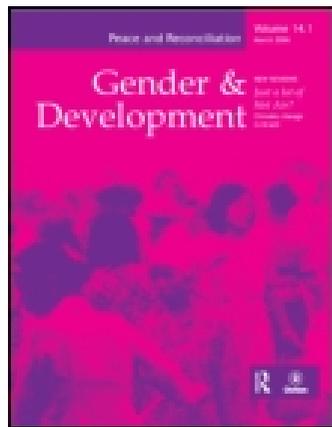


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Campaigning to save market women's livelihoods in Hanoi: experience from HealthBridge

Kristie Daniel, Debra Efroymsen, Tran Thi KieuThanh Ha, Dinh Dang Hai and Sian Fitzgerald

Traditional markets are at the heart of economic and social life in many cities, but in many, supermarkets and commercial centres are replacing the markets as governments pursue modernisation strategies. HealthBridge in Vietnam engaged in a multi-faceted advocacy campaign to show the importance of the markets in the country's capital, Hanoi, for women's livelihoods, the local economy, health, and the environment. The aim was to change attitudes among decision-makers and ensure the survival of markets as a relevant and positive aspect of life in the city.

Les marchés traditionnels sont au cœur même de la vie économique et sociale dans de nombreuses villes, mais dans nombre d'entre elles les supermarchés et centres commerciaux sont en passe de remplacer les marchés à mesure que les gouvernements adoptent des stratégies de modernisation. HealthBridge, au Vietnam, a entrepris une campagne de plaidoyer à facettes multiples pour montrer l'importance que revêtent les marchés dans la capitale du pays, Hanoï, pour les moyens de subsistance des femmes, l'économie locale, la santé et l'environnement. L'objectif était de modifier les attitudes parmi les décideurs et de veiller à la survie des marchés comme un aspect pertinent et positif de la vie urbaine.

En muchas ciudades, los mercados tradicionales constituyen el centro de la vida económica y social; sin embargo, a medida que los gobiernos impulsan estrategias de modernización, en muchos espacios urbanos estos son desplazados por los supermercados y los centros comerciales. En Hanói, capital de Vietnam, HealthBridge emprendió una campaña de incidencia multifacética encaminada a destacar la importancia de los mercados en lo que tiene que ver con el sustento económico de las mujeres y la permanencia de la economía local, así como con la salud y el medio ambiente. El objetivo de dicha campaña se orientó a transformar actitudes entre los encargados de tomar decisiones, a fin de asegurar la supervivencia de los mercados tradicionales, en tanto se los considera como un aspecto positivo de la vida urbana.

Key words: women; livelihoods; markets; advocacy

Introduction

In many low- and middle-income countries, plans to modernise and grow towns and cities are affecting the lives of city-dwellers. Traditional markets are at the heart of the economic and social life in many cities, but supermarkets and commercial centres are replacing them. Cities are home to both the poor and the wealthy, spanning many different interests and needs for facilities, including the means to purchase food and other commodities. City authorities are often faced with stark choices about the use of land, which is at a premium in the world's rapidly growing cities. Modernisation plans, usually involving the demolition of traditional lower-density housing and retail, are taking place alongside plans for conserving historic areas. These historic areas are often valued by tourists and residents, and used each day by a wide variety of city dwellers.

This article discusses advocacy and campaigning by HealthBridge¹ in Vietnam, to build support for the retention and upgrading of traditional markets in the country's capital, Hanoi. Almost 200 small and informal markets have been closed from 2010 to 2013 (BáoMoi.com 2013, 1). In addition, from 2005 to 2014, ten larger traditional markets were demolished, to be turned into commercial centres, and six were already open at the end of that period (Thinh 2013, 1; Tien 2014, 1).

The work we focus on here is part of HealthBridge's Livable Cities programme. Livable Cities is an international programme that seeks to respond to rapid urbanisation and the wide and varied range of negative effects this can have, particularly on the poor and vulnerable. Livable Cities seeks to ensure that everyone, including the most vulnerable, have access to healthy transportation options, healthy foods, and parks and public spaces. By focusing on how cities are planned, designed, built, and adapted, the programme aims to improve gender equity and ensure that cities are built to meet the needs of women and girls. The programme involves a partnership between HealthBridge and local women's groups, and aims to improve health, equity, and the environment.

