. This is the consequence of overuse of disposable plastic products and the ineffective and inefficient collection, recycling, and reuse capacity, causing plastic waste to spread in the environment. Vietnam is currently the country with the fourth largest amount of plastic waste discharged into the sea in the world. According to experts, it is forecasted that by 2050, the amount of waste at sea will be more than fish.

In recent years, activities to protect the environment, which are prominent campaigns against plastic waste, have been widespread. Biosphere Reserves and Marine Protected Areas (MPA) are the pioneers of the green living, the movement "Say no to plastic waste". Cu Lao Cham, shortly after being recognized as the World Biosphere Reserve in 2009, also became the first locality in the country to launch the movement "Say no to plastic bags". After 10 years, it can be said that this place is still the only place to successfully implement the program and continues towards "Say no to single use plastic products". However, the implementation still faces many difficulties, challenges and is not synchronous in the whole Biosphere Reserve. The amount of waste, especially plastic waste, is still a great pressure for waste management.

Stemming from the above reality, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Vietnam together with the Vietnam National Committee for Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB), the World Biosphere Reserve of Cu Lao Cham - Hoi An Management Board has launched the Program on Youth Innovative Ideas for an Ocean without plastic, under the support of the Coca-Cola Foundation, to seek creative solutions from the youth for the problems of reduction, collection, classification, treatment, recycling of plastic waste.

Nearly 3 months after launching, with 25 ideas collected from youth groups, university students, and young scientists nationwide, the jury selected the best 8 ideas for the next round.

In order to further improve the design, feasibility and practical application of the proposed ideas, from 4th to 6th November, 2020, 8 groups with excellent ideas entering the second round participated in the training workshop conducted by leading experts in the field of natural sciences and the environment, creativity and plastic waste management, and exchanging information about the situation of plastic waste at the Biosphere Reserve of Cu Lao Cham - Hoi An. The workshop was organized by UNESCO in Vietnam in coordination with the Management Board of the Cu Lao Cham MPA at the Movenpick Hotel, Hanoi City.

Speaking at the workshop, Mr. Michael Croft - UNESCO Representative to Vietnam highly appreciated the ideas and initiatives of the youth groups participating in the competition and hoped that through the workshop, young scientists will be equipped with important knowledge to help complete the ideas and be able to realize and apply them appropriately to contribute to solving the problem of plastic waste in Cu Lao Cham and replicate them to other Biosphere Reserves in Vietnam.

During the 3-day workshop, with the enthusiastic guidance of lecturers, technical experts from leading universities in Vietnam on methods of building, forming teams, groups; sharing and extracting information; presentation skills; developing ideas and especially the sharing of the current situation of plastic waste at the Biosphere Reserve of Cu Lao - Hoi An by Master Le Ngoc Thao - Head of the Secretariat of the Cu Lao Cham - Hoi An Biosphere Reserve. The groups, for the first steps, adjust, complete the initiatives towards feasibility and meet more specific requirements of reality. At the end of the workshop, the Organizing Committee awarded certificates of training completion to all 30 members of the 8 youth groups and the young scientists.

In the coming time, the groups will continue to adjust and present their initiatives completed in the Final round scheduled to take place on December 8, 2020 at the UN Green Building (in Hanoi). There will be 6 initiatives awarded at the Final Round, of which the best 3 initiatives will receive a reward of up to 70 million VND, including initiative proposals and support costs for actual implementation in Cu Lao Cham in 2021 and 3 initiatives to receive consolation prizes, 10 million each.

Within the framework of Youth Innovation for Ocean Initiative, on December 4, 2020, the "Youth Action for Ocean" event will take place in Hoi An with many practical and useful activities to increase the participation of the youth, communities and stakeholders in raising awareness, calling for and spreading positive actions to reduce plastic waste and protect the environment at the Biosphere Reserve of Cu Lao Cham - Hoi An./.

Some photos of the Workshop