

VIETNAM PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT 2007

I. Executive Summary

The Vietnam Public Health Association (VPHA) has been officially established in December 2002 with the first congress attended by the delegates from almost all provinces in Vietnam. The consensus was reached among participants on goals, mission and objectives of the VPHA. The VPHA's goal is to bring all people involved in public health field to cooperate for mutual understanding and assistance. This will contribute to better health care and protection of the nation, region and worldwide integration. VPHA also aims to protect and legalise its material and professional interest of association's membership.

The VPHA office is now temporarily located within the HSPH campus at 138 Giang Vo, Hanoi, Vietnam in order to take the advantage of HSPH technical assistance and facilities. However, the Association retains its own independence in the execution of all its activities.

II. Narrative Report

The activities are as follows:

Objective 1: To set up office in Hanoi and three population health research centers

1. VPHA central office:

Office system and procedures has been developed and improved (e.g. organization/ individual member recruitment procedures, VPHA members' list-serve, VPHA profile/activities tracking and updating, member fee/financial management, photo album, etc.).

Fulltime staff have been recruited and working effectively on coordinating activities at provincial level and activities with other organizations.

Human resource from Hanoi School of Public Health have been mobilized for technical assistance of conducting projects.

2. Community Health Research Centers (CHRC):

- *In Thai Binh:* VPHA in collaboration with Thai Binh Provincial Branch and Tien Hai District Branch have been conducting an intervention research in Tien Hai, Thai Binh. The aim of the research is to build up a model "Safe use of pesticide in the community" applied in Dong Co commune, Tien Hai district, Thai Binh province in order to protect community health and environment. The intervention activities have been implemented since November 2004. Intervention activities were highly appreciated by the community, the community also involved in designing the messages for intervention. Local authority has supported the implementation of the project by providing local resources. In next few months, post survey will be conducted to assess the effects of this project. For this period all of the interventional activities are implemented at Dong Co commune. Post survey was

conduct in early October, 2006. The report of this model has been prepared to disseminate to other centers and Provincial Public Health Associations.

- ***In Da Nang:*** Being one of the three public health applied centers, Da Nang PHA has conducted public health studies such as smoking preventions, Injury prevention and control, HIV/ AIDS preventions, etc. From March, 06 to March, 08, with the coordination, as well as supports of VPHA, Da Nang PHA will implement an intervention study at Hai Chau District, Da Nang City. Its objective is to create the model of supporting and taking care of people living with HIV/AIDS at home through PHA's network. As planned, the 1st phase was implemented in the 2nd Quarter, 2006. And intervention activities are being implemented in the 3rd, 4th Quarters of 2006. This interventional study was developed based on the health data of the province with the involvement of the local health sector in priority setting. The implementation of this study could help Da Nang PHA achieve some objectives such as capacity building in scientific study field for providing information to develop appropriate strategies for locals, and strengthen interdisciplinary coordination, as well as community involvement in Public Health Activities.

- ***In Dong Thap:*** With the financial and technical support of VPHA, Dong Thap PHA has been implementing this intervention study to deal with this health problem, and then developing a pilot model of replication and adaptation in neighboring regions.

This intervention study will be implemented in 28 months, from the April of 2006 to the July of 2007, and be divided into 3 phases:

- The 1st phase: April, 06 - July, 06
- The 2nd phase: August, 06- March, 08
- The 3rd phase: April, 08- July, 08

The Expected Outcome of this study is an overall picture of the effective community-based prevention methodologies to apply in other areas of Dong Thap province, as well as neighboring regions of the Mekong Delta.

The pre-survey was conducted successfully in the research area, report of this baseline survey is being completed and was presented in the third annual conference in December, 2006.

Main outcome(s):

The Central office of VPHA working effectively to coordinate activities at provincial and lower levels and among the Steering Committee, Editorial board of Vietnam Journal of Public Health. With the support from AP for setting up the office at the central level, routine activities of VPHA have been implemented and maintained effectively, establishing first collaborations with other organizations and government institutions.

Three Pilot centers have been set up in the North, Central and the South. By conducting pilot interventions, capacity of key players of those Provincial Public Health Associations has been improved on coordinating and implementing PH

activities, mobilizing the community, advocating the authorities and seeking for further resources for sustainability of the Association.

Objective2: To develop a strategic plan for the VPHA development from 2004-2010

Delegation of VPHA, leaded by Prof. Dr. Le Vu Anh, VPHA's Standing Vice President visited and worked with New Zealand Public Health Association from 8 - 9 December 2004. In Hamilton city, the delegation met Mrs. Marty Roger, Chairwoman of New Zealand Public Health Association, and some members of this city branch. Prof. John Smith, pointed to help building VPHA's development strategy by WHO, also attended the meeting. Both sides discussed issues related to public health and exchange experiences on operation between 2 associations: organizational issues, orientation, research... The delegation also visited some health center of Waikaito province which has consultant service of detoxifying cigarette, improving health, preventing infected diseases... controlled by this branch. The delegation visited office of New Zealand Central Public Health Association in Wellington City and Mrs. Noeline Holt, Office Administrator of the Association, its members and Wellington branch's members. Public health issues was exchanged and discussed. Both reached agreement principles on establishing co-operation relationship and exchange operation experiences between VPHA and New Zealand Public Health in the future.

