

PEPFAR / Viet Nam Quarterly Newsletter

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World AIDS Day and Vietnam's National Action Month for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control



U.S. Ambassador Michael Michalak and Vietnam Deputy Prime Minister Truong Vinh Trong, among others, at the Sympathy Hearts Ceremony

For the first time, the Government of Vietnam launched a national action month for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment. From November 10 to December 10, the Government of Vietnam, particularly the Ministry of Health, hosted a series of important events.

An opening ceremony was held on November 16, followed by many events at the national and local level. In celebration of the World AIDS Day, on the morning of November 30, a national meeting and parade was

organized at the National Convention Hall in Hanoi, attended by over 3,000 people. At the same time, some 3,000 simultaneous meetings and parades took place around the country at the provincial, district and commune level. On the evening of November 30, "Sympathy Hearts" art performance and exchange program was hosted by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with sponsors, including PEPFAR. The performance was televised live on the national television channel (VTV3) to call for donations for a special fund to

support people living with HIV (PLHIV). Deputy Prime Minister Truong Vinh Trong (also Chair of the National Committee for Addressing HIV/AIDS, Drug and Prostitution) attended the performance together with three Vice Ministers (VM of Health, VM of Justice, and VM of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs) and many other senior officials of the Government of Vietnam. The U.S. Ambassador participated in the event, and donated VND 100 million (\$6,000) to the national fund. The program received a total amount of more than VND 3.2 billion (approximately \$190,000) from donors, international and Vietnamese organizations, individual philanthropists, and TV viewers who sent text messages and made phone calls to the program to make contributions.

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Statement by Ambassador Mark Dybul on World AIDS Day 2008



"President George W. Bush and a bipartisan Congress launched the U.S. President's Emergency Plan AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) in 2003, when many doubted the possibility of progress against global HIV/AIDS. Five years later, people and communities all over the world are leading the fight, saving the lives of their countrymen and women and looking forward to a generation free from HIV with the strong support of the American people. It is in this spirit that we celebrate life on World AIDS Day 2008."

"PEPFAR is one aspect of the 'new era' in development led by President Bush, with a focus on true partnership: support for country-owned strategies and national programs, with shared accountability for results, achieved through the power of multisectoral partnerships with governments, non-governmental, faith- and community-based organizations, the private

sector and groups of people living with HIV/AIDS.

"The successes of PEPFAR have been vast. Ahead of schedule, PEPFAR has fulfilled its commitment to support treatment for two million people. As of September 30, 2008, PEPFAR supported life-saving antiretroviral treatment for over 2.1 million men, women and children living with HIV/AIDS around the world. It is safe to say that as of December 1, 2008, PEPFAR also has met its goal of supporting care for 10 million people affected by HIV, including nearly 4 million orphans and vulnerable children. Nearly 240,000 babies have been born free of HIV, due to PEPFAR-supported programs to prevent mothers from passing the virus on to their children. And the American people, through PEPFAR, have supported a comprehensive prevention portfolio providing HIV prevention messages in hundreds of millions of encounters.

"In recent months, we have been reminded that this world is one of global connections, and the challenges of people around the world are our own. On this World AIDS Day 2008, we must rededicate ourselves to bringing hope to those who need it most – and celebrate life."

Talk Vietnam Features PEPFAR Activities



The *Talk Vietnam* show aired a special edition of the show about PEPFAR activities in Vietnam in celebration of World AIDS Day on November 22 & 23. The show was estimated to attract audiences of over 10 million viewers within Vietnam and 2 million abroad. This is one of the few programs in the English language and it is among the most popular shows in Vietnam.



Dr. Mitchell Wolfe, CDC Director, was the key guest on the talkshow. The episode also included short documentary clips on PEPFAR activities in Vietnam

WORLD AIDS DAY 2008: CELEBRATE LIFE!