HealthBridge began working in Vietnam in 1993. The Vietnam Livable Cities programme started in 2006, and from 2010 has focused specifically on ensuring continued access to local markets, which both improves access to a nutritious food supply and supports economic well-being and the livelihoods of women. Working with local women's groups is an important strategy for ensuring continued access to local markets within all neighbourhoods by both consumers and sellers. This reinforces the overall Livable Cities programme aim of promoting walking and cycling, in part by ensuring that needed destinations are within reasonable proximity. It also reinforces the overall development goal of ensuring women have access to decent livelihoods.

This article starts by highlighting the many important economic and social roles that traditional markets have played in Hanoi. It goes on to give a brief summary of the factors and rationale for plans for the redevelopment of Hanoi's traditional markets. The next section draws on interviews to give women traders' and shoppers' views of

the markets and their significance to their livelihoods. Following that, a section focuses on HealthBridge's advocacy campaign to bring these perspectives to the forefront of debates about the Hanoi markets and the plans to upgrade them.² The campaign used data collected from 2009 to 2011 (Geertman *et al.* 2011). Data collection included reviewing government policies and conducting key informant interviews with local market vendors, market customers, experts, and government officials. In writing this article, we draw on these data, and on our own experience working on Livable Cities concepts in Vietnam since 2005.

Traditional markets in a modernising city

Traditional markets are very important to Hanoi. For hundreds of years, Hanoi was known as Ke Cho, or market place, to reflect the important role that market activities play in the city; some people still use that historic name. The advocacy campaign was mounted in response to a plan to upgrade and modernise traditional markets, replacing them with supermarkets and shopping malls. It aimed to raise awareness of the importance of Hanoi's traditional markets for women's livelihoods, the local economy, health, and the environment.

Hanoi has a population of more than 6 million (General Office of Statistics 2013a), including 3.8 million who are considered of working-age (General Office of Statistics 2013b). The city is growing by approximately 2 per cent each year (General Statistics Office 2013a). There are an estimated 125,000 informal traders in Hanoi, who depend wholly or partly on the 426 remaining traditional markets in the city (including the 166 that remain in the inner city; Huong 2014, 1) for their livelihoods (Herrera *et al.* 2012, 105). Approximately 59 per cent of the traders at the traditional markets are women (*ibid.*, 2).

The environment of a traditional market is hospitable for small traders; in contrast, a modern shopping centre favours supermarkets and larger businesses. Therefore, upgrading from traditional markets presents risks to the livelihoods of traders and small local retail outlets. The traditional markets of Hanoi are also important to women in their socially ascribed role as primary providers for families. In particular, low- and middle-income consumers rely on traditional markets close to their homes to satisfy their need for locally available fresh food at affordable prices. As more and more women enter the paid workforce, the existence of markets close to home has been a major benefit as they juggle their daily responsibilities as workers and primary carers for families.

In addition to playing a critical role in the economic life of the city, the markets of Hanoi continue to contribute to the social cohesion of districts. They present a lively, vibrant space for social connections to be fostered between city-dwellers of all income-brackets, where neighbours and recent arrivals can meet. These economic and social roles are not separate, of course; social connections are critical to economic survival,

particularly for people living in poverty (Feigenberg *et al.* 2013). In the marketplace, recent migrants to Hanoi can find their feet and forge relationships of economic and social worth, and long-term supplier–customer relations between market sellers and buyers can be built.

The markets also provide benefits that extend beyond the individuals and their households who frequent them. Traditional markets foster sustained links between rural and urban communities, via flows of goods and migrants who journey between the two, either regularly throughout the year, or seasonally. They offer job opportunities for the poor, especially women. This is particularly important for rural women migrants to the city, for whom few other job opportunities are available.

The rationale for upgrading and modernising the markets

In 2011, the People's Committee³ of Hanoi approved a plan developed by the national Trade Department. The aim was to redevelop the existing traditional markets and upgrade them into modern shopping centres combined with residential properties. In addition, small markets would gradually be upgraded – that is, replaced by supermarkets, grocery stores, and convenience stores (Quân 2009).

