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Media Release

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ANZ staff help boost Vietnamese women's business skills

Thirty-two ANZ staff volunteers will tackle a tough 400km bike ride in northern Vietnam to raise funds to help local Vietnamese women start their own innovative small businesses.

The 32 employees from New South Wales and Victoria have raised more than \$160,000 to help provide business training and credit facilities for a group of 800 rural women starting their own micro-enterprises in north-west Vietnam. The community project is managed by the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA).

ANZ Group Managing Director, People Capital, Mr Shane Freeman said: "Each ANZ volunteer had to raise a minimum of \$5,000 for the community project in Vietnam and personally contribute \$550. Our volunteers raised more than \$175,000, a significant achievement of which we are extremely proud. In response to this effort, ANZ has contributed a further \$15,000 to the cause."

Over four days, from Tuesday, 28 November to Friday, 1 December 2006, participants will ride through the mountainous terrain of north-west Vietnam as part of the ANZ Corporate Charity Challenge.

"The participants will spend one day working in local businesses alongside the women and their families who benefit from IWDA's sponsorship," Mr Freeman said. "The team could be mat weaving, noodle making or even experience first hand the challenges of pig farming."

ANZ's support has allowed the IWDA to extend the project for another 12 months. Without this support the project would cease.

"Making a contribution to the communities in which we operate is really important to our people, and has become a cornerstone of our values and our culture. We also chose Vietnam because this is a developing country where ANZ is increasing its business links," Mr Freeman said.

"The project aligns with ANZ's commitment to improve financial literacy by helping local women make informed and effective decisions about the use and management of money and provide accessible affordable credit."

Mr Freeman said this was the first time ANZ had run the Corporate Charity Challenge. Employees were selected to take part from a range of ANZ business units, roles and levels, ages, as well as an equal gender split. ANZ contributed 2.5 days of special volunteering leave for each employee who was prepared to commit to the challenge.

"The Challenge is a unique team building project, as well as providing individuals with a tremendous sense of personal achievement as they raise funds for a worthwhile cause and are mentally and physically challenged," Mr Freeman said.

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“They have all succeeded in including and motivating friends, family and colleagues to reach their fundraising targets – and have trained consistently and hard for what will be a tough ride.”

The ANZ Corporate Charity Challenge was launched on 22 March 2006. ANZ engaged Mission Accomplish, an external organisation to design the project and provide guidance and support for employees on everything from fundraising to getting fit.

Ms Jordina Evins from Mission Accomplish said: “Our experience shows a corporate charity challenge is one of the most unforgettable and rewarding events ANZ staff will ever experience. It takes staff out of their comfort zone and empowers them to make a real difference to their workplace, community and own lives.”

Ms Suzette Mitchell, Chief Executive Officer of IWDA, said, “We are delighted to have the support of ANZ in facilitating women in Vietnam to achieve financial independence and improve their standard of living. By supporting women - their families and the whole community benefits.”

On this special event, Australian Ambassador to Vietnam, Mr. Bill Tweddell has joined the dinner with the team at the cozy Koto restaurant on Van Mieu Street, a familiar address for community activities.

As the General Manager of ANZ Vietnam and also the first Vietnam woman to hold this title in an international bank, Ms. Thuy Dam proudly asserted that “ANZ is not only active in doing business but also a responsible corporate citizen. ANZ Vietnam has, is and will be embracing these values and moreover, act as the bridge between local and international community for better understanding of Vietnamese people and the country and thus, develop meaningful activities”.

Some pictures of the activities:



