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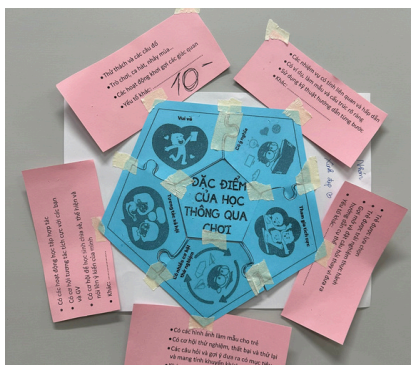
SAFEGRO NEWSLETTER MARCH 2024

ENHANCING ACCESS TO SAFE AND COMPETITIVE AGRI-FOOD PRODUCTS



SAFEGRO is helping to enhance food safety in preschools by a learning through play approach

Utilizing the Play-based Learning method for food safety education aligns perfectly with preschoolers' developmental traits



On February 3, 2024, Van Duc Kindergarten embarked on a transformative journey in food safety education as over 20 school board teachers and members underwent training in the dynamic “learning-through-play” methodology. This innovative approach was promptly integrated into the school’s program, enriching the series of food safety lessons offered at the school.

Teacher Dzung, who leads a 4-5 year-old class, reflected on the transition: *“While we’ve previously employed this method for the district-level excellent teacher competitions, its incorporation into daily classes marks a significant milestone.”* Teachers acknowledged the challenges posed by implementing a ‘learning-through-play’ lesson, emphasizing the need for concerted effort, financial investment, and time commitment from the entire school community.

However, Dr. Oanh, drawing from over 45 years of experience in applying the “learning-through-play” method, offered a reassuring perspective. Contrary to popular notions, she underscored the pivotal role of effective classroom management, with teachers needing to orchestrate appropriate activities that foster children’s autonomy and independence in learning. Dr. Oanh emphasized the importance of creating interactive opportunities for children to engage with learning content actively, advocating for a pedagogy centered on purposeful enquiries and suggestions rather than passive instruction.

She emphasized the effectiveness of experiential learning and interactive exploration, advocating for a balanced approach where teachers strategically identify opportunities to foster autonomy while offering essential support throughout diverse learning activities.

A GENEROUS GIFT FROM CANADA ON THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY:

Today, we took a trip to Thuong Thanh market to inspect the equipment provided by SAFEGRO. It filled us with joy to witness the vendors showcasing their joyfulness.

One vendor at the market shared their experience: “Every customer who visited the market today was amazed and exclaimed, 'Oh my god!'. They were astounded by the cleanliness and beauty of the market and asked the team: “How much does it cost?” We replied “Canadian support and give us these, among other things to help enhancing food safety”.

One customer shared that she had visited all the wet markets in the neighborhood, but none could compare to this one. “*Is it true that Canadian people to give us these?*” She asked eagerly.

At that moment, all the fatigue evaporated from our minds, and we realized that we, the SAFEGRO team, are contributing to making a significant impact on the Thuong Thanh market, its customers, and ultimately the well-being of Vietnamese.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Canada for this remarkable contribution.

Warm regards.
SAFEGRO team



In March, the first batch of equipment was delivered to Thuong Thanh market for testing purposes. The SAFEGRO team, in collaboration with the market management board, conducted thorough inspections, tests, and provided recommendations for potential improvements.

The equipment will undergo further testing by market traders over the coming days to gather additional feedback before proceeding to mass production.

Additionally, discussions were held regarding communication strategies, training initiatives, and guidelines to enhance food safety practices within the market.

Mr. Them, representing the Thuong Thanh management board, expressed his enthusiasm for the collaboration, stating: *‘Thuong Thanh market management board and traders are committed to working closely with SAFEGRO experts to elevate the market into a distinguished hub of food safety. We aspire for Thuong Thanh to serve as an exemplary model destination for replication in Hanoi and other provinces throughout Vietnam, where others can come to learn and emulate’.*



