



Union Aid Abroad

APHEDA

Chairperson: S. Moait

9th Feb 2010

Launch of the Vietnam-Australia Asbestos Awareness and Disease Prevention Project

Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA and the National Institute of Labour Protection in Vietnam in collaboration with the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU), the Asbestos Disease Research Institute (ADRI) and with support of several other national and international unions and organisations are today pleased to announce the commencement of a new asbestos awareness project in Vietnam.

With the financial support of AusAID's Australian NGOs Cooperation Program Innovations Fund, Australia's hard won expertise in fighting asbestos disease will benefit Vietnamese workers where asbestos is still freely imported and utilised, primarily in the asbestos roofing tile industry.

Vietnam has banned other forms of asbestos but still imports around 60,000 tonnes of chrysotile asbestos each year to make cheap roofing tiles. Many thousands of workers are occupationally exposed each year in Vietnam. Added to this, millions of Vietnamese are living in housing whose roofing is made from asbestos roofing tiles.

The initial one year project will establish a dedicated National Resource Centre on Asbestos within the National Institute of Labour Protection an institute located within the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL). Linkages will be made initially between this centre and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union for expertise in worker education and with the Asbestos Disease Research Institute for technical, treatment and diagnostic expertise.

NILP will undertake environmental health research at contaminated workplaces as well as diagnostic testing of workforces in order to develop sample research for the first time on the extent of asbestos contamination and asbestos-related disease in the high risk areas surveyed.

The project will also investigate alternative roofing tiles that do not contain asbestos and will help Vietnam build a database of relevant and accurate information on this deadly fiber. The project will develop information and training materials for workers and assist in immediate protection for workers potentially exposed via low cost Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Vietnamese trade unions will then be better positioned to educate workers and employers on the dangers of asbestos and provide information to the Vietnamese Government.

"Exposure to asbestos has categorically been proven to be lethal to workers" says Peter Jennings, Executive Officer at Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA.

'This project will assist the Vietnamese union movement to produce credible research to inform the ongoing policy debate in Vietnam between employers, the government and the unions. It will also provide practical and direct assistance to workers in the short term who are likely to be exposed to this deadly fiber'.



AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE FOR HEALTH, EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT ABROAD INC.
THE HUMANITARIAN AID AGENCY OF THE ACTU

Tel: +61 (02) 9264 9343 Fax: +61 (02) 9261 1118 Email: office@apheda.org.au Website: www.apheda.org.au
ABN 76 425 451 089 Level 3, 377– 383 Sussex St, Sydney NSW 2000 Australia

