

PEPFAR VIET NAM QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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U.S. DIRECTOR OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE FORE'S VISIT

On the morning of July 5, 2008 U.S. Director of Foreign Assistance and USAID Administrator, Henrietta Fore visited the Methadone Maintenance Therapy (MMT) Clinic located at the Community Counseling and Support Center (CCSC) of Binh Thanh District, Ho Chi Minh City. She was accompanied by the U.S. Ambassador to Viet Nam, Michael Michalak and Deputy Principal Officer, Angela K. Dickey from the U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City.

"We know the clinic will make a positive change in the lives of many addicted to heroin, to their families, and to the community," said Mdm. Fore to the clinic staff and members of the press.

The Methadone Maintenance Therapy (MMT) Clinic opened on May 19, 2008 and is operated by the Ho Chi Minh City Provincial AIDS Committee (PAC) with technical and financial support from USAID through Family Health International (FHI). This is one of the three sites in Ho Chi Minh City in the pilot MMT program coordinated by the Viet Nam Administration of AIDS Control (VAAC / MOH). The other two sites are located in Districts 4 and 6, supported by the U.S. Centers for Disease

Control (CDC).

Dr. Nguyen Truong Giang, Deputy Director of Ho Chi Minh City's Department of Health and Vice President of the HCMC Provincial AIDS Committee, briefed Mdm. Fore on the HIV/AIDS programs implemented in Ho Chi Minh City, highlighting the important role of PEPFAR funding. Mdm. Fore appreciated the local Government's efforts in improving people's health, and she was especially impressed with the way the city's AIDS Committee coordinates resources from different donors in both geographical and programmatic terms.

Chief medical doctor of the CCSC, Dr. Nguyen Thanh Liem, delivered a short presentation on the ser-

vices offered to clients by the CCSC in general and the MMT Clinic in particular. During her visit Mdm. Fore had a personal talk with a client, who claimed that after over a month of Methadone therapy he no longer has to spend some 300,000 VND (20 USD) a day on drugs. She encouraged the Clinic and other stakeholders to scale up communication channels not only to make more clients aware of the program and come to it at earlier stages of their illness, but also to provide services to more female clients.

Answering a question from a journalist whether the U.S. Government would fund the expansion of the MMT program to other regions of Viet Nam, Mdm. Fore stressed that, "this program is owned by the Vietnamese



Mdm. Fore at Binh Thanh Methadone Maintenance Therapy Clinic

Government and coordinated by the Ministry of Health. This is just one of the many HIV/AIDS programs that the U.S. Government provides technical and financial assistance to in Viet Nam. We have strong proof that Methadone is one of the most effective methods to treat drug addiction, and we will be happy to provide support to multiply this model to many other provinces and cities in Viet Nam."



SUCCESS STORY

"We feel good about providing Methadone to patients"

The PEPFAR Communications Specialist interviewed Dr. Dang Phi Bang, Chief Medical Doctor at the Methadone Maintenance Therapy Clinic in Binh Thanh District, Ho Chi Minh City on June 26, 2008.

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SIX NEW GRANTS SUPPORTED BY PEPFAR

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in Viet Nam through Pact Viet Nam has just announced its support for six grants totaling an estimated \$1.4 million under three HIV/AIDS Initiatives, namely: *the HIV Care Local Partnership Initiative; the Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS Education for Secondary School Students Initiative; and the Engendering Care and Treatment Response Initiative.*

The first initiative is designed to support local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to increase access to community/home-based care and support for people living with

HIV and orphans and vulnerable children.

Organizations receiving grant awards to implement programs under this initiative are: 1) the Center for Community Health Promotion (CHP), 2) CARE International in Viet Nam, 3) CESVI, and 4) Health and Environment Services Development and Investment (HESDI). Program activities will be implemented in Nghe An, Quang Ninh, and Hai Phong provinces until September, 2009.

The second initiative will assist the Ministry of Education and Training in providing reproductive health and HIV/AIDS education to secondary school students and will be implemented by Save the Children

USA, in Ho Chi Minh City, Quang Ninh and Quang Tri provinces, until September, 2010.

The third initiative is designed to improve the scope and quality of services provided to women living with HIV/AIDS in Viet Nam using an integrated assessment-implementation-evaluation approach. The program will be implemented by the Center for Community Health and Development (COHED), in partnership with Development Center for Promotion of Quality of Life (Life Center) and Boston University's Center for International Health and Development (CIHD) in Hai Phong and Ho Chi Minh City until September, 2009.

