

ANNUAL REPORT

AICS - Hanoi Office

20 25



10 AGENZIA ITALIANA
PER LA COOPERAZIONE
ALLO SVILUPPO

Index

0. ACRONYMS	7
1. AICS HANOI	
▪ Welcome message	8
▪ AICS Hanoi	9
▪ AICS Hanoi in numbers	10
▪ Where we work	12
2. DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN THE REGION	14
▪ The Italy - ASEAN Development Partnership	16
▪ Vietnam	17
▪ Cambodia	19
▪ Laos	20
▪ Pacific Small Island Development States (PSIDS)	21
▪ Philippines	22
▪ Myanmar	23
▪ Bangladesh	24
▪ Sri Lanka	25
3. PRIORITY SECTORS - 5P	26
▪ Rural Development and Food Security	27
▪ WASH	29
▪ Environment and Land Use	31
▪ Health	33
▪ Humanitarian Aid and Fragile Contexts	35
▪ Governance	37
4. LESSONS LEARNT	40
5. AICS HANOI FUTURE PERSPECTIVES	41
6. ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT	42
7. AICS HANOI: 2025 HIGHLIGHTS	44
8. STORIES & PROJECTS	46
9. THE AICS HANOI TEAM	56
10. CONTACTS	58

Acronyms

ADB Asian Development Bank	GDP Gross Domestic Product	PTSD Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
AICS Italian Agency for Development Cooperation	IAI Initiative for ASEAN Integration	PVN PetroVietnam
AIDP ASEAN-Italy Development Partnership	ISTAT Italian National Institute of Statistics	RSPP Health and Safety Officer
ODA Official Development Assistance	IUCN International Union for Conservation of Nature	TEI Team Europe Initiative
ASEAN Association of Southeast Asian Nations	JETP Just Energy Transition Partnership	TWG Technical Working Groups
ASEC ASEAN Secretariat	JRP Joint Response Plan	UN ESCAP UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
CDP Cassa Depositi e Prestiti	LME Low and middle enthalpy	UNDP United Nations Development Programme
CSO Civil Society Organizations	MAE Vietnamese Ministry of Agriculture and Environment	UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
DGCS Directorate General for Development Cooperation	MAECI Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation	UNOCHA United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
DPG Development Partners Group	MHF Myanmar Humanitarian Fund	WFP World Food Program
DRR Disaster Risk Reduction	MIP Multi-annual Indicative Programme	WHO World Health Organization
DWRM Department for Water Resource Management Vietnam	NbS Nature based Solutions	
EU European Union	OCHA Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	
EUDC European Union Development Counsellors	SDGs Sustainable Development Goals	
FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation	PBL Policy-Based Lending	
GAqP Good Aquaculture Practices	PCA Practical Cooperation Areas	
	PSIDS Pacific Small Island Developing States	

AICS Hanoi



Welcome Message

Dear Readers,
For the AICS Hanoi Office, 2025 marked a year of strategic consolidation and progressive adaptation to a rapidly evolving regional and international landscape. Across a geographical area stretching from Bangladesh to the Pacific Small Island Developing States through Southeast Asia—characterized by varying levels of development, climate vulnerability, and socioeconomic fragility—the Italian Development Cooperation is called upon to operate with increasingly integrated, flexible, and partnership-oriented instruments designed for long-term impact. In recent years, AICS Hanoi has progressively strengthened its regional approach, supporting the evolution of the priorities of the Italian Development

Cooperation and the ASEAN–Italy Development Partnership. Within this framework, climate resilience, sustainable natural resource management, energy transition, and the promotion of circular economy have become central strategic pillars of the Office’s work, in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Team Europe and Global Gateway initiatives. Particular attention has also been devoted to the evolution of development finance instruments and to strengthening synergies among public cooperation actors, financial institutions, and the private sector. In this context, the Office has promoted new forms of collaboration with multilateral and international financial partners, fostering Italian participation in innovative blended

finance initiatives in the fields of green growth, private sector development, and energy transition. At the same time, the Office has continued its commitment to leveraging European funds through delegated cooperation initiatives and to strengthening the role of the Italian System in the region. The year 2025 also marked the launch of new regional initiatives within the ASEAN framework and the consolidation of the Italian Development Cooperation’s humanitarian commitment in protracted crisis contexts. In particular, AICS Hanoi supported emergency interventions following the earthquake that struck Myanmar in March 2025 and renewed its support for humanitarian demining activities in Cambodia, where the consequences of past conflicts continue to have multiple negative impacts on local communities. On the tenth anniversary of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, I would finally like to emphasize that the work of the Office continues to be grounded in the conviction that inclusive partnerships, innovation, and multilateral dialogue are essential tools for addressing the major climate, environmental, and energy challenges affecting this region of the world.

Margherita Lulli
Head of Development Cooperation

AICS Hanoi

The AICS Hanoi Office oversees Italian Official Development Assistance (ODA) activities across a geographic area encompassing Sri Lanka, the ASEAN Member States, Bangladesh, and the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS). AICS Hanoi manages an active portfolio of initiatives worth €144.8 million, spanning technical cooperation, development finance, and humanitarian assistance. Vietnam is the principal beneficiary of Italian ODA in the region.

The Office operates in highly diverse economic, institutional, and social contexts. In lower-middle-income countries such as Vietnam, particular emphasis is placed on capacity development, technical assistance, and support for public policies in the fields of environmental sustainability and inclusive economic growth. In contexts affected by political instability or protracted crises, such as Myanmar and areas impacted by the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh, interventions focus primarily on humanitarian assistance and the protection of vulnerable populations.

The Office’s activities are guided by a regional strategy aligned with the 2030 Agenda and grounded in the principles of the 5 Ps—People, Planet,

Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership—with particular emphasis on three operational priorities: climate resilience, sustainable natural resource management, and circular economy. Within this framework, AICS Hanoi promotes local capacity strengthening, the valorisation of Italian expertise, and the development of integrated and replicable solutions.

Since 2020, the Office has progressively strengthened its regional orientation, prioritising initiatives that support ASEAN integration within the framework of the ASEAN–Italy Development Partnership. To support this process, since May 2024, AICS Hanoi has opened a project office hosted at the Italian Embassy in Jakarta. The Office facilitates technical dialogue with ASEAN Secretariat divisions and supports coordination with implementing partners and beneficiary institutions involved in regional initiatives.

The Office also collaborates closely with European Union Delegations across the countries under its mandate through participation in coordination mechanisms, Team Europe Initiatives, and Global Gateway programmes. With regard to financial instruments, AICS Hanoi is increasingly

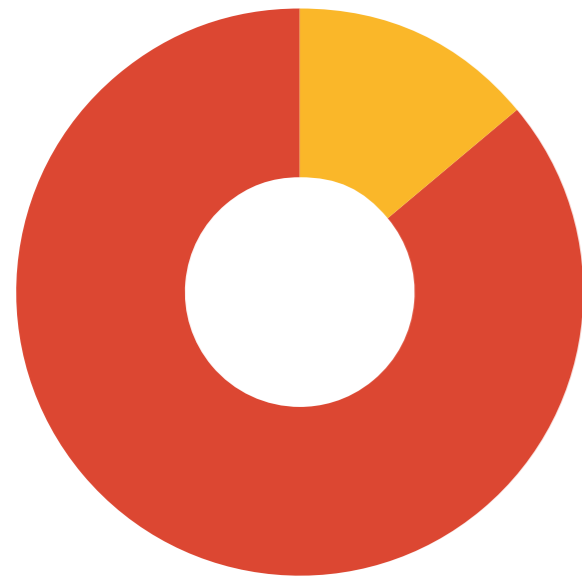
engaged in blended finance mechanisms, coordination with Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP) and vertical funds—including the Italian Climate Fund—as well as in promoting the participation of the Italian private sector in sustainable development initiatives.