The first map in Figure 1 shows the traditional markets operating in 2010 and the area they cover within an 800-metre walking radius (ten-minute walk) around the market. The second map shows the proposed market closures planned by 2020.⁴

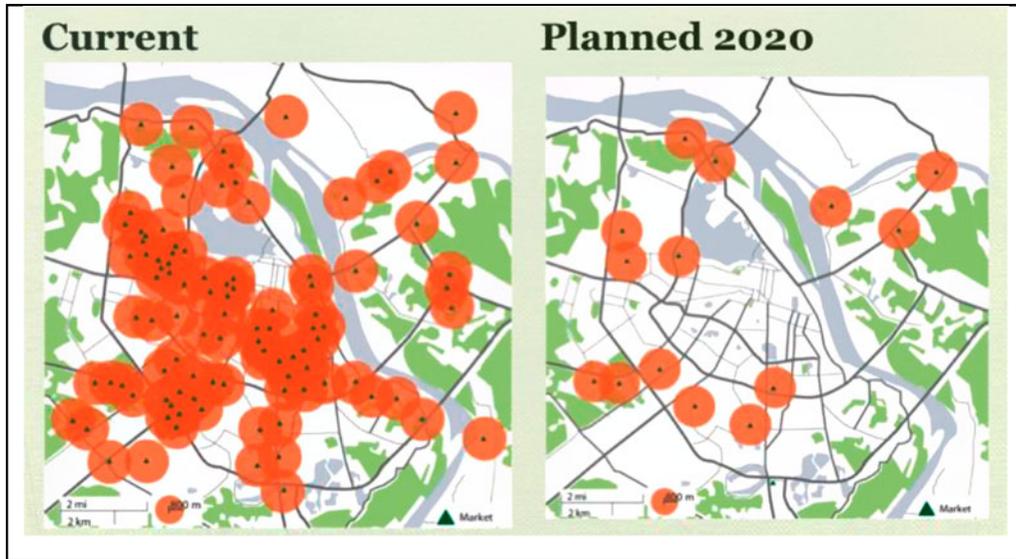
The reasons for transitioning from traditional markets to supermarkets included modernisation, congestion, and food safety, in a large and rapidly growing city (Maruyama and Trung 2007).

Average incomes in Hanoi have been rising from US\$1,400 in 2008 to US\$3,000 in 2013 (The Government of Vietnam 2014, 8) and are expected to increase by US\$4,100 in 2015 and US\$7,100 in 2020, in real terms (The Government of Vietnam 2011, 2). The plan depicted Hanoi as a rapidly changing retail environment in which there will be increased demand for modern retail services, including supermarkets for food, and shopping malls for consumer goods (Hanoi Department of Trade and Industry 2011a, 12). Projections are that by 2015 modern retail services will account for 40 per cent of the demand for goods in Hanoi, growing to 60 per cent by 2020 and 80 per cent by 2030 (Hanoi Department of Trade and Industry 2011b, 3).

One of the key foundational principles for the plan was stated to be the development of the trade network to meet consumers' demands and improve the living standards of residents (Hanoi Department of Trade and Industry 2011b, 5). Reasons for upgrading given in the plan included the current poor and degraded state of the traditional markets' infrastructure, poor safety and hygiene, and lack of modern management (*ibid.*, 4).

The plan for market upgrading drew attention to the lack of funding within the public sector for upgrading existing markets and building new ones. In Hanoi, as in

Figure 1: Two maps of nine urban districts in Hanoi. Source: HealthBridge (2011).



other cities, decisions about the development of the cities are taken in a context of the preference of private investors for modernisation. Vietnam embraced economic liberalisation in the mid-1980s,⁵ and in addition to state-owned companies, private companies are playing an important part in the economic development of municipalities. In 2003, private investors contributed 22 per cent of Hanoi's total investment. This represents 20 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 22 per cent of the state budget, and 10 per cent of export revenue (Hanoi People's Committee 2010).

