**Final report:**

Project: Improving open public spaces for healthy and happy urban residents in Vietnam

By HealthBridge Vietnam

Reporting period: 1/7/2012-30/9/2013

1. **Introduction outlining the rationale for the project, its goals, and objectives;**

The importance of outdoor physical activities and socialization to the health of urban residents has been recognized for decades, particularly in Europe, but has yet to emerge as a major issue in developing countries in Asia, including Vietnam. However, as cities grow in size, issues of crowding, pollution, congestion, and hygiene become urgent. Government responses to these issues can take the form of “modernizing”. But the principles of modernity being used by governments have since been rejected, such as banning “outmoded” transport like cyclos, closing fresh markets and converting parks into commercial places. Open public spaces in cities are being threatened by privatization and weak management without the community’s participation. As a result, there is still a lack of proper public spaces for the urban resident to do physical activities and socialize, resulting in significant impacts to the quality of life, the health and wellbeing of the city’s residents.

With a goal to increase socialization and physical activities among urban residents to prevent NCD and mental health problems, the project focuses on improving urban open public spaces, which are believed to be one of the most important environmental factors to enable and encourage urban residents to do recreational physical activities and to engage in socialization. Apart from continuing advocacy for a policy on neighborhood open public spaces at the central level, we are implementing a pilot in Hoi An city and developing a working committee with local government to develop a Parks Master Plan.

1. **Brief description of activities undertaken in the projects, results and variances**

During 6/2012-9/2013, the project team implemented various activities to achieve the set goal, including a pilot intervention in Hoi An city, a research on public spaces in Hue City, advocacy for policies on public spaces at the central level and partnership development and fund raising. Details of the activities and their outputs, outcomes are described as follow:

