



PEPFAR Vietnam Quarterly Newsletter



October-December 2010

Vietnam Commemorates 20 years of the National HIV/AIDS Response

Since the first case of HIV infection was reported in Vietnam in 1990, the country has made numerous efforts to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. Many activities and events were held in November and December 2010 to commemorate 20 years of the HIV response, evaluating the HIV/AIDS epidemic situation in Vietnam over the past 20 years, reviewing achievements and challenges in the response, and raising awareness and changing attitudes and behaviors with regard to HIV/AIDS.



National Congress on "20 years of HIV/AIDS prevention and control"

On December 1, 2010, the National Congress on "20 years of HIV/AIDS prevention and control" was held at the My Dinh National Convention Center in Hanoi. At the congress, local organizations and individuals were recognized and awarded for their achievements and contributions to HIV/AIDS prevention and control over the last two decades.

Also at this event, on the behalf of the Government of Vietnam, Ms. Nguyen Thi Doan, Vice State President, presented the Friendship Medal to Dr. Mitchell Wolfe (*left in photo*), former Country Director of the U.S.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Vietnam, for his contributions to the national HIV/AIDS response.



4th National Scientific Conference on HIV/AIDS

With the theme "Universal Access to Complete the Millennium Goals by 2015," the 4th national scientific conference on HIV/AIDS prevention and control was held in Hanoi from December 1-3, 2010. More than 1,500 Vietnamese and international delegates attended the conference, sharing progress and results of HIV/AIDS prevention and control programs both globally and in Vietnam. It was also an opportunity for organizations to display their successful models, technical activities, products, publications, materials or equipment.

The main topics discussed at the conference included: basic science of HIV/AIDS, HIV/AIDS epidemiology and research, HIV/AIDS prevention, harm reduction interventions, HIV/AIDS care and treatment, health management science, social research, community engagement, and law on HIV/AIDS prevention and control. Over 100 reports and 60

posters were presented at the conference's plenary sessions and eight satellite workshops. PEPFAR personnel were invited to host and present in a number of the sessions.



HIV/AIDS Innovation Day 2010

After four months of solicitation, the Vietnam Innovation Day for HIV/AIDS prevention and control 2010 received some 60 proposals from organizations and individuals, particularly self-help groups of people living with HIV, across the country. Under the theme "Community Initiatives to Stop AIDS", the competition focused on five technical areas: behavior change; community-based harm reductions; community-based prevention of mother-to-child transmission; community-based care, treatment and support for AIDS patients; and mobilizing community resources and participation of people living with HIV.

Sixty short-listed initiatives were presented in the 3-day exhibition at the My Dinh National Convention Center in Hanoi. At the closing ceremony on December 3, the 30 best projects were awarded with funding from World Bank for implementation.

USAID/PEPFAR Supports Dance4Life Event



On November 27, 2010, USAID/PEPFAR funded and took part in the *Dance4Life* event, which drew 1,000 local high school students who danced together, via satellite, with tens of thousands of young people in 27 countries around the world. The show was broadcast live on the national youth-focused channel VTV6. Connected via satellite, the young dancers reminded world leaders of their pledges to address HIV and AIDS as part of the Millennium Development Goals.

Many famous Vietnamese artists participated. Ms. Tran Thi Hue, winner of the recent Charming Plus pageant for women living with HIV, joined celebrities setting alight symbols spelling out the word "stigma." USAID's Health Office Director, Jonathan Ross, took to the stage on behalf of PEPFAR.

USAID/PEPFAR Supports New TB Laboratory in Hanoi



The Hanoi Hospital of Lung Disease on December 16, 2010 formally opened a specially designed and highly bio-secure tuberculosis laboratory funded by the U.S. Government to improve case detection of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) in Vietnam.

