

CAMPAIGN FOR SAVING LOCAL PUBLIC MARKETS IN HANOI

HealthBridge organized a successful advocacy campaign to show the importance of public markets for the people of Hanoi.

Project Partner:
HealthBridge in Vietnam

Keywords:
Health, Economy, Markets, Livelihoods, Gender

Location: Hanoi, Vietnam

Duration: 2009 - 2014

Target Issue and Target Group

Traditional local public markets are at the heart of economic and social life in Hanoi. But in many cases, they are being replaced by supermarkets and commercial centres as the governments pursues modernisation strategies. The aim of the project was to change attitudes among decision-makers in order to promote the survival of local public markets as an important contributor to the health and wellbeing of city residents.



Comparison of current distribution of Local Public Markets in Hanoi and planned Markets for the year 2020. Source: HealthBridge (2011).

Strategies Employed within Project

HealthBridge in Vietnam (HBV) engaged in a multi-faceted advocacy campaign to show the importance of the markets for women's livelihoods, the local economy, health, and the environment. The multi-faceted campaign involved research, community engagement, media work, collaboration with local women's groups, and empowering women to articulate the importance of traditional markets to their way of life.

Main Activities

Research: In 2009, the first step in the effort to saving traditional markets was for the HBV team to gather evidence about the ways in which local public markets are important in Hanoi. The local team conducted interviews with customers and vendors in two of the five markets that have been redeveloped into shopping centres in order to understand the impacts of the closures.

Working with media: HBV provided media outlets with evidence and arguments based on the

research including: the impact of the closures on livelihoods; the role of markets in creating social networks; and the role the markets play for overall well-being and health. In addition, we put forward the argument that the markets are important for retaining the character of the old city and are vital to the thriving tourism industry.

Collaborating with local women's groups: In 2014, HBV worked with the Vietnam Women's Museum and Fresh Studio, a local food consultancy, to organise an exhibition about traditional markets in Hanoi and their importance to local women. The exhibit attracted the attention of the public, media, and local authorities in Hanoi.

Results

The campaign achieved a number of direct results, including the government's decision in July 2013 to stop three projects to replace markets and to reconsider the rebuilding of eight markets that were to be combined with shopping malls.

Additional results included an announcement by the Vice Chairman of the People Committee that the government had decided to stop replacing markets with commercial centres because of the important role that markets play in the shopping habits of residents, especially low-income residents. The HBV team estimates that approximately 2,700 vendors' livelihoods were saved. The livelihoods of those women has a ripple effect through the supply chain in terms of the farmers (many of them women) who supply the produce sold, and the families of the farmers and vendors who benefit from the women's ongoing employment. We estimate that approximately 279,000 people who shop at these markets are able to continue to access healthy fresh food close to home at affordable prices.

Impact

The HBV market programme is an example of a successful advocacy campaign that is beginning to reverse policy that would destroy traditional markets, negatively impact the livelihood of hundreds of women, and would, for many urban residents, make it difficult to access fresh foods. By collecting research that demonstrated the impact of the traditional market closures as well as the important role the traditional market plays in the life of the Vietnamese people, HBV was able to successfully make the case that the market policy should be reconsidered.

Take-away Messages from the Project:

- It is a real challenge to ensure that small local vendors, who are poor urban women, have a voice in the city decisions that affect their livelihoods. This is especially the case when those decisions have an impact on powerful business interests.
- The key factor for the success of the Saving the Public Markets Campaign was the use of many different arguments including health, environment, well-being, employment, culture, and the economy.
- Although working with the media proved to be a useful strategy, such activities are not without their challenges. The media is not always neutral; developers are aware of the importance of public opinion, and may be able to influence media messages.

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