

CAMPAIGNING FOR NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS IN HANOI

HealthBridge engaged in an advocacy campaign to show the importance of neighbourhood parks and playgrounds for children and the elderly.

Keywords:
Health, Economy, Markets, Livelihoods, Gender

Project Partner:
HealthBridge in Vietnam

Location: Hanoi, Vietnam

Duration: 2014 - 2015

Target Issue and Target Group

Neighborhood parks and playgrounds (NPS) are places for people to exercise, play and interact. This is especially true for the elderly and children who live in the inner city of Hanoi. Located at a short distance from their homes, NPS have an advantage of attracting people on a more regular basis than bigger parks that are farther away. However the rapid urbanization of the city has resulted in a decrease in the number of NPS in the city and has degraded quality of those that do still exist. The aim of our initiative was to change attitudes among decision-makers and ensure the NPS are considered indispensable spaces of the city. We did this by strengthening the political commitment of the local government to improve the management and development of NPS.



Neighborhood parks and playgrounds provide vital benefits for communities.

Strategies Employed within Project

We engaged in a multi-faceted advocacy campaign to show the importance of NPS for the elderly's health and children's development. We also highlighted how NPS help create social equity and improve the environment. The campaign involved research, creating a network of stakeholders, working with the media and collaborating with professionals' groups to articulate the importance of the NPS to the residents of Hanoi.

Main Activities

Between June and August 2014, we collected basic information on the overall situation of existing



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NPS in Hanoi examined specific study cases, and reviewed the policies and management practices related to NPS. We conducted interviews with different groups to help us understand different viewpoints on the issue.

We provided media with evidence and arguments that were developed as a result of the research. The project team disseminated regularly updated information to the journalists to facilitate their supportive publishing in articles and other media content. During the implementation of the campaign we engaged four professional/voluntary organizations to participate in the advocacy activities. They helped to disseminate the findings and recommendations of the research to the public. In addition, we organized an event called “Play Day” to attract public attention on the issue of parks and playgrounds.

Results

Four press releases were produced and a network of thirty-four journalists in support of NPS in Hanoi was developed. This media work was done most intensively in May and June of 2015, two months before the XX Session of the Hanoi People’s Council. The campaign was successful in creating public pressure on the city People’s Council and the People’s Committee.

The significant attention generated by the campaign achieved a number of direct results. Policy makers at both the local and national level mentioned the importance of NPS and the need to improve their management during interviews and speeches at workshops and meetings.

Local government’s policies have been issued for improving the management and reclaiming of NPS in the city, which is an achievement of this campaign.

Impact

This campaign is an example of a successful advocacy campaign that is bringing attention to the negative impacts associated with a lack of NPS and the need for NPS for the development of children and the health of city dwellers. By collecting evidence and communicating it to media and the general public, HBV successfully made the case that the policy makers of Hanoi should give more attention on NPS for dwellers, especially for children.

Take-away Messages from the Project:

- Despite the fact that the City Government has committed to improve the NPS, there are still many challenges such as a lack of resources and available land in the downtown area and a lack of serious policy implementation at the lower administrative levels. Therefore, it is necessary to follow-up with the Government to supervise and support the implementation of their commitment.
- The management and development of NPS is often not prioritized. Issues related to economic growth continue to be the most important and when investors and private business target these spaces, there is often little resistance. Therefore, a strategy to work with media on a regular basis is very important to report any violations to the city Government’s commitments.

Contact Person:

Tran Thi Kieu Thanh Ha, HealthBridge in Vietnam
hatran@healthbridge.org.vn
www.healthbridge.ca



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