However, the private sector is more interested in redevelopment of market areas rather than upgrading them and retaining their original use. The land that traditional market areas occupy provides an excellent opportunity for developers and investors to build high-rise commercial and residential buildings, attracting residents and businesses that are likely to bring in more money to local district budgets. Developers the world over are economically powerful, and potentially very influential. In contrast, the vendors and buyers in a traditional market tend to be low- and middle-income, in contrast to the comparatively wealthy clients of modern supermarkets and shopping malls.

The voices of vendors, residents of market areas, and consumers were not present in the plan; nor did it examine the relationship between livelihoods and the retail and wholesale network (Hanoi Department of Trade and Industry 2011b). It did not include residents' and consumers' opinions about their traditional markets versus their modern alternatives, and did not include any discussion about what residents were looking for

when purchasing goods. A particular advantage of the traditional markets is their proximity to homes.

In the next section, we discuss the Save the Markets Campaign. This was a multi-faceted campaign involving research, creating a network, working with the media, collaborating with local women's groups, and empowering local women to articulate the importance of the traditional markets to their way of life.

The save the markets campaign

In the event, as stated in the introduction, nearly 200 small and informal markets were closed from 2010 to 2013 (BáoMói.com 2013, 1). Ten larger traditional markets were demolished from 2005 to 2013, and five new commercial centres opened (Think 2013, 1).

In planning the campaign, we drew on earlier experience of initiating a campaign around an unexpected government decision in 2007 to sell the right to develop Thong Nhat Park (one of the most significant parks in the city in terms of space, popularity, and contribution to urban quality of life), to create a theme park. HealthBridge built strong alliances with organisations and key decision-makers, as well as with the media, and worked with them to prevent the destruction of the park. The campaign was a success; the park remains open to the public and is used by thousands of citizens every day.

Our market campaign built upon these prior strong alliances and the experience of gathering public opinion to contribute to policy decisions.

Gathering the evidence

The first step in the effort to save local markets was for the HealthBridge Vietnam team to gather the evidence necessary to understand the nature of the problem and to identify the ways in which local markets are important in Hanoi. From 2009 to 2011, the team reviewed government policies about markets, and worked with an urban planning student to map the existing and planned market environments to create the map in Figure 1. This illustrated the impact of the market plan approved in 2011 being carried out. Information was also collected from peer review and grey literature about the benefits of the markets and how they contribute to health, the environment, the economy, and Vietnamese culture.

In addition, the local team conducted interviews with customers and vendors in two of the five markets that have already been redeveloped into shopping centres in order to understand fully the impacts of the closures. The example of Hang Da market illustrated that the redeveloped markets are failing to provide income opportunities for the poor and are decreasing the availability of fresh, healthy, and affordable food. We also conducted interviews with residents and vendors in Nghia Tan market to

understand the wishes of the local people and to determine if they wanted the new model of shopping centres or if they preferred maintaining the existing markets (if they were made more hygienic).

The experience of the small-scale businesses and street vendors affected by the changes to traditional markets is that these have, in effect, been closures rather than upgrades. Many small traders have been gone out of business. Although the redevelopment policy included a provision to have space in the new buildings for the vendors, the experience thus far is that the new market buildings are often not designed for existing vendors and customers of the traditional fresh markets. The recent development of Hang Da market, for example, allocated space to local vendors – but that space was located underground, adjacent to car parking facilities. This resulted in a significant decrease in customers for the vendors.

A middle-aged woman selling vegetables at Hang Da market said:

The market is very deserted. No one wants to go up and down the stairs. The goods sold here now even have lower prices than at temporary markets near here, but still no one wants to come down here to buy ... I lost a lot of customers since the new market was built. (Interview, Hanoi, 15 February 2011)

For 16 years, a 50-year-old woman and her 75-year-old mother sold *com binhdan* (affordable meals for low- and middle-income persons) in Hang Da market. Although they were given space in the new commercial centre, they have had to close down their business. As the mother explained:

Although we have a strong attachment with this market, and we did try to set up our shops in the new market, we had to give up and sell the place. There were many difficulties. For example, we were only allowed to have one gas cooker and one electric plug-in, and we couldn't bring in a coal cooker. How can we cook 20 dishes with that? Also at that time, when the market [in the new commercial centre] was just inaugurated, there were no air-conditioners, so it was really hot in the summer. Besides that, our kiosk in the old market was 5 m², but now, each kiosk is only 3 m². When I left, there were only two other shops still selling meals. (Interview, Hanoi, 15 February 2011)

As in this case, families have often depended on market livelihoods for generations.