AICS Hanoi in numbers

Total amount € 144.837.300,90

Development finance € 124.328.772,93

Grants € 20.508.527,97



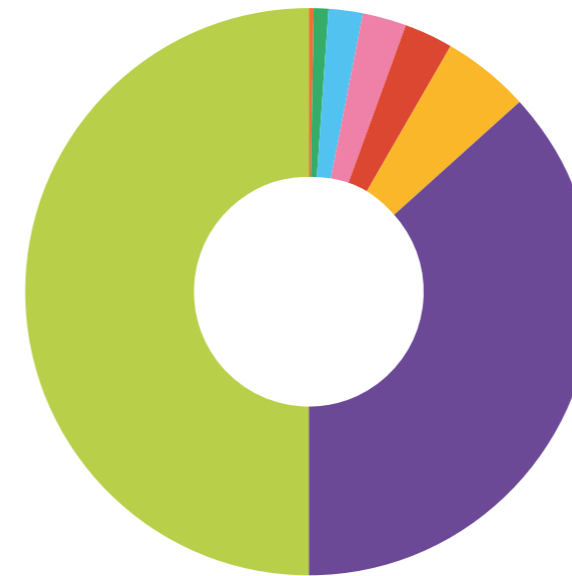
Development finance
85,84 %

Grants
14,16 %

Financing channels

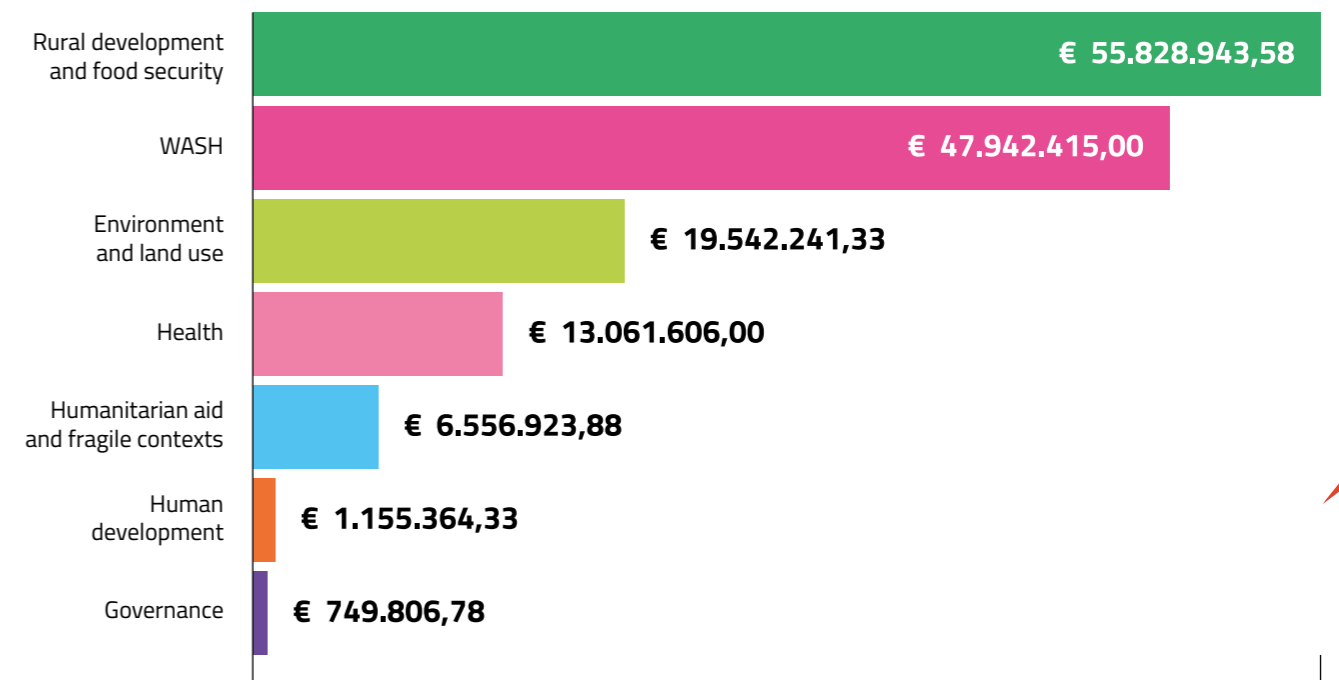
GRANTS		DEVELOPMENT FINANCE	
Development cooperation	Humanitarian aid	Loans	Debt-swap
13 Projects	5 Projects	8 Projects	2 Projects
€ 14.951.604,09	€ 5.556.923,88	€ 113.363.606,00	€ 10.956.166,93

Portfolio by country

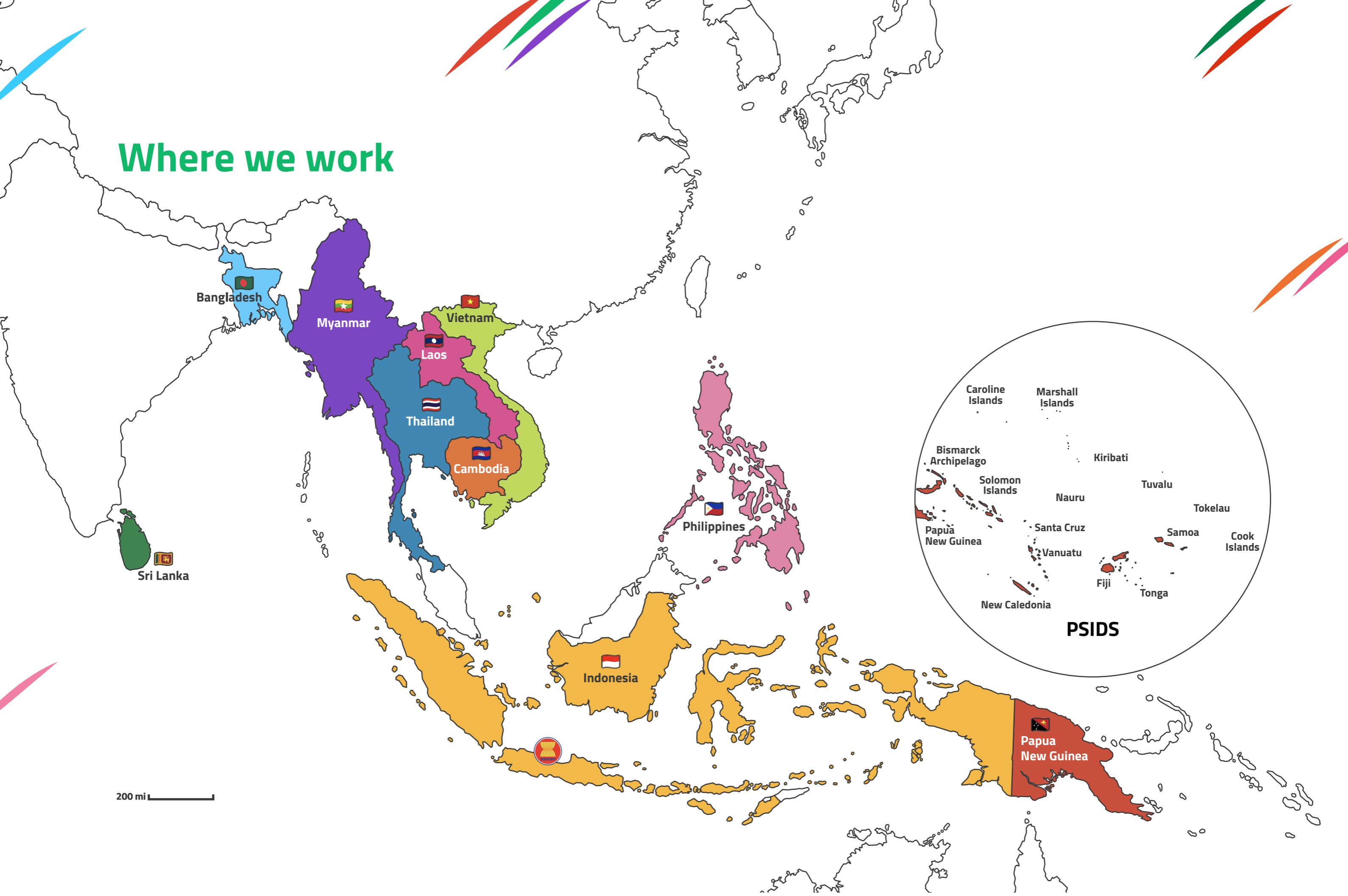


Vietnam	50,11%
Myanmar	36,80%
ASEAN and regional projects	4,77%
PSIDS	3,02%
Philippines	2,26%
Bangladesh	2,07%
Sri Lanka	0,80%
Cambodia	0,17%

Portfolio by sector



Where we work





DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN THE REGION

Following the closure of the AICS Yangon Office in 2022, the AICS Hanoi Office became the regional hub for the Italian Development Cooperation in Asia, assuming responsibility for initiatives in Myanmar and Bangladesh and for coordinating cooperation activities under the Italy–ASEAN Development Partnership.

Since 2023, AICS Hanoi has further expanded its mandate to include the Philippines, the broader Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Small Island Development States (PSIDS), managing development and emergency programmes at both national and regional levels.

Socioeconomic data of Partner Countries

COUNTRY	POPULATION	LIFE EXPECTANCY	POVERTY INDEX (% OF THE POPULATION)	GDP PER CAPITA (CURRENT US\$)	ANNUAL GROWTH RATE %	HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX
VIETNAM	100,987,686 (2024)	75 (2023)	1.6 (2022)	4,717.3 (2024)	7.1 (2024)	0.766 (2023)
CAMBODIA	17,638,801 (2024)	NA	NA	2,627.9 (2024)	NA	0.606 (2023)
LAO PDR	7,769,819 (2024)	69 (2023)	15.7 (2018)	2,124.0 (2024)	4.1 (2024)	0.617 (2023)
PHILIPPINES	115,843,670 (2024)	70 (2023)	5.3 (2023)	3,984.8 (2024)	5.7 (2024)	0.720 (2023)
MYANMAR	54,500,091 (2024)	67 (2023)	10.3 (2017)	1,359.1 (2024)	-1.0 (2024)	0.609 (2023)
BANGLADESH	173,562,364 (2024)	NA	NA	2,593.4 (2024)	NA	0.685 (2023)
SRI LANKA	21,916,000 (2024)	78 (2024)	2.7 (2019)	4,515.6 (2024)	5.0 (2024)	0.776 (2023)

The Italy-ASEAN Development Partnership

The admission of Timor-Leste into ASEAN, formalized in October 2025, marked the geographical completion of the Association, which now brings together eleven Member States: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and Timor-Leste. With a population of approximately 670 million inhabitants and an aggregate GDP of around 3.8 trillion USD, ASEAN represents one of the most dynamic regions in the world, committed to promoting political stability, regional integration, and sustainable growth, despite significant economic and social disparities among its member countries.

Within this framework, Italy has held the role of ASEAN Development Partner since September 2020. Through the collaboration between AICS Hanoi, the Embassy of Italy in Jakarta, and the ASEAN Secretariat, strategic initiatives

have been promoted to address global challenges such as climate change, food security, and energy transition. AICS's actions focus specifically on promoting innovative and sustainable solutions in agriculture, circular economy, and energy sectors.

During 2025, two regional initiatives promoted under the Italy-ASEAN Development Partnership entered their operational phase, with the aim of strengthening regional technical cooperation in the fields of sustainable agriculture, food security, fisheries, and aquaculture. These initiatives seek to promote innovative and climate-resilient approaches, fostering dialogue among ASEAN institutions, research centers, and technical bodies.



In 2025, Vietnam took an important step in reforming its development cooperation regulatory framework through the adoption of Decree No. 242/2025/ND-CP on the management and use of ODA funds and concessional loans. The new regulation aims to streamline administrative procedures, strengthen coordination among the institutions involved, and enhance the country's capacity to absorb external development resources.

Although some implementation challenges remain, the reform represents a significant step towards greater efficiency in the management of programmes financed by international partners and creates new opportunities for more flexible financing modalities, including programme-based and policy-based approaches. It is also worth noting the growing emphasis placed by the Vietnamese Government on budget support mechanisms through credit instruments, compared to the traditional approach centered on financing individual investment projects. This evolution has been accompanied by a substantial shift in the country's borrowing policies towards

international partners. After years of prioritising highly concessional financing, in 2025 the authorities demonstrated greater openness to less concessional forms of financing offered by international financial institutions. In this context, to address an estimated financing requirement of USD 83 billion over the 2025–2027 period, the Government of Vietnam resumed seeking support from the major multilateral development banks operating in the country, accepting financing conditions closer to market terms.

In parallel, the Government continued the administrative restructuring process launched in 2024, aimed at rationalising the public administration structure and containing public expenditure, with significant implications also for coordination with development partners. The Office maintains continuous dialogue with the Vietnamese Government to address these challenges and to promote an inclusive and resilient development model, strengthening coordination among development partners while fostering synergies with the European Union and multilateral institutions.

Over the years, development cooperation projects in Vietnam have benefited from the significant involvement of the Italian System, which was further strengthened in 2025. This engagement includes important collaborations with Italian companies specialized in water resource management, environmental monitoring technologies, and the medical sector. Numerous partnerships have also been established with Italian universities, including the University of Sassari, the Polytechnic University of Milan, and the University of Brescia. These collaborations have intensified knowledge exchange between the two countries and further consolidated Italy's reputation as a reliable and competent partner among local counterparts, capable of combining technological innovation with a strong commitment to sustainability.