1. **Pilot intervention in Hoi An City**

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|  | Activities | Results/Reach | Outcomes |
| Advocating for better policies and guidelines on managing and developing public spaces in Hoi An | 1. Project Manager (PM) made a field trip to Hoi An city in mid July/2012 to investigate the city’s situation, commitment by local leaders and discuss with the local partner (Action Centre for City Development – ACCD) on the intervention and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
 | * A work plan and budget on the pilot intervention were developed
* An MoU between HB and ACCD was prepared and signed
* Agreed on the sites for community-based intervention: An My communal house was selected as the first site for intervention. Lessons learned from this site will be applied to the other two sites.
 | * The PM gained better understanding of the situation and political context towards public spaces development in Hoi An.
* The partnership of HB and local government and partner has been improved
* The appropriateness of MOU has been increased due to mutual understanding
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| 1. First workshop to raise awareness of the importance of public space and community participation in Hoi An city (organized on 7 Sept 2012)
 | * 50 participants from different offices of Hoi An city government, including the chairman and vice chairman of the People’s Committee
* 4 presentations: one from the director of the Department of Culture and Information giving an overview of public space in Hoi An: policies, situation, challenges and future plan. HB Regional Director made a presentation on importance and experience of developing public spaces while the Indian Program Officer shared experience of mobilizing community participation in India. Findings and recommendations of the baseline research on public spaces in Hoi An that was conducted by HB and ACCD were also presented at the workshop (the presentation was prepared by the PM).
* 1 proceeding which includes the presentation
* 9 articles and 2 TV programs reported about the workshop
* A detailed workshop report was made by ACCD and submitted to HB
 | * The Hoi An Government issued a Resolution requesting all communes and wards should build at least one playground for their local children.
* Increased awareness among participants about community participation in PS development
* Increased awareness among participants about the need for a master plan on public spaces
* Increased awareness among participants about the challenges of using funds from the private sector for developing public space
* The city had a follow-up meeting with HB experts and ACCD and as a result of the meeting started to conduct an inventory of public spaces
* Increased awareness among participants about the needs for an assessment of the existing public space and policies on public space
* Agreement from the government to form a working group to begin creating a Parks Master Plan.
* Improved public awareness of importance, and the best practice of PS
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| 1. Supporting the establishment of a working group on PS development by the local authorities
 | * 04 informal meetings between ACCD and the directors of the Department of Culture and Information and the Department of Urban Management. These two offices are in charge of public space development and management
* A verbal commitment from the city leaders to form a working group on PS development
* An official letter was sent by ACCD to the city leaders about the establishment of the working group.
* A city team was established for public space planning and developing under the Decision 24/01/2013 of the People’s Committee of the city
 | * Increased awareness among city leaders about the importance of a working group.
* Increased awareness among the directors of the Department of Culture and Information and the Department of Urban Management on how Hoi An can develop a master plan on public space
* The knowledge of local partner on the best practice in developing master plan has been improved
* The local expertise of GO-NGO partnership has been improved
* Agreement from the Vice Chair to have city departments sit on the local working group
* Local government commitment on working for improving PS has been improved
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| 1. Working with the city team to develop a master plan on PS
 | * 03 documents on examples of master plans of two small towns in Canada and application of GIS in PS inventories were sent to the local authorized officers for their reference reading. The translation was made by ACCD volunteers and edited by the PM.
* Meetings between the HB Program Director, SPO and ACCD and the Hoi An People’s Committee to discuss the development of a public spaces master plan for Hoi An. The LC Program director also provided comments on the “Amendment to general planning of Hoi An”
* 3 formal and 9 informal meetings with the city team about public space development plan for Hoi An city, and discussed the issues: scope of the master plan, prepared information needed for the plan, a detailed action plan.
* A detailed action plan to develop a master plan on PS for the next two years was completed.
* A field visit by Paul Young, a Canadian urban planner, and our SPO to Hoi An in May 2013 to share experience on developing PS with community participation and provide the city team with advices on developing the public space master plan.
 | * Strengthened collaboration between ACCD and HBV and the local government
* Enhanced awareness and commitment of the Hoi An People’s Committee in developing a master plan of public spaces
