

**Participating Universities:** VFP usually works with students' volunteer clubs based at various universities in Hanoi. When a work-camp comes up that involves university participation, the work-camp program is sent to all these clubs, which reply with feedback or register their interest. Selected pharmacies are those who can fit into the work-camp schedule and, or those who are the most interested in the participating in the VFP sessions.

After each session we had debriefs, where we evaluated our performance - both strengths and weakness - and made improvements where necessary.

### **National University Social Sciences**

After over a week of preparation and planning, it was "Showtime!" We were both nervous and excited, and looking forward to finally being able to *do* what we came here to do. The VFP director, Mr. Phuong, had not had time to attend our dress-rehearsal the day before and so was eager (and probably a bit nervous) to see what we had produced.

We had always assumed we would be presenting in a classroom of some sort, however we did not expect that the chairs and tablets were bolted together in rows, which limited our ability for group discussion and space for the games that we had planned. The room also had windows with no glass, which created unfavourably loud and echoing acoustics, making it very difficult to be heard especially without the use of a microphone.



Other than the technical difficulties, we did very well for our first attempt. Our main faults were not speaking slowly and loudly enough. We also decided that we definitely required Vietnamese translation for the condom demonstration. We all felt

that if anything at all, we wanted students to leave the session feeling confident they would know how to use a condom correctly, if and when required. We thought that it was important to give the students a chance to practice a few times before initiating the relay games, which required accuracy and not just speed.



The set up of the classroom made is difficult to have proper discussions but the students were generally a reluctant and shy to share their ideas – whether they found us ‘foreigners’ intimidating or the topic embarrassing or a mixture we can only assume – but we did have exceptions in each group, with some students volunteer to re-enacted one of our skits with an alternative and more appropriate ending, which was a nice **surprise and a positive response!**

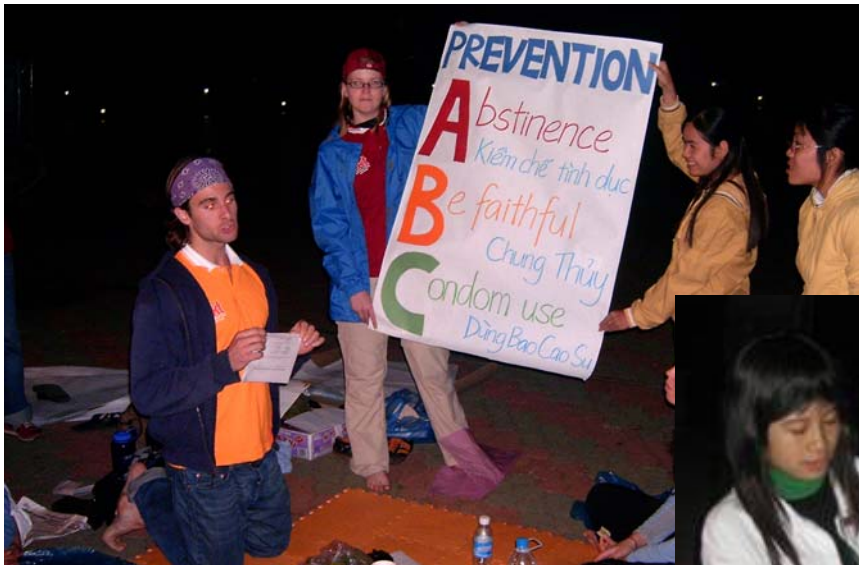


## 🌐 University of International Relations - Sunday Club

We met with the Sunday Club, a student English-speaking club, at a local park on a Thursday evening. VFP organized a large picnic rug with salad rolls, biscuits and drinks for us all to share before our talk.



Our audience was about a dozen not including local volunteers, which was small in comparison but gave us the opportunity to help students one-on-one when it came to practicing using a condom.



The club members were well-versed in English and were enthusiastic to learn. We had limited lighting being in a public park and had to improvise basing ourselves by an ice-cream stand which had a large lit-up sign in front of it.



Due to time limitations we could not have detailed discussions, but we did incorporate the Vietnamese translation into the condom demonstration which was hugely beneficial.

## 🌐 National University of Foreign Languages

The third and final presentation was by far our most successful, in all aspects:

- **Venue:** we had a large auditorium with a large stage, big white board to put up our posters, a microphone and plenty of room to move around for discussions and games.
- **Attendance and participation:** estimated more than 60 students attended and the majority was responsive to all our activities. This session was advertised at the university and was not intended for one specific class, so all students came voluntarily and were interested in what we had to share.
- **Confidence:** Having mastered our presentation, and refined it in such away that we were confident that it could be easily understood, we were able to relax and enjoy the experience.