During 2025, also as a result of the evolving attitude of the Vietnamese authorities towards borrowing from international partners, the Office initiated consultations with the Ministry of Finance, the Asian Development Bank (ADB),

Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), and Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP) to facilitate Italian participation in two Policy-Based Lending (PBL) operations in Vietnam. PBL is a form of budget support linked to the implementation of policy reforms and agreed policy measures by the partner country. The initiatives focus on green growth, energy transition, and circular economy policies.

The Office also continued to provide technical support to initiatives associated with the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) in Vietnam, promoting potential collaborations in the fields of geothermal energy and energy transition. At the same time, AICS Hanoi advanced the design of a delegated European cooperation initiative in the agricultural and environmental sectors, aimed at promoting climate-smart and circular practices along selected agricultural value chains. Through these efforts, the Office contributed to strengthening Italy's role as a technical and strategic partner in Vietnam's sustainable development.



Cambodia

In 2025, Cambodia continued its path of economic and institutional consolidation, maintaining robust growth rates driven primarily by the manufacturing, tourism, and infrastructure sectors, despite an international environment characterised by slowing global demand and persistent social vulnerabilities. The Government led by Prime Minister Hun Manet continued the implementation of the "Pentagonal Strategy – Phase I", with particular emphasis on public administration reform, human capital development, digitalisation of public services, and strengthening the country's economic competitiveness.

At the same time, Cambodia continued to reinforce its role in ASEAN regional integration processes and in initiatives related to climate resilience and the sustainable management of natural resources. However, the country remains exposed to significant structural challenges, including territorial inequalities, vulnerability to extreme climate events—droughts and floods—and the need to further strengthen public governance and institutional capacities.

During 2025, tensions along the border with Thailand resurfaced, culminating in a number of armed incidents in disputed areas, drawing renewed regional attention to the persistent fragilities along the frontier between the two

countries. In addition, Cambodia continues to face the long-term consequences of past conflicts, particularly the widespread presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO), which remain a threat to rural communities and an obstacle to socioeconomic development in several provinces.

In this context, increasing attention has been devoted to improving public planning, enhancing the quality of statistical data, and attracting sustainable investment. Within this framework, Italian Development Cooperation continued its engagement in the country, strengthening dialogue with Cambodian institutions and promoting initiatives focused on sustainable development, institutional capacity building, and regional cooperation.

The AICS Hanoi Office continued to support the launch of a trilateral initiative involving Vietnam, Lao PDR, and Cambodia aimed at strengthening the capacities of their respective national statistical systems, with particular emphasis on environmental and climate statistics.

Cambodia also participates in two additional regional initiatives approved under the ASEAN–Italy Development Partnership, focusing respectively on sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, and



climate-resilient agriculture. These initiatives contribute to strengthening ASEAN regional cooperation in the areas of food security, environmental sustainability, and rural development.

In Cambodia, the Italian Development Cooperation also continued its engagement in humanitarian demining and unexploded ordnance risk reduction, contributing to national and international efforts aimed at improving the safety of local communities and fostering sustainable socioeconomic development in the areas most affected by the legacy of past conflicts.



Laos

In 2025, Lao PDR continued to face a challenging economic and social situation, marked by high public debt, the depreciation of the Lao kip, and rising living costs, despite a gradual slowdown in inflation. At the same time, the Government pursued efforts to strengthen macroeconomic stability and improve economic and administrative governance, placing increasing emphasis on public planning, the quality of statistical data, and the resilience of the agricultural and energy sectors. In this context, the country continued to promote its role as a regional energy hub through hydropower development and energy interconnections. Meanwhile, deeper ASEAN integration and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda priori-

ties further enhanced Lao PDR's participation in regional initiatives supported by development partners, against a backdrop of growing international attention to the environmental and financial sustainability of large-scale infrastructure and energy projects.

Following a period of limited operational engagement, Lao PDR has progressively been reintegrated into the regional strategy of AICS Hanoi through initiatives developed under ASEAN-Italy Development Partnership framework. The Italian Development Cooperation focuses on strengthening institutional capacities, enhancing climate resilience, and promoting the sustainable management of natural resources, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Particular attention is devoted to regional technical cooperation and the development of national statistical capacities, including through the previously mentioned trilateral initiative involving Vietnam, Lao PDR, and Cambodia in the field of environmental and climate statistics. At the same time, Lao PDR participates in regional initiatives promoted by AICS Hanoi in the areas of sustainable agriculture, food security, and climate-resilient fisheries and aquaculture, fostering knowledge exchange among institutions, research centers, and ASEAN technical bodies.

The Italian Development Cooperation in the country is therefore implemented through a regional integration approach, leveraging Lao PDR's role in ASEAN cooperation processes and promoting technical partnerships aimed at sustainable development, environmental resilience, and institutional capacity strengthening.



Pacific Small Island Development States (PSIDS)

The year 2025 marked a crucial moment for the Pacific SIDS, which, during the 2025 United Nations Ocean Conference in Nice, strengthened their leadership role in ocean governance by promoting commitments to expand marine protected areas in line with the global 30x30 target. Pacific SIDS are among the regions most exposed to the impacts of climate change and environmental shocks: according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (AR6), mean sea levels in the tropical Pacific have risen faster than the global average, while in several island States more than 90% of the population lives within 5 km of the coast, facing direct exposure to coastal flooding, erosion, and saltwater intrusion into freshwater resources.

In this context, the Italian Development Cooperation supports Pacific Small Island Developing States through initiatives aimed at strengthening climate resilience and promoting sustainable development. These interventions, overseen by AICS Hanoi and implemented through the multilateral channel, focus on the protection of fragile ecosystems, sustainable energy, and the improvement of local livelihoods. Through partnerships with international organizations, Italy contributes to enhancing food security

and climate change adaptation in these vulnerable communities.

The Italian Development Cooperation is actively engaged across Pacific SIDS to strengthen climate resilience, protect biodiversity, and promote sustainable livelihoods. In Samoa, Tonga, and Tuvalu, Italy supports access to renewable energy in remote areas and promotes ecosystem conservation, responsible tourism, and organic agriculture through technical training, local markets, and the valorization of traditional products.

In Fiji and Vanuatu, Italy supports agricultural biodiversity, with a focus on agroecological practices and the sustainable management of native food and medicinal plants.

In Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, initiatives aim to strengthen local knowledge on the sustainable use and valorization of forest resources, while in Palau and the Cook Islands Italy promotes gastronomic tourism linked to local agricultural traditions. In the Marshall Islands, Italy contributes to sustainable electrification and the improvement of basic services. These initiatives are implemented through multilateral partnerships, in line with the 2030 Agenda and the respective *Nationally Determined Contributions* of partner countries.



Philippines

The Republic of the Philippines, classified as a lower middle-income country, has experienced steady economic growth in recent years, supported by fiscal reforms and increased public investment in infrastructure. However, in 2025, the impact of Typhoon Aghon, which particularly affected the northern Luzon region and caused significant damage, highlighted the country's persistent climate vulnerability and contributed to worsening territorial inequalities. In this context, the Philippines continues to display relatively high levels of income inequality, above the ASEAN average, that makes the path toward achieving upper middle-income status more uncertain. According to the most recent World Bank assessments, this objective remains plausible, though not guaranteed in the short term.

Italy continues to operate in the Philippines primarily through a Debt Swap Programme active since 2013. With an initial value of EUR 2.9 million, the Programme has financed projects aimed at environmental protection and strengthening the climate resilience of local communities, implemented by Philippine civil society organizations, and now concluded. In 2025, a review of the Programme's architecture was launched in order to enable the resumption of activities and the financing of a new intervention.

Furthermore, although the Philippines is no longer included among the priority countries of the Italian Cooperation, it continues to benefit from initiatives promoted by the AICS Hanoi Office within the broader ASEAN framework.

Myanmar

On 28 March 2025, Myanmar was struck by a magnitude 7.7 earthquake with its epicenter near Mandalay, along the Sagaing Fault. It was the strongest earthquake recorded in the country in more than a century. The disaster caused thousands of deaths and injuries, directly affecting millions of people. Its consequences were devastating: widespread collapse of homes, schools, and hospitals, as well as severe damage to critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and water and electricity networks, with estimated economic losses amounting to billions of dollars.

The earthquake hit a population already severely affected by a multifaceted crisis. Since the military coup of 1 February 2021, Myanmar has been experiencing a widespread civil conflict that has generated more than 3.7 million internally displaced persons. According to OCHA's Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026, approximately 16.2 million people require multisectoral humanitarian assistance, more than two-thirds of whom are women and children. The document identifies life-saving assistance and protection interventions as priorities for 4.9 million people considered among the most vulnerable populations in the hardest-hit areas.

From an economic perspective, the earthquake further aggravated an already critical situation: poverty in the af-



ected areas has deepened significantly. Employment rates, already reduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, declined further, while inflation and the depreciation of the local currency drastically reduced households' purchasing power. Rural communities, heavily dependent on agriculture, suffered major losses to their livelihoods due to damage to farmland, infrastructure, and productive activities, with significant consequences for food security. More than five years of intensified internal conflict have exacerbated the proliferation of interconnected threats, compounding the political and humanitarian crisis. Among these are the so-called *scam centers*, illegal facilities in which, according to United Nations estimates, tens of thousands of trafficking victims are forced to work under exploitative conditions. At the same time, drug trafficking continues to represent one of the main sources of instability. These dynamics are accompanied by serious human rights violations, including torture, human trafficking, and sexual violence,

making the protection and security environment for civilians even more complex.

Myanmar also remains one of the countries most vulnerable to climate risks: the March 2025 earthquake adds to a series of recent natural disasters, such as Typhoon Yagi in September 2024, which affected 630,000 people, confirming the country's structural fragility.

In this context, the AICS Office in Hanoi has continued its humanitarian commitment in support of the population of Myanmar and the communities most affected by the regional crisis, supporting emergency interventions and humanitarian assistance initiatives in coordination with multilateral organizations and civil society organizations. Particular attention has been devoted to supporting the most vulnerable segments of the population, including in relation to the consequences of the above-mentioned earthquake, as well as assisting refugee and displaced populations in the region, with specific reference to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh.



Bangladesh

In 2025, Bangladesh continued to undergo a profound and complex political transition initiated by the “July Revolution” of 2024, which culminated in the forced resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, daughter of the country’s founder and first President. One year after the protests, the interim Government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus promulgated the “July Declaration”, a programmatic document which, in addition to recognizing the historical and political significance of the 2024 revolution, outlines a roadmap for institutional reforms aimed at restructuring the country’s democratic framework, with particular emphasis on strengthening the principles of transparency, pluralism, and preventing authoritarian tendencies.