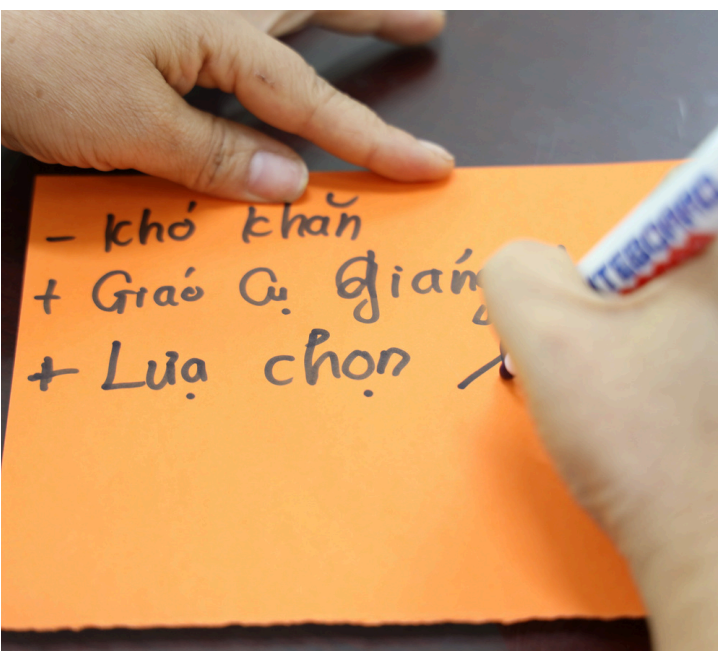
Learning through play is more than just a method or an approach; it represents a comprehensive approach to education, serving as both a form of implementation and a teaching technique. This pedagogical approach has gained recognition and adoption by esteemed international organizations such as UNICEF, Save the Children in Viet Nam, and VVOB. When applied in classrooms, the learning-through-play method promotes active participation and facilitates the holistic development of children, encompassing oral language, communication skills, cognitive abilities, judgment, emotional growth, and physical development.

Recently, educators had the opportunity to engage with experts, participate in interactive activities, and deliberate on integrating learning through play into preschool educational practices.

A key focus of their discussions was reviewing the ten lectures on food safety previously delivered to children, with the aim of refining and implementing the learning-through-play method. Utilizing a checklist, teachers assessed the alignment of their lessons with the five characteristics of learning through play: interest, active participation, relevance, social interaction, and the provision of numerous opportunities for experimentation and child autonomy. Through collaborative discussions, educators identified areas for enhancement, striving to improve the integration of play-based learning within their lesson plans.



As part of the SAFEGRO initiative, teachers receive support in developing instructional materials using the learning-through-play approach, integrating food safety education into existing preschool curriculum topics. Leveraging the foundation laid by the '10 lectures on food safety developed under the SAFEGRO project, these materials will be thoughtfully curated and widely disseminated to benefit other preschools, fostering a culture of food safety awareness and active learning in early childhood education.



Women's Day

8 MARCH | 2024

The Strong Female Lead

Three Women
Named "Orchids":
Making Food Safety
Blossom



Dao Phuong LAN:
Prioritizing Food Safety
in Preschools

Pham Khanh Phong LAN:
Ensuring the food safety
of the busiest city in
Vietnam

Dao Hong LAN: Ensuring
national security and
food safety



Dao Phuong LAN, Vice Dean of Van Duc Preschool, is speaking at the signing ceremony in Hanoi to support selected vegetable and pork value chains. The ceremony is organized by the Safe Food for Grow project (SAFEGRO) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

At Van Duc Preschool, Vice Dean Dao Phuong LAN has cared for children with love and compassion that many former students still visit her. Throughout her career, she has been concerned with food safety.

Vice Dean Dao Phuong LAN worried about the lack of traceability of ingredients like pork and vegetables, which could mean that they are not safe for children. She has also been concerned that teachers and kitchen staff may not always follow safety rules, furthering the risk to her small students and creating a threat to the preschooler's health.

In her management role at the preschool, Phuong LAN felt a solid responsibility to address these issues to ensure every child received safe and nutritious meals, and they have also prioritized reinforcing proper food safety behaviours in the children.

During a recent [SAEFGRO food safety event in Hanoi](#), Phuong LAN emphasized the critical need to ensure food safety for preschools, upholding the highest standards from the ingredients' source to the moment they reach the children's tables.

She also stressed the vital role parents play in this commitment, urging their active involvement in ensuring the safety of the food served to their little ones.



PHAM KHANH PHONG LAN

Ensuring the food safety of the busiest city in Vietnam

Picture below: Dr. Pham Khanh Phong LAN (second from the right) took a commemorative photo with the SAFEGRO Project Director during the conference announcing the establishment of the Ho Chi Minh city Department of Food Safety - the first Department of Food Safety in the country.



At the municipal level, another Orchid works in the food safety industry: Dr. Pham Khanh Phong LAN, the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Food Safety Director. With a population exceeding 10 million people, Ho Chi Minh City has relied primarily on external sources for its food supply – which has caused food safety concerns for both the government and citizens.

Dr. Pham Khanh Phong LAN has led her department to work very hard to ensure the food safety of Ho Chi Minh City during Tet – the Lunar New Year of 2024.

Since assuming her position, the Tet (from February 9 to 15, or the 30th to the 5th in the lunar calendar), which usually sees many cases of foodborne diseases, recorded no cases in Ho Chi Minh City.

Dr.LAN responded to the [interview with Việt Nam News](#) ahead of the event.