In December, 2005 Prof Goran Dahlgren, a well recognized expert on policy was invited to work with VPHA on development of Strategic Plan for VPHA.

After being developed with the advice from Prof. Goran Dahlgren, the first draft of the strategic plan was disseminated to the Steering Committee. Members of the Steering Committee have revised this plan with consultancy of VPHA consultant expertise on Health Policy. Final version of this strategic plan has been developed and available in February, 2007.

Main components of the Strategic plan include:

1. Brief description of current context of Vietnam, trend in Public Health and Public Health Policies
2. Introduction of VPHA (structure, main functions)
3. Opportunities and challenges
4. Main body of the Development strategies:
 - VPHA vision
 - VPHA mission
 - Eight main objectives:
 - Objective 1.** Strengthen and develop the VPHA at central, provincial and district levels.

Objective 2. Strengthen and develop the advocacy role of VPHA as related to public health policies and programmes.

Objective 3. Strengthen and develop the professional competence of VPHA members as well as other key professionals and decision makers in the field of health development.

Objective 4. VPHA support the implementation of certain public health policies.

Objective 5. Provide consultancy services.

Objective 6. Promote the practical use of Public Health Research

Objective 7. Dissemination of materials.

Objective 8. Promote international cooperation.

- Priority strategies for each objective

Based on the Strategic plan, a detail Action Plan 2007 – 2020 has been also developed.

Main outcome(s):

By reviewing structure of VPHA, Public Health context in Vietnam and developing the strategic plan, a direction for development of VPHA has been established. Master plan for action has also been developed for more specific solutions and activities needed. The Strategic plan also shows the need for strengthening operational structure of VPHA with the need of setting up Advisory Committee and the involvement of key members from Ministry of Health, National Assembly and the Party.

Clear and detail Master Plan has been used effectively for setting up priority according to the period. Based on the Master Plan, potential donors and partners were also primarily identified.

Objective3: *To have a network of VPHA in Vietnam and become a member of WFPHA*

VPHA network in Vietnam:

Setting up of Provincial Public Health Associations:

By the time of this report 10 Provincial Public Health Associations were set up, include:

- Hai Duong Public Health Association
- Thai Binh Public Health Association
- Da Nang Public Health Association
- Dong Thap Public Health Association
- Khanh Hoa Public Health Association
- Yen Bai Public Health Association
- Lao Cai Public Health Association
- Dong Nai Public Health Association
- Ho Chi Minh city Public Health Association
- Ha Tinh Public Health Association

Hoa Binh province is processing to set up their Association. Hanoi PHA is processing to become a branch of VPHA.

Main outcome(s):

VPHA gradually expand its network thru out the country. The most active provinces on Public Health have established their PHAs and carrying out many activities on Public Health. Thru Provincial PHAs, concept of Public Health has been introduce to local authorities and partners.

Becoming a full member of WFPHA, VPHA has chance to explore the collaboration with other PHA members. At the latest congress of the Federation in Geneva last May, recommendation of WFPHA on implementation of PHA of country members showed that VPHA is on the right track with close collaboration with Ministry of Health, playing advocacy as one of the key functions of the Association.

Objective 4: *To strengthen capacities of VPHA in public health knowledge, conducting public health activities and research*

Capacity Building for VPHA Staff

The two training workshops on “Capacity Building for VPHA Staff” was held at Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh city. Those training workshops were designed to have three phases with the aim to develop VPHA network. The participants, including members of VPHA Directorial Board, representatives of provincial PHAs coming from the North, Center, and South of Viet Nam. The participants had shared their experiences in applying VPHA’s activities to their provinces, and lessons learned as well as visions in the future. The participants were also provided updated information in the public health field as well as equipped with basic knowledge and skill on Public Health such as Public Health Functions, Advocacy etc.. After the two workshops, the provinces that had not established provincial Public health association continued planning, lobbying for the new establishment of Provincial Public Health Association.

Actively involving in tobacco control

- Reducing Social acceptance of smoking in Vietnam.