PEPFAR/USAID through Pact Vietnam supports Save the Children to implement Project NAM, a comprehensive HIV prevention program for at-risk young men in vocational schools and out-of-school settings. In vocational schools, the partner is the General Department of Vocational Training (Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs) which supports activities in 17 vocational schools in Hai Phong, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Quang Ninh.

Like many students at the Hong Cam Mining Vocational College, 22-year-old Pham Van Duy leads a busy academic and social life. In addition to his coursework in electrical studies, Duy is an active Peer Educator. "They told me, 'You must know how to smoke, drink alcohol, and be with women!'" Duy smiles as he recounts a conversation he had with a group of male friends when he came to the school. But Duy does not smoke or drink, and has a committed relationship with his girlfriend. As a Peer Educator trained by Project NAM, he knows how certain behaviors like drinking and unprotected sex may have negative consequences. Wanting to share what he has learned, Duy now leads a club for young men at his vocational college. "The club follows the Project NAM curriculum, which was adapted to the Vietnamese context from the Program H from Brazil.



Duy facilitates a club session for peers on HIV prevention

Club members reach out to peers through one-on-one, interpersonal communication on HIV prevention to negotiate risk reduction, distribute condoms, and provide referrals to VCT and other health services. In 2008, **700 peer educators and club members** like Duy reached more than **45,000 at-risk young men**. They also organize and perform in school-wide events to promote HIV prevention in a positive way.

An important aspect of Project NAM is helping young men like Duy and his classmates reflect upon and challenge gender norms that influence HIV risk. They question traditional views on manhood "Many young men at this vocational college are at the age when they want to experience new sensations," Duy says. "Sometimes they do things to impress their friends but do not think about the consequences. Some of my classmates engage in risky behaviors that may even result in HIV."

A survey at the end of the school year in June 2008 documented a significant increase in consistent condom use, an increase in HIV risk perception and improvement in gender attitudes among male students. As a member of Duy's club said, "Before I couldn't say 'sex' or 'condom' because I felt shy. But now I can use condoms... and I share with my friends what I learn in the club."

Three New Projects for Vietnam

In October 2008, the United States Embassy announced three new contracts totaling more than \$28.5 million for projects implemented through USAID under PEPFAR, aimed at combating the spread of HIV/AIDS in Vietnam.

The first was awarded to Population Services International for "Social Marketing Prevention and Supportive Services in Vietnam." Applying \$15 million in funds this five year project aims to reduce HIV prevalence among most-at-risk populations by promoting

treatment and services, increasing safer behavior practices, and reducing the initiation of drug use.

The second project entitled "Health Policy Initiative Vietnam" of almost \$10 million was awarded to Abt Associates, Inc for a five-year program to support the Government of Vietnam, civil society, and networks of people living with HIV/AIDS to undertake critical policy and advocacy actions in their efforts to improve HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment in Vietnam

The third \$3 million grant was awarded to Chemonics, Inc. and will provide technical services for workplace-based prevention, as well as employment and support services for high risk individuals. Through this project, PEPFAR will work to provide employment opportunities and services for people living with HIV/AIDS and others considered at risk of infection.

Through these awards, the United States Mission aims to expand and strengthen HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support services in Vietnam.

Methadone Changed My Life

SUCCESS STORY

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief through USAID/Family Health International, CDC, Vietnam Ministry of Health, and Ho Chi Minh City Provincial AIDS Committee, is supporting the Government of Vietnam to implement a pilot methadone program in Hai Phong and Ho Chi Minh City.

I first used heroin when I was 14 years old. Every morning, the first thing I thought of was how to get enough money to buy heroin. I lost my job as a painter. My family lost faith in me and wanted to admit me to a drug detoxification and rehabilitation center (06 center), but found the setting of such a center was not appropriate for me.