When the market closes, selling on the streets may seem like the only other option.

In the case of the redevelopment of Cua Nam market, the developer did not allocate space for a public market, so all vendors originally at that market either closed their businesses or were forced on to local streets. However, selling on the street was officially banned in 2008 as part of the city's modernisation policy, though selling on the streets had been restricted for many years prior to that. This policy creates an unsafe situation for the women selling on the streets as they can be harassed and forced to move at any time, and must pay large fines if they are caught by the police.

Participants in the research listed the benefits they saw in the traditional markets. In contrast, the vendors believed the traditional market environment provided a pleasant atmosphere to sell goods and generate enough income to support the family. As a 34-year-old vegetable seller explained:

I've been selling groceries here for three years now. My main income source comes from selling vegetables. My husband and I live in Mê Linh, about 30 km from Hanoi. We bring vegetables from our village here to sell. We can afford our two children's schooling and sustain our daily life. Working as a factory worker is not as comfortable as selling goods in the marketplace like this. (Interview, Hanoi Ngõ sī Liên market, 2 February 2014)

Fear of the loss of a livelihood is extremely stressful, as a middle-aged woman who is a porter of water at Nguyen Cong Tru market said:

Markets are places where many people can earn a living. I have been working here for eight years. My family has only a mother and a child. I was rented for bringing buckets of water to the shops in this market, earning about 50,000 dong [US\$2.5] per day. I was also employed for Mrs Lan's banh khuc [local cake] shop in the market. If this market is closed, I will not have a job. My life will be very hard as there will be no income sources. (Interview, Hanoi, 13 February 2014)

Women who used to earn a living in traditional markets cannot count on finding employment in the new shopping centres. Research into the shift from traditional markets to modern retail shows that although supermarkets do employ women, the number of jobs available is dramatically reduced. One study from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, found that the traditional wholesale food businesses employ up to 2.9 workers per tonne of vegetables sold, whereas a supermarket employs 1.2 workers (Cadison *et al.* 2006, 43). Women traders are largely unskilled, rural migrants, who find it difficult to gain employment in other sectors. Dr. Phạm Sĩ Liêm, Vice President of the Vietnam Federation of Civil Engineering Associations, also highlighted the important role the markets play in providing employment to the surrounding community:

It is not only sellers in traditional markets that benefit from them, but people in surrounding areas, guards, porters, cleaners, and those who sell goods around the market ... All of them earn their living from trading in the market. (Interview, Hanoi, 17 January 2011)

In addition to the negative impact on women's employment and the local economy, the convenience and affordability of food items has been jeopardised by redevelopment of the markets. Interviews conducted in 2009 found that community members were seeing differences in the shopping experience in a supermarket compared to a traditional market:

There are a lot of advantages to shopping in the [traditional] market. I mainly just buy vegetables, pickles, meat and fish for daily meals, and the market is only a few steps away. The food is fresh and good, and there is abundance aplenty. The prices are reasonable. If I go to a supermarket I have to travel a long way, and since I'm old it's hard for me to climb the steps. And often my purchases are so trifling, I can't even find such things in a supermarket. (83-year-old woman, interview, Hanoi, 4 November 2009)

A 70-year-old woman who used to buy her products at Cua Nam market told us she visited the new supermarket that is now located at the location of the previous traditional market. She said:

I went to the new [super] market but I was totally frustrated because the vegetables there are not fresh. There were very few kinds of goods and the price was a lot higher. This new market is not suitable for me. (Interview, Hanoi, 15 February 2011)

The frustration of women shoppers at the new supermarkets was not limited to decreased availability of fresh produce and higher prices. The entire experience of shopping was different. We could clearly see that the issues of gender, urban planning, transport, and food provision are inextricably intertwined. Hanoi's efforts to 'modernise' have refocused the transportation system on *mobility* rather than on *access*. In Hanoi, as in cities throughout the world, this has led to intense traffic congestion that has in essence reduced access to the daily necessities, especially for those who do not own a motor vehicle. Women, in particular, are affected by increased traffic congestion due to their need to make numerous trips during the day: to workplace, to accompany their children to and from school, to take the elderly to doctors' offices, to buy food and other household supplies, and so on. A policy of shifting where people can buy daily necessities, such as food, farther from residences will inevitably increase traffic and reduce accessibility.

