

STUDENTS IN DIEN BIEN AND DAK LAK PROVINCES EXCITED TO CELEBRATE “THE BRIDGE TO KNOWLEDGE” OF BRIDGESTONE

HCMC, November 11, 2019 - Realizing that there are still many Vietnamese students in flooded areas who are facing many obstacles on their ways to school every day, Bridgestone Vietnam officially launched a bridge-building program for students in 2019 to help bring back their enjoyments to every school day. Particularly, Bridgestone has just completed the construction of two bridges in flood areas of Dien Bien and Dak Lak, in a big effort to provide safer roads to schools for disadvantaged children. This is the next phase after a series of traffic safety education events at the elementary schools of "Bridgestone Squad – Complete safety for kids".

On October 28th, in Dien Bien, Muong Ang district, Bridgestone's work had officially installed the first-ever solid concrete bridge for the people of Nam Lich – the poorest area of this district with over 65% of households in poverty. According to the given information from the Department of Infrastructure Economics of Muong Ang District which is in charge of monitoring and quality assurance for this project, the overflow bridge was built with a width of 4m, a length of 6m and a thickness of 25cm and with 2 layers of 16 bearing steel. The bridge, making of tough materials, is guaranteed to last for more than 20 years with a weight restriction of up to 7 tons. This bridge is the cooperation of financial sponsorship from Bridgestone Vietnam, the construction design based on the understanding of the commune officials about the terrain and the professional skills of the contractor, an expert in constructing bridges in rainy and windy weather with the rugged terrain of Lich Nua village.



The new bridge (right) replacing the weak old bridge (left) is initially bringing the first positive impacts to the villagers of Lich Nua, Nam Lich commune, Muong Ang, Dien Bien.



1st and 2nd-grade students of Lich Nua experiencing brand new bridge to school

Continuing the journey of extending knowledge and "Complete safety for kids", in early November, in Ea Le commune, Ea Sup district, Dak Lak was the next local to be transformed with a new bridge from Bridgestone. With the availability of the new bridge, the road to go to the school of students here is now 8km shorter and the activities of Ea Le people here ranging from shipping and trading are more convenient than ever. The new bridge sponsored by Bridgestone Vietnam is 15m long, 2.5m wide and 3.5m high with a thickness of 0.7m. With the weight restriction of 3 tons, making from strong materials, the bridge is expected to be durable for at least 10 years.



The new solid bridge (right) provides a great connection between 7&8 village.

Bridgestone's bridge construction is expected to continue to support hundreds of students in flooded areas on their way to pursuit knowledge as well as contribute to the positive development of the local economy in the future.

Sharing about the enthusiasm of Bridgestone for this project, Mr. Sadaharu Kato, Director of Bridgestone Tire Sales Vietnam Llc. said: "Vietnamese students in general, especially children in the poorer area, who nurture in their heart the enthusiasm toward learning, deserve respect and need big encouragement. For these children, pursuing knowledge is a tough and difficult journey with a variety of obstacles on their way to school every day. As a corporate that always cares about the community with the mission of "Serving Society with Superior Quality", Bridgestone is willing to accompany Vietnamese children every day and on every educational path and encourage the young generation to unlock their potential. I also would like to express my sincere thanks to the enthusiastic support of the local leadership in creating the opportunity so that we can implement this meaningful project, which would provide new, safe and durable bridges for many years to come.

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Mr. Sadaharu Kato presented gifts with the hope to help the children in Nam Lich commune become more confident in their path of education.

Attending school is one of the basic rights that every child deserves. Additionally, education is considered one of the most effective bridges to a bright and prosperous future. However, most of the Vietnamese children in disadvantaged areas are living and learning in poor conditions. Moreover, severe weather, frequent floods, and lacking safe transportation are among the reasons for children in remote areas to drop out of school. In order to get to school, many children have to travel cross dangerous ragged bridges. For areas without bridges, children even have to use plastic bags to cross the river or use simple wooden rafts, not equipped with lifebuoys. These stories brought Bridgestone Vietnam into considering and making the decision to implement this meaningful campaign.



Many bridges in Vietnam are temporarily built and unsafe

Sharing about the excitement of local people to celebrate the new bridge, Mr. Vuong Dinh Hoang - Chairman of Nam Lich Commune People's Committee, the representative of Nam Lich commune, Muong Ang district, Dien Bien shared: "After more than 15 years asking for funding to build the bridge but not yet approved and having to cross temporary and unsafe bridge, Lich Nua people now have the first-ever solid concrete bridge. The "knowledge bridge" from now on will be more substantial, without the concern of being washed away in the floods. The economic activities of local people and the education of children here will be more stable! The journey to reduce poverty in the local area is therefore much less difficult." "Very excited! Very happy" are some rare Vietnamese words that the people here, most of whom are the people of Thai ethnic minorities who don't speak Vietnamese frequently, keep repeating today. Although they could not express their joy any further in language, they were really happy to celebrate the new bridge in Lich Nua!"- Mr. Hoang added.



Mr. Sadaharu Kato, government representative and students at Lich Nua Village - Nam Lich Commune

Ms Tran Thao, a farmer at Ea Le commune, Ea Sup, Dak Lak, was happy to share her joy in the opening ceremony: "I'm so glad that I don't know what to say! After about 40 years, there was finally a bridge, we will

no longer have to go nearly a dozen kilometers to go to school or to work. With this new bridge, it will be quicker and easier for goods-trading to earn more income, and the children's education will also be more convenient. Now I just hope that the children will study harder and have a better life than their poor parents.”



The happiness of people in Ea Le commune after nearly 40 years of waiting for a solid bridge

The meaningful journey of "Bridgestone Squad – Complete safety for children in 2019" has ended with many remarkable achievements for the community. 2019 is marked as the first year Bridgestone launched a campaign to ensure the safety of the young generation both physically and mentally. The 2019 campaign received strong responses from representative organizations including Manh Dung Tire Company in Dien Bien and Tin Nghia Transport & Service Company in Dak Lak. Bridgestone's journey will continue for many years to come with the help of the network of employees, agents and customers. In the following years, this program is promised to be replicated in many local regions to continue the mission to provide a safe journey to school for students across Vietnam.

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About Bridgestone:

Bridgestone Vietnam belongs to Bridgestone Corporation Japan, the world's largest tyre and rubber company. In addition to tyres for use in a wide variety of applications, it also manufactures a broad range of diversified products, which include industrial rubber and chemical products and sporting goods. Its products are sold in over 150 nations and territories around the world.

For more information, please contact:
Bridgestone Tire Sales Vietnam Liability Company
Branding & CSR Division
Le Huynh Hai Sa
Email: sa.le@bridgestone.com
Tel : +84 901 880 813