Then my sister heard of the methadone maintenance therapy (MMT) program in Binh Thanh district, HCMC. I successfully registered in the program in July 2008 and was one of the very first people on methadone in HCMC. I have now been on methadone for six months and have completely stopped using heroin. I have gained the trust back from my family and returned to my job. The only disadvantage is that I cannot travel far from the clinic as



Son (not his real name) taking his daily methadone dose

the program currently doesn't allow taking doses at home. I want to become a peer educator to help other drug users turn their lives around as I have done.

This is the story of Son, one of the 600 patients currently on MMT in Vietnam. Recognizing a high relapse rate using the current strategy of mandatory detoxification/

rehabilitation for opioid dependent individuals, the Vietnam Ministry of Health decided to pilot a MMT program in 2008. In response to an MoH request, the US Government, World Bank and WHO coordinated financial and technical assistance to establish six pilot MMT clinics in Hai Phong and HCMC.

A holistic model of care was developed including psychosocial support, drug addiction counseling and peer support in addition to linkages to referral services such as voluntary counseling and testing and HIV care and treatment. MMT implementation guidelines were developed by an international team led by MoH. PEPFAR and WHO provided technical assistance in training and clinical mentoring.

Anecdotal reports of client improvement in physical and social well-being have been common. The government of Vietnam plans to scale-up to six additional MMT clinics in Hanoi in 2008-2009 and will consider further expansion following the outcome of a one-year evaluation.

New OVC Center Opens in Hanoi



On November 9, 2008, a new Center for support of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) was opened in Gia Lam District, Hanoi.

Located at a pagoda, the Center "Smiles of the Sun" will provide support services including health care and psychological support, to children infected with and/or affected by HIV/AIDS in the neighborhood (estimated 300 to 500 OVC). The center will also help to build a friendly community environment and support families coping with the impacts of HIV/AIDS to prevent abandonment or institutionalization of OVC.



The center is operated by Doctors of the World-USA in partnership with the Vietnam Women's Union and the Bright Futures Network of PLHIV (Hanoi), with technical and financial support from PEPFAR/USAID through PACT Vietnam.

Departure and Arrival



Dr. Karl D. White departed Vietnam in November 2008 after spending three years as the SAMHSA Substance Abuse Treatment Advisor for the PEPFAR/Vietnam team. Best wishes to Karl in his new journey.



Replacing Karl is Dr. Kevin P. Mulvey, who has just been working in Vietnam since 2007 with Family Health International. We welcome Kevin to the team.



Vietnamese and Americans
IN PARTNERSHIP TO FIGHT HIV/AIDS

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Workshop on Care and Support to OVC

On November 28, 2008, PEPFAR and the Ho Chi Minh City Committee for AIDS Prevention and Control brought together health practitioners to study models in care and support for orphans and vulnerable children.

Ninety participants from the city's departments, agencies, public hospitals and orphanages, as well as non-governmental organizations and self-help groups, discussed facility, community, and home-based care and support, and ways to expand services.

"In the last few years, with support from PEPFAR and other international organizations, Ho Chi Minh City has provided care and support to more than 4,000 orphans and vulnerable children," said Dr. Nguyen Truong Giang, President of

the Ho Chi Minh City Committee for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control. "This workshop is a chance for the city's Committee for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control to discuss with PEPFAR and other partners possible expansion of comprehensive care and support services to orphans and vulnerable children in Ho Chi Minh City."

Since 2004, PEPFAR has provided US \$5.7 million to support the development of orphans and vulnerable children supportive policies and programs, reaching a total of 47,400 to date, with different services such as food and nutritional support, health care, psychological support, education and vocational training, protection, shelter and care.



Website for MSM Launched



With support from PEPFAR/USAID, Family Health International (FHI) in collaboration with Consultation of Investment in Health Promotion (CIHP) has launched a new website for the men who have sex with men (MSM) community in Vietnam. On the website (at the link www.nam-man.vn), users can post questions to and receive guidance from health, sexual and psychological experts, as well as share their experiences and interests with others. The website is linked to the online forum for MSM www.adamzone.vn under the same intervention project, which was launched in July 2008.