



PRESS RELEASE:

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Debut of Photo Exhibition Highlighting Methadone Maintenance Treatment Successes

HANOI, December 14, 2013 -- With an aim to raise community awareness on the benefits that Methadone Maintenance Treatment (MMT) could bring to the community, drug users and their families, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-supported SMART TA project under the aegis of the Vietnam Administration of HIV/AIDS Control - Ministry of Health, is holding the photo exhibition “GET OUT AND GO ON.” The exhibition features photographs that tell true stories of former heroin addicts who have received treatment successfully and found a way to “GET OUT AND GO ON.” Thirty-one photographs by photographers Hoai Thanh, Trong Chinh and others will be presented at Thai Phien Garden, Vincom, Ba Trieu, Hai Ba Trung District, Hanoi from December 14 – 30, 2013.

“Addicts are not criminals, but patients in need of treatment. MMT provides smart solutions that bring health for patients, hope for families and safety for communities. This photo exhibition provides an opportunity for the public to have a better understanding of the benefits MMT brings to not only the patients and their families themselves but for the whole community through true stories captured”, said Dr. Do Huu Thuy, Chief of Communication & Community Mobilization Division, Vietnam Administration on HIV/AIDS Control at the launch of the exhibition.

MMT works towards long-term recovery and gradually improves patients’ health. Patients in treatment take their daily doses at clinics under the supervision of health staff. They live with their family, receiving care and support that helps them in their social reintegration. The treatment has been highly recognized in more than 80 countries worldwide and proven to be remarkably effective in Vietnam during the past five years, significantly contributing to a reduced relapse rate, crime rate, transmission rates of HIV, HBV, HCV and unemployment rate at a low cost.

According to the Ministry of Public Security, as of June 2013, Vietnam has 180,783 registered drug addicts (mostly heroin addicts) (Ministry of Labor – Invalids and Social Affairs) of whom 18.4 percent are HIV positive. The Government of Vietnam commits to provide MMT for 80,000 patients by 2015. Currently, there are 74 MMT clinics in 29 provinces, providing treatment for 14,785 patients. Thus, 65,000 people are still waiting for treatment to meet this commitment. MMT program encounters a lot of difficulties, given the current resources for operation and medication entirely depend on international funding which are being gradually cut down. Strategic solutions to the finance and medication issues for the program, therefore, are urgently required.

The USAID SMART TA project is implemented by FHI 360 and receives funding support from the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

Further information or arrange for interviews, please contact:

Pham Thu Thuy, MCMS, thuyphammcms@gmail.com, 0125 359 1994

Nguyen My Ha, FHI 360, nmyha@fhi360.org, 0904 644 660