The facility is one of five TB laboratories which have been

Enterprises Honored for Promoting HIV/AIDS Prevention and Support



On September 23, 2010, Vietnamese private enterprises displaying exemplary corporate responsibility received honors for investing time and resources to promote HIV/AIDS prevention and employment support for people living with HIV. At a ceremony organized by USAID's HIV Workplace Project (implemented by Chemonics) in collaboration with the Vietnam Women Entrepreneurs Council of the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, ten of

more than 130 enterprises participating in the Project were presented a certificate of appreciation.

These enterprises were selected based on their track record in corporate social responsibility in HIV/AIDS prevention and employment support for PLHIV and high-risk individuals.

Activities include implementing HIV/AIDS workplace policies, creating HIV/AIDS steering committees within enterprises, organizing HIV/AIDS education activities among employees, and providing free condoms. They also implemented non-discriminatory policies regarding HIV/AIDS, recruited PLHIV, and committed funds for care and support activities for PLHIV in the community.

DoD/PEPFAR Supports Training for Military Healthcare Staff on TB/HIV and PMTCT

On October 21 and 22, 2010 in Nha Trang City, with technical and financial support from DoD/PEPFAR, the Vietnam Military Medical Department (MMD) in collaboration with the Development Center for Public Health, hosted a *TB/HIV and PMTCT Awareness Workshop* for military healthcare staff. The workshop provided participants with general and updated information on HIV epidemiology in Vietnam and HIV testing and screening, with a focus



on HIV & TB co-infection/screening/treatment and testing/prevention of mother to child transmission.

The 150 participants were generalists, obstetricians, and head nurses from 32 military hospitals throughout Vietnam. The trainers included managers and staff from MMD and DoD/PEPFAR, Vietnam Administration for HIV/AIDS Control, the National TB and Respiratory Diseases Hospital, and the National Obstetrics and Gynecology Hospital.

strengthened with \$1.4 million in funding from USAID through the TB-CAP project. Since 2009, the project has provided funding for facility layout, equipment and training in five MDR-TB laboratories in Can Tho, Da Nang, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Thanh Hoa.

Technical Assistance Builds Confidence in MMT



By Dr. Nguyen Quang Tuyen at Tu Liem MMT Clinic

I still remember how nervous I was starting when I began providing methadone maintenance treatment (MMT) to injecting drug users in Hanoi's first MMT clinic. Having received only a short accreditation and practicum training, I was very confused about how to start treatment for patients. In addition, I was very concerned about side effects of methadone and unpredictable reactions from patients.

However, my worries did not last long. From the day the clinic opened, the other staff and I started receiving continued and timely technical support from CDC/Life-GAP, FHI, and WHO, and other international experts. They gave us hands-on guidance and mentoring in starting, stabilizing and maintaining patients in treatment.

With all this support, I have personally become confident in building good therapeutic relationships, starting doses safely and dealing with complex situations. I also receive support in organizing case conferences, which facilitates timely changes to treatment regimens, and collaborations with other staff.

With clinical experience, technical support, and a friendly attitude toward patients, I now gain their respect, as well as readiness and honesty in talking about their health conditions, drug usage and psychosocial issues. At the moment I work directly with 242 patients on treatment, to identify psychological cravings to stop



Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister Truong Vinh Trong (middle) takes United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (left) to visit Tu Liem MMT Clinic on October 29, 2010.

increasing doses, collaborate with counselors to keep patients maintained at stable doses, help patients deal with side-effects, and provide counselors with patients' medical information.

USAID/PEPFAR Supports New MMT Clinic and OPC

On November 29, 2010, U.S. Ambassador Michael Michalak joined Hanoi's Department of Health Director Le Anh Tuan to open a methadone maintenance treatment clinic in the city's Son Tay District. This is the third methadone clinic USAID has supported in Hanoi and the 13th supported by PEPFAR in Vietnam. The clinic will complement the other HIV-related services which are now available in Son Tay.