The consensus from the research was clear: participants said they would prefer the city authorities to keep the existing markets and support improvements in infrastructure to make them cleaner, rather than rebuild them into commercial centres.

In the next section, we discuss how we took the findings forward and used them in an advocacy campaign.

Using research in advocacy

HealthBridge Vietnam was drawing on lessons learnt from almost two decades of advocacy work undertaken by HealthBridge in many different contexts. These lessons informed our strategy.

Plan and present your research so it is tailored to your advocacy

While research is vital, the findings need to be targeted to specific advocacy goals and presented in simple, clear, easily understandable language that will be accessible to busy policymakers. The first step was to turn the research – including the policy review, case studies, and list of benefits – into illustrated written materials that could be distributed to policymakers, local experts, and the media in order to educate people about why the markets are an integral part of the city. In addition, a documentary was produced and is being used as an advocacy tool with local policymakers.

Undertake advocacy directly, rather than leaving it to others

Our experience is that it is best to engage in advocacy with our partners, using research we have generated for that specific purpose. Without undertaking our own advocacy we cannot ensure uptake of our research by others, or have a say in how it is used. In short, it is not enough to carry out research, to write up the results, and to prepare and disseminate advocacy materials; it is also vital to engage in advocacy through a variety of means, as described below.

Analyse power and influence to shape advocacy strategies

In order to be effective with advocacy, we have found it is important to understand the roles the various actors played in shaping the market policy. While conducting the last phase of the research in 2011, the HealthBridge Vietnam team met with many professionals in various fields to explore their points of view regarding the government plans concerning market closures. This allowed the team to develop its analysis of power and influence, and identify potential allies for future advocacy.

Undertake advocacy as a partner in a network or coalition

Advocacy campaigns are rarely successful when conducted by one organisation acting alone. Joint campaigns with many professionals, residents, and organisations carry multiple benefits: most notably, it is more convincing to policymakers when a range of groups speak together. Each campaign member is likely to have important contacts and information to support the campaign, and a joint effort makes it clear to the media and to policymakers that this is an issue that many people care about.

In addition to developing its analysis of power and influence and identifying allies, the team organised a series of meetings in partnership with the government-run *Trade Magazine*. These meetings brought together a network of experts who had an interest in protecting and preserving the local markets, including local architects, agriculture and market experts, economists, and health advocates. Together this group presented information to the local policymakers that made the case for the continued existence of local markets in neighbourhoods and the need to provide markets in new communities.

Working with the media

Gaining media attention to one's campaign is vital for at least two reasons. Mass media is the most cost-effective way to reach a large audience, so that a broad swathe of the public will be aware of the campaign and its motives. Mass media is also an excellent way to gain the attention of policymakers, who are both regular observers of the media and who are concerned about how their policies are being portrayed in the press.

HealthBridge Vietnam used its extensive experience from its many years of work on tobacco control and other issues to gain coverage by print and online media. The team provided the media with the evidence and arguments that had been developed as a result of the research. These arguments included a focus on the impact the closure of the traditional markets was having on the livelihoods of the vendors; the role the market plays in creating social networks and relationships; and the role the markets play in 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: tourism is on the increase, with earnings from this trade sector representing 14–15 per cent of GDP in 2013 (Dong 2014, 1).

The information we provided appeared compelling; the media agreed to participate in a workshop organised by HealthBridge Vietnam in 2012. The champions identified as part of the network development activities were active in writing articles and participating in interviews. Finally, an intensive media effort was organised during June and July 2012; during this time three major online newspapers ran 22 articles about the issue while an additional 20 articles were run in other print and online newspapers.

Although working with the media proved to be a useful strategy at the beginning of the campaign, such activities are not without their challenges. The media is not neutral; different stakeholders within it may be close to decision-makers and influential figures in government and other institutions that have the power to decide outcomes. Developers are aware of the importance of public opinion, and may be able to garner support from the media.