* The content of the “Amendment to general planning of Hoi An” has been improved
* The know-how skill of local partner on development of master plan has been increased
* ACCD and Hoi An leaders learned about how to mobilize the community to participate in designing, building and maintaining public spaces
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| Pilot improvement of public spaces with community participation | 1. Participatory design of public space
 | * Two charrettes were organized to design the playgrounds in An My and Thanh Tam Tay, with participation from architects, local authorities, and the community.
* 2 designs were made by architects with participation from the residents
* Two charrette reports were made and submitted to HB
 | * - A good model of community participation in design and construction of playground has been developed. This has been applied to constructions of other public spaces including designing and building a playground in Cam Thanh Commune (outside of this project)
* Strong support from residents to the charrette (they contributed food, drinks, time and venue)
* Leaders of Cam Chau ward were impressed with the process of lively discussion between architects and residents and aware of importance of community participation in designing the playground
* Strong support from community after the charrette: residents came out in groups and cleaned up the space for building playgrounds.
* The know-how skill and appreciation of inter-sectoral collaboration in conducting intervention of local stakeholders have been improved
* The appropriateness of design has been improved (due to participation of architect)
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| 1. Meetings with An My community leaders and residents about guidelines and regulations regarding public space
 | * 10 meetings were conducted by ACCD staff and residents, leaders of An My neighborhood and leaders of Cam Chau ward: Discussions on each step in developing the playground and about managing the playground after its completion
* 8 meetings were held between ACCD and local people, leaders of Thanh Tam Tay village and Cam Thanh ward. We discussed about the process of playground contribution, steps on process, formed management team and monitoring team, the maintenance playground.
* Minutes of these meetings were kept, especially about selecting suppliers to build the playground and about monitoring the construction of the playgrounds.
 | * A strong sense of transparency and accountability in constructing the playground. Each step was documented: meeting with residents, forming the management team, selecting suppliers, monitoring the construction and managing the budget
* Improved the likelihood that an effective management will be set up
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| 1. Construction to improve two playgrounds of An My and Thanh Tam Tay
 | * After the charrettes, a design firm, 1=1>2, was contracted for detailed designing of the playgrounds. This firm is well known for its work in community buildings and public space
* Architect from the firm was sent to Hoi An to work with local residents, management team of the playground, and ACCD staff.
* The playgrounds were very well designed. The community also engaged during the completion phase of the sites.
* The Opening Ceremony for An My Playground was organized on 26/02/2013. 6 newspapers and 2 Televisions reported about the event.
* The Opening Ceremony for Thanh Tam Tay was organized on 9/09/2013. 5 newspapers and 2 televisions reported about the event.
 | * The pilot project received in-kind from the government and the community during the construction process, including: (1) in-kind trees by the ward’s authority; (2) sand and volunteer work to clear out the sand for planting by the community; (3) 30 million VND of contribution from local businesses; (4) lights from the city’s government
* Increased involvement of the community during the construction period
* Promoted engagement of the community in using the public place for multi purposes, particularly for recreational purposes.
* Promoted engagement of the local government and local businesses through their contributions of monetary and materials
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|  | 1. A final workshop to share experience on playground development with community participation
 | * Around 90 participants from different offices of Hoi An city government and representatives of 11 wards and communes in Hoi An
* Presentations by ACCD, 1+1>2 Company, Cam Thanh ward, Cam Thanh commune, An My neighborhood and Thanh Tam Tay village’s sharing experiences relating to build three playgrounds.
* A hand book documenting the experiences was printed and disseminated at the workshop.
* A video about the process that the community built the three playgrounds was produced and shown at the workshop.
* Commitment by the local Government to allocate fund for develop neighborhood playgrounds in the city in 2013: The Department of Culture and Information committed to support 20,000,000 VND/playground and The Department of Labor and Social Affiars committed to support 30,000,000vnd/playground
* A workshop report was finalized
 | * Leaders of commune/ward, village/neighborhood gained experiences to build playground.
* Many local authorities became aware of the needs for building playground. Especially, local authorities from Cua Dai, Thanh Ha, Cam Ha, Cam Nam, Cam An have contacted to ACCD to ask for support to build new playgrounds.
* Commitment from local government to developing neighborhood playground has been strengthened
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1. A research on public spaces in Hue:

