

## PRESS RELEASE

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### One out of two women give birth in Centers of Excellence for Breastfeeding in Quang Nam

**Quang Nam, April 13-14:** Half of all childbirths in Quang Nam Province now take place in Centers of Excellence for Breastfeeding, ensuring thousands of newborns and their mothers have access to quality newborn care and breastfeeding support. During a visit by the Irish Embassy in Viet Nam to the Centers of Excellence for Breastfeeding and a Human Milk Bank Service Network in Quang Nam province, officials discussed the effort in the province to build a network of universal family-friendly health services, which also provides more equitable access to newborn care and breastfeeding support for ethnic minorities and families with special needs.

The [Centers of Excellence for Breastfeeding](#) model in Viet Nam, supported by Irish Aid through the Alive & Thrive initiative, improves the quality of maternal and newborn care and promotes the implementation of the [Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding](#) in health facilities.

“We are delighted to know that up to one in four babies will be born in a Center of Excellence for Breastfeeding in Viet Nam by 2022 if all 58 enrolled hospitals from 12 provinces become accredited. Today, we are more confident about this vision after hearing Quang Nam’s mission to have five out of seven hospitals designated as Centers of Excellence.” Lisa Doherty, Deputy Head of Development, Embassy of Ireland in Viet Nam shared at the review workshop for the Centers of Excellence for Breastfeeding initiative held at Quang Nam Provincial General Hospital.

Quang Nam has more Centers of Excellence for Breastfeeding than any other provinces in the country, achieving an impressive percentage of early and exclusive breastfeeding of 95%. Just two years after the initiative was launched in Quang Nam, the rate of uninterrupted skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth has sharply increased from 53% to 86% for vaginal births and 46% to 96% for caesarian births. All mothers who gave birth in the seven enrolled hospitals in Quang Nam praised the breastfeeding counseling and support they received from medical staff. <sup>1</sup>

Roger Mathisen, Southeast Asia Director for Alive & Thrive commended the province efforts during the pandemic and recent disasters: “Quang Nam received nearly 350 pregnant women from COVID-19 high-risk countries, was a pandemic hotbed, and was badly affected by recent storms, floods and landslides. Two mothers confirmed with COVID-19 were supported to practice prolonged skin-to-skin contact and direct breastfeeding and were also enabled



A mother from the Co Tu ethnic minority is breastfeeding her newborn at Dong Giang District Hospital, a Center of Excellence for Breastfeeding in Quang Nam. Photo: Tinh Ho | Alive & Thrive

<sup>1</sup> According to the mother experience survey conducted quarterly by Quang Nam Department of Health.

to bring a birth companion of choice despite strict COVID-19 infection control measures. I am impressed with the resilience of the health services and health workers in Quang Nam, and you are an exemplar to follow to maintain service provision for mothers and newborns during pandemics and disasters.”

After the workshop, the delegation from the Irish Embassy visited Dong Giang, a remote district hospital that primarily serves families from the local Co Tu ethnic minority. With the Centers of Excellence for Breastfeeding model and family-centered services, this hospital is skillfully accommodating traditional birth preferences of ethnic minority mothers, such as receiving breastfeeding counseling in Co Tu language, changing positions during labor or having family members present while giving birth<sup>2</sup>. The combination of these methods has strengthened local women’s confidence to give birth at a hospital instead of at home.

“We are proud of the comprehensive support package to ensure equitable access to breastmilk for all newborns, including at-risk infants,” said Dr. Mai Van Muoi, Deputy Director of Quang Nam Department of Health. “Each year in the province, there are over 2,000 pre-term, low-birthweight and sick infants who cannot directly breastfeed for a period of time. Therefore, a Human Milk Bank Service Network was set up at Quang Nam General Hospital, a Center of Excellence for Breastfeeding, to provide pasteurized donor human milk for these babies.”

The Human Milk Bank in Quang Nam was launched in July 2020 in connection with the Da Nang Human Milk Bank and has already provided 54 liters of pasteurized human milk from donating mothers to 80 at-risk infants.

During the delegation’s visit, three more hospitals were awarded the Centers of Excellence designation, including Vinh Duc General Hospital and Que Son General Hospital in Quang Nam, and Hai Chau General Hospital in Da Nang, increasing the total number of Centers of Excellence in Viet Nam to 21.

“Ireland is proud to work with Alive & Thrive, the Ministry of Health, and the provincial Departments of Health to support the expansion of the Centers of Excellence for Breastfeeding initiative and Human Milk Bank network, and use the learning from Dong Giang district to outreach more ethnic minority and hard-to-reach communities in Viet Nam and the Mekong sub-region.” said Lisa Doherty.

**Event photos:**

<https://tinyurl.com/CoEs-in-Quang-Nam>

**Related Videos:**

[Introductory video on the Centers of Excellence for Breastfeeding Initiative](#)

[Dong Giang District Hospital](#)

[Quang Nam General Hospital](#)

**For more information on the Center of Excellence for Breastfeeding Initiative:**

<https://www.aliveandthrive.org/resources/centers-of-excellence-for-breastfeeding-in-viet-nam/>

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<sup>2</sup> According to a report on barriers to access to maternal health services of ethnic minorities in Vietnam implemented by the UNFPA and Viet Nam Ministry of Health in 2017.

## INFORMATION FOR THE EDITORS

**The Center of Excellence for Breastfeeding initiative** has been developed and implemented by Viet Nam's Ministry of Health, provincial Departments of Health with support from Alive & Thrive and Irish Aid, encouraging health facilities to create and maintain breastfeeding-friendly environments by practicing early essential newborn care and supporting breastfeeding. The Ministry of Health issued Decision No. 3451/QD-BYT on August 6, 2019 to legalize the Center of Excellence for Breastfeeding designation criteria and mechanism for nationwide application.

*For more information, kindly visit:*

<https://www.aliveandthrive.org/resources/centers-of-excellence-for-breastfeeding-in-viet-nam/>

**Alive & Thrive** is a global nutrition initiative to save lives, prevent illness, and ensure healthy growth of mothers and children. The initiative, managed by FHI Solutions, is funded by Irish Aid and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other donors. From 2009-2014, Alive & Thrive demonstrated that rapid improvements in infant and young child feeding are possible in settings as diverse as Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and Viet Nam. In 2014, Alive & Thrive began working in Burkina Faso, India, Nigeria, and throughout the Southeast Asia region, expanding its scope to include maternal and adolescent nutrition, and using agriculture and social protection programs as delivery mechanisms for maternal, infant, and young child nutrition. Currently, Alive & Thrive is leveraging its robust network and knowledge base to strengthen systems and build capacity in these and other countries across Africa and Asia, and disseminate innovations, tools, and lessons worldwide.

*For more information please access:* [aliveandthrive.org](http://aliveandthrive.org)

**Irish Aid** is the Government of Ireland's official aid program administered by the Development Cooperation Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, working globally on behalf of the Irish people to address vulnerability and reduce poverty and inequality in some of the poorest and most marginalized communities in the world. The Irish Aid program is an integral part of Ireland's foreign policy. Ireland's development cooperation with Vietnam is set out in the Mission Strategy for Vietnam and the Mekong Sub-region (2017-2020) and provides annual funding of over €10 million, focusing on reducing poverty and inequality, supporting equality and diversity, and promoting respect for human rights.

*For more information please access:*

Embassy of Ireland in Viet Nam: [www.dfa.ie/vietnam](http://www.dfa.ie/vietnam)

Embassy of Ireland's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/irishembassyinvietnam/>