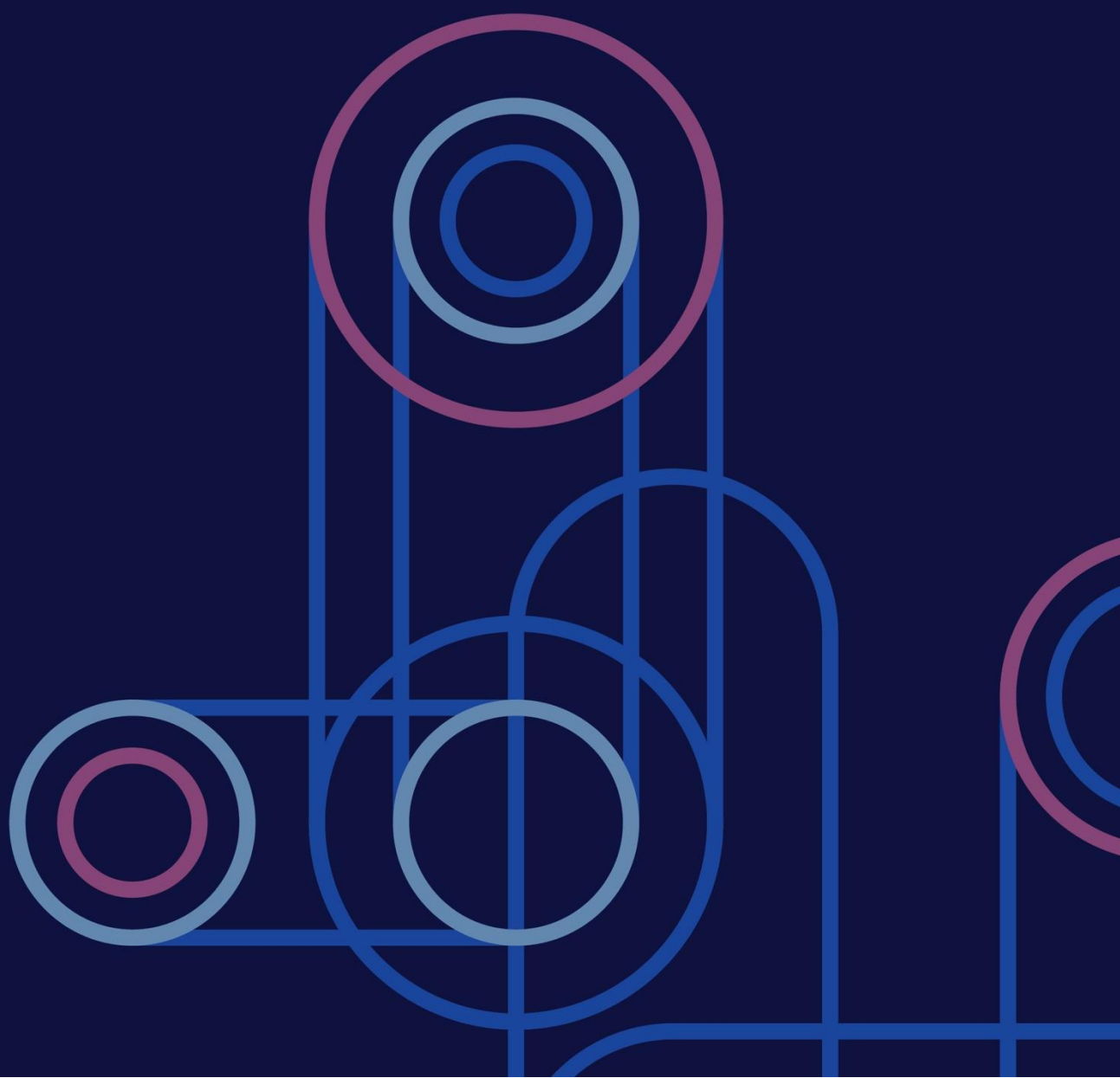


CASE STUDY

*Redesigning an open street market in Tan Mai
Ward, Hanoi*

2026



Basic information	
WHO Region	WPRO
City or Country	Hanoi, Vietnam
Timeline	2019-2022
Type of intervention	Infrastructure; behavioural
Primary level of implementation	Neighbourhood
Primary sectors involved	Health; transport; urban planning; food; solid waste
Primary health outcomes or challenges	Infectious disease; health behaviours; health equity

Case description

Tan Mai Ward is located in a lower-income area of Hanoi characterized by rapid urbanization, a high proportion of migrants from other provinces, and a large population of informal workers. In the years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ward lacked functional public spaces, including parks and public gardens, and existing playgrounds were degraded. Local residents – especially women, children, older people and persons with disabilities – thus had few significant opportunities for public physical activity or social interaction.

In this context, the ward relied heavily on informal street markets both as sources of affordable, fresh food and as primary public spaces for daily activities. The only roofed market had previously been converted into a commercial centre, with the market itself relocated underground. This facility proved unpopular with both customers and vendors, leading residents to purchase fresh food from a poorly organized, unhygienic open street market. Vendors, mostly women and from low-income households, operated on the margins of the street without adequate infrastructure, waste management or traffic control. These conditions posed risks for food safety, pedestrian safety and infectious disease transmission, which became more acute during the pandemic.

Between 2019 and 2022, HealthBridge Vietnam, in collaboration with the People's Committee of Tan Mai Ward, UN-Habitat and local partners, implemented a participatory redesign of the open street market and surrounding public spaces. The People's Committee provided local government authorization and institutional support, while HealthBridge convened stakeholders, coordinated activities and facilitated community



Tan Mai Ward market relay layout. Hanoi, Vietnam: 2021. © Healthbridge.

participation. Stakeholders included ward authorities, residents, vendors, women's groups, community organizations, urban planners and public health actors. Partnerships were also established with organizations focused on organic waste management – like the Centre for Organic Agriculture Promotion and Studies, COAPS – and food safety and hygiene – including Rikolto.

