

PROGRAMME COORDINATING BOARD FIELD VISIT | 23-24 November 2009

UNAIDS PCB Field Visit to Viet Nam

A delegation from the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) undertook a field visit to Viet Nam in November 2009.

1. The delegation comprised:

- Ms. Jan Beagle, Deputy Executive Director UNAIDS
- Ms. Helen Frary, Chief, Board and UN Relations, UNAIDS
- Ms. Monique Middelhoff, Senior Health and AIDS Advisor, Health, Gender and Civil Society Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands (PCB Vice Chair)
- Dr. Ibra Ndoye, Executive Secretary of National Aids Council of Senegal
- Dr. Canan Yilmaz, Head of STI/HIV-AIDS Department, Ministry of Health, Turkey
(unable to attend due to travel problems)
- Ms. Natacha Tolstoi, Policy Advisor on Global Health Issues in the UN System, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France
- Mr. Kourosh Ahmadi, Counselor (Health Issues), Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN in Geneva
- Dr D. Bachani, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India
- Ms. Gulnara Kurmanova (PCB NGO, Asia), Chair of the Board, AntiAIDS Association, Kyrgyzstan
- Mr. Vincent Chrisostomo (PCB NGO, Asia), Coordinator, Asia Pacific Coalition of Regional Networks on HIV/AIDS, Thailand

2. The full programme for the visit is attached.

3. A number of key issues were observed:

The HIV Epidemic in Viet Nam: how the response to HIV in the context of a concentrated epidemic increases the demand on UNAIDS for strong technical assistance, as well as human rights and community, health and legal systems strengthening, advocacy around the rights of marginalised groups, and the elimination of stigma and discrimination.

Leadership: the high level of commitment and excellent relationship between UNAIDS and most senior members of government in the response to HIV in Viet Nam, including the Deputy Prime Minister, Trung Vinh Trong, Chairman of the National Committee on HIV, Drugs and Prostitution Prevention and Control, and at the provincial level with leaders such as Mr. Ke, Vice-Chairman of the People's Committee of Hai Phong.

Funding: that sustainability of funding is an issue in all countries including Viet Nam, which is both the only PEPFAR funded country in Asia, and a Global Fund recipient. In Viet Nam, only 45% of those who need them have access to ARV, and continued availability of ARV treatment after 2012 is uncertain. This raises the issues of both the increase of domestic funding for HIV in countries, and the need for continued support from donors for Universal Access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

Civil Society: the increasingly viable and strong civil society involvement in the response to HIV and UNAIDS strong support and ongoing work in this area. Local NGOs and INGOs have collaborated with the government for a successful application for dual track financing under Global Fund Round 9, and civil society has self-selected 40% of the membership in the Global Fund Country Coordination Mechanism. The PCB Delegation participated in the launch of VNP+, the first Viet Nam Network of People Living with HIV that has received official registration in Viet Nam, with support of the Joint Team on HIV and key bilateral donors.

Systems strengthening: that many of the HIV services are well integrated into broader community based or health services. Programmes for key populations at high risk while highly effective are still limited and very new.

Joint UN Team on HIV: how the work of the Joint UN Team on HIV demonstrates strong implementation of the technical support division of labour and commented that this was “the Way UNAIDS is supposed to work”. The Joint UN Team is working towards the implementation of an informed and effective response to HIV in Viet Nam focusing on three priority areas in the Outcome Framework. The group observed that in the absence of a UNDP staff member working on HIV, Gender and HIV was an issue covered by UNIFEM in collaboration with the Joint UN Team on HIV, whereas MSM and Human Rights issues were supported directly by UNAIDS Secretariat in collaboration with the broader UN.

UN Reform: the model of UN Reform - of strong collaboration within the UN - has been based on the model which was developed by the UNAIDS family for effective UN coordination in the area of HIV. It also observed how the model of UN reform has the impact of putting the Government of Viet Nam in the lead in the response to HIV.



Programme Coordinating Board Visit to Viet Nam, 23-24 November 2009 Full Programme

23rd November

Meeting with Mr. Ke, Vice-Chairman of the People's Committee of Hai Phong

A seaport industrial town of approximately 1.8 million people, Hai Phong is one of the provinces with a large concentration of HIV infections through injecting drug use.

