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PROMOTING ACTION ON CHILD HELMET USE – LOCAL AUTHORITIES DISCUSS WAYS FORWARD IN HO CHI MINH CITY, HANOI AND DA NANG

A series of workshops held in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Danang in November and December are mobilizing local road traffic safety agents. The workshops aim to guide attendees in improving the child motorcycle helmet situation in their cities. They are part of the first phase of a national campaign entitled “Children **also** need a helmet”, launched earlier this month by the National Traffic Safety Committee (NTSC), the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), the National Traffic Police (C67), and the Asia Injury Prevention (AIP) Foundation. The social marketing campaign will be accompanied by strengthened police enforcement, supported by the World Health Organization (WHO).

City officials are leading the workshops, demonstrating the government’s serious commitment to this campaign at the local level.

The first workshop took place in Hanoi on November 12th and instructed 60 parents and teachers how best to protect their children and students, thereby equipping key influencers to be role models and promote responsible road behaviors.

Dr. Phạm Gia Anh from Viet Duc Hospital explained to the parents and teachers attending why helmets are so important. “Helmets have been proven to reduce the likelihood of head trauma in an accident by 69 percent,” he said. “Viet Duc hospital receives more than 70 cases of traffic accidents every day, many of which are children under 18 years. Head trauma will severely impair a child’s physical and mental health, and can impact our entire society’s future.”

Luu Xuân Bình from Hanoi’s Traffic Safety Committee described the poor rates of child helmet wearing in Hanoi and identified some plans for action. “Many parents are not aware of the importance of child helmets,” he said. “Hanoi TSC plans to work with the People’s Committee, international organizations, and local government departments to improve the public’s awareness of the importance of child helmets.”

Principal Đào Thi Kim Thoa of Cam Thuong School presented her school’s positive experience. “We have accompanied our school’s helmet use policy with several initiatives,” she said. “For example, during school pick-up hours, we use loudspeakers to remind parents to put helmets on their children. We placed hooks on each side of the desks to store the students’ helmets. Our school now has a 70 percent helmet wearing rate.”



Primary schools were identified as playing a central role in educating children and passing information on to parents. Ms. Nguyen Thi Minh Xuyen, Deputy Director of the Cau Giay DoET, noted, “Traffic safety competitions for students are an interactive and effective way of communicating crucial information to children and their teachers. The Cau Giay DoET organizes these annually, and plans to involve parents during the new year’s parent-teacher meetings.”

C67’s Senior Lieutenant-Colonel Tran Son reminded the workshop participants about the specifics of Vietnam’s current helmet laws, and described the heightened enforcement activities that will soon take place. “Although Decree 34 mandates helmets for children over the age of 6, helmet wearing among young people is very low,” he said. “People who don’t wear helmets when they travel by motorbike or electric bicycle, either as a driver or passenger, will get fined 100,000 to 200,000 VND.”

In Ho Chi Minh City, the workshop on November 25th mobilized a different group of about 100 road safety agents. In addition to parents and teachers, attendees included police officers, hospital staff members, certified helmet manufacturers, and members of the Bureaus of Traffic Safety and Bureaus of Education and Training from 24 districts.

“We chose to include these additional agents in our workshop because of their immense potential for influencing positive behavior change,” said Mr. Tran Quoc Hung of Traffic Safety Committee (TSC). “The Ho Chi Minh City TSC sees its local involvement in this campaign as a top priority which can save countless lives.”

Mr. Le Ngoc Diep, Head of Primary Education for Ho Chi Minh City’s DoET also pointed out, “Children look up to their teachers and rely on them heavily for knowledge. Teaching children why they should wear a helmet and how to do so correctly is our responsibility.”

Another workshop is set to take place in Danang on December 17th, focusing on teachers and parents as role models of good behavior.

“We have sent out a formal letter to local government offices and media representatives, certifying our commitment to the child helmet campaign and the upcoming workshop,” said Nguyen Huu Cuong of Da Nang Traffic Safety Committee. “By collaborating on these projects, we are confident that this campaign will be a great success in Danang.”

These workshops accompany a widespread distribution of informational flyers taking place throughout November. Overall, the three phase campaign aims to increase national child helmet use rates by 2014, consequently lowering Vietnam’s devastating numbers of child deaths and injuries caused by road traffic accidents.



For media contact:

Chloé Denavit

Communications and Outreach Coordinator

AIP Foundation

Phone: (84-8) 6299 1409 (ext. 113)

Email: chloe.denavit@aipf-vietnam.org

About AIP Foundation

The Asia Injury Prevention Foundation (AIP Foundation) is a U.S. registered 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that uses public-private partnerships, public awareness education, and school-based programs to reduce the rate of traffic injuries and fatalities in developing countries. AIP Foundation has offices in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and Bangkok, Thailand. In 2001, AIP Foundation built its non-profit helmet assembly plant, V-SPEC, which manufactures Protec brand tropical helmets. These helmets offer an environmentally appropriate, safe and affordable option for motorbike and bicycle users.

In 2009, AIP Foundation, in collaboration with the FIA Foundation and the World Bank Global Road Safety Facility, launched the Global Helmet Vaccine Initiative (GHVI), an international coalition with the objective of “putting a helmet on every head in the ‘Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020).”

For more information about the AIP Foundation, please visit www.asiainjury.org.