The intervention began with a baseline survey and key informant interviews with 40 vendors and 40 residents to assess existing infrastructure, operations and community concerns. Four meetings with partners and local authorities were held to identify and prioritize problems. A Block-by-Block co-design workshop using Minecraft engaged 23 participants, including vendors and residents, enabling community members to model proposed improvements. An online consultation with 100 vendors and local authorities gathered feedback on detailed designs during COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. Initial designs were revised based on this feedback and public health guidance.

Infrastructure changes were implemented to organize space and improve hygiene and safety. A total of 120 m² of pavement was painted to designate vending areas, organize traffic flows and maintain physical distance between shoppers and vendors. Signage was installed to improve wayfinding and the customer experience. Two prototype mobile display shelves were tested by vendors, revised based on feedback, and then scaled to 25 units across the market to reduce the footprint of stalls and improve food

presentation. Complementary ward investments included drainage improvements, lane paving and relocation of overhead electricity lines underground.

The market redesign took place alongside a broader set of community-led public space improvements across Tan Mai Ward. Four Block-By-Block workshops with community members – including women, children, youth and older adults – generated designs for a range of other public spaces, which were further refined in validation meetings. Five public spaces were improved through participatory construction in partnership with Live and Learn Education Center, with 102 residents contributing 2096 volunteer hours and in-kind contributions valued at over 4,000,000 VND. Improvements included community gardens, inclusive playgrounds with accessible pathways and equipment, and public art installations. Across the five broader public space improvements, over 1000 users visited the sites daily.

The redesigned market directly benefited approximately 150 vendors and 1500 local residents, most of whom are women buying and selling fresh food, and has had more general impacts on the population of more than 6000 residents living within a 15-minute walking radius. The improved market provides a cleaner, safer and more hygienic environment that is easier to navigate, supporting access to affordable fresh food during and following the period of pandemic restrictions. Community feedback, including comments on local social media platforms, indicated strong appreciation for the changes.

Following the redesign, the Tan Mai People's Committee committed state budget resources to complementary improvements to the surrounding street infrastructure, including drainage, paving and relocation of overhead electricity lines, extending the scope of physical upgrades beyond the market site.

Key enabling factors included the support of the People's Committee, sustained community engagement, co-design methodologies that incorporated local knowledge into spatial solutions, and cross-sector partnerships linking public health, urban planning, food systems and environmental management. Barriers included long-standing informality, limited space, and the need to adapt designs rapidly in response to COVID-19 restrictions.

The Tan Mai interventions have since become a model for other districts in Hanoi, demonstrating how small-scale, low-cost improvements can create significant quality-of-life enhancements and build governmental capacity for participatory urban development. Importantly, the evidence generated through these community-based interventions contributed to national policy advocacy that culminated in Vietnam's Decree 60/2024/NĐ-CP on Development and Management of Markets, which took effect on August 1, 2024. This decree represents a historic shift in national policy, recognizing outdoor markets and street vendors for the first time, enabling government funding for urban market renovation, and requiring provinces and cities to develop comprehensive

market development plans – and thus directly addressing the issues that the Tan Mai market intervention sought to resolve.

Strategic Highlight

The Tan Mai Ward case illustrates how community-identified problems can serve as an entry point for a wider, integrated urban health strategy. The confluence of local dissatisfaction with an unhygienic and unsafe street market with the broader public reaction to the pandemic contributed to important changes in public space use and local collaboration around health-promoting environments. The intervention leveraged community concerns and insights to address intersecting challenges across food systems, mobility, public health, social inclusion and environmental management.

Community participation was embedded throughout problem definition, design and implementation. Tools such as the Block-by-Block methodology allowed residents and vendors to contribute directly to spatial solutions, visualizing trade-offs and co-creating alternatives. This continuous feedback loop allowed the project to adapt to emerging constraints, including pandemic restrictions, demonstrating the value of creating spaces for iterative learning and flexible design in complex urban systems.

Equity considerations were central to the redesign of the Tan Mai Street Market and the broader public space improvements. Women and low-income informal traders, who were most affected by the loss of traditional markets and the shift to unsafe street vending, were prioritized as both beneficiaries and co-designers. Moreover, the inclusive playground specifically addressed the needs of children with disabilities, while the community garden supported migrant women's integration into the community. By improving safety, hygiene and accessibility, the intervention addressed immediate health risks for vulnerable groups while strengthening livelihoods and social cohesion.

This case underscores that modest, locally grounded interventions can catalyse systemic action when they embrace participatory processes and align with institutional mandates. Community concerns, when treated as directional signals rather than obstacles, can provide seeds for longer-term and wider application where enabling conditions exist – in this case directly influencing national-level policy.

Further Information

- [Redesigning an open street market in Tan Mai Ward, Hanoi](#)
- [Summary Report: Redesigning an open street market in Tan Mai Ward, Hanoi](#)
- [Low-cost, Safe, Inclusive and Accessible Neighbourhood Public Spaces in Tan Mai Ward, Hanoi, Vietnam](#)
- [Creating Public Spaces in Tan Mai Ward, Hanoi](#)
- [10 Years of the Global Public Space Programme: Annual Report 2022](#)

- [The Block by Block Playbook: Using Minecraft as a participatory design tool in urban design and governance](#)
- [Nghị định 60/2024/ND-CP về phát triển và quản lý chợ mới nhất \[Decree 60/2024/ND-CP Regarding Market Development and Management\]](#)