The Hai Phong Provincial Committee on AIDS, Drugs and Prostitution Prevention and Control which is Chaired by Mr Ke, brings together a multisectoral mix of government, civil society and mass organizations providing a strong best practice example of the Three Ones. This project supported by the Joint UN Team on HIV ensures regular Committee meetings and resources, including two staff who assist with HIV policy development. The more effective coordination by the centre has ensured that more accurate strategic information is available for the committee to share with its members as they collaborate on formulating consolidated action plans. This has also resulted in a stronger harm reduction response as demonstrated by Viet Nam's first maintenance therapy pilot (MMT) that began in Hai Phong in 2008 and has been very successful.

Visit to Pilot Methadone Project

Due to its leadership and commitment to addressing injecting drug use and HIV, Hai Phong is one of the first cities to pilot methadone maintenance therapy (MMT) in Viet Nam. The implementation of MMT was approved after extensive discussion and debate among the National Assembly, the Ministry of Health, and various other government bodies. High-level and international advocacy ensured that MMT as a form of drug dependence treatment was legal and available.

With funding from PEPFAR and the World Bank and technical assistance from the Joint UN Team on HIV and FHI, the methadone maintenance therapy pilot project began implementation in Hai Phong in April 2008 at three sites. 95% of clients have remained in the MMT programme. It has had a powerful impact on clients and their families, and community support and demand have increased in the first year.

The Joint UN Team on HIV provides technical support to the methadone project. The Joint UN Team provides coordination for policy advocacy on this issue through the Donor Coordination Mechanisms as well as through study visits including to Hong Kong, Australia, The Netherlands and France.

Due to the success of the programme, in September 2009, authorities agreed to expand the pilot to 4 sites and increase client uptake from 750 to 1000 individuals, meeting approximately 10% of demand. The programme has also expanded to include employment and vocational opportunities for clients.

Visit to project for Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV (GIPA)

Hai Phong is one of the 4 provinces, namely Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hai Phong and Quang Ninh implementing the GIPA project.

The Joint Team on HIV provides technical and financial assistance to the GIPA project which started in 2005. Through this project PLHIV are supported to develop their own self-help groups or clubs and build their capacity on HIV treatment, care and support.

Flamboyant Flowers Group is one of the groups in Hai Phong under the GIPA project. It was founded in 2003 with 6 founding members who are living with HIV. Now, its membership is up to 200 people. The goals of this group are to provide psychological and physical care and support for PLHIV and orphan and vulnerable children (OVC) in the community; to raise public awareness of HIV in order to reduce stigma and discrimination against HIV; and to support employment creation and income generation for PLHIV.

Some achievements of the group: In 2007, the group set up its income generation model including motorbike washing, sewing, knitting, sea snail growing. 25 PLHIV are engaged in these income-generation activities. They have mobilized support from international NGOs, donors, mass organizations and local authorities.

The group leader, Mrs. Pham Thi Hue was awarded an Asia Hero Award by the Times Magazine in 2004 because of her great efforts and contributions to the fight against HIV related stigma and discrimination in Vietnam. She has met with national and world leaders, such as Deputy Prime Ministers, UN Secretary General, then US President Bill Clinton and has shared her experience in different regional and international fora.

Visit to PMTCT Centre

Thuy Nguyen is the northern-most district of Hai Phong province with 300,000 inhabitants living in 37 communes. Thuy Nguyen has special geographic features as the whole district is bordered by water- either the river or the Western Sea. It is therefore advantageously located as a transportation network, including road, river as well as sea, but these features also bring challenges for HIV prevention and control activities. As reported at 30 July 2009 there was a cumulative total of 1,044 HIV cases in the district, including 652 people living with HIV, 526 AIDS cases and 392 deaths. The number of married couples living with HIV was 322, including 246 sero-discordant couples.

From the year 2004, The Joint UN Team on HIV supported the PMTCT pilot programme in Thuy Nguyen district, which was successfully phased out by the end of 2007. The evaluation of this model for feasibility provided data for both the establishment of PMTCT services at the local level, as well as defining lessons learned for scaling up PMTCT services to whole city. The PMTCT model also provided useful inputs for the local health office and the Ministry of Health in developing PMTCT technical guidelines which assisted the roll out of the PMTCT national programme of action.

PMTCT interventions have been carried out at both health service and community levels, which include support for Voluntary and Confidential Testing; provision of information

on HIV and AIDS for pregnant women and their partners; provision of prophylactic anti-retroviral drugs to mothers and their infants; care and support during and after delivery; counseling on infant feeding options for HIV-positive mothers and referral to the outpatient clinic for continuous care and treatment.

