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Joint Media Release

FIT FOR HOPE by AIA: Raising Breast Cancer Awareness in Unison

Phnom Penh, 20 October 2018 – Campaigns and events for international Breast Cancer Awareness Month of October take place throughout the globe, as pink ribbons of all sizes appear online and on the ground. Efforts to increase public awareness of breast cancer and raise money for research and treatment materialize in all forms. In Cambodia this year, the “FIT FOR HOPE by AIA” event saw huge crowds of people gathered at Koh Pich with around US\$ 30,000 being raised to fund breast cancer programs at Sihanouk Hospital Center of HOPE.

Endorsed by the Phnom Penh Capital Hall and joined by representatives of the Ministry of Health and of the Phnom Penh Municipal Department, the “FIT FOR HOPE by AIA” has been a month-long campaign organised by AIA (Cambodia) Life Insurance Plc (“AIA Cambodia”) and Sihanouk Hospital Center of HOPE (“SHCH”). SHCH is a non-profit hospital with the longest-running breast cancer program in the country.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer for women globally. In Cambodia, the challenges are more pronounced due to low awareness and lack of facilities for treatment, leading to many cases being untreatable due to their late-stage detection. “Up to 70% of patients coming to our hospital did so at a late stage already. Coming earlier would have helped a lot,” said Dr. Preap Ley, the Director of Surgery at SHCH, while heading a medical team who were providing free breast cancer check-ups and consultation at the event. He added, “In some cases, it is their own spouse or family members who obstructed hospital admission because they deem having breasts checked by others ‘deeply inappropriate.’ Cases like this necessitate the FIT FOR HOPE by AIA campaign, and we are humbly grateful for it.”

The “FIT FOR HOPE by AIA” campaign started mid-September with AIA Cambodia and SHCH working with a variety of parties to raise awareness:

- 🎀 Promotional activities among staff, AIA Life Planners and associates;
- 🎀 Far-reaching social media advocacy and endorsement by celebrities, media outlets, and online influencers;
- 🎀 Youth seminar for hundreds of university students; and
- 🎀 Public outreach activities at different markets and universities

This campaign culminated today with a number of programs:

- 🎀 Free breast cancer check-ups and consultation by health practitioners to around 1,300 people;
- 🎀 A never-before-seen pink parade called the Pink Walk with nearly 2,000 people with many fun activities along the route
- 🎀 A Zumba dance session filling the venue area with almost 800 people
- 🎀 Breast cancer survivors’ inspirational talk, preceding a crowded concert, featuring some of the biggest names in Cambodia’s entertainment and drawing more than 20,000 spectators

Speaking in front of the crowded and cheerful Pink Walk, Mr. Richard Bates, CEO of AIA Cambodia, said: “We are delighted to see this many people coming together to help raise awareness of breast cancer, and because of this, saving lives. We are very pleased to have provided around 1,300 free breast cancer check-ups and consultations today. This is seven times more than we did last year.” Emphasizing the increased impact of the campaign, Mr. Bates added: “With generous contributions from our business partners Amret Microfinance Institution, Cambodian Public Bank Plc, and others, including many individual donors, FIT FOR HOPE by AIA this year managed to raise US\$ 30,000 in funds for Sihanouk Hospital—(tripling) the funds raised last year. This way, more lives can be saved through the hospital’s community outreach program and in-hospital treatment.”

Applauding the campaign, Mrs. Hak Sam Ath, a breast cancer survivor and one of the hospital’s voluntary peer educators, said during the experience sharing session before the concert: “Thanks to the FIT FOR HOPE by AIA campaign, our peer educators will have enough educational materials to reach out to nearly 2 million people across the country. When needed, this much funding allows us to help up to provide 4,000 people with X-Ray examination or provide over 1,300 histology/cytology tests. We are thrilled that our work is able to increase life-saving awareness, and provide accessible treatment to people in need.”

Mr. Bates concluded: “Breast cancer can affect our entire family, but with proper early detection, is largely treatable. AIA, Sihanouk Hospital, our corporate partners, celebrities, social media influencers, and diverse participants of this campaign, have joined together to help themselves and others beat breast cancer and live healthier, longer, and better lives.”

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About AIA Cambodia

AIA (Cambodia) Life Insurance Plc (“AIA Cambodia”) is a wholly owned subsidiary of AIA Group Limited (“AIA” or “the Group”), the largest life insurer in the world by market capitalisation.

The Group has a presence in 18 markets in Asia-Pacific – wholly-owned branches and subsidiaries in Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, China, Korea, the Philippines, Australia, Indonesia, Taiwan, Vietnam, New Zealand, Macau, Brunei, Cambodia, a 97 per cent subsidiary in Sri Lanka, a 49 percent joint venture in India and a representative office in Myanmar. AIA is a market leader in the Asia-Pacific region (ex-Japan) based on life insurance premiums and holds leading positions across the majority of its markets. It had total assets of US\$221 billion as of 30 June 2018. Through an extensive network of agents, partners and employees across Asia-Pacific, AIA serves the holders of more than 32 million individual policies and over 16 million participating members of group insurance schemes.

AIA Cambodia offers market-leading life insurance products and services to meet the growing need for financial protection and long-term savings of people in Cambodia. AIA Cambodia is committed to contributing to the kingdom’s economic and social development over the long term, and help Cambodians live healthier, longer, better lives.

About Sihanouk Hospital

Sihanouk Hospital Center of HOPE (“SHCH”) started in 1996 with a mission to provide further education and training for medical professionals while delivering free, 24-hour high-quality medical care to the poor and disadvantaged of Cambodia. SHCH has contributed to better health outcomes for the poorest Cambodians, enabled livelihoods, trained a health professional workforce, and prevented needless suffering from illness and the economic hardship that accompanies it. SHCH receives over 45,000 patients each year, and by August 2018, SHCH has provided healthcare services to more than 1.4 million people in Cambodia.

SHCH has been running its Breast Cancer Initiative (BCI) since 2008. It is an internationally recognised innovative breast cancer program which spans the continuum of awareness-raising, screening and treatment.

In 2017 alone, SHCH's peer educators and nurses provided breast cancer education to over 10,000 women, linking them to care at SHCH when needed; more than 700 women were evaluated and screened for breast cancer; and around 600 existing breast cancer patients continued to receive follow-up treatments. BCI receives the majority of its funding from AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals and AmeriCares; SHCH relies on individual donors and annual fundraising to provide the rest of the program's funding.

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