"We look forward to collaborating with a range of Vietnamese government authorities from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Public Security as Vietnam strengthens its capacity in the coming months and years to assume an increasing portion of methadone treatment and a range of other HIV-related health programs with its own human and financial resources," said

SUCCESS STORY

Tu Liem MMT Clinic opened on December 1, 2009, and is run by Tu Liem Health Center (Hanoi Municipal Health Department) and the CDC/Life-GAP Project (Ministry of Health). It currently provides MMT services to 242 patients from Tu Liem and neighboring districts. It is one of four MMT clinics in operation in Hanoi and one of 16 nationwide.

PEPFAR supports these MMT clinics through CDC, USAID, SAMHSA and their implementing partners, -- from management and operations to technical assistance. Particularly for the Tu Liem MMT Clinic, PEPFAR/CDC technical assistance also includes building training capacity for the clinic's staff so it can serve as a training center for new MMT clinicians in Vietnam.



Ambassador Michalak at the opening ceremony.

On November 30, another USAID/PEPFAR supported HIV outpatient clinic officially opened in Hanoi's suburban Soc Son District. This facility will provide high-quality clinical care, support, and treatment services for 400 patients in its first year. It will also offer voluntary counseling and testing services for 750 individuals over the next 12 months. These services are to be made available to residents in a state-run drug rehabilitation center nearby.

Small Grants Promote Health Diplomacy and Public Awareness of HIV/AIDS

Pageant Puts Spotlight on Reducing HIV Stigma

At the first-ever Charming Plus pageant for women living with HIV, there was hardly a dry eye in the audience as U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Michael W. Michalak crowned the winner. The event was hosted by the Bright Futures Network of people living with HIV in Hanoi, with financial and technical support from PEPFAR.



After two preliminary rounds, the finale was held November 14 at the Vietnam Youth Theater, with live footage beamed around the country on channel VTV6. Top honors of the night went to Ms. Tran Thi Hue, a 27-year-old outreach worker with the Hanoi Reproductive Health Center and member of the Bright Futures self-help group of Ha Nam province.

Interactive Theater Combats HIV Stigma

With support from PEPFAR, the Vietnam National Youth Theater developed a new interactive theater project, which was performed for free to students of 20 universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City from October to December 2010.



The core part of the performance was the short drama *I Want To Go to School*, reflecting all the challenges of an HIV-positive father taking his daughter, also living with HIV, to school. The

interesting part of the show, though, came after the curtain fell - that's when the performers invited all audience members to join them in finding happier ending to the story. One or two members of the audience were then invited onto the stage to re-create any part of the play. Together, the actors and audience helped the daughter fulfill her dream of going to school.

For the first time, the Youth Theater team included in their cast a non-professional actor, a man living with HIV. More than the story itself, his participation carried the message the actors sought to convey through the production.

People Living with Stories

This unique film project commissioned for World AIDS Day 2010 by the Center of Creative Initiatives in Health and Population with support from PEPFAR, features eight people living with HIV from a cross-section of Vietnamese society. In a series of short appearances, the eight participants reveal intimate moments in their lives, such as love, bereavement, a first kiss, a wedding day, a memory of a lost love or a friend's loyalty. The film attempts to tackle the issue of stigma, showing how people should be defined by their shared life experiences and not by their HIV status.



The Hanoi Cinematheque showed this film over three nights leading up to World AIDS Day as part of a series of films that highlighted the issues of human rights and HIV/AIDS. The film has also been posted on YouTube and other social networks to reach wider audiences. (<http://vimeo.com/17947326>)

Some other public diplomacy small grants:



A rally hosted by the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism, drew about a thousand college students and young people in Hanoi on November 13, 2010.



A rally hosted by the Ho Chi Minh City's Youth Union was participated by about a thousand people attending the municipal camping festival commemorating World AIDS Day in HCMC on November 28, 2010.



An HIV/AIDS focused month (November-December 2010) on national media channel for youth VTV6 featured a series of documentaries, news bulletins, talk-shows, and reality shows.

Arrival in the Quarter

Welcome to the team



Vu Thi Bich Diep, MD, PhD,
Strategic Information Senior Health Scientist / CDC