The PMTCT programme supports health staff to provide Voluntary Counseling and Testing for all pregnant women through integration in antenatal services. All mothers receive pre-test counseling on HIV and PMTCT. Those who give their consent receive the HIV test and post-test counseling services upon return of test results.

Women who are HIV-positive will be referred to the Provincial Hospital via Thuy Nguyen district health centre and district hospital where they receive care and support, including ARV prophylaxis during pregnancy and delivery. The baby will also receive prophylactic treatment after birth. Mother and baby receive follow-up care and support by the commune midwife, once they are discharged from hospital.

Joint UN Team on HIV on going support: From the year 2008, the Joint UN Team on HIV continued its support for PMTCT in Hai Phong in collaboration with partner organizations, including LifeGap CDC and the Global Fund, based on the comparative advantages of each agency. The Joint Team support for PMTCT through the Provincial Reproductive Health Centre has focused on technical capacity building, especially in the areas of Voluntary Counseling and Testing, Infant Young Child Feeding and IEC/BCC for PMTCT at scale-up sites in Hai Phong. For 2009 and 2010, the Joint Team is supporting Hai Phong to implement an action plan on promotion of men's involvement in Sexual/Reproductive Health and PMTCT, again in Thuy Nguyen district, which is in line with the Asia-Pacific Operational Framework for Linking HIV/STI, with Reproductive Health, Maternal/Child Health Services that is being promoted and co-implemented by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNAIDS.

24th November

Meeting with Joint UN Team on HIV + Heads of UN Agencies

The United Nations response to HIV is coordinated by the Joint UN Team on HIV. Its establishment in 2006 ensures a coherent and effective response to HIV and supports the Hanoi Core Statement on Aid effectiveness. Under the ONE UN Initiative, the Joint UN Team on HIV has become one of the Programme Coordinating Groups (PCGs) as well as a model for the other PCGs.

The Team is made up of HIV technical staff from each participating UN organisation: ILO, IOM, UNAIDS Secretariat, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNODC, UNV and WHO. The UNAIDS Country Director convenes and facilitates the Joint UN Team on HIV.

The Joint United Nations Team on HIV:

- Develops, implements and monitors the Joint UN Programme on HIV in partnership with government ministries and national and international partners; The eleven participating United Nations organisations working on HIV in Viet Nam agree to implement this programme jointly.
- develops an annual work plan in close consultation with relevant government ministries and national partners;

- develops coordination and implementation arrangements for joint activities;
- takes decisions on technical issues;

All UN programming and activity relating to HIV in Viet Nam are reflected in the Joint UN Programme on HIV and are undertaken in accordance with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2006–2010 and the One Plan, both of which guide cooperation between the Viet Nam and the United Nations.

Meeting with UN Resident Coordinator a.i. Jesper Morch

This meeting will be an opportunity for the delegation to hear from the UN Resident Coordinator A.I. Jesper Morch, who has been one of the leaders of the UN Reform initiative in Viet Nam from its very outset. The meeting will focus on how the UN is working differently in Viet Nam, and how the UNAIDS model of joint planning and programming has supported this initiative.

Overview of UN Reform in Viet Nam

Based on the shared belief that the United Nations has a vital role to play in Viet Nam's development, the UN in Viet Nam has changed the way it works to better help Viet Nam meet the challenges that lie ahead. Through the One UN Initiative, the UN is transforming itself to deliver better results for the benefit of the people of Viet Nam through greater unity of purpose, coherence in management and efficiency and effectiveness in operations. In line with the Ha Noi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness, UN reform in Viet Nam is a three-party undertaking by the Government of Viet Nam, the UN Country Team and the donor community.

The reform is based on five pillars or Five Ones: One Plan, One Budget, One Leader, One Set of Management Practices and the Green One UN House.

- **ONE PLAN:** The One Plan combines and synthesizes the work of the 14 participating UN organizations in Viet Nam within a single planning framework. Since the signing of the revised One Plan in June 2008, the UNCT has moved forward on implementation, monitoring and resourcing.
- **ONE SET OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES:** In the past year the Harmonised Programme and Project Management Guidelines (HPPMG) have been agreed upon between ExCom Agencies and Government. The HPPMG has been submitted to UN headquarters, and formal endorsement is expected soon, with implementation starting in early 2010.
- **ONE BUDGET/ONE PLAN FUND.** As part of the One Plan, a single budget provides a clear sense of total resources required to implement the One Plan, while the One Plan Fund provides a streamlined way of providing un-earmarked support for the UN's programmatic work and reduces the problem of different UN agencies competing for the same donor funds. The total budget of One Plan is USD 286 million for the 2008-2010 period.
- **ONE HOUSE:** The eco-friendly and team-friendly Green One UN House for all UN organizations in Viet Nam is essential to integration, coordination and the realization of greater synergies. The Government has contributed a high-value land site, and on 8