The Italian Cooperation in Bangladesh is primarily focused on humanitarian assistance supporting the response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, with refugees hosted in the camps of Cox’s Bazar and on Bhasan Char Island, within the framework of the United Nations-coordinated humanitarian response (Joint Response Plan – JRP). The Rohingya, a Muslim community originating from Rakhine State in western Myanmar, have for years been forced to live in

conditions of extreme vulnerability due to persecution, violence, and systematic discrimination in their country of origin. The denial of citizenship and the severe restrictions imposed by the Myanmar authorities have progressively forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee Myanmar and seek refuge in neighbouring Bangladesh.

As of 30 June 2025, it was estimated that around 550,000 Rohingya were still residing in Rakhine State in western Myanmar, while more than 1.1 million had found refuge in Bangladesh. The protracted conflict between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army, an armed group active in Rakhine State, continues to prevent conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of refugees to their places of origin, making the Rohingya crisis one of the major protracted crises in the region. The initiatives managed by AICS Hanoi support Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi host communities through the funding of United Nations agencies engaged in the provision of essential multisectoral services and in strengthening the resilience of vulnerable populations, with particular attention to protection, human dignity, and gender-related considerations.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka presents a complex context marked by economic fragilities and social tensions that have persisted in recent years. Over the last decade, the country has continued to suffer from interethnic divisions, with recurring episodes of tension among Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim communities, contributing to a persistently high level of social instability. This situation was further aggravated by the jihadist attacks carried out on Easter Sunday, 21 April 2019, targeting churches and hotels and causing approximately 269 deaths. These dynamics were compounded by a severe economic crisis that culminated in 2022, characterized by high inflation, shortages of essential goods, and rising poverty, with lasting effects on the living conditions of the population. In 2025, the country continued its difficult path of economic reforms and fiscal consolidation within the framework of agreements with the

International Monetary Fund, with significant social impacts, including protests and growing concerns over the cost of living. These challenges continue to fuel migration abroad, including to Italy, where the Sri Lankan community represents a well-established presence of more than 113,700 people according to the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) data. Within this context, the initiative financed under the 2023 call for proposals on Christian minorities and coordinated by the Italian CSO Fondazione MAGIS is being implemented. Its main objective is to support the Christian minority population in Sri Lanka by promoting a process of reconciliation among the country’s different ethnic and religious communities in the post-conflict period through an educational and interreligious dialogue programme. The initiative, with a total value of EUR 1,155,364, was launched in April 2024 and will conclude in January 2027.



PRIORITY SECTORS



Italy promotes the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda through a cooperation strategy that integrates the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development, fostering coordination among public institutions, private sector, universities, civil society, and international organizations. The AICS Office in Hanoi operates in accordance with the principles of the 5 Ps (Peace, People, Planet, Prosperity, and Partnership), with a particular focus on social inclusion, environmental protection, and resilience.

In the ASEAN region, Italy supports the reduction of socio-economic and gender inequalities and the strengthening of governance, intervening in key areas such as energy transition, food security, sustainable management of natural resources, and statistical capacity development.

Rural Development and Food Security

Through the project "Cooperation mechanism for the competitive development of aquaculture and artisanal fisheries in ASEAN - COOPMEC", the Agency contributes to food security in the ASEAN region through an integrated strategy aimed at making the aquaculture and small-scale fisheries sectors more sustainable, productive, and competitive. The initiative aims to ensure food availability and safety by promoting the adoption of regionally harmonized Good Aquaculture Practices (GAqP) and the implementation of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication.

By training programs and the transfer of knowledge from the "Mediterranean model", the project aims to significant-

ly reduce food loss and waste (by up to 15% in the artisanal fisheries sector) and decrease the use of chemicals and antibiotics, thereby improving product quality for local consumers. Furthermore, by addressing the phenomenon of abandoned fishing gear, the project intends to protect biodiversity and support the replenishment of fish stocks, safeguarding the long-term supply of animal proteins for local communities.

The project "Scientific and technical support for sustainable agriculture in ASEAN countries - 3S", on the other hand, contributes to food security in the ASEAN region by promoting the transition towards more resilient, productive, and sustainable agricultural production systems. The initiative focuses on the introduction of advanced technological solutions and tailored agricultural mechani-

zation for the maize, cassava, and sugarcane value chains, with the goal of increasing yields and reducing pre- and post-harvest losses. Through a Climate-Smart Agriculture and agroecology approach, it aims to stabilize food supplies despite the challenges posed by climate change, while simultaneously improving soil quality and the health of agricultural workers. Furthermore, the training of technicians and farmers (with a specific focus on gender inclusion) and the development of jointly drafted technical manuals ensure that the introduced innovations become established practices, thereby strengthening the autonomy and competitiveness of the regional agri-food system by 2030.



Prosperity

Through its actions in the Indo-Pacific, the Agency enhances food security by introducing innovations that make crops more resilient to climate change. Concurrently, it supports rural development by promoting responsible aquaculture models that integrate environmental protection with the growth of local economies. This commitment is translated into concrete interventions to ensure decent and stable livelihoods for coastal and agricultural communities.

ASEAN: regional certification systems and standards for sectoral competitiveness

Certification systems in the ASEAN Region present several weaknesses. The regional landscape is fragmented by a marked heterogeneity among national guidelines and a lack of harmonization in biosecurity and traceability protocols. Furthermore, the artisanal fisheries and small-scale local aquaculture sector struggle to access these schemes due to high compliance costs, a lack of widespread technical skills, and limited integration among public institutions, research institutes, and the private sector.

Within this framework, and specifically through the "Cooperation Mechanism for the Competitive Development of Aquaculture and Artisanal Fisheries in ASEAN - COOPMEC" project, Italian Cooperation aims to increase the sector's competitiveness and environmental sustainability through a strategic breakthrough in assurance mechanisms. This will be achieved by focusing on the harmonization of good production practices and the strengthening of certification and traceability systems, alongside the definition of shared sectoral policies.

Within this architecture, certification systems are not merely a bureaucratic requirement, but an indispensable tool for exporting to international markets such as the European Union and North America, which demand rigorous and verifiable standards. Focusing on certification means placing sustainability at the core: an essential prerequisite that not only protects ecosystems but also ensures the long-term conservation of fish stocks, thereby guaranteeing continuous productivity and the economic stability of coastal communities.

Projects



- AID 013133 - Scientific and technical support for sustainable agriculture in ASEAN countries - 3S
- AID 013115 - Cooperation mechanism for the competitive development of aquaculture and artisanal fisheries in ASEAN – COOPMEC



The AICS Hanoi Office works to support improved access to water resources through three strategic actions: ensuring access to basic sanitation services; guaranteeing the availability of water for domestic and productive use; and protecting water resources, including through Nature-based Solutions.

WASH activities are mainly concentrated in Vietnam through concessional loan initiatives supporting national programmes. In recent years, the Vietnamese authorities have introduced several policies aimed at advancing towards Sustainable Development Goal 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation. In this context, the Hanoi Office has provided technical assistance and specialized contributions to the formulation of the new Law on Water Resources, integrating climate resilience measures and circular water use approaches. According to the UN-Water coordination mechanism, only 59% of the population uses safely managed drinking water services, while 45% has access to adequate sanitation services and only 41% of domestic wastewater is treated - figures that remain significantly lower than those recorded in other countries in the region, such as the Philippines and Thailand.¹

Four concessional loan initiatives are currently ongoing in the central and southern provinces of Vietnam, aimed at ensuring water availability for drinking and irrigation purposes and improving the management of domestic wastewater and rainwater drainage, with the objective of reducing environmental impacts, mitigating flood risks, and improving sanitation conditions in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas.

Following the proposal to reallocate resources originally earmarked for infrastructure projects in the sector by the Debt Management and External Economic Relations Department of the Vietnamese Ministry of Finance, the AICS Hanoi Office, in coordination with the Italian Embassy, initiated discussions with Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in order to assess a possible Italian contribution to a Policy-Based Loan (PBL) operation supporting private sector development and the promotion of the circular economy in Vietnam.

1. <https://www.sdg6data.org/en/country-or-area/Viet%20Nam>

People, Planet

In Southeast Asia, water management remains a constant challenge, closely linked to climate vulnerability and the strong dependence on water-intensive sectors such as agriculture. Protecting water resources means safeguarding ecosystems and biodiversity, while also ensuring well-being and sustainable development for future generations, in line with the “Planet” and “People” pillars of the 2030 Agenda.

Projects



- AID 8766 - Water Supply in Binh Thuan Province
- AID 8794 - Urban Sanitation in Nui Thanh, Quang Nam
- AID 9914 - New Wastewater Collection and Treatment System for Tay Ninh City
- AID 8862 - Urban Sanitation in Ca Mau City
- AID 9906 - Local Fund Supporting Water Projects



Environment and Land Use

In 2025, field activities under the Vietnamese Debt Swap Program entered a fully operational phase, with the launch of two projects in Quang Tri Province: one focused on improving and managing solid waste, and the other on providing water supply to mountain communities.

During the year, the solid waste management project organized two Training-of-Trainers workshops aimed at strengthening skills in waste classification and implementing a source-separation collection model. On the infrastructure side, the contract for purchasing equipment for the local community was signed, and the tender process for constructing the landfill was launched.

The drinking water supply project received approval from

provincial authorities for the cost estimates and detailed designs, while simultaneously initiating the contractor selection process for building the treatment plant and for other related procurement packages.

Activities were also completed under the technical assistance project to strengthen the regulatory framework of the water sector in Vietnam, implemented by the CIMA Foundation in support of the Department of Water Resources Management. In May 2025, ten Vietnamese officials participated in a study tour in Italy focused on early warning, flood prevention, and basin management. This experience laid the foundation for drafting a regulatory document to support Vietnamese river basin authorities.

The project “Climate Change and Mountain Forests,” implemented by FAO, also came to a close. In its third phase, it had a specific focus on Pacific SIDS (Small Island Developing States). In 2025, a regional pilot initiative was carried out on the “Development of Sustainable Gastronomic Tourism Routes and Value Chains in Pacific SIDS,” designed to integrate small agricultural producers into tourism supply chains in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, the Cook Islands, and Palau.

AICS Hanoi continued to provide technical assistance within the framework of the Just Energy Transition Partnership in Vietnam. During 2025, AICS focused on facilitating dialogue with Vietnamese and Italian counterparts to advance the development of geothermal resources.