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| **Activities**  | **Outputs** | **Outcomes** |
| * Support Hue Planning Institute’s research studying the functions of the public spaces in the citadel, employing the method of community engagement.
 | * Research tools were developed with HB technical comments and with a reference to the tools of HB’s similar researches in Hoi An and in Dhaka
* A research report in Vietnamese and English
* The research findings and policy recommendations for developing public spaces in the citadel were presented at the dissemination workshop
 | * Better understanding of the current situation of the public spaces in the citadel and the residents’ needs for using public spaces.
* The HPI has enhanced their research skills on public spaces,
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| * Capacity building for Hue Planing Institute and other local professional in Hue about public spaces development with community engagement
 | * Paul Young’s presentation on public engagement to a group of about 40 people from Hue Planning Institute, Association of Young Architects, Architect students, Department of Planning and related departments, University of social science, etc. Participants’ discussion on the issue.
* Debra’s presentation on public spaces in the workshop in Hue provided the audiences with new perspectives on the importance and different types of public spaces
 | * Participants were able to learn new methods and skills on public engagement in public spaces development
* Improved awareness of local authorities and professionals about the importance of public spaces. They were inspired to work to preserve and develop PS for people.
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1. **Policy development:**

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| Activities | Outputs | Outcomes |
| 1. Involving the MoH in advocating for the creation of enabling environment for physical activities
 | * 02 meetings with officers of the General Department of Preventative Medicine (Ministry of Health) together with the PM of Cancer Control
* A loose translation of a chapter “Interaction between Public Health and Urban Design”.
* The “Manual on encouraging physical activity and good nutrition at schools” was prepared by the General Department of Preventative Medicine with comments from the PM. The manual development was an activity under the Cancer control project. It has been officially proved by the MoH and MoET committed to disseminate it.
 | * This document together with HB factsheets on NCD and Livable cities equipped the project team with more arguments to convince the MoH to pay more attention on the creation of the enabling environment for physical activities in cities.
* Improved the commitment of MOH on promoting Physical activity
* Better understanding among PH professional of MOH on the relationship and importance of urban designing and (in) public health
* Improved inter-ministerial collaboration in public health policy development
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| 1. Media campaign on local markets (This is the continued efforts from the previous project to preserve local markets in Hanoi)
 | * Overall, there were more than 30 media articles and three series on the online media (Dan Tri, Kien Viet and VNmedia)
* A documentary film highlighting values of markets in the life of urban residents was produced for showing at the events relating to the issue in the next phase. The work for this project will continue into the next phase of the project.
 | * Media becomes more active in this issue
* Public pressure to Hanoi city Government to consider the policy of replacing fresh markets by commercial centers and supermarkets.
* Improved awareness of policy makers on values of fresh markets and the need of preserving the urban fresh markets (Vice Minister of Trade and Industry, Head of Hanoi People’s Council, the Party Secretary of Hanoi publicly highlighted the importance of markets and confirmed to preserve the markets in cities.
* The Government of Hanoi has decided to stop three projects to convert markets into commercial centres and reviewed eight other similar projects.
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| 1. Dissemination of situational analysis on Active safe route to schools
 | * A Vietnamese fact sheet on ASRTS was developed and distributed at the International Conference on Road Traffic Safety (VIETRANS). 300 copies were given to ACCD for their project on Green Transportation in Hoi An
 | * Increased awareness of the conference’s participants on the issue of ASRTS
* A group of volunteer architects in Hanoi has committed to implement a pilot ASRTS program in Hanoi in 2013/2014.
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1. **Fundraising and Program/ Partnerships Development**