- **ONE LEADER:** Another key element of reform is strengthening the role of the Resident Coordinator (RC) as the “One Leader” for the UN in Viet Nam. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the One Leader has been signed by all participating UN organisations, providing enhanced functions and responsibility to the UN RC to better represent the participating agencies in the One Plan. As the One Leader, the RC will take the lead on common issues that require the UN Country Team to speak with one voice, and present a common position and/or view. He/she will guide the strategic development and management of the One UN Initiative and promote joint decisions including all representatives of the participating UN organizations.

Lunch Roundtable with civil society organizations

Local civil society organizations

The Vietnam Union of Science & Technology Associations (VUSTA). VUSTA is a socio – political organisation of Vietnamese scientific and technological intellectuals comprising of 114 Associations. It works towards promotion of the intellect potentialities of the scientific – technological intellectuals. VUSTA is a Principal Recipient in the recently approved Global Fund Round 9 dual track HIV proposal.

The Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS). ISDS is a Vietnamese nonprofit, non-government organisation. It contributes to the socioeconomic development of Vietnam through research, training, advocacy and consultancy on the country's key social issues. ISDS is a Sub Recipient in the recently approved Global Fund Round 9 dual track HIV proposal and is also contracted to facilitate civil society participation in the preparation of the 2010 UNGASS Country Progress Report.

Center for Community Health and Development (COHED). COHED is a Vietnamese nonprofit, non-government organisation focusing on capacity building for health professionals and social workers through trainings. It also provides sponsorship for poor and disadvantaged people including PLHIV and their families. COHED is a Sub Recipient in the recently approved Global Fund Round 9 dual track HIV proposal.

The Vietnam Network of People Living with HIV (VNP+). VNP+ established in August 2008 is the voice for 70 self-help groups and alliances of PLHIV from many different parts of Vietnam. It aims to bring all PLHIV together and involve them in the national response to HIV.

Vietnam Women’s Union (VWU). VWU was found in 1930. It has a network that operates throughout Vietnam at central, provincial, district and commune levels with a total membership of above 13 million women. The Women, AIDS and Reproductive Health Centre of the VWU support the Government of Viet Nam’s strategies on HIV and reproductive health. The VWU has been implementing the GIPA project since 2005.

The national Men having Sex with Men working group (MSMWG). MSM WG was informally established several years ago by concerned group of individuals to discuss male sexual health and MSM issues in Vietnam. It is also now a member group of the

Greater Mekong Regional MSM Working Group, participating in further collaboration and sharing of experiences in the region.

Vietnamese community Mobilization Centre for HIV/AIDS Control (VICOMC). VICOMC is a non-government organization established in 1994. It focuses on training, informing, broadcasting, community intervention and development in the field of HIV Prevention and Care.

International Non-Governmental Organisations

Medical Committee Netherlands-Vietnam (MCNV). MCNV has worked in the field of health in Vietnam since 1968. It is a professional development organization aiming to enable the disadvantaged among the Vietnamese population to attain structural improvements in their health. It supports projects in more than 14 provinces of Vietnam,

PACT. PACT is an INGO working in Vietnam since 1990. Currently it provides grants, technical assistance and management support to Vietnamese and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) receiving or slated to receive USAID funding allocations for work in a wide range of activity areas under the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). PACT is a Sub Recipient in the recently approved Global Fund Round 9 dual track HIV proposal.

Family Health International (FHI). FHI is a public health and development organization working to improve the lives of the world's most vulnerable people. It works directly with the Viet Nam Ministry of Health on capacity building, behavioral surveillance, monitoring, and dissemination activities. FHI also works directly with the provincial AIDS and health authorities to conduct a range of HIV/AIDS behavioral change and risk reduction interventions and related HIV/AIDS prevention activities. FHI is a member of the Viet Nam Country Coordinating Mechanism.

CARE International Vietnam. CARE in Vietnam is a Non-Government Organisation representing the CARE International network. It works with Vietnamese partners in the sectors of health, rural development and disaster mitigation and preparedness. CARE is providing capacity building support to ISDS as part of the recently approved Global Fund Round 9 dual track HIV proposal.

Meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Truong Vinh Trong, Chair of the National Committee on AIDS, Drugs and Prostitution Prevention and Control

The National Committee for HIV/AIDS, Drugs and Prostitution Prevention and Control is tasked with coordinating the national response to HIV. It was set up on 5 June, 2000 and is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister (H.E. Truong Vinh Trong). As an umbrella organisation, the National Committee is tasked with overseeing the work of 25 entities including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Fatherland Front, the 64 Provincial Steering Committees, the AIDS Divisions at member ministries and organisations, international non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, local non-governmental organisations and civil society.

The Joint UN Team on HIV benefits from a relationship of mutual trust and collaboration with the Office of the Government and the National Committee and have been working closely with them to strengthen their coordination capacity and implementation of the law on HIV. Thanks to advocacy from the Joint UN Team on HIV, including support for study visits to Australia, Hong Kong, the Netherlands and the USA to learn about international experiences with HIV, drug use and sex work, the National Committee has changed politics to widen harm reduction, introduce methadone maintenance therapy, changed social support and is revising sex work legislation. The National Committee has also increased provincial level engagement and coordination as seen in Haiphong.

HANOI FIELD VISITS

Option 1 - Meeting with Sex Workers Self Help Group - Noi Binh Yen (NBY)

Noi Binh Yen (NBY) or The Peaceful Place – a Sex Workers self-support group – was founded in March 2009 by a group of former and current Sex Workers to reduce vulnerability and improve quality of life of Sex Workers, especially those who are on the street. Noi Binh Yen has now around 40 members who in their turn have reached around 150 street-based SW in Hanoi. The Dutch AIDS Fund (SANL) has recently expressed their interest in funding this group.

It is estimated that there are around 300 women sex workers working on the streets in Hanoi. Hai Ba Trung and Hoan Kiem are the districts with the highest concentration with an estimate 200 street based sex workers. While Sex Workers are vulnerable, Sex workers who work on the street are much more so. Majority of street-based Sex Workers are using drugs (estimated 70%), many living with HIV (around 40%), are of older age (late 20s – 30s), and around one third have children. They are subjected to stigmatization, violence, exploitation, harassment and abuse, arrest and detention as well as poverty, homelessness and health problems as consequences. Many of them are abandoned by their own families. Many of them are denied the rights of custody or even recognition to their own children.

This meeting will be an opportunity to visit the self-support group and hear their stories.

Option 2 - Tu Liem District Health Centre

Tu Liem District Health Center includes voluntary counseling and testing, and a drop-in centre for drug users. The center also provides PMTCT and services for residents from nearby O5/06 centres.

The visit will start with a short and brief presentation from the Director of Tu Liem District Health centre on the activities of the centre on HIV (care and treatment, prevention, including harm reduction) followed by a tour of the facilities and opportunity for questions and answers.

Partners in this project include DFID, Global Fund, World Bank, PEPFAR, Ministry of Health and the Joint UN Team on HIV.

Option 3 - Visit to Long Bien Health Centre.

Meeting with Director of the Long Bien Health center and staff as well as discussion with a group of peer educators who have outreach activities with injecting drug users and

representatives of self-help groups for injecting drugs users. The centre includes about 100 staff members and provides services to over 200 Injecting Drug Users and 600 Sex Workers. Services include Voluntary Counseling and Testing, PMTCT, treatment, care and support, peer outreach services, harm reduction services. Partners in this project include Global Fund, FHI and is supported by the Joint UN Team on HIV.

Reception with partners and Launch of VNP+

The Action Center for people living with HIV (ACP+) is the name of the local NGO that VNP+ was registered under. It gathers scientists and PLHIV committed to work together in the response to HIV. Its mandate includes: provide training for PLHIV and create job opportunities for PLHIV and those affected by HIV; conduct information and communication activities on HIV/AIDS and promote research and programs on HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment.

The legal registration of ACP+ is the result of commendable efforts from the Vietnam Network of PLHIVs (VNP+) which was established in August 2008. The network brings together 70 self-help groups and alliances of PLHIV from many different parts of Vietnam. It aims to bring all PLHIV together and ensure the involvement of PLHIV in the national response to HIV.

The Joint UN Team on HIV has provided technical and financial support to VNP+ and also supported VNP+ in the registration process. In 2009 the Joint UN Team in collaboration with Center for Community Empowerment (CECEM) supported overall training on outcome-oriented project management, policy advocacy skills and regular information sharing meetings and the annual review meeting.