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PROTECTING VIETNAM'S CHILDREN FROM A PERSISTANT ENEMY: ROAD CRASHES DURING THE LUNAR NEW YEAR OF THE DRAGON

Ho Chi Minh City, January 5th, 2011

To avoid the annual dramatic increase in road deaths and injuries that come with Tet holiday, extra precautions must be taken to protect Vietnam's children. On January 5th, Ho Chi Minh City's Pham Van Chieu Primary School received a donation of 1870 helmets from United Parcel Service (UPS), a sponsor well aware of the holiday's impact on road conditions. The donation, part of a school-based helmet education program called *Helmets for Kids*, was implemented by the Asia Injury Prevention (AIP) Foundation with the collaboration of Ho Chi Minh City's Department of Education and Training (DOET) and Traffic Safety Committee (TSC).

Tet holiday is supposed to be a time for family and festivities. But last year, the Road and Railway Traffic Police Department (C67) reported 397 traffic accidents taking place throughout Vietnam over the 6 days of Tet holiday. For the families of the 287 people who were killed and the additional 425 people who were injured, Tet holiday will forever be a time of mourning.

UPS is an international package delivery company whose drivers deliver thousands of parcels to and from Vietnam during Tet Holiday. "We know how crowded and dangerous the roads are at this time of year," says Jeff McLean, General Manager of UPS Vietnam. "We chose to collaborate with Ho Chi Minh City authorities and AIP Foundation to provide these children with real protection. By wearing their helmets, they will be well protected in the case of a crash. In fact, we urge all Vietnamese children to wear helmets all year long."

In addition to a generous helmet donation, UPS sponsored the training of the schools' teachers so that they would be equipped to teach their students how to wear a helmet correctly. Volunteers from UPS staff came to the school themselves to provide children with road safety life-saving knowledge. A Helmet Handover Ceremony allowed the government officials involved, school representatives, police forces, and sponsor UPS to join parents, students, and teachers in remembering why helmet wearing is so important.

"Child helmet use is a serious problem in Vietnam, because many parents aren't aware of their importance," said AIP Foundation Executive Director Mirjam Sidik. "The children of Phan Van Chieu School are particularly at risk of traffic injuries because their school is located near a dangerous National Road. These helmets will keep them safe both during this Tet holiday, as well as year-round when they commute to school."

In the months following the Handover Ceremony, activities will be organized for the students outside of their classrooms. By participating in interactive games and practicing safe road behaviors in the school courtyard, students will be reminded of the lessons learnt during today's initial training.

“Children over six are required by law to wear helmets on motorbikes,” said Huynh Thi Kim Trang of Ho Chi Minh City Department of Education and Training. “Thanks to UPS’ donation of child helmets to Pham Van Chieu School, we hope that they will have no more excuses about wearing them and be good examples to students across the country.”

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About AIP Foundation

The Asia Injury Prevention Foundation (AIP Foundation) is a U.S. registered 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that uses public-private partnerships, public awareness education, and school-based programs to reduce the rate of traffic injuries and fatalities in developing countries. AIP Foundation has offices in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and Bangkok, Thailand. In 2001, AIP Foundation built its non-profit helmet assembly plant, V-SPEC, which manufactures Protec brand tropical helmets. These helmets offer an environmentally appropriate, safe and affordable option for motorbike and bicycle users.

In 2009, AIP Foundation, in collaboration with the FIA Foundation and the World Bank Global Road Safety Facility, launched the Global Helmet Vaccine Initiative (GHVI), an international coalition with the objective of “putting a helmet on every head in the ‘Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020).”

For more information about the AIP Foundation, please visit www.asiainjury.org.

About UPS

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