Planet

Environmental protection is a cornerstone of Italian Cooperation in the South-east Asia, a region among the most vulnerable to extreme climate events. AICS Hanoi strengthens community resilience through targeted actions on adaptation, mitigation, and disaster preparedness.

Vietnamese Debt Swap: Improving Solid Waste Collection and Treatment Capacity in Quang Tri Province

In June 2025, the solid waste management project organized two Training-of-Trainers sessions in the Gio Linh and Vinh Linh districts of Quang Tri Province. Each session involved about 40 participants, including village leaders and local officials from the agriculture and environment sectors. The training, led by the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Environment, continued in July and December.

The core of the training focused on waste classification at the source: a technical topic, approached in a practical and results-oriented manner. Particular attention was given to 3R practices—Reduce, Reuse, Recycle—which are already promoted in the district and are essential for improving local waste management.

To support the adoption of good waste management practices, community members were provided with operational tools such as containers for separate collection and composting equipment, ensuring both theoretical training and practical means for implementing the model.

Projects

PSIDS

- AID 12294 - Climate Change and Mountain Forests. Phase 3: Strengthening the Resilience of Fragile Ecosystems: Islands and Mountains
- AID 11072 - Energy, Ecosystems and Sustainable Livelihoods Initiative (EE-SLI) – Phase III



- AID 012866 - Technical Assistance for Strengthening the Regulatory Framework of the Water Sector: Real-Time Multi-Basin Operations
- AID 13789 - Development of a Monitoring and Decision Support Platform for the Management of the Thai Binh – Red River II Hydropower Basin System
- Italian–Vietnamese Debt Swap Programme



- Italian–Philippine Debt Swap Programme

Health

The AICS Hanoi Office supports the modernization of Vietnam’s healthcare infrastructure and the strengthening of public health institutions through a concessional loan initiative in three provinces of the central region, in line with national strategies. In recent years, Vietnam has significantly increased health investments, achieving progress in the prevention, monitoring, and management of epidemics. UNICEF data indicate that under-five mortality declined from 23 to 20 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2023 compared to 2010, confirming a steady improvement in child health indicators.²

However, significant challenges remain: in mountainous areas and among ethnic minorities, maternal mortality reaches 100–150 deaths per 100,000 live births, more than double

the national average, highlighting persistent territorial and cultural inequalities in access to essential healthcare services.³

Furthermore, climate change and growing air pollution are worsening the health situation: according to the World Health Organization (WHO), around 60,000 deaths per year are attributable to poor air quality, with particularly severe impacts on children, the elderly, and people with chronic diseases. In this context, AICS’s commitment contributes to supporting Vietnam’s efforts towards a more equitable, resilient, and inclusive healthcare system capable of protecting the most vulnerable segments of the population.



2. <https://data.unicef.org/country/vnm/>

3. <https://www.unfpa.org/data/VN>

People, Peace

The Italian Development Cooperation considers health a strategic priority: not only as physical well-being, but as an essential condition for dignity, opportunities, and peace. Where health is protected, people are empowered and more stable societies, free from conflict, can be built.

Hue: the Italian Cooperation supports women and children

In December 2025, the inauguration ceremony of the new Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology of the University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Hue was held in Hue, central Vietnam, within the framework of the Italian Cooperation project “Improvement of Health Services for Specific Areas of the Central Region of Vietnam and the Hue University College of Medicine and Pharmacy.”

The facility will accommodate 150 beds and is part of the Italian Cooperation’s long-standing and well-established commitment to the healthcare sector in Vietnam. In Hue Province in particular, this commitment has been pursued through targeted investments in research, training, and capacity building, as well as through the development of infrastructure and the provision of modern medical equipment. The occasion also provided an opportunity to commemorate Carlo Urbani, the Italian doctor who in 2003 was the first to identify and classify SARS in Vietnam and who later lost his life to the same virus.

Project



- AID 9627 - Improvement of Health Services in Specific Areas of the Central Region of Vietnam and at the Hue University College of Medicine and Pharmacy



Humanitarian Aid and Fragile Contexts

The AICS Hanoi Office operates in a regional context marked by deep and interconnected crises, particularly affecting Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Cambodia. In Myanmar, political instability remains extremely high: the intensification of the conflict between the military junta and opposition forces has generated unprecedented forced displacement, triggering one of the most severe humanitarian crises globally. Nearly one third of the population requires assistance, especially in the areas of food security and protection, in a context further aggravated by the March 2025 earthquake and by the spread of transnational phenomena such as illicit trafficking, human trafficking, and systematic violations of fundamental rights.

In April 2025, the Office launched a Call for Proposals open to CSOs for a total value of EUR 1.3 million, aimed at financing multisectoral humanitarian response and early recovery interventions for the most vulnerable segments of the population, with

particular attention to the areas affected by the earthquake.

The Italian Cooperation also contributed EUR 1 million to the Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (MHF), managed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). The impact of the crisis extends to neighbouring countries, particularly Bangladesh, which hosts more than one million Rohingya refugees living in conditions of extreme vulnerability and exposed to climate risks, food insecurity, and gender-based violence, against a backdrop of severe underfunding of the humanitarian response.

During the same year, Italian Cooperation contributed EUR 1 million to the multisectoral humanitarian assistance efforts led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in response to humanitarian and protection needs, and EUR 2 million to a life-saving food assistance initiative implemented by the World Food Programme

(WFP). Both initiatives contribute to the humanitarian response envisaged under the United Nations Joint Response Plan in support of the Rohingya hosted in the camps of Cox’s Bazar and Bhasan Char, as well as Bangladeshi host communities.

In Cambodia, persistent contamination by landmines and explosive remnants of war continues to threaten people’s safety and hinder access to land and resources, confirming the regional relevance of mine action as a driver of stability, resilience, and sustainable development. To this end, in 2025, Italian Cooperation contributed EUR 250,000 to the fifth phase of the UNDP-managed project “Clearing for Results” (CRF-V), implemented in partnership with the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority, with the objective of accelerating the achievement of “mine-free” status in the country by 2030.

People, Peace, Planet

Italian Development Cooperation is at the forefront of humanitarian crises. AICS Hanoi focuses its action on Myanmar and the Rohingya emergency in Bangladesh, combining immediate assistance with peacebuilding and disaster risk reduction interventions. This integrated commitment strengthens People, Peace, and Planet, in line with the 2030 Agenda.

Rohingya crisis: Italy's support

In February 2025, the Italian Cooperation renewed its commitment in support of approximately one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Through a contribution of EUR 3 million, Italy supported the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) to ensure the continuity of humanitarian interventions in the refugee camps of Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char.

UNHCR contributed to ensuring safe and dignified living conditions, as well as access to essential services, including water supply and sanitation services. At the same time, WFP focused its activities on the delivery of life-saving food assistance, with particular attention to the prevention and treatment of malnutrition among the most vulnerable groups, including women and children.

These interventions represent a significant contribution to maintaining food security, reducing disaster risks, and protecting the most vulnerable segments of the refugee population. They also reflect Italy's continued commitment to promoting humanitarian principles and international solidarity.

Projects



- AID 10789 - Italian Contribution to the Joint Peace Fund
- AID 12884 - Emergency and Early Recovery Intervention in the Sectors of Food Security and Livelihoods, Health, and Education to Strengthen the Resilience Capacity of Vulnerable Populations in Myanmar
- AID 13359 - Italian Contribution to the Myanmar Humanitarian Fund 2025



- AID 13102 - Lifesaving general food and nutrition assistance to the Rohingya
- AID 13132 - Multi-sector assistance for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh



- AID 13448 - Italian Contribution to the "Clearing for Results" Mine Action Project (UNDP)



- AID 12401 - Italian Contribution to the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian Countries

Governance

I. Governance and Institutional Coordination

Achieving SDG 17 requires effective coordination among development partners, national institutions, and multilateral organizations. In this context, AICS Hanoi has continued in 2025 to actively participate in the main international development cooperation coordination mechanisms across the countries under its mandate, with particular reference to Vietnam and ASEAN.

The Office participated in the work of the Development Partners Group (DPG) in Vietnam. The group throughout the year continued its dialogue with the Vietnamese Government on strengthening the regulatory framework for Official Development Assistance (ODA), also contributing through the ODA Task Force to discussions on the new

Decree 242/2025/ND-CP. The DPG also strengthened its links with the Technical Working Groups (TWGs), inviting their representatives to present technical analyses and activities to development partners.

AICS Hanoi also regularly participated in meetings of the European Union Member States representatives, contributing to the coordination of Team Europe and Global Gateway initiatives, as well as to the definition of priorities for the new Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2028–2035. Within this framework, the Office promoted Italian priorities in the areas of circular economy, climate resilience, and energy transition, including through delegated European cooperation initiatives.

The Office also continued to participate in the main technical platforms and sectoral partnerships, including

those dedicated to the Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP), Mekong Delta climate resilience, energy, rural water supply and sanitation services (WASH), and the strengthening of the national statistical system, contributing to technical dialogue and coordination between international partners and national authorities.

In Myanmar, the Office participates in the coordination mechanisms among development partners, including bilateral donors, United Nations agencies, and International Financial Institutions, namely the Cooperation Partners Group, as well as in donor coordination platforms such as the Humanitarian Donor Group and the European Union Development Counsellors (EUDC). In Bangladesh, it participates in the Rohingya Donors Group and EUDC meetings.



Within the ASEAN context, the Development Counsellors Meeting currently serves as the main coordination platform among European partners, while Team Europe Initiative (TEI) coordination meetings are held at the European Union Delegation in Jakarta. The two ASEAN-related initiatives are included under the Green TEI, and Italy participates through the presence of the project office.

Through its Jakarta antenna office, AICS Hanoi participated in the ASEAN Ad Hoc Working Group's Interface with External Partners (Sectoral Dialogue and Development Partners) and in the 14th Consultation Meeting of the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) Task Force and ASEAN Partners. The latter takes place annually in conjunction with the third meeting of the IAI Task Force each year.

The Fifth ASEAN-Italy Development Partnership Committee Meeting (AI-DPC), held on 26 November 2025 in Jakarta, celebrated the fifth anniversary of bilateral cooperation and highlighted significant progress in implementing the Practical Cooperation Areas (PCA 2022-2026), with 55% of the action lines already addressed. The event, co-chaired by the Ambassador of Italy, Roberto Colaminè, was attended by the Head of the AICS Hanoi Regional Office, Dr Margherita Lulli. On this occasion, AICS provided essential support to the Embassy of Italy in Jakarta in both the logistical organization of the meeting and the definition of shared strategic priorities, demonstrating the importance of the AICS Jakarta office for technical coordination. Key projects such as COOPMEC and 3S were discussed, and participants reaffirmed their willingness to cooperate on future priorities including maritime security, energy transition, digitalisation, and the development of the new PCA 2027-2031 Action Plan.