In more recent disputes about the renovation of a market approved in 2012, local vendors demonstrated against the project. Several journalists were very concerned about this and prepared articles. However, to date these articles have not been printed and it has been suggested that developers are beginning to use their influence to sway the media to print articles more favourable to the redevelopment of markets. Regular contact and relationship-building with the media is necessary in order to continue to understand how the messages are being shaped so that appropriate counter-arguments can be developed.

Working with women's groups

In 2014, HealthBridge 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 group used the materials developed by HealthBridge and Fresh Studio, took photographs of the remaining local markets, and conducted 28 additional interviews to create the exhibit. The exhibition was opened in March 2014; over 300 guests and 40 media representatives attended the opening. The exhibit attracted the attention of the public, media, and local authorities in Hanoi. There were 76 online and printed media articles and nine television clips about the exhibition. Over the one month during which the exhibition was in place, there were over 10,000 visitors, who provided a total of 465 comments. Most of the comments discussed how the markets are not only important for Vietnamese tradition and cultural values, but also are essential for the daily life of the city's residents. Some examples of comments include:

Only insensible hearts [people] have changed the lively markets into lifeless empty buildings of interest groups. (Nguyen Quang Minh, visitor to the 'Stories of Markets' exhibition, March 2014)

This is the most meaningful exhibition that I have ever visited. Many thanks to the organizers for the ideas and efforts to do this exhibition. My recommendation for future markets: Let think of interests of buyers and sellers. (No name, visitor to the 'Stories of Markets' exhibition, March 2014)

Successes, challenges, and next steps

The significant attention generated by 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, during the Question and Answer session of the People's Council in December 2013, 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 (Anh 2013, 1).

The HealthBridge Vietnam team estimates that approximately 2,700 vendors' livelihoods were saved. The livelihood 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.

However, challenges remain. The advocacy success remains partial, as the policy to redevelop markets has not (yet) been overturned, despite the verbal commitment to stop replacing the markets. A wider understanding among policymakers and the public is still needed about how the markets provide a vital source of women's employment and healthy foods that benefit the environment, the economy, and people's well-being.

Success over the longer term will require improvement in the conditions of the markets, including both physical improvements to hygiene and better management to improve food safety, fire prevention, security, and inappropriate waste disposal. HealthBridge Vietnam plans to work with the Vietnam Women's Union on these improvements. In doing so, it will be important to document and publicise the potential for and benefits of improvements versus demolition:

It's very important for sellers to have a fixed place to sit, have quality goods that are fresh and delicious to serve their customers, especially their familiar customers. I think they just need to renovate the market to make it more spacious and clean, not to completely tear it down and build a new one. Customers also prefer to shop in old markets because it's more convenient and cheaper. (Interview, Hanoi, 4 November 2009)

Finally, success will include a formal policy that protects the role of markets in both existing and new neighbourhoods in Hanoi and throughout Vietnam.

Moving forward and building on the progress to date is challenged by issues including the ongoing pressure by developers to claim the land on which the existing markets are built and the ongoing pressure by the owners of supermarkets to acquire more space in the city for additional stores. In addition, the continuing misperception about the nature of modernity, including the belief that the traditional is outdated and old-fashioned, is an ongoing challenge that will need to be addressed before policies that protect the traditional markets can be introduced. Possibly tourism, with its value given to tradition and local culture, provides an alternative perspective here. In short, a new understanding is needed among policymakers about the many benefits of traditional markets and the value that the public puts on such places will be the key to future successes.

Concluding thoughts

The HealthBridge Vietnam 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 result, for many urban residents, in making 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 person, HealthBridge

Vietnam was able to successfully make the case that the market policy should be reconsidered.

It is a real challenge ensuring that small local vendors, who are urban poor 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 strategy employed by HealthBridge Vietnam brought together many different actors as a way of increasing the voice of the vulnerable. Whereas a local vendors' group on its own might have no influence at all, we found that when combined with the messages from local urban planners, culture experts, architects, and health experts, the messages proved to be quite influential. Providing various platforms under which this group could influence public opinion, and ultimately the opinion of local leaders, was a key element of success.