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| Activities | Output | Outcome |
| 1. Develop partnerships with Hue city
 | * HBV project team had an opportunity to visit the citadel and to learn about the plan to relocate residents currently living on the walls and to renovate the areas around the citadel to become more accessible to the public
* 01 meeting was set up between HBV project team and Mr. Dang Minh Nam- Director of Thua Thien Hue Construction Planning Institute (CPI) and Mrs. Hanh (UDA) to learn about his work and to search for potential opportunities to collaborate in the future, particularly with the plan to renovate the citadel public areas. Areas of potential partnership include: concept note development, bringing expert from Canada on community engagement.
* 01 meeting was set up between HBV project team and representatives from Hue’s People Council (chairman, director of Hue Monuments Conservation Center, director of Department of Construction, representative from Department of Planning and Investment) and Mr Nam and Mrs. Hanh to: (1) introduce HBV, (2) present the potential collaboration plan with CPI, (3) learn about the political commitment in developing Hue into a model for eco-city in Asia
* 01 meeting was set up between HBV project team and representatives from Hue Monuments Conservation Center to learn in more detail the plan to renovate the public areas in the citadel
* Reference materials on concept note template and a guide to develop parks master plan were provided to Mr. Nam
 | * Increased knowledge for HBV project team about urban planning, and public spaces in Hue
* Noted awareness and political commitment of Hue’s governmental officers on promoting public spaces and eco-city model in Hue
* Increased the partnership between HB with MOC and local government
* The ADB selected Hue as a site for work on Ecocity development.
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| 1. Develop partnership with Ministry of Transportation
 | * 01 lunch meeting was set up with Mrs. Hien- Head of Legislation Department (MoT) and Mrs. Hang- Institutional Development, Public Finance and M&E (National Academy of Public Administration-NAPA) and HBV project team to identify potential collaboration.
* HBV would provide assistance to develop a concept note on *“Development of effective measures for improving management of transport system for making better access and availability of Physical Activity in urban areas of Vietnam”* and to identify potential funders for the research proposal.
 | * Enhanced relationship with MoT and NAPA for future collaboration
* The knowledge/interest of the issue and skill in research development in this area of researchers will be improved
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| 1. Develop partnership with Hanoi School of Public Health (HSPH)
 | * 01 meeting was set up with HBV project PM and Mrs. Nguyen Thanh Huong- Deputy Head of HPSH to discuss an opportunity to collaborate in the future: HPSH, under a fund from US CDC, is developing a curriculum on social determinants of health as a reference book for health professionals, and it would be used later for an elective course offered at master level. HBV’s success stories on various areas in LC would be good examples for case studies in the section on “Urbanization” of the curriculum. Opportunity to bring in guest speakers for the class was also identified. Most of LC project publications and IEC materials were provided to Mrs. Huong.
 | * Increased knowledge of HPSH on HBV past and present efforts on the subject of LC/ Health promotion
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| 1. Strengthen partnership with Lac Viet Centre and the Global Research Center (University of Hawaii)
 | * The conference “Public spaces and community participation” was successfully organized in July 2013 with HB technical support.
* HB helped to facilitate and provided input to a planning workshop on development of urban public spaces
 | * Strengthened relations between HB, Lac Viet and GRC and formation of a network of activists and researchers for urban public spaces.
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| 1. Renew and strengthen cooperation with Urban Development Agency (UDA - Ministry of Construction), Improve relations with Vietnam Urban Forum
 | * Meetings with new leaders of UDA, discussing on MoU and future cooperation
* Draft MoU on cooperation between HB and UDA to develop livable cities in Vietnam for the next 3 years
* The PM and Country Director attended several VUF strategic meetings and events, commenting on the VUF action plans.
 | * Strengthened relations between HB and UDA. Increasing opportunities to integrate LC concept in MoC policies.
* Increased visibility of our program.
* Improved action plans of VUF
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| 1. Support the formation of Vietnam Coalition for Livable Cities (funded by DIFD through Oxfam)
 | * The PM was a core member of the Coalition, providing inputs to development of its strategy and workplan for 2014
 | * The strategy and workplan was more relating to our program’s goal.
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| 1. Follow up with IDRC proposal
 | * 01 meeting was set up between HBV team, FARVI and UoC to discuss the next step in approaching IDRC
* 01 meeting was set up between HBV team and Mr. Toan-Head of the Department of Science, Environment and Foreign Partnership- Directives of Roads- MoT to discuss on an alternative approach to ADB grants to be part of the public transportation projects
* The proposal was finalized and submitted to IDRC
 | * Improved opportunities for future funding and collaboration
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| 1. Follow up with CCSHR proposal
 | * 01 meeting was set up between Md. Hanh (UDA) and Olivier Jacques (PhD researcher from McGill University) to learn about current policies on public spaces with regards to youth.
 | * Increased awareness for UDA leader about the research proposal and established relationship for future collaboration
* Our joint proposal with INRS to CCSHR was approved
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1. **Significant changes to the project:**
* There was some delay in starting the working group on public spaces development policy in Hoi An. The main driver of this effort, the director of the Department of Culture and Information, was in a serious accident. He was the organizer of the first workshop and who was active in initiating a partnership with our local partner, ACCD. Then, ACCD had to work with his colleagues instead. In a country like Vietnam where officials do not take initiatives, especially where there is no financial incentive, it is very important to cultivate good partnership with key individuals.
* Initially, the project planned to improve three sites of public spaces in Hoi An almost at the same time. However, after the meeting between the PM and the ACCD, we decided to take intervention in one site first and will have its lessons learned and experience applied to other sites later. Due to the change that the playgrounds would be improved one after another, the time during project life was sufficient for improving only two sites only (An My and Thanh Tam Tay Playgrounds). HB and ACCD agreed that the remaining funding for the third sites would be move to the next year for continued work.