In Cambodia, the Office systematically participates in the European Union Delegation's coordination mechanisms and in dialogue with Cambodian institutions.

II. Statistical governance

Within the framework of SDG 17, with specific reference to statistical governance, AICS Hanoi continued in 2025 the preparatory work for the regional initiative "Strengthening Statistical Capacities to Improve Climate Change Management in the Mekong Region," approved in 2024 and entrusted to the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT). The initiative involves Vietnam, Lao PDR, and Cambodia and is based on a trilateral cooperation model that assigns the General Statistics Office of Vietnam a technical coordination role and responsibility for transferring expertise to counterpart statistical institutions in the partner countries.

In 2025, preparatory activities necessary for the operational launch of the initiative were developed through technical consultations with the statistical authorities of the three countries, consolidation of institutional coordination with ISTAT, and further analysis of methodological priorities related to environmental and climate statistics. Particular at-

tention was devoted to indicators related to climate change, extreme events, natural resource management, and the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The initiative also builds upon the cooperation developed in previous years between ISTAT and the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, which has progressively strengthened its technical capacities in environmental statistics and the digitalisation of information systems. In this context, Vietnam is assuming an increasingly important role as a regional provider of technical cooperation, contributing to the dissemination of statistical expertise and best practices throughout the Mekong region.

The initiative is fully aligned with SDG 17, contributing to the strengthening of the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to the development of statistical capacities in partner countries, particularly with regard to the production and dissemination of high-quality data in support of sustainable development and climate resilience policies.



Partnership

In an international context marked in 2025 by growing geopolitical tensions, increasing challenges to multilateralism, and declining resources allocated to development cooperation, strengthening international partnerships has become even more critical. Sustainable Development Goal 17 continues to provide an essential framework for promoting multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation capable of mobilising expertise, financial resources, and innovation. In this context, shared agreements and principles—from the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to the Nairobi Principles—remain highly relevant as foundations for building more effective, inclusive, and resilience-oriented partnerships, while enhancing coordination among public institutions, the private sector, international organisations, and civil society.

Innovative features of the new ODA decree

Decree No. 242/2025/ND-CP, adopted by the Government of Vietnam in September 2025, introduces significant reforms in the management of programmes and projects financed through Official Development Assistance (ODA) and concessional loans. For AICS Hanoi, the decree represents an important step towards greater procedural simplification and enhanced operational effectiveness of development cooperation.

Among the most noteworthy innovations are the strengthening of administrative decentralisation, a clearer allocation of responsibilities between central and provincial authorities, and the introduction of streamlined procedures for the approval, amendment, and implementation of development initiatives. The decree also promotes greater integration between public investment planning, financial programming, and national strategic priorities, thereby facilitating coordination with international development partners.

Particular significance is attached to the broader opening towards innovative financing instruments, including program-based approaches and policy-based lending operations, which are considered strategic tools for supporting sectoral reforms as well as climate resilience and green growth programmes.

Project

- AID 013086 – Strengthening Statistical Capacities to Improve Climate Change Management in the Mekong Region



Lessons learnt

Operating in a vast and highly diverse geographic area such as the Indo-Pacific requires engagement with political, institutional, and operational contexts that vary significantly from one country to another. AICS's work therefore demands continuous adaptation to local specificities in order to ensure the effective implementation of initiatives and the achievement of expected results. Daily engagement with these diverse realities has progressively strengthened the Office's operational knowledge base, reaffirming the importance of flexible, context-sensitive approaches grounded in strong institutional coordination.

With regard to projects implemented under the ASEAN partnership, start-up time-

lines continue to be affected by the need to coordinate a dual approval process involving both the Italian authorities and ASEAN. Experience has also confirmed the importance of relying on ASEAN institutional coordination networks to facilitate the identification and mobilisation of implementing partners, particularly in countries where the Italian presence is more limited. In Vietnam, the public administration reform has led to delays and procedural adjustments, which have been addressed through strengthened dialogue with national counterparts and enhanced coordination with other development partners. In the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the Pacific, persistent logistical challenges have further highlighted the importance of combining

multilateral implementation mechanisms with strengthened field monitoring activities. In the Philippines, difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Debt Conversion Agreement underscored the need to strengthen technical presence and adopt more flexible management arrangements, contributing to the revision of the Agreement itself. In Myanmar, the political context required cautious interventions and close coordination with the Embassy, CSOs, and multilateral partners. Finally, in Bangladesh, despite the absence of a permanent office, activities were carried out smoothly thanks to continuous coordination with the Embassy and well-established mechanisms for engagement with donors and implementing partners.



AICS Hanoi future perspectives

In 2025, the AICS Hanoi Office continued its technical assistance activities in support of the Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETP)¹ in Vietnam and Indonesia. Throughout the year, the Office's engagement progressively evolved towards a more structured role as a technical facilitator within JETP-related initiatives, in close coordination with the Italian Embassies and in collaboration with Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP).

Within this framework, a systematic effort was undertaken to explore the geothermal sector in both Vietnam and Indonesia, with the objective of identifying intervention areas consistent with the priorities of Italian Development Cooperation and the opportunities arising from the JETP process. In Vietnam, this work led to the identification of an initial project concept jointly developed with CDP for a low- and medium-enthalpy geothermal power plant (LME), as well as the launch of preliminary discussions with the state-owned energy group PetroVietnam (PVN). It also involved technical coordination with institutional counterparts regarding potential investment preparation and technical assistance activities.

At the same time, in Vietnam, the Office initiated discussions with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Ministry of Finance, and CDP regarding possible Italian participation in a Policy-Based Loan (PBL) operation supporting private sector development and the promotion of the circular economy. In this context, the Office contributed to the technical dialogue on potential policy measures related to green finance, access to credit for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and the integration of circular economy principles into public support mechanisms and national financial instruments. The initiative represents a first attempt

to leverage innovative blended finance mechanisms through coordination among development cooperation actors, financial institutions, and multilateral development banks, in line with recommendations emerging from recent OECD-DAC Peer Reviews of Italian development cooperation.

The Office also initiated discussions with the German development bank KfW and CDP concerning potential Italian participation in Policy-Based Lending operations linked to the JETP and Vietnam's green growth objectives. These exchanges focused in particular on energy transition, sustainable infrastructure financing, and coordination between European and national financial instruments, with the aim of fostering greater synergies among development partners active in the climate and energy sectors.

Furthermore, in consortium with Expertise France and with technical support from UNDP, the Office laid the groundwork for responding to a European Union Action Document aimed at promoting circular and climate-smart practices along selected agricultural value chains in Vietnam. With a total budget of EUR 11.5 million, the Action seeks to improve the regulatory framework and business environment to encourage the adoption of circular economy practices that are responsible and gender-responsive, while enhancing circularity within agricultural value chains.

Similarly, in consortium with Camões (Portugal) and CPVA (Lithuania), the Office worked on a proposal in response to the European Union Action Document known as e-JUSTL in Timor-Leste, with a total budget of EUR 6 million. The intervention aims to support access to justice through e-governance tools, in line with the Roadmap adopted by the Government of Dili in 2024. The initiative is

particularly strategic in the context of Timor-Leste's recent accession to the ASEAN community, reinforcing Italy's role as a promoter of regional integration.

In Indonesia, efforts focused on identifying key stakeholders and launching an exploratory dialogue, including in coordination with CDP, aimed at defining a potential geothermal initiative within the JETP framework and improving understanding of both opportunities and challenges within the national context.

Overall, the activities carried out in 2025 demonstrate a gradual repositioning of the Office towards a more proactive approach in identifying and supporting initiatives in the geothermal sector—an area that has thus far received limited attention from many stakeholders in the energy field yet presents significant development potential. In this context, AICS is moving beyond the traditional role of project implementer to become a strategic catalyst for complex development processes. Acting as a genuine institutional hub, the Agency facilitates policy and regulatory dialogue with local counterparts while mobilising and leveraging Italy's technological excellence and sectoral expertise in geothermal energy, ensuring effective knowledge transfer aligned with the challenges of the global energy transition.

1. Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) are financing mechanisms established between G7 countries and major emerging economies with a high dependence on coal and fossil fuels, with the objective of supporting a transition towards lower-carbon energy sources. In Vietnam and Indonesia, Italy participates in the respective JETP platforms through financial pledges of €500 million and €250 million, respectively. These commitments can be financed through resources from the Italian Climate Fund and Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP), and are intended to support the financing of specific projects.

Administrative management

The Administrative Section of AICS Hanoi consists of four staff members: one coordinator, two fixed-term experts, and one locally recruited staff member (within the so-called *Contingente di sede*) employed on a permanent basis with assistant-accounting functions. Throughout 2025, the Section regularly carried out all activities necessary to support the formulation, management, and financial monitoring of the interventions under its responsibility, in compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory provisions, while also ensuring the regular operational functioning of the Office. During the reference year, the Office was structured across two offices in Hanoi (Vietnam) and one secondary accreditation office in Jakarta (Indonesia).

In this regard, the Section contributed to launching and completing the administrative process aimed at consolidating, as of 1 January 2026, all personnel operating in Vietnam within a single office building, with no increase in expenditure compared to previous financial years. This intervention will also allow the Office to address workplace safety issues identified in the Risk Assessment Document (DVR) relating to the building currently in use.

In compliance with the applicable legislation on occupational health and safety, a new occupational physician for the Office was appointed during 2025, jointly with the Embassy. Medical examinations were also carried out for the relevant personnel, and the annual periodic meeting took place with the participation of the occupational physician, the Health and Safety Officer (RSPP), and workplace safety supervisors. All documentation related to workplace safety and office lease agreements was duly archived within the dedicated files of the document management system.

During the year, the Office also responded, through a dedicated explanatory report sub-

mitted to headquarters, to corrective actions and further clarifications requested following the monitoring conducted by Office XI – Human Resources. This activity aimed to ensure the proper legal and economic treatment of locally recruited personnel, both fixed-term and permanent, with reference to the following areas:

- attendance and absence recording and management of supporting documentation;
- occupational safety and health surveillance;
- labour disputes and disciplinary procedures;
- staff insurance coverage;
- official travel and missions;
- personnel selection procedures;
- contract analysis;
- legal status and employment conditions;
- economic, fiscal, and social security treatment.