Natalie and I had the chance to mediate a group discussion, where we shared opinions on the skits that were performed. We were lucky to have an overall very responsive group of students, with the exception of a few sniggering girls on the end. There was also one or two girls who refused to touch the condom; they refused to hold the cucumber even, claiming they didn't have a boyfriend so didn't need to know anything about it. Despite some reluctance to handling the condom, the students had a lot to say about other issues, for example, sex before marriage, unfaithfulness, having relationships with HIV positive people, and expressed that they felt discrimination against PLWHA was often to lack of knowledge about the disease.



Overall, our group had a great discussion. I was challenged by their questioning and opinions and had to do my best to facilitate the conversation taking into account everyone's ideas; trying not to impose beliefs but still wanting to portray the important messages of choice, safety and prevention when it came to sex and sexually transmitted infections, such as HIV. It was my first time in such a role, and it was not easy to say the least, but I felt more confident as we continued and feel that it has made me grow on a personal as well as professional level, especially with respect to my public speaking and communication skills.



In retrospect, we all agreed that we could have easily conducted more sessions. We had thoroughly prepared and felt we could have reached out to bigger or more audiences over the course of the work-camp. Like the other volunteers, I felt that we made a big impact on students. It was obvious it was the first time they had ever experienced anything like this, the first time that HIV/AIDS, sex and condom use was ever spoken about freely, without judgment. At first I think that it was confronting to audiences but I think they appreciated our openness and in response opened up to us.

## World Aids Day 2006 - December 1<sup>st</sup>

To deepen our understanding of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) we contacted and visited two HIV groups, Cactus Blossom and Sunflower group. Both groups are run under the Red Cross banner in the Dong Da district. VFP volunteers met with these groups at their weekly meeting in the lead up to World Aids Day, 2006.



Cactus Blossom is run by and aimed at helping women affected by HIV/AIDS. The group has three main areas in which they offer support:

### **1) Social**

The stigma and discrimination still prevalent in the community against PLWHA makes important for the Cactus blossom group to offer a social support network. Members, some of whom are former drug users or sex workers, have all been affected by HIV and said that the group provided them with an understanding that their family members and friends could not provide. Being able to meet with people who have experienced the same mental and physical hardships is both comforting and encouraging. Members work together to reach out to more women in need.

### **2) Medical**

Assistance is provided in obtaining medical referrals for HIV testing, treatment and other healthcare needs. However, access to treatment medicines, nation-wide, is a problem that still needs to be overcome.

### **3) Financial support**

Funding or subsidies are provided for workforce training and for business ventures, with the aim of helping HIV positive women gain employment or make a living for themselves. Members shared stories of how they received computer skills training, or received financial support in order to open up their own store. Despite financial and technical training from the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the group's activities are limited due to financial constraints.



The Sunflower group has similar goals to that of Cactus Blossom, however their target group is specifically mothers with HIV/AIDS.



On World Aids Day, VFP helped the two Red Cross groups set up their information booths and displays at a local festival. HIV/AIDS groups from around the city, gathered at this festival, to be recognized for their efforts in working with PLWHA.



## HIV club becomes model help group

After being driven to near financial ruin and blamed by her husband's family for contracting HIV, Duong Thu Huong was saddened once again when doctors reported that her nine-month old son would die of AIDS within days.

Huong, like many other women in Vietnam, has faced insurmountable difficulties since discovering she had contracted the deadly disease. In a country where suicides are not uncommon when a patient is diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, Huong has found hope in the Hoa Xuong Rong (Cactus Flower) Club.

Run by other HIV infected individuals, the club helps those living with the disease through volunteer work and direct financial support, and tries to break down the many negative stigmas HIV/AIDS has in Vietnam.

As a result of its success, the club has become the new model, for the Government's Centre for Community Health and Development (COHED). The group has also received support from the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), a US funded programme to help infected women overcome discrimination in both society and their families.

When Huong discovered she had HIV, her husband's family was far from supportive. "I was shocked and scared when I received the test results. My husband's family blamed it all on me, and told everyone that I was a debauched wife. With no care and no money, I almost killed myself," said Huong in a recent interview. The family eventually discovered that a man, with which Huong's husband had shared a knife to tattoo themselves, had died from AIDS and was the likely culprit in spreading the disease.

Thanks to a suggestion from a relative in the healthcare profession, Huong joined the Cactus Flower Club a year ago, and now helps other families and individuals cope with HIV/AIDS. If a person is excommunicated by their relatives, the club will take them in, and care for them. "We have nothing to lose. We are willing to do anything from helping a person bathe and feed themselves to washing clothes. Through our work, we hope that people living with AIDS will at least experience a small degree of joy before passing away," said Huong.