“We will concentrate on inspections at distribution points like wholesale markets and traditional markets”.

“Alongside inspection work, we will conduct communication campaigns to raise awareness of producers, businesses, and consumers on food poisoning prevention”.

Minister Dao Hong LAN of the Ministry of Health speaking at the National Assembly Meeting



During the “Action Month” authorities intensified inspections and supervision to ensure food security and safety, cracked down on violators, and enhanced government, management agencies, and consumer roles in upholding food safety laws.

Dao Hong LAN is preparing to oversee awareness campaigns and establish clear responsibilities for party committees and organizations at all levels during the ‘Action Month for Food Safety 2024’, scheduled for April and May this year. Additionally, she will lead important revisions to update food safety policies, including amendments to the Food Safety Law.

Women in Vietnam have played a crucial role in various areas of food safety, from production through distribution and regulation enforcement. They have taken the lead in multiple tasks such as food inspection and quality control, ensuring that high standards are maintained.

INTRODUCTION TO FOOD SAFETY CULTURE



Food handlers wash their hands with soap and clean water before preparing food to avoid spreading germs that could make others sick.

Brita Ball, Food Safety Culture expert, Canada

Foodborne illness outbreaks in Vietnam continue to occur despite improved food safety laws. One way to address this problem is to improve food safety and food safety culture across the food value chain throughout the country.

Safe food is everyone's business. From my perspective as a food safety specialist and Canadian researcher in food safety culture, I believe that Vietnamese culture is well suited to improving food safety culture on a broad scale. Vietnamese values of respecting others and being loyal to families, communities and country can guide people to keep food safe across the food value chain.

- When we respect others, we do what is right to protect the food in our care from becoming unsafe to eat. We also take steps to reduce or remove food safety hazards where possible.
- When we are loyal to others and our country, we avoid putting lives and livelihoods at risk because we follow proper practices consistently. Proper practices help protect all people, especially those who are elderly, very young, pregnant or ill. Correct practices can also improve the reputation of Vietnamese food supply.
- When we learn about food safety and willingly follow correct food production and food handling practices, everyone will become confident in the safety of Vietnamese foods.

Correct practices for safe food

Specific food handling practices vary across the food value chain. However, here are some good food safety practices that, when they become habits, will contribute to a positive food safety culture. These may apply to farming, fisheries, food processing, markets, catering, other food businesses and at home.

Choose products wisely

- Identify trusted suppliers and buy your inputs, ingredients and/or finished products from them.

Be clean and healthy

- Ensure that everyone who handles food in your operation or home is committed to following good food safety practices, like washing hands before handling or preparing food and avoiding food preparation when ill.

Use correct, cleanable tools and equipment

- Use utensils, tools, equipment and facilities that are appropriate and safe for food. They should be easily cleaned and kept in good repair to prevent food safety issues.

Learn and follow food-safe procedures for your sector and role

Examples of food-safe procedures that should become habits include:

- Measure and apply safe amounts of chemicals and follow correct waiting periods before harvest or slaughter to become a trusted supplier.
- Implement good manufacturing practices and HACCP to reduce the food safety risk of your product and increase consumer confidence in Vietnam's food supply.
- Follow proper procedures to clean utensils, tools, equipment and facilities. This can prevent food safety problems that could ruin your company's or your own reputation.
- Check food temperatures to ensure food is cooked hot enough to kill parasites and harmful germs when catering, street vending and at home. Learn the correct temperature for the food you are cooking.
- Keep cooked and ready-to-eat foods separated from uncooked food and unclean utensils and equipment. This will prevent accidental contamination that could harm consumers and your reputation.
- Store foods at temperatures that prevent bacteria from growing and making food unsafe wherever it is in the food value chain. Keep high-risk, perishable foods in the refrigerator at 0°C to 4°C, or keep them above 60°C.

The Vietnamese culture supports safe food for all. By consistently following safe food handling practices with a positive attitude wherever you are across the food value chain, and by encouraging others to do the same, you can help improve Vietnam's food safety culture.

What do you need to learn and do to support a positive food safety culture? Your actions could help keep families safe from foodborne illnesses and protect food businesses that support communities and contribute to prosperity in Vietnam.



Farm workers that pick fruits and vegetables use portable toilets and handwashing stations to prevent the produce from becoming contaminated by human waste. Three portable toilets are near the bus that transports workers to different fields.



Employees with good food safety culture always wear hair nets and smocks or aprons to prevent food contamination in commercial kitchens and food processing companies.

Food safety culture in your home

Brita Ball, Food Safety Culture expert, Canada

Food safety continues to be a problem in Vietnam, with many people becoming ill from contaminated food.

Recent studies show that such illnesses are often related to consumer behaviours and beliefs. This burden on families throughout the country can be reduced by improving food safety culture in Vietnamese households.