* Initially, the project planned to involve the MoH to be more active in advocating for an enabling environment by taking full use of the the MOU between HBV (Cancer Control Project) and the General Department of Preventive Medicine (MoH) on promoting physical activities and healthy eating. However, the implementation of the MoU was very slow, despite the fact that HBV has kept constant pushing to the partner. Without strong commitment and efforts from the counterpart, the LC project team found it difficult to integrate its advocacy activities into the MoU implementation. However, when both parties (Cancer Control Project and the General Department) decided to change the expected outputs, being a “Manual on encouraging physical activity and good nutrition at schools”, the LC project still supported the activities by provide technical comments to the outline of the manual.
* We also revised the advocacy activities at the “central” level. As the cancer project decided to change the outputs of their work with the MoH that no longer meet the objectives of our project, we could not join with them as initially planned to advocate for enabling environment. Therefore, we decided to focus prepared resources on advocacy for saving markets by producing a film on the topic and supporting Hue Planning Institute to do a research on public spaces in citadel.
* The cooperation with UDA was delayed for several months due to changes of human resources and leadership in the UDA. We had to wait until the new leaders took over the job from their predecessors and hold meetings with them to refresh our cooperation and discussing on upcoming plans.
* Potential partnerships and collaborations came up with various agencies, including with Hue’s CPI, MoT and NAPA, HSPH, etc. These are great opportunities for HBV to become more present in the subject area in Vietnam, to distribute the project materials to wider audiences, as well as to enhance capacity building effort to our partners via providing technical inputs and assistance. The project team needs to be prepared and equipped to respond to partners’ feedbacks and requests with great consideration and sensitivity.
1. **Lessons learnt and recommendations:**
* The partnership between HealthBridge and ACCD is going very well. This is a key to success where partners are communicating, trusting each other and sharing the same mission. The Project team kept regular contact with the director of ACCD to get updates on the development in Hoi An and discuss on any arising problem as well as how to deal with them. Field trips were made periodically by the project team to provide them with technical support and advices as needed. This has helped to keep the pilot intervention in Hoi An on the right track.
* The process of choosing Hoi An or Hue is a good lesson learned on how to select the project site that has strong local government commitment and is in line with the local interest. These criteria will provide the project with more chances for success.
* Continuous expansion of network with different related ministries and agencies in Hanoi and in other cities is important for future collaborations and projects. These partners play as potential channels to disseminate past and present success stories of LC projects in order to strengthen and enhance our advocacy efforts.
1. **Assessment on sustainability of results:**
* The pilot intervention in Hoi An has created a very successful model of developing public spaces with community engagement and using the practical work (building/ improving playgrounds) to advocate the city government to become more committed to public spaces development. Local leaders of other wards in Hoi An visited the project sites in Hoi An to learn the experience and asked for support from our local partners, ACCD, to develop similar projects in their wards. This has increased concern of local authorities about developing public spaces after seeing the results of our project and the model has been reduplicated to other wards in the city after the project end.
* After the re-construction of the playgrounds in Hoi An, many initiatives have been raised by the locals to ensure sustainable financing to maintain the playgrounds after the project end. They include labor contribution for cleaning, surface preparation cleaning done playing, cash contribution from local business, or contribution of nights rental from hotel (ie. partners of HealthBridge, Action for the City or Hoi An government come in Hoi An to work , we will recommend them to stay in those hotels, then the hotels will deduct the room rental to fund construction and maintenance playground).
* The Hoi An pilot results have had impacts not only within the city. The experience from Hoi An has been shared at the workshop on public spaces with community participation (organized by GRC, Lac Viet Centre and HealthBridge). Delegations from some cities (including Phu Tho) have visited the playgrounds to learn the practical experience. The capacity of our local partner, ACCD, relating to developing PS with community participation has also been improved. After the successful implementation of the pilot, the ACCD were able to help two other local NGOs to do similar work in Nam Dinh and Ho Chi Minh Cities, sharing with them the experience and knowledge they obtained from doing our project.
* The findings and recommendations from the research on public spaces in Hue are expected to have valuable contribution to the ongoing revision of Hue’s Master Plan of Construction. Our partner, HPI has had a plan to continue to disseminate the research results to the decision makers during different workshops or consultation meetings after the project ends.
* Our media campaign “Saving markets” were intensive in only in July 2012 with a very small fund but it has attracted attention of the media, encouraging working more actively on the issue. Even after the campaign, many journalists still contacted us for information support to write articles, produce TV report about the issue. This, in fact, has resulted in continuous public pressure to the policy makers and they had to review their policy.
1. **Recommendations for future:**
* Provide technical support to help Hoi An develop a master plan for public spaces. If this work has been done well, Hoi An will be the first city with such a kind of master plan with long term visions for public spaces development and it will be come a good model for other Vietnamese cities to follow.
* Share the lessons learnt from Hoi An with the MoC and other cities. Advocate for a policy encouraging people engagement in public spaces development and management.
* Though the Saving market campaign has achieved some positive results, fresh market vs supermarkets remained a controversial urban development issue in Vietnam. Therefore, more efforts still needed to raise awareness of policy makers and public on the importance of markets and follow up the movements of the Government and developers relating to the issue.
* With regards to the non-motorised transportation component, with our current modest resources, it will be better to start from such a small but hot issue as supporting safe walking route to schools for children.
* Consider an alternative option to involve the MoH , WHO, Vietnam Public Health Association in advocating for an enabling environment.
* Explore opportunities to integrate our program activities with the Vietnam Urban Forum and Vietnam Coalition for Livable Cities to advocate for policies on public spaces development and non-motorised transportation
* Strengthen and widen the existing network and partnership, look for new funding opportunities for the program.