



PRESS RELEASE

DANISH MINISTER OF HEALTH VISITS VIETNAM TO PROMOTE HEALTH SECTOR COLLABORATION

Hanoi, April 11th, 2018

Danish Minister of Health Ms. Ellen Trane Nørby has concluded her two-day official visit to Vietnam today (April 10th -11th), during which she held talks with Vietnamese leaders on enhancing the bilateral comprehensive partnership between the two countries with special focus on health-related sectors.

Day 1 – April 10th, 2018:

In Hanoi, Minister Nørby paid a courtesy meeting to Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc at which she reaffirmed Denmark's commitment to work with Vietnam and ensure continued collaborations for progress. Minister Nørby's also met with Vietnam's Health Minister Nguyen Thi Kim Tien, reemphasizing the close cooperation between Denmark and Vietnam since signing of the first Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in September 2016. During the meeting, the parties noted recent progress of the current Strategic Sector Cooperation (SSC) on primary healthcare and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) as well as present opportunities and challenges within the health sector. Consistent with the two ministries' growing partnership, both leaders agreed to work toward the SSC's second phase. Later in the day, Minister Nørby joined WHO in meeting with MA students and lecturers from the Hanoi Medical University (HMU). Here, the minister highlighted the key role of primary healthcare in preventing, managing and treating NCDs, and underlined the strong cooperation between the two nations.

"Vietnam and Denmark are both pursuing healthcare reforms with the aim of strengthening the primary healthcare system as a key component in fighting the rise of chronic diseases, such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. This is also an area of the fruitful bilateral cooperation between our two ministries of health," said Minister Nørby

Day 2-April 11th, 2018

The minister visited Bach Thuan Commune Health Station (CHS), one of the 30 stations under the SSC Project in Thai Binh Province, to gain further understanding of healthcare facilities at the primary level, and attended a SSC training session for 50 frontline healthcare workers. Moreover, she discussed with the Provincial Peoples Committee and Thai Binh Health Authority the importance of primary healthcare in response to NCDs and how the project in Thai Binh can be a model for how to improve access to basic healthcare. Finally, Minister Nørby witnessed the signing of Partnership Agreement on research between University of Copenhagen, University of Southern Denmark, and Thai Binh University of Medicine and Pharmacy.

"Visiting a commune health station and the trainers in Thai Binh Province – the true "change agents" in the project has been most encouraging and inspiring. I truly believe the primary health care level will thrive in Vietnam, because it has a long history and is strongly rooted in the communities", stated Minister Nørby

TO EDITORS:

BACKGROUND ON THE HANOI MEDICAL UNIVERSITY VISIT

Hanoi Medical University opened their first one-year English-taught Master of Public Health Program in 2016. This was possible due to postgraduate training of staff funded by Danida Fellowship Center (DFC), and joint research projects between the school and various educational institutions in Denmark. The MA program is currently in its second year.

DFC is a self-governing institution under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark administering Danida's grants to development research and research capacity building, and coordinates Danida Alumni Network. <http://dfcentre.com>. Danida (Danish International Development Agency) is the brand used by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark for humanitarian aid and development assistance

BACKGROUND ON VIETNAM & DENMARK COOPERATION ON KEY HEALTH ISSUES

A visit by Vietnamese Minister of Health Nguyen Thi Kim Tien to Denmark in December 2014 opened for cooperation between the two nations in health and the establishment of the present Strategic Sector Cooperation (SSC) program signed in 2016. The cooperation focuses on strengthening the primary health care system in Vietnam by supporting the capacity to address non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which is of growing concern in Vietnam as in the rest of the world. Through the Strategic Sector Cooperation (SSC) Health Project, Vietnam and Denmark are cooperating through knowledge sharing and knowledge exchange, which enables both countries to benefit from knowledge and experiences gained in each country— and thus expanding the joint knowledge base.

The SSC project is a Ministry-to-Ministry cooperation, where staff and experts from one ministry cooperates with counterparts from the other ministry. The focal point in the Vietnamese Ministry of Health is the General Department of Preventive Medicine (GDPM). 30 commune health stations in Thai Binh Province have been selected to develop and test the new strategies and policies developed through the cooperation, before potentially implemented at a larger scale.

A key point in the SSC project is that non-communicable diseases (NCD) are chronic, which enhances the need for primary health care close to the patient's home. Other key points are to prevent the disease or to have an early diagnosis as this minimize the risks of further complications. Awareness raising, prevention, early detection and self-management are part of a pilot project in Thai Binh Province. The pilot project targets delivery of healthcare services to residents, reduce travel costs and pressure on provincial and central hospitals by training and building awareness at grass-root level.

The project has a Core Training Team (CTT) of eleven people of which seven have attended five-week training in Denmark. Danish trainers will participate in the first training session of 40 people from across the province. Afterwards, the 40 people can train healthcare workers in their communities, and will receive simple diagnosis tools with the chronic diseases in focus, i.e. diabetes or hypertension, enabling them to carry out simple tests such as measure weight, height, and blood pressure, which are key risk indicators of the diseases. Moreover, the SSC project includes an associated scholarship program of sending 30 Vietnamese health professionals for training in Denmark in 2018, a program set to continue for a number of years; and a research component. The first research proposal has just been approved, involving University of Copenhagen, University of Southern Denmark, Thai Binh University of Medicine and Pharmacy as well as MOH and other public and private partners. The current project phase ends in June 2019, but a second phase is under discussion.

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