



PRESS RELEASE

The Government of Ireland and Alive & Thrive support hospitals to cope with the surge of COVID-19 in Viet Nam

Personal protective equipment and technical assistance provided by Alive & Thrive with funding from the Government of Ireland will support hospitals to maintain best practices and safety during the pandemic. Priority for mothers and newborn children.

Ha Noi, November 18, 2021 - A surge of COVID-19 cases in Viet Nam that peaked at 14,000 new daily infections in August and September overwhelmed health centres and deprived families of sufficient equipment and maternal and newborn care services. Although the initial surge has ebbed, case numbers have again begun to increase. By mid-November, 7-8,000 daily new infections are being reported and hospitals need new supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) as stocks run low. Thanks to funding from the Government of Ireland, Alive & Thrive is supporting hospitals with supplies of PPE and up-to-date guidance on breastfeeding and nutrition for infants in the context COVID-19.

“The Government of Ireland is glad to help the people of Viet Nam during this challenging time” said Ireland’s Ambassador, John McCullagh. “COVID-19 has had a severe impact on health systems around the world and with this support from the Embassy of Ireland, we can help to ensure adequate safety at hospitals for frontline healthcare workers and patients. This is a meaningful way to mark 25 years of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and Ireland”

“The recent surge in COVID-19 cases is receding, but hospitals continue to need PPE and technical assistance on the new COVID-19 treatment guidance for pregnant women and infants,” said Linh Phan, Regional Associate Director of Alive & Thrive’s Southeast Asia office.

“We are pleased to provide this assistance thanks to the generous support of the Government of Ireland.”

In response to the demand, Alive & Thrive is delivering PPE to 30 hospitals, and ensuring health workers understand and follow new guidance on COVID-19 treatment for pregnant women and infants issued by the Government of Viet Nam in August that allows direct breastfeeding, immediate skin-to-skin contact, and newborns sleeping in the same rooms as their mothers.

“Many people feared that mothers infected with coronavirus would pass it on to their newborns and so the old guidance that was adopted at the beginning of the pandemic called for newborns to be separated from their mothers if the mothers had tested positive for coronavirus,” Phan explained. “But research confirms that indeed it is far more beneficial to keep the newborn with

mother, and initiate breastfeeding within one hour of birth, according to international recommendations.”

The funding with a total value of €300,000 covers a comprehensive support package. This includes procurement of personal protective equipment, medical supplies, and breastfeeding support aids, human milk containers, refrigerators, and free [pasteurized donor human milk](#) for newborns in COVID-19 treatment hospitals. The technical assistance on offer includes coaching and supportive supervision for hospitals on the updated treatment guidance , which Alive & Thrive and other development partners had helped the government revise in August.

NOTE FOR EDITORS

- **The Embassy of Ireland in Hanoi** works to promote a positive relationship between Ireland and Vietnam across a wide number of sectors. It manages Ireland’s bilateral development programme in Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar, with additional funds provided by headquarters-based units of the Department of Foreign Affairs. In Vietnam, the bilateral development programme centres on cooperation between universities in Vietnam and Ireland, support for ethnic minority communities, mine risk education and humanitarian assistance. Through the Embassy of Ireland in Vietnam, Ireland has provided a total of €675,900 to support COVID-19 response and public health efforts in Vietnam since the onset of the pandemic in early 2020. 2021 marks the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Ireland and Vietnam.

For further information, kindly visit: www.dfa.ie/vietnam
<https://www.facebook.com/irishembassyinvietnam>
<https://twitter.com/irlembvietnam>

- **Alive & Thrive** is a global nutrition initiative to save lives, prevent illness, and ensure healthy growth of mothers and children. Alive & Thrive is managed by FHI Solutions with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Government of Ireland, and other donors.

Kindly visit www.aliveandthrive.org for more information.

Photos of PPE delivery and handover to hospitals can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/COVID-19PPEdelivery>