When the club's Ha Long City chapter opened a year ago, Huong was one of 58 members who were divided into three groups. The first group included 30 people who were public about living with HIV/AIDS and were responsible for approaching other women who seek consoling and healthcare. The second group had 25 people who were responsible for disseminating information to the public and caring for people living with HIV/AIDS. The last group consisted of three people who co-ordinated the chapter's operations.

After its first year, the chapter approached more than 3,640 people, of which 395 were living with HIV/AIDS, and cared for nearly 40 AIDS patients. "One year may seem like a short time for a healthy person, but it is a very long time for a person living with HIV/AIDS," says Nguyen Thi Thom, a fellow club member. Dr Nguyen Thi Tien, club chief, says the group still faces a number of difficulties; many of its members have limited education, financial support and access to medicine.

According to Duong Quoc Trong, director of the Viet Nam Administration of HIV/AIDS Control, PEPFAR has been an active contributor to local organisations since beginning HIV/AIDS prevention programmes in June 2004. PEPFAR has so far supplied anti-retroviral drugs to more than 3,300 patients and has treated more than 800 pregnant women to prevent mother-to-child infection. Trong added that the Ministry of Health had also supported PEPFAR's Leadership and Investment in Fighting an epidemic - Global Aids Programme.

The health ministry and the Viet Nam Administration of HIV/AIDS Control are also carrying out their own HIV/AIDS prevention programmes nationwide. "We are currently in discussions with PEPFAR to create a mechanism in which we more effectively co-ordinate our efforts and strengthen our management in fighting this epidemic," said Trong.

<http://english.vietnamnet.vn/social/2006/11/639361/> (Source: Viet Nam News) 20:20' 30/11/2006 (GMT+7)

## HOW THE WORLD CAN CONQUER AIDS

*Kofi A. Annan is secretary-general of the United Nations*

In the 25 years since the first case was reported, AIDS has changed the world. It has killed 25 million people and infected 40 million more. It has become the world's leading cause of death among both women and men ages 15 to 59. It has inflicted the single greatest reversal in the history of human development. In other words, it has become the greatest challenge of our generation.

For far too long, the world was in denial. But over the past 10 years, attitudes have changed. The world has started to take the fight against AIDS as seriously as it deserves.

Financial resources are being committed as never before, people have access to anti-retroviral treatment as never before, and several countries are managing to fight the spread as never before.

Now, as the number of infections continues unabated, we need to mobilize political will as never before.

The creation of UNAIDS a decade ago, bringing together the strengths and resources of many different parts of the United Nations family, was a milestone in transforming the way the world responds to AIDS. And five years ago, all U.N. member states reached a new milestone by adopting the Declaration of Commitment" containing specific, far-reaching and time-bound targets for fighting the epidemic.

### **My priority**

That same year, as I made HIV/AIDS a priority in my work as secretary-general, I called for the creation of a "war chest" of an additional \$7 billion to \$10 billion a year. Today, I am deeply proud to be patron of The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which has channeled almost \$3 billion to programs across the globe. Recently, we have seen significant additional funding from bilateral donors, national treasuries, civil society and other sources. But much more is needed; by 2010, total needs for a comprehensive AIDS response will exceed \$20 billion a year.

Because the response has started to gain real momentum, the stakes are higher now than ever. We cannot risk letting the advances that have been achieved unravel; we must not jeopardize the heroic efforts of so many. The challenge now is to deliver on all the promises that governments have made. Leaders must hold themselves accountable" and be held accountable by all of us.

Accountability is the theme of World AIDS Day on Friday and requires every president and prime minister, every parliamentarian and politician, to decide and declare that "AIDS stops with me." It requires them to strengthen protection for all vulnerable groups" whether people living with HIV, young people, sex workers, injecting drug users, or men who have sex with men. It requires them to work hand in hand with civil society groups, who are so crucial to the struggle. It requires them to work for real, positive change that will transform relations between women and men at all levels of society.

### **What is required of us?**

But accountability applies not only to those who hold positions of power. It also applies to all of us. It requires business leaders to work for HIV prevention in the workplace and in the wider community, and to care for affected workers and their families. It requires health workers, community leaders and faith-based groups to listen and care, without passing

judgment. It requires fathers, husbands, sons and brothers to support and affirm the rights of women. It requires teachers to nurture the dreams and aspirations of girls. It requires men to help ensure that other men assume their responsibility – and understand that real manhood means protecting others from risk. It requires every one of us to help bring AIDS out of the shadows, and spread the message that silence is death.

I will soon be stepping down as secretary-general of the United Nations. But as long as I have strength, I will keep spreading that message. That is why World AIDS Day will always be special to me.