In addition, the case for saving the markets was made using many different arguments including health, environment, well-being, employment, culture, and the economy. This was a key factor for the success of the campaign. It is expected that people will resist change and there was a real risk that without multiple arguments the campaign would have been viewed as vendors resisting change that others see as inevitable. By having multiple arguments and different groups of people making those arguments, the messages were harder to ignore.

A key lesson for policymakers who may be considering closing traditional markets in favour of supermarkets is to examine the full impact that such a policy would have on both the local economy and the well-being of the local people. A final important success factor in our campaign was being able to share actual effects of market closures with government officials. By the time HealthBridge Vietnam became involved in the issue, several markets had already been converted into shopping malls and supermarkets. This meant that both local vendors and customers could be interviewed to share their experiences. Given that the original plan included no information about consumer preferences nor about impact on vendors, this research filled an important gap. Developers had convinced district authorities that high-rise commercial centres would be appealing to consumers, and would bring greater revenue to the city. However, the opposite has proven to be true. Not only have vendors lost their businesses, but residents found these centres inconvenient for shopping. Ultimately, the government lost state budget because the vendors closed their businesses and were no longer paying taxes, while the new commercial centres had few clients (Kiet 2014). Being able to demonstrate such impacts proved to be very important to the campaign.

Although the work of HealthBridge Vietnam continues, there is every reason to believe that the traditional markets can be not only saved but protected for future generations. Continued advocacy is needed and local women's groups will play a key role in shaping the next phases of the campaign as it is these women that are most affected by the changes to the traditional markets. But, for the women of Hanoi, the markets are not just places for business. The future success of the markets will require

building on tradition and the culture of the markets, and supporting the ways in which women lead their lives:

Going to the [traditional] market is women's needs and pleasures. I love Hanoi markets and countryside markets. Going to markets is not just for buying and selling but for understanding local cultures. It is a fault to destroy traditional markets. Destroying markets is destroying a tradition. I will never come to the newly built Hang Da market. (Ngoc Lan, visitor to the 'Stories of Markets' exhibition, 16 March 2014)

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Notes

- 1 HealthBridge is a Canadian NGO that works with partners worldwide to improve health and health equity through research, policy, and action. HealthBridge works on a range of health issues including tobacco control/prevention of non-communicable disease; reproductive, maternal, and child health; nutrition and food security; and liveable cities. For more information on HealthBridge and the Livable Cities Campaign, see www.healthbridge.ca.
- 2 It is difficult to track accurate information regarding all markets in Hanoi, though possible to do so for individual markets. The number given reflects the total number of informal traders minus the total number of street vendors. The total including street traders is almost double, and the percentage of women increases to 67 per cent.
- 3 Vietnam is a single-party socialist republic led by the Communist Party of Vietnam. The national government plays an important role in setting national policy that the local Hanoi government must adhere to and implement. The political system of Hanoi includes the People's Committee and the People's Council. The People's Committee acts as the City Government and the Chairman is considered to be the city's

Mayor. The People's Committee oversees the city's 17 departments including health, industry and trade, transportation, and construction. It is the People's Committee that is responsible for the implementation of the Constitution, the law, the resolutions of the People's Council, and overseeing the work of the city departments. In addition, Hanoi has 12 urban districts and 18 rural districts and towns, and each of these districts has a District People's Committee that performs state management responsibilities for the district, including ensuring security and social order in the local area, management of public spaces, and management of educational institutions. Overseeing the activities of the People's Committee is the People's Council, which is democratically elected and responsible for approving important policies and decisions relating to the city's development, including supervising the activities of the People's Committees. In addition, it is responsible for preparing resolutions and overseeing the implementation of laws prepared by state agencies, economic organisations, social organisations, people's armed forces, and local citizens (Hanoi People's Committee 2014).

- 4 The maps in Figure 1 showing market closures was created in 2011 with 2010 data. It has not been updated since to reflect the most recent closures.
- 5 For nearly three decades now, policies promoting trade liberalisation have been followed. In 1986, the national government introduced DoiMoi, a comprehensive reform agenda that aimed to transform the economy into a socialist-oriented market economy. The intent of DoiMoi was to have the state sector play a decisive role in directing economic development, while at the same time placing greater emphasis on market forces.

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