



PRESS RELEASE

“KEEP THE PROMISE - STOP AIDS”

- * CONTINUING EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION
- * INCREASING COMMUNICATION ABOUT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

Ha Noi, on 16 November 2007 at the Center for Women and Development (20 Thuy Khê Street), the Vietnam Women’s Union, United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and some other organizations will organize the following event in response to the World AIDS Day 2007 as well as the Call for Action for the Greater Involvement of the People Living with HIV that was adopted at the National Workshop on GIPA in Aug. 2007:

- Review and prize awarding ceremony of the Letter-Writing Contest “Reduction of Stigma and Discrimination against People Living with HIV (PLHIV)”
- Launching of the publication “HIV - Know Your Rights and Responsibilities in Viet Nam”

I. Letter-Writing Contest “Reduction of Stigma and Discrimination against PLHIV”

In the framework of the project “Greater Involvement of PLHIV in Vietnam”, or GIPA project for short, that has been implemented by the VWU in cooperation with UNV and UNAIDS since the end of 2005, the Letter-Writing Contest was launched in Ha Noi, Hai Phong, Quang Ninh and Ho Chi Minh City from June to September 2007.

The contestants include members of the Young Women Clubs, Empathy Clubs, self-help groups, staff and members of the Women’s Unions, and citizens living in the 4 provinces and cities.

Contest form: Contestants wrote letters to the relatives or friends who just found out their HIV positive status, or letters to those whose relatives are living with HIV, to express their sympathy and support for them to overcome psychological troubles. The writers also encouraged recipients to participate to reduce stigma and discrimination towards PLHIV and the HIV/AIDS prevention and control in general.

Judging Board includes 5 members who are representatives from the Vietnam Agency for AIDS Control (VAAC); Women, AIDS and Reproductive Health Center (WARC) of the Vietnam Women’s Union; a PLHIV, a writer and a psychologist.

Contest result: There were 7,708 entries, of which 395 entered the final round. With enthusiasm and impartiality, the Judging Board selected 18 individual prize-winning entries with the following prize structure:

1 first prize, 1 second prize, 3 third prizes, 9 condolence prizes and 3 specific prizes (The Letter Richest in Knowledge, The Most Painstakingly-Prepared Letter, and the Youngest Writer to Enter the Final Round). The winner of the first prize is Phạm Thị Đông (Group 34, Cẩm Đông ward, Đông Hải II quarter, Cẩm Phả town, Quảng Ninh province).



Of the 4 provinces and cities, Hai Phong has the highest number of entries and prize-winning letters (7.113 entries, of which 13 prize winning letters).

The prize-winning letters and many other entries showed deep empathy to PLHIV, encouraging them to overcome difficulties to take care of themselves and to contribute to AIDS prevention and control, expressing genuine feelings of the writers with high convincingness. The prize-winning letters will be used as communication material to reduce and eliminate stigma and discrimination towards PLHIV.

II. Launching of the publication “HIV - Know Your Rights and Responsibilities in Viet Nam”

The Law on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control has been operational since 1 January 2007. In addition to other contents related to HIV/AIDS prevention and control, the Law regulates rights and responsibilities of PLHIV, which include the following:

- The right to be free from HIV-related stigma and discrimination
- The right to privacy and confidentiality, including test results protected in most circumstances
- The right to information regarding HIV, right to work, equal access to healthcare, and to education
- The responsibilities to take measures to prevent the transmission of HIV to others; to follow the instructions of doctors while taking ARVs; and inform spouse of HIV status.

To implement the Law in reality, the publication “HIV - Know Your Rights and Responsibilities in Viet Nam” had been developed to help PLHIV and the community to fully understand and realize the above-mentioned basic rights and responsibilities.

The publication was made possible with the cooperation and support by the National Assembly, Viet Nam Women’s Union, GIPA Subgroup, Law and HIV Working Group, Centre for Consulting on Law and Policy on Health and HIV (Viet Nam Lawyer’s Association). Financial assistance for the material development and printing comes from Action Aid, Irish Aid/VSO and UNAIDS.

The publication is printed in the form of small-sized cards to be brought easily by users with them. For the pilot phase, 6,000 copies in Vietnamese and 1,000 copies in English were printed and will be distributed to PLHIV self-help groups, Empathy Clubs, communities, ministries, mass organizations and international organizations working in the area of HIV/AIDS.

For more information, please contact:

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