PEPFAR PARTNERS' MEETING

On July 1, 2008, PEPFAR Viet Nam hosted the first Partners' Meeting in 2008 with the theme of "Looking Back". This was the first in a series of meetings in preparation for the upcoming Country Operational Plan (COP) Development season.

The objectives of the meeting were:

- To become better informed about activities being implemented by USG partners in Viet Nam;
- To identify areas of strengths, successes, weaknesses, gaps, challenges, threats and opportunities in programs;
- To gain a better understanding of USG FY07 program implementation in preparation for FY09 activity planning.



Strategic Information (SI) Overview presented by Ray Ransom, PEPFAR SI Chief

After the introductory remarks made by Dr. Nguyen Thanh Long, Director of VAAC, and a Strategic Information (SI) Overview by the USG SI Chief, sixteen presentations were delivered by PEPFAR prime partners: MoH Life-GAP; Ministry of Defense; Ho Chi Minh City Provincial AIDS Commit-

tee; National Institute of Hygiene & Epidemiology; Hanoi School of Public Health; UN-AIDS; Supply Chain Management System; PACT, Inc.; Nordic Assistance/Viet Nam; Family Health International; Harvard Medical School AIDS Partnership; Health Policy Initiative; IntraHealth International, Inc. (Capacity Project); Abt Associates (Health Systems 20/20); UNC/MEASURE; and PATH TB Country Support .

In their presentations, the prime partners shared achievements vs. targets, their successes as well as challenges, and proposed recommendations for overcoming difficulties.

The next Partners' Meeting with the theme of "Looking Forward", is scheduled for August 21-22, 2008.

"We feel good about providing Methadone to patients"

Interview with Dr. Dang Phi Bang, Chief Medical Doctor at the Methadone Maintenance Therapy Clinic in Binh Thanh District, Ho Chi Minh City

Q1. What is your general assessment of the medication-assisted-therapy program being implemented at your clinic?

A1. Although the program has been recently launched, it has brought hope to many drug users and their families. After a few weeks of Methadone therapy, most of my patients are no longer dependent on heroin or other opioids. This statement is not only based on observations, but the results of regular and random urine and pupil tests



Dr. Bang and his staff at the Binh Thanh MMT Clinic in Ho Chi Minh City

"The program ... has brought hope to many drug users and their families. After a few weeks of Methadone therapy, most of my patients are no longer dependent on heroin or other opioids."

on patients. Patients' families are really grateful.

Q2. What do you think of the future of this type of therapy in Viet Nam?

A2. I believe this method will be developed and expanded in Viet Nam, because obvious needs are very visible. I hope after the piloting phase, the program can be accessible to more patients with more diverse backgrounds, and the enrollment criteria will be less stringent than they are now.

Q3. How many injecting drug users have been selected to join the program at your clinic?

A3. In the first and second months, we started the pilot program with 15 pa-

tients. Currently we are in the third month (June 2008), and the number of patients is 29, of whom 17 are HIV positive. Our planned target is to reach the clinic's maximum capacity of 250 patients by the sixth month.

Q4. What about your staff?

A4. At the moment we are fully staffed per the program's design. We have 14 staff members, including 2 medical doctors, 2 nurses, and 2 counselors. Among these, two (including me) were transferred from the District Hospital and are paid by the local health administration. All the other staff members were carefully selected and are supported by donor funds.

COLLABORATION TO STRENGTHEN QUALITY OF HIV/AIDS SERVICES

Representatives of provincial HIV/AIDS care and prevention services convened in Hanoi the week of June 22 to conduct a mid-term review of a management training program designed to strengthen the quality of HIV/AIDS services in Viet Nam. This program was conducted by Hanoi School of Public Health with sponsorship and participation by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Global AIDS Program.

The review was conducted by the Hanoi School of Public Health in collaboration with the Viet Nam Administration of HIV/AIDS Control (VAAC) and regional partners from Center for Preventive

Medicine in Da Nang, Institute for Hygiene and Public Health and the Pasteur Institute in Ho Chi Minh City. The purpose of the review was to assess the effectiveness of the current program activities in improving HIV/AIDS services in Viet Nam and to discuss institutionalizing and standardizing the management development activities across the national HIV/AIDS system as part of VAAC's human resource development plan to 2010.

