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Viet Nam
July, 2008

Country Situation

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The response to HIV in Viet Nam is coordinated by the National Committee for HIV/AIDS, Drugs and Prostitution, Prevention and Control. The Viet Nam Administration for HIV/AIDS Control, under the Ministry of Health, reports to the National Committee on national HIV issues and progress. International development partners increased support from 2007 to 2008. Donors committed to align with the government's strategies and the Ha Noi Core Statement, strengthen national systems, emphasize programme integration at the provincial level and follow a Coordination Action Plan. These positive developments allowed Viet Nam to scale-up the "Three Ones" principles, move towards universal access and achieve a six-fold increase in antiretroviral therapy coverage. Viet Nam is expected to achieve middle-income status by 2010. With more national resources to respond to HIV, donors will begin to withdraw support. Now is a crucial time for the national government to put key systems in place and plan for the future, including the need to increase domestic spending. The needs of most-at-risk groups are of great concern. In 2006 Viet Nam passed the Law on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control, which protects the rights of PLHIV and stipulates government and social responsibilities. In 2007 the ministries finalized the Programmes of Action (HIV Prevention, Information Education and Communication and Behaviour Change Communication; Harm Reduction Prevention targeting high risk populations; PMTCT; Management and Treatment of STIs; Care and Support for PLHIV; Access to HIV Treatment including antiretroviral therapy; HIV Surveillance and Monitoring and Evaluation; Capacity Building and International Cooperation Enhancement; and Blood Safety). Major barriers to prevention, treatment, care and support are stigma and discrimination, access for key populations at higher risk, and lack of human resources. To address this Viet Nam has increased support for participation from civil society and PLHIV, approved methadone substitution treatment on a pilot basis, and expanded quality HIV care and support, treatment, condom distribution, Information Education and Communication, needle exchange targeting key populations at higher risk, population-wide access to voluntary testing and counselling, and PMTCT. Finally, provincial AIDS Centres have been established in 90% of provinces to improve and consolidate human resources. The HIV response is linked to the government's poverty reduction, education, and sexual and reproductive health efforts. Recognized as a threat to development, HIV is being mainstreamed into school curriculum and reproductive health services.

UNAIDS activities at country level during 2007

UNAIDS works closely with co-sponsors through the Joint UN Team on HIV. In 2007, the Joint Team worked to develop a Joint Programme that will strengthen its capacity to deliver as one and support the response jointly, instead of as individual agencies. There was a heightened focus on prevention, particularly harm reduction. The Joint Team supported the Government of Viet Nam to develop and publish a National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, the Law on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control, Decree 108 (which provides detailed instructions for the implementation of the Law), and nine Programmes of Action under the National Strategy on HIV/AIDS. Coordinated advocacy was provided in support of the national response via the Ambassadors/Heads of Agency Informal HIV Coordination Group, the HIV Technical Working Group and the HIV Policy and Programme Coordination Group. Major outputs of these coordinating bodies included establishment of advocacy platforms, active participation of civil society and PLHIV, and implementation of the “Three Ones” principles at provincial level. The UNAIDS Country Office advocated raising the awareness of the National Assembly and Communist Party on the importance of prevention and the greater involvement of PLHIV (GIPA), and to build the capacity of leaders in the response. National forums on harm reduction and most-at-risk populations were supported, the latter of which produced the national “GIPA Call To Action” which calls for the full implementation of the Law on HIV. Numerous awareness raising activities took place during World AIDS Month, including high-profile and nationally televised events with leaders speaking out against stigma and discrimination. Finally, UNAIDS supported national partners to improve HIV services to key populations at higher risk and to build local capacity, especially among PLHIV and MSM.

UNAIDS achievements at country level during 2007

Joint UN planning and programming

As Viet Nam is a pilot country for the One UN Initiative, Joint UN planning and programming is a strategic priority for the UNAIDS Country Office. In 2007 the Joint UN Team on HIV developed the Joint Programme to improve coordination and delivery of UN technical assistance. As a result of work by UNAIDS and the Joint UN Team on HIV, the government of Viet Nam has a high level of trust in the UN system. 2007 saw the development and establishment of new coordinating bodies that – building on the strength of UN agencies acting with one voice – have been able to meet and effectively negotiate with the government and international stakeholders. These include the Ambassadors/Heads of Agency Informal HIV Coordination Group and the HIV Policy and Programme Coordination Group. Thanks to a strong Joint UN Team on HIV, HIV remains a priority for the UN system and HIV is established as one of the key Programme Coordination Groups with UNAIDS as convener.

National strategic and operational planning

The Joint Team on HIV supported the Government of Viet Nam to finalize the Law on HIV/AIDS, which was passed in 2007. To effectively implement this law, the Joint UN Team on HIV assisted the government to finalize 9 Programmes of Action and an Implementation Decree (No.108). These legal documents create a crucial legal context for the implementation of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for PLHIV, and safeguard the right of people living with HIV to live, work, and access healthcare without being limited by stigma and discrimination. In

particular, UNAIDS support for the development of the fourth Programme of Action, Capacity Building and International Cooperation Enhancement, was key. Other key Joint UN Team on HIV activities in 2007 included support for the development of a national monitoring and evaluation framework and promotion of the “Three Ones” principles at the provincial level.

Main challenges / activities for 2008

Viet Nam continues to be challenged by the lack of a multisectoral response. In 2008 stakeholders face a number of issues; most importantly, the need to focus on prevention, the engagement of non-health sectors, and the harmonization of laws and policies with the 2006 Law on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control. Viet Nam has a concentrated epidemic. To ensure that HIV does not spread further within or beyond key populations, prevention is essential. Viet Nam must scale-up implementation of harm reduction, address stigma and discrimination and ensure that services are accessible to all. This will require more national funding, continued international support, greater human resource capacity, harmonization of legal regulations related to HIV, and implementation at all levels. Viet Nam recognizes the need to review approaches on drug prevention and control, particularly as they relate to HIV prevention. Because prevention requires knowledge of the epidemic, Viet Nam needs to strengthen the national surveillance system further and focus on using data effectively, particularly at the provincial level. In addition, more information about key populations at higher risk, especially SW and MSM, is needed in order to target more effectively.