Vietnamese researchers[1] recently investigated factors that influence consumers' food safety behaviour. Their results highlighted the importance of focusing interventions on local norms and household situations which hinder the adoption of safe food handling practices. As food safety specialist who has studied consumer behaviour and food safety culture in Canada, I believe their findings can be used to understand and improve food safety and food safety culture in Vietnam.

The researchers discussed factors that influence Vietnamese consumers' food handling practices (see Figure 1). Maintaining factors, demographics, motivating factors and enabling factors all play a role.

1) Maintaining factors – These factors relate to cultural norms that may prevent people from following food safety practices even though they are aware of them.

- **Habits and heuristics** – Habits and assumptions are hard to change because people often do not know what they are. Some of these include unsafe habits, like not storing leftovers in the refrigerator based on the assumption that no one got sick yet.
- **Food preferences** – Many Vietnamese prefer traditional foods because of the familiar flavour, texture and appearance. Unfortunately, some traditional foods have a high food safety risk. For example, raw blood, raw fish and other seafoods, raw or undercooked meats, and undercooked eggs may have high levels of bacteria, viruses or parasites.
- **Social and societal influences** – Family and friends and local norms that support unsafe food choices and unsafe practices increase food safety risk. Consuming unknown plants and mushrooms, local herbs, sea snails, fish and other seafood may seem safe, but some contain high levels of natural toxins that cannot be removed by cooking.

2) Demographics – These factors relate to consumer characteristics that influence knowledge about food safety.

- **Age** – Older people are more aware of the importance of safe food than younger people. This may be due to elders' understanding that they are more susceptible to illnesses as they get older.
- **Gender** – Women are more aware of food safety risks than men. This may be because they are often responsible for food preparation, and for caring for elders and children who can get sick easily. Women are also at greater risk of infections when they are pregnant.
- **Education** – Several studies suggest that people with higher education are more aware of food safety practices than those with less education. Office workers, for example, know more about food handling practices than manual labourers.

3) Motivating factors – These factors are provide the foundation for changing behaviours:

- **Knowledge about causes of foodborne illness and safe food handling practices** – People who learn about food safety are often motivated to avoid doing things that increase food safety risk and to do things that reduce the risk.
- **Perception of food safety risks, the seriousness of foodborne illness and the benefits of good food safety practices** – People who believe that they can take action to reduce food safety problems are often motivated to change their behaviour. In Vietnam, bacteria, virus and parasites are the most common causes of foodborne illnesses and can often be controlled by good food safety practices. Unfortunately, some consumers mistakenly believe that chemical contamination is the biggest food safety risk, and some do not believe scientific facts. Their risk perception leads them to take chances with unsafe food choices or practices.



4) Enabling factors – These factors make it easier for motivated consumers to follow proper food handling practices.

- **Exposure to food safety guidance while managing home prepared meals** – People will be able to follow proper guidance if it is available when they need it. This includes having accurate food safety information while they are planning and preparing meals and storing ingredients or leftovers.
- **Availability of proper resources** – People who have the tools, space and other resources will be able to follow recommended food safety practices. Those without running water, adequate space and a refrigerator may find it hard to prevent cross-contamination while preparing food and prevent bacteria growth but they should do the best they can.
- **Lifestyle that influences food selection and cooking** – People who have adequate time are able to shop often and cook family meals. Those with time and other constraints may buy more food when they shop and store it at home, instead of going to the market every day. They may buy more “box meals” or convenience foods. Everyone should keep perishable food refrigerated and buy meals prepared by people who follow safe food handling practices.

These factors affect food safety behaviour in Vietnamese households and contribute to food safety culture in the home. Three contextual factors (Figure 1) – maintaining, motivating and enabling – can be influenced to improve food safety and food safety culture in the home. By changing unsafe behaviours and attitudes, people can take steps to reduce food safety risk which will lead to improved food safety culture in their homes.

Improve food safety culture

When people become aware that some habits and traditional practices (maintaining factors) may be unsafe, they can begin making decisions to reduce the food safety risks. Learning about the causes of foodborne illnesses and proper food safety practices (motivating factors) can increase motivation to change. Finally, increasing factors that enable the adoption of new behaviours (enabling factors) will reduce food safety risks, especially to the elderly, pregnant people and children who are most susceptible to becoming ill.

As new habits and beliefs about food safety become common practice, they will become new maintaining factors that are embedded in the culture. What habits, assumptions and beliefs are you willing to change to reduce food safety risks and improve food safety culture in your home?





Figure 1. Contextual factors affecting food safety culture at home
(adapted from [1] Luu, H. P., Tran, T. T. H., & Truong, T. X. (2023). Factors affecting consumers' food safety behavior in Vietnam. *Food Control*, 143, 109294.)