Concurrently, 87 HIV/AIDS managers from 21 provincial HIV/AIDS centers presented their final management improvement projects and graduated from the program in the central and north regions. Further capacity-building activities will fo-

cus on HIV/AIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Systems and Quality Management Programs for HIV/AIDS organizations.

"Support from the PEPFAR program has enabled our partners in Viet Nam to provide innovative management training and support activities throughout the country, and work with hundreds of HIV/AIDS program managers to have a positive impact on improving HIV/AIDS services for Viet Nam. We are looking forward to using the results of this program review to bring new ideas for strengthening the program during 2008-2009," said Janna Brooks, Senior Public Health Advisor, CDC.

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WORKSHOP ON PEER OUTREACH PROGRAMS

The U.S. Government, through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in Viet Nam, in collaboration with the Viet Nam Administration for AIDS Control (VAAC / MOH), co-hosted a workshop, organized by PACT Inc., on Peer Outreach Programs in HIV Transmission Prevention on June 23-24, 2008, attended by more than 150 delegates from the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Public Security; the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs; the Viet Nam Women's Union; provincial AIDS Committees; multilateral and bilateral donor organizations; and NGOs working to combat HIV/AIDS.



One of the purposes of the workshop was to share the results of a recent survey (November 2007 - January 2008) of Peer Educator programs conducted by the Center for International Health and Development at Boston University, the Ho Chi Minh City Statis-

tical Office, and Abt Associates, Inc., which evaluated PEPFAR-supported community outreach HIV prevention programs in Viet Nam, and identified opportunities for program improvement. The workshop was also a forum for all stakeholders, including government agencies, donors, NGOs and local partners, to discuss ways to enhance efforts in order to improve peer education programs and deliver comprehensive services in HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Nguyen Thanh Long, VAAC Director, conveyed an expectation of working closely with PEPFAR to assist Viet Nam in efforts to fight AIDS until 2013.

PEPFAR Operating Areas in Vietnam

Critical Interventions for HIV/AIDS Prevention:

- Support peer outreach programs among injecting drug users, sex workers, and men-who-have sex with men to build the sustainable capacity of members of these populations to reduce their HIV-related risks, and to improve their access to care and treatment services.
- Support the development and implementation of comprehensive drug treatment services -- including Methadone and other forms of medication-assisted therapy -- as well as sustainable training programs on addiction for clinical and community service providers.
- Scale-up support for condom social marketing in Viet Nam, as well as for interventions in entertainment establishments and other settings to support the adoption of safer behaviors among potential male clients of sex workers.

Critical Interventions for HIV/AIDS Treatment:

- Support the integration of HIV treatment in facility-based and community-based activities and referral services to enhance treatment adherence.
- Build in-country technical capacity through pre-service and in-service trainings for health care cadres and lay caregivers.
- Provide clinical services, including regular check-ups, and necessary lab tests for adults and children with HIV.
- Provide first-line and second-line antiretroviral treatment (ART) for adults and children with HIV.
- Provide HIV counseling and testing for pregnant women and antiretroviral prophylaxis to prevent mother to child transmission of HIV (PMTCT). Support the government of Vietnam to develop PMTCT national implementation protocols and programs.
- Support national HIV/AIDS programs in development of a responsive supply chain management system of antiretroviral drugs and related commodities.

Critical Interventions for HIV/AIDS Care and Support:

- Support the integration of a comprehensive and seamless package of HIV clinical and psychosocial care and support for HIV+ clients and at risk family and kinship groups through facility-based and community-based activities. These include: prevention and treatment of opportunistic infections and Tuberculosis (TB); sexually transmitted infection (STI) diagnosis and treatment; pain and symptom relief; nutritional assessment and support; and referral services.
- Build in-country technical capacity through pre-service and in-service training for health care cadres and lay caregivers.
- Support efforts to identify orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), assess their needs and provide services for comprehensive intervention at the community level, with a focus on food and nutrition, shelter, clothing, basic personal hygiene, child protection, health care, psychosocial support, and education and vocational training.
- Support the Government of Vietnam to develop a National Action Plan for Children, Infected and Affected by HIV and AIDS and assist with implementation of the roll-out of the plan.
- Support HIV counseling and testing sites in 30 provinces.
- Support groups of People Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) to promote human rights and reduce stigma and discrimination.

Policy strengthening:

- Support to MOH in developing the national guidelines for HIV/AIDS diagnosis and treatment, national ART protocol, Palliative Care guidelines, Methadone implementation protocols and guidelines, and national VCT guidelines.