On this World AIDS Day, let us vow to keep the promise, not only this day, or this year, or next year, but every day, until the epidemic is conquered

[http://blogs.usatoday.com/oped/2006/11/how\\_the\\_world\\_c.html#more](http://blogs.usatoday.com/oped/2006/11/how_the_world_c.html#more)

## Beauty in Diversity- Celebrating WAD/IDD and IVD

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2006



Beauty in Diversity is a joint celebration in honour of World AIDS Day (Dec. 1st), International Day of Disability (Dec. 3rd) and International Volunteer's Day (Dec. 5th). This special event takes place from 14h-20h Sunday, 5th December in Reunification Park.

Beauty in Diversity is dedicated to recognizing the wide-range of individuals living with or affected by disability, those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, along with those individuals that volunteer their time and energy to contribute to their community's needs.

Representatives from each of these areas are working together to present a collaborative and educational 'fun day' in the park. The event seeks to: promote the active and full participation of people with disabilities, educate the public about issues surrounding HIV/AIDS, and acknowledge the significant contribution of volunteerism in eliminating discrimination and

enabling acceptance and appreciation for a diverse society.

"Following in the tradition of last year, today's fair aims to emphasize the importance of cooperation and collaboration between these three groups in achieving their goals, while also highlighting the essential role these groups play in creating a beautiful and diverse community here in Viet Nam" – Mr. Jordan Ryan – United Nations Resident Coordinator says.

Hundreds of people join the event including: representatives from local and international NGOs, companies and international organizations, volunteer groups, youth groups, students and the public.

People living with HIV/AIDS, people with disabilities, volunteers, together with their family and friends are the main participants of the event. By sharing their stories and experiences, they seek to help people in the general public become aware of the need for everyone's active commitment and participation in promoting community solidarity and respect for human rights to fight stigma and discrimination. Information booths hosted by a variety of organizations, educational games, live music and drama provide fun and entertainment for the whole family.

Beauty in Diversity (BID) day was a unique and appropriate way to finish our work-camp as BID celebrates three important ideals which VFP as an organisation represents. We as volunteers demonstrated this through a role play on stage:

- **VFP works at the Vietnam Friendship Village**

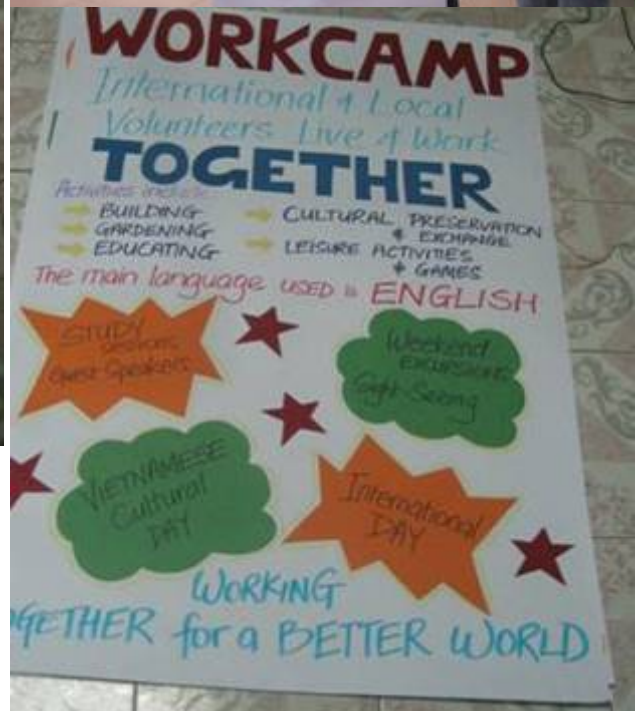
VFP volunteers at the Friendship Village help Agent Orange affected children dig and plant seeds to contribute to their organic farm. The village houses over 100 people with Agent Orange related disabilities.

- **VFP promotes cultural exchange and learning through international volunteerism**

A local Vietnamese volunteer exchanges a Vietnam flag and traditional conical hat (non la) with an International Volunteer who in return gives her a Canadian Flag and an Australian Koala toy.

- **VFP most recent work camp was focused on increasing HIV/AIDS awareness among Vietnamese youth in community**

VFP volunteers teach Vietnamese people about HIV. An employer, who has attended the educational session, openly employs a HIV positive person without judgment.



## Information Booth

The VFP booth was set up to promote HIV awareness. We displayed all our posters from our HIV presentations and gave free condom demonstrations to the crowds. Our efforts were sponsored by DKT™ and OK™ condom companies who provided us with t-shirts to wear as promotional uniforms as well as plenty of free merchandise (for example mugs, key-rings, hats and condoms), which we used as prizes to encourage audience participation.