Viet Nam Public Health Association (VPHA) and HealthBridge Canada (formerly PATH Canada) have been implementing this operational intervention study in 3 provinces which represent for 3 main regions of Viet Nam. This project is expected to be implemented within 3 years from 2005 to 2007 with 4 main objectives:

1. Improving awareness of community on negative impacts of Tobacco on smokers’ and secondhand smokers’ health
2. Advocating for ban on smoking at public places
3. Changing behaviors of smokers (not smoking in front of others) and non smokers (feeling confident in requesting smokers not to smoke in front of them)
4. Building capacity of VPHA in tobacco control

This project has been being implemented with mobilization of numerous stakeholders and community at both local and national levels. Mass media, educational system as well as channel of mass organization (women Union) were used for communication campaign. Results from post – survey showed that there were significant changes of knowledge and practice of smokers as well as female secondhand smokers. Results of this interventional project will be disseminated to Public Health professionals as well as policy makers in Vietnam

- Preparing the Shadow report on FCTC implementation in Vietnam

In the year 2007, VPHA together with HealthBridge Canada prepared the Shadow report on FCTC implementation in Vietnam. This is an annual report which is prepared in order to monitor the level of FCTC implementation in Vietnam. The report focuses on principal terms of the convention including tax, second hand smoke exposure... The Report in the year 2007 was also disseminated at the Conference of Parties in Thailand in June 2007. This is an important activity to evaluate and enforce the implementation of FCTC in Viet Nam

Reducing burdens of dioxin in Vietnam

A project titled “ Applying Public Health approach to reduce burden/harmful risks of the dioxin (orange agent) in an isolated hotspot- Bien Hoa, Dong Nai- An operational intervention study” has been being implemented by the VPHA with financial support from Ford Foundation. The main objective of this project is to Improve the Knowledge-Attitude-Practice of people staying in the hotspot areas toward dioxin poisoning thru food chain. The project will be implemented from 2007 – 2008.. This intervention program will be used as a pilot one for further operational activities in the other hotspots in Vietnam.

Main outcome(s):

VPHA key members were equipped with concepts of Public Health, how to advocate to establish Provincial PHA at their provinces and how to advocate for implementation of Public Health activities.

Objective 5: *To create the forum for public health discussions through VPHA publications and annual conferences*

VPHA journal:

By the time of this report 9 issues of Vietnam Public Health Journal were released . The journal was well recognized by Public Health professionals and peer reviewers. Number of article sent to the editorial board has increased gradually.

VPHA Conferences

Three Annual Scientific Conferences were conducted in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. Participants of the conferences were Public Health professionals, VPHA members, provincial PHAs, government organizations, NGOs as well as academic institutions in Vietnam. The conferences held by VPHA were recognized as an effective forum for sharing information among PH

VPHA website:

The official website of VPHA (www.vpha.org.vn) has been registered. Design of the website will be developed. It is expected that this website will be an interactive website

which help to share information of activities of VPHA, results of research as well as update health related policies.

Main outcome(s):

VPHA conferences, journals and website have been highly appreciated by Public Health professionals. Those communication channels help to strengthen the Public Health network in Vietnam as well as the ways to advocate for role of VPHA on Public Health in Vietnam. More and more potential partners are seeking to collaborate with VPHA on implementing Public Health activities in Vietnam.

3. The main constrains and solutions

In general, the project has met the objectives set in the original proposal. The activities carried out to meet specific objectives were mentioned the previous section of this report.

However, during implementation of the project, we still faced with some constrains in expanding the network of VPHA and joining WFPHA (objective 3) and completing two intervention research in Community Health research center in Da Nang and Dong Thap by 2006 (objective 1).

For the expansion of network of VPHA thru out the country, the Steering committee agree that the aim of VPHA is not to have all 64 provinces to have Provincial Public Health Association without having real activities carried out and impact on the improvement of Public Health for the community. Based on the need of the population, VPHA gradually expand its network with careful explosion of local personnel, possibility of sustaining activities.

As WFPHA only accept one full member for each country, Vietnam already has Society of Preventive Medicine as full member of VPHA. After great effort by VPHA staff and support of international colleagues, VPHA has approached secretariat of WFPHA, sent all communication materials of VPHA. With the support from AP, delegation of VPHA also had meeting with Ms Barbara Hatcher, Secretary of WFPHA to directly introduce about VPHA. By the end of the 11th congress of WFPHA, VPHA was announced as the full member of WFPHA.

III. Future direction for development and sustainability:

Thanks to the support from AP for the start – up and operation of VPHA in the infancy period, VPHA has set up its structure and gradually expand the network in country and collaboration with national and international organizations. To adapt with the Public Health Movement in Vietnam and to implement the mission and functions of the organization effectively, for the next period, VPHA will:

- Strengthening the Operational structure by setting up Advisory Committee and restructure the Steering committee with details job descriptions
- Develop and implement initiative programs in line with the functions of VPHA and suitable to Vietnam context

- Advocacy for effective public health policies and programs.
- Promoting the professional competence of the members through training activities, research, consulting services, and sharing information and experience through conferences, PH journal etc.
- Strengthening the interdisciplinary coordination and community participation in public health activities.
- Enhancing the international cooperation in order to improve the quality of public health activities in Vietnam and expand international cooperation in the field of public health.