In 2025, six recruitment processes were launched for fixed-term personnel; of these, two (003/AICSHANOI/2025 and 006/AICSHANOI/2025) were subsequently revoked following the need for a comprehensive redefinition of the Office's staffing requirements, in order to align team composition with new operational and budgetary priorities. Furthermore, three new full-time fixed-term employment contracts governed by Vietnamese local law were concluded, and seven extensions of contracts expiring during the reference period were formalized.

With regard to public procurement, a market survey was conducted through the publication of expressions of interest on institutional websites, aimed at launching a simplified negotiated procedure. Within procurement activities, 15 public contracts for goods and services were directly awarded, in compliance with applicable regulations and with particular attention to corruption prevention aspects, avoiding artificial contract splitting and ensuring the rotation of economic operators. The total committed amount was EUR 659,795.01.

The Office also managed all activities related to the preparation of budget and financial reporting documents falling within the Office's responsibility, in compliance with established deadlines. In particular, it ensured the input and communication of accounting data (economic, asset-related, and financial), both forecast and actual, within the information systems and accounting system in use, with the support of an external company.

In order to ensure transparency and public disclosure in the allocation and management of funds and in overall administrative action, the Office published data, documents, and information on the Transparency Administration Portal, in accordance with the provisions of Annex 2 – Transparency Subsection of the PIAO, thereby ensuring forms of public oversight over the use of resources.

Particular attention was also devoted to strengthening the personal data protection management system through the definition of roles, responsibilities, processes, and internal con-

trols, in collaboration with the GDLP (Privacy Working Group) of AICS Rome.

Finally, in order to ensure efficient and closely monitored management of financial flows related to cooperation interventions, a detailed analysis was carried out on amounts not yet disbursed and residual balances for each initiative. This activity made it possible to identify:

- 6 initiatives with completed activities, for which Technical Closure Notes were submitted;
- 17 initiatives requiring closure from a managerial and accounting perspective (of which 4 with residual amounts and 13 without residual amounts to be returned);
- 7 initiatives in the final closure phase, with documentation already submitted to Headquarters;
- 3 AID initiatives to be revoked/cancelled.



AICS Hanoi: 2025 Highlights



The process of strengthening communication and visibility undertaken by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), and formalized through the MAECI-AICS Agreement of August 2025, involves all AICS Offices and reflects a shared commitment to enhancing the visibility of development cooperation activities for the Italian public,

which is the primary audience of each office's communication efforts. An initial indication of this process was the monitoring activity carried out by AICS Headquarters on the digital communication channels of the various AICS offices. The quantity and quality of content, the topics covered, and media outreach have progressively emerged as additional performance indicators for the offi-

ces. In this context, raising the level of ambition contributes to strengthening the sense of belonging to the Italian Development Cooperation System ("Sistema Italia") and encourages all stakeholders involved to build a coherent communication approach capable of ensuring a clear and recognizable AICS identity. The AICS Hanoi Office actively contributed to this collective effort by

continuing to participate in international and national events, engaging the relevant Embassies in the dissemination of press releases and their promotion through social media channels, as well as in the organization of and participation in project events, system-wide missions, and monitoring activities. Continuous coordination with the Agency's Office I further strengthened these efforts.

Although operating in a geographical and cultural context that is distant from the areas traditionally prioritized by the Italian Development Cooperation, the AICS Hanoi Office maintains close alignment with development cooperation and humanitarian actors across its vast region of responsibility. In this context, it actively contributes to promoting environmental sustainability, protecting

natural resources and territories, and providing life-saving assistance in fragile settings, while simultaneously strengthening communication activities to enhance the accountability, transparency, and credibility of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.



STORIES & PROJECTS



AID 013102/01/0

Lifesaving general food and nutrition assistance to the Rohingya

Country Bangladesh

Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char

Description

Life-saving food assistance to the Rohingya population through the provision of food commodities and vouchers for purchasing food items.

Nutritional assistance through the provision of malnutrition prevention and treatment services for children under five years of age and pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Keywords

Life-saving food assistance, malnutrition prevention.

Budget and duration

2 million € - 12 months

Partners, implementing organizations

World Food Program Bangladesh

Beneficiaries

60,000 Rohingya refugees

Activities

Improved food security among the most vulnerable Rohingya refugees;
Reduction of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) among children aged 6 to 59 months, pregnant women, and breastfeeding women from vulnerable households in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char.

Specific results achieved

E-vouchers for the purchase of food items at retail outlets;
Meals and emergency food assistance in response to shocks (floods, fires, cyclones);
Malnutrition prevention for young children and pregnant/breastfeeding women;
Treatment of acute malnutrition through therapeutic food and beneficiary follow-up;
Nutrition education, awareness-raising, and growth monitoring.

In 2025, the Italian Cooperation supported the activities of the World Food Programme (WFP) in assisting the Rohingya population in the camps of Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char, Bangladesh, by providing life-saving food assistance to refugees and implementing activities aimed at preventing and addressing malnutrition among children, pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers.

The testimony of Mahabuba, a beneficiary of the Italian contribution to WFP together with her entire family, offers a glimpse into a reality marked by uncertainty, yet where hope remains clearly visible.



In Cox's Bazar, families can purchase what they need in WFP retail outlets through the food assistance system based on e-vouchers, which provides a contribution of USD 12 per person per month. "With this, we can buy fish, chicken, vegetables, and eggs, allowing us to eat properly and have adequate meals," she explains.

"We sincerely thank those who help us: without their support, where would we find food?" Mahabuba adds, expressing her genuine gratitude despite the hardships of life in the camp. Her concern, however, turns to another fundamental right that remains insufficiently addressed: education.

"I cannot afford to send all my children to school. My greatest hope is that they will be able to continue their studies."

WFP's support remains essential for food assistance, but an additional USD 150 million is still needed to ensure the continuity of these operations.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Cox's Bazar: The Resilience of Rohingya Refugees Between Assistance and Hope

Approximately 1.2 million Rohingya refugees are currently living in the Cox's Bazar camps in Bangladesh. The largest influx of people fleeing violence was recorded in 2017, when more than 740,000 Rohingya were forced to leave their homes in neighbouring Rakhine State, Myanmar, due to violence and persecution. However, the conflict, which has never truly ceased, continues to force many families to flee even today.

Among them is Mahabuba, a 45-year-old woman originally from Rakhine. She arrived at the camp just one year ago together with her husband, who is in his seventies and in poor health, and their six children, aged between 5 and 18.

"We had land and a vegetable garden, and we lived from what we cultivated and from our work in Rakhine," Mahabuba recalls, speaking about a life shattered by violence. "When the military started shooting at us and burning our homes, we could no longer stay. With the help of other people, we crossed the river; it took us six days to get here."



WORKING IN THE FIELD

Italian Support in the Rohingya Camps: Solidarity Without Borders

As the conflict in Myanmar continues, between 2024 and 2025 an additional 150,000 people crossed the border into Bangladesh in search of safety. Life in the camps remains extremely difficult, with families facing overcrowding, restrictions on freedom of movement, and recurring emergencies such as fires, landslides, and cyclones. Without legal status and with very limited access to livelihood opportunities, refugees depend almost entirely on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic needs. In this context, partnerships such as the one between the Italian Government, through the Italian

Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), and the World Food Programme (WFP) have proven crucial. Italy's latest contribution supported monthly life-saving food and nutritional assistance, which represents the main source of humanitarian support for the Rohingya population. Through WFP's e-voucher system, families received monthly assistance calibrated according to their level of need and redeemable at nineteen retail outlets in Cox's Bazar and two in Bhasan Char, an island located 60 kilometres from the mainland. This approach helped preserve dignity and freedom of choice while ensuring access to staple food items and fresh products.

Italian support also enabled WFP to provide essential services for the prevention and treatment of malnutrition among pregnant and breast

feeding women and children under five years of age. Moderate acute malnutrition affects more than 15% of children in this age group in the camps, highlighting the urgency of these interventions.

While the Rohingya crisis appears to be fading from global attention, the solidarity of the Italian people continues to reach families who have lost everything. Their support has helped WFP protect well-being, prevent malnutrition, and maintain the humanitarian lifeline on which Rohingya communities depend.

This commitment also reflects the broader and long-standing global partnership between Italy and WFP, grounded in shared humanitarian principles and a common commitment to protecting the most vulnerable.



Looking ahead, continued cooperation between AICS and WFP will remain essential. As the crisis persists, Italy's solidarity continues to be crucial in sustaining life-saving food and nutrition services — a reminder that compassion can transcend borders, sustaining hope and preserving dignity even in the most fragile contexts.

Kun Li

BIO

Kun Li is Head of Partnerships, Communication and Reporting for the World Food Programme (WFP) in Bangladesh. She has more than 15 years of experience in developing communication strategies for international organizations working in the humanitarian and development sectors. Prior to joining WFP, Kun worked on communications for UNICEF in several duty stations, including its headquarters in New York and country offices in the Maldives, Kenya, and Somalia.

She speaks English and Mandarin Chinese (her mother tongue) and holds a Master's degree in Computer Science from the City University of New York, United States. Kun lives in Dhaka, Bangladesh, with her husband Riccardo and their two children, Constantino and Dari.



AID 012884/01/2

H.E.R.O.E.S. – Health Education Rehabilitation Opportunities Empathy and Support for children in need of education and children with special needs

Country Myanmar

Southern Shan State: Taunggyi city and the village tract of Mong Thaw; Nyaung Shwe, in the village tracts of Nan Pan, Kaylar, and Nga Hpei Chaung; Mandalay Region, in the townships of Pathein Gyi, Amarapura, Aung Myae Thar San, and Mingun; Sagaing Region and Sagaing City.

Description

To provide assistance and strengthen the resilience of the population most at risk in Myanmar by improving the quality of and access to

education and healthcare services in the areas of Nyaung Shwe, Mandalay, and Sagaing, with particular attention to children and persons with disabilities.

Keywords

Education, health, disability

Budget and duration

EUR 216,444 - 12 months

Partners, implementing organizations

Fondazione New Humanity International - NHI

Beneficiaries

Direct beneficiaries: 4,658 individuals

Activities

Provision of school materials; Support to and establishment of early childhood education facilities; Reconstruction of inclusive school buildings affected by the earthquake; Delivery of emergency and primary healthcare services through mobile clinics; Mental health and psychosocial support services; Community-based inclusive development activities for persons with disabilities; Training for healthcare staff and rehabilitation activities.

Specific results achieved

Screening of 96 beneficiaries with disabilities and planning of related interventions in Nyaung Shwe; Completion of 80 medical consultations through mobile clinics.

In April 2025, AICS Hanoi launched the call for proposals entitled “Emergency and Early Recovery Intervention in the Sectors of Food Security and Livelihoods, Health, and Education to Strengthen the Resilience Capacity of Vulnerable Populations in Myanmar”, addressed to civil society organizations operating in the country. The funding opportunity was published only a few days after the devastating earthquake of 28 March, affecting communities already deeply impacted by the ongoing civil conflict. The following testimony is provided by New Humanity International, an organization that has been present in the country for many years with activities supporting the social sector. The project H.E.R.O.E.S. – Health Education Rehabilitation Opportunities Empathy and Support for Children in Need of Education and Children with Special Needs aims to strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable populations in Myanmar by improving the quality of and access to education and healthcare services.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Mental health support to look towards the future

The mental health activities carried out under the H.E.R.O.E.S. Project take place in camps established in Pyi Lone Chan Thar, near Mandalay, and in Nyaungshwe, close to Inle Lake. In these areas, the effects of the devastating earthquake have also affected people already experiencing psychological vulnerabilities.



U Tin had been living a normal life until the resurgence of the conflict, which coincided with the worsening of his wife's health conditions and increasing economic hardship. "My name is U Tin Win and I am 57 years old. I came to know New Humanity International in the camp where I live. I lost my home because of the earthquake. It was a very difficult moment for me, both physically and mentally," he recalls.

U Tin has been living in the Pyi Lone Chan Thar camp for about a year. He survives thanks to the financial support of his grandchildren, as his health conditions no longer allow him to work. "Here, NHI," U Tin explains, "organized mental health activities in the camp. These include physical exercises and psychological support sessions. I have benefited both phy-

sically and mentally. I now feel less anxious and stressed, and more able to appreciate moments of happiness. Before, I focused too much on the negative aspects of my life."

In his testimony, U Tin highlights how he initially had very limited knowledge of mental health issues. Participating in the sessions organized by NHI, with the support of Italian Cooperation, allowed him to better understand conditions such as stress, chronic anxiety, insomnia, and post-traumatic stress disorder. "I learned more about mental health and how to take care of myself. This journey has helped me become more aware of my emotions and manage them better. I feel I have more positive energy," he says.

"Within the camp, we support each other, and these activities continue to help me improve both my physical and mental health," U Tin concludes. Today, he is known in the camp as someone who cares deeply about the well-being of others, demonstrating the value of sharing experiences for personal growth and for coping with even the most difficult situations.

Rebuilding a community through education

In the Mandalay Region, in the district of Amarapura — the former royal capital of Myanmar, renowned for its traditional weaving of fine silk and cotton textiles — teachers Yin Nu and Aye Aye Phyu from the Bahgyi village kindergarten share their experience working with NHI within the framework of the H.E.R.O.E.S. project, funded by Italian Cooperation and co-financed by Fondazione Pontificio Istituto Missioni Estere (PIME).

The village hosts a community school established in response to local needs and later registered with the local Department of Social Welfare. The school is managed by a steering committee selected by the villagers themselves.

Yin Nu and Aye Aye Phyu are both members of the Bahgyi village committee: Yin Nu works as a kindergarten teacher, while Aye Aye is mainly



responsible for administration and students' physical education.

"The kindergarten was created to ensure that children from less affluent families in our community could have the same opportunities as others. Not everyone here can afford expensive education and, with children attending school, parents are also able to work during the day," explains Yin Nu. "The costs are limited, which makes it accessible to everyone, including low-income families," adds Aye Aye.

The March 2025 earthquake caused severe damage to the school: the façade of the building collapsed together with the roof. "At that moment, safety for both children and teachers were no longer guaranteed," recalls Yin Nu.

"NHI supported our kindergarten in several ways: through the rehabilitation of the building, food assistance for the children, and support for the salaries of some teachers," says Aye Aye. "Thanks to this support, children continued to receive meals at school and remain healthy, while teachers felt more motivated to continue their work. In addition, the entire teaching staff received training that improved our professional skills," emphasizes Yin Nu.

New teaching methods and materials, professional training, and the rehabilitation of the school building have been key elements in rebuilding the post-earthquake community in Bahgyi through NHI's work on the ground. "It has been effective support, and we hope it can continue," say Yin Nu and Aye Aye.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Beyond the Emergency: Mental Health and Inclusion in the Earthquake Response in Myanmar

The first time I set foot in Mandalay, about fifteen years ago, I remember dust, dark streets, many pagodas, and relatively little modernity. When I returned in November 2025, everything had changed. The city had modernized thanks to the massive influx of Chinese capital, but it had also been partially destroyed, six months earlier, by one of the most devastating earthquakes in Myanmar's history.

I was deeply surprised to see how quickly reconstruction had progressed. Rubble had been cleared from the streets and construction sites were active everywhere. Yet I soon realized that this recovery was not benefiting everyone equally. Hundreds of families were living — and many still continue to live — in displacement camps, in containers or simple bamboo shelters. Although the most acute phase of the emergency was nearing its end, some people continued to remain in the camps, revealing the existence of a segment of the population that had

lost everything and could not rely on any family support network. Among these vulnerable groups, I remember seeing many elderly people. Those who had the possibility — especially many young people — had already left in search of new opportunities. It is precisely this vulnerable population that the H.E.R.O.E.S. project, funded by the Italian Government and implemented by New Humanity International, seeks to support. These are communities near Mandalay or close to Inle Lake that remain trapped in camps, with few prospects of leaving and without alternative resources, for whom psychological support is essential. Particular attention, through dedicated counselling pathways, is given to people facing more complex diagnoses, including symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety disorders, and suicidal risk. Structured mental health activities are specifically provided for them by the Aung Min Clinic in Mandalay. Children with physical and intellectual disabilities are also at the center of the intervention: together with their parents, they participate in physiotherapy sessions, learning how to adapt to a new daily life that

requires specific assistive devices such as wheelchairs or prosthetics. Throughout this process, family support proves to be essential.

Another component of the project is dedicated to children through support to kindergartens, ranging from the reopening of facilities closed following the earthquake to the professional training of teachers. These activities respond both to the immediate needs of the post-earthquake emergency and to the strengthening of educational capacities. It is worth noting that in Myanmar only a one-month course is required to obtain certification for teaching in early childhood education.

While some of these actions may produce lasting effects, others provide temporary relief in situations of profound personal hardship. For New Humanity International, both have equal value, because they are directed towards people whose lives have long been shaped by chronic lack of opportunities, widespread conflict across the country, and, not least, natural disasters such as the earthquake of 28 March 2025.

Luca Penasa



BIO

Luca Penasa was born in 1983 and holds a degree in Languages and Literature, as well as a Master's degree in Social Enterprise and Non-Profit Management. Since 2006, he has worked in the field of international cooperation in various roles, gaining experience in Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Timor-Leste, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. In November 2025, he relocated to Mandalay, Myanmar, as Project Manager of the H.E.R.O.E.S. initiative, implemented by New Humanity International and funded by Italian Cooperation.

AID 13133

Scientific and technical support for sustainable agriculture in ASEAN countries - 3S

Countries ASEAN Brunei, Cambodia, Philippines, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Timor Leste

Vietnam, Indonesia, Laos

Description

Improve climate change resilience and promote the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of agricultural practices in ASEAN countries through the introduction of sustainable

agriculture and agricultural mechanization solutions for the maize, cassava, and sugarcane value chains.

Keywords

Sustainable agriculture; agricultural mechanization

Budget and duration

2,829,198 € - 36 months

Partners, implementing organizations

UNIMI, Bioersivity and CIAT, Scuola Sant'Anna di Pisa

Beneficiaries

Institutional officials/technicians; smallholder farmers/producers

Activities

Inspection report, single out pilot sites

Specific results achieved

Project ongoing

SMART objectives

Train ASEAN Member States' officials and technicians on sustainable agriculture and mechanization techniques;

Launch practical applications of innovative agricultural solutions in real-world contexts; Facilitate the transfer of Italian know-how and create business and research synergies.

AID 013115

Cooperation mechanism for the competitive development of aquaculture and artisanal fisheries in ASEAN – COOPMEC

Countries ASEAN Brunei, Cambodia, Philippines, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Timor Leste

Vietnam

Description

Support for the implementation of sustainable aquaculture and artisanal fisheries initiatives through:

- strengthening the aquaculture sector through the adoption of multi-sectoral policies, strategies, and tools;

- strengthening the management of coastal and small-scale fisheries resources, drawing on models proposed by FAO/GFCM, the European Union/MEDAC, and UNESCO for food security and the Mediterranean diet.

Keywords

Sustainable aquaculture, artisanal fisheries

Budget and duration

2,999,745 € - 36 months

Partners, implementing organizations

CIHEAM Bari

Beneficiaries

Government fisheries experts; professionals/entrepreneurs in the aquaculture, artisanal, and small-scale fisheries sector.

Activities

Inception report; training in sustainable aquaculture

Specific results achieved

Project ongoing

SMART objectives

Formulate and approve new ASEAN Regional Guidelines on Good Aquaculture Practices and draft the related Certification and Control Manuals; Implement training and awareness programs for institutional officials and fisheries sector

stakeholders on sustainable aquaculture and small-scale fisheries (SSF); Implement a pilot initiative in Vietnam to validate GAqP and conduct a regional study on abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear.

The AICS Hanoi team

AICS Hanoi Office



As of 31 December 2025, the AICS Hanoi Office had a staff composed of:

- 12 locally contracted staff members employed pursuant to Article 11, paragraph 1(c), of Decree No. 11 of 22 July 2015 of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.
- 3 locally recruited staff members (the so-called personale contingente).
- 3 outsourcing staff members.

Project Office in Jakarta



The AICS Hanoi Office is supported by a secondary accreditation office in Jakarta, Indonesia, established to strengthen the Italy–ASEAN Development Partnership.

Contacts

AICS Hanoi - VIETNAM

20th floor LPB Building - 17 Tong Dan, Trang Tien,
Hoan Kiem, Hanoi

☎ +84 (0) 2473011886

✉ hanoi@aics.gov.it

Project Office - INDONESIA

c/o Italian Embassy in Jakarta
Jalan Diponegoro No. 45, Menteng, Giacarta 10310

🇫🇦 Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione
allo Sviluppo - AICS Hanoi

🇮🇳 AICS Hanoi

📷 aicshanoi

📺 AICS Hanoi



hanoi.aics.gov.it

Prepared by the AICS Hanoi Team

Photo Credits

@AICSHanoi @Cesvi @NewHumanityInternational @WFPBangladesh

@UNHCRBangladesh

*The data presented in the table Development Cooperation in the Region on page 15
are sourced from the World Bank DataBank: <https://data.worldbank.org/>*

Graphic Design 3M LAB

Published in June 2026