**Summary of significant outcomes from the Vietnam capacity building project**

**(2015-2017)**

Janet Williams, Programme lead, IASSW Capacity Building Committee.

**1. Background**

Since the 2000s there has been a determined effort by the Vietnamese government, and others promoting social welfare, to reintroduce social work. This has been maintained and informed by an enthusiastic and growing band of social work educators and practitioners, some of whom were educated abroad. There are now many schools of social work across the country but the quality of the education is variable. Associations for social work and for social work education were formed in 2014 and several Schools joined IASSW.

The IASSW Board responded to requests to support the development of social work in Vietnam by holding a board meeting and international conference in Hanoi in Spring 2014. The commitment and effective organisation of the meeting and conference gave the IASSW Capacity Building committee the confidence to support further developments. A three-year project for annual workshops was proposed by the past president (Angie Yuen) and supported by the then IASSW President (Vimla Nadkarni) and the chair of the Capacity Building Committee (Janet Williams). Angie Yuen was able to locate funders from Foundations in Hong Kong. The United Board has funded the project for three years @ US$23,000 for each of the first two years and US$ 18,000 in 2017 (due to the closure of the IASSW Foundation. The Sunwar Foundation funded the first year also and IASSW funded travel for the Programme Lead in 2017 @ US$18,000.

Angie Yuen was also able to introduce the VAVETSWO to another Hong Kong Foundation which resulted in the Association receiving funds for its infrastructure. A number of projects are underway as a result of having an office and an organiser. The IASSW workshop topics (professionalisation, curriculum development for example) were informed by, and contribute to, VAVETSOW developments.

**2. The workshops**

Each autumn, in both the North and South of Vietnam, IASSW and VAVETSOW held annual 3-4 day workshops from 2015 until 2017. This was done as a partnership: IASSW (Janet Williams – Programme leader), VAVETSOW (Mrs Nguyen Thi Thanh Huong) and, since 2016, the Regional Resource Centres based in Peking (Kan Yip). Anges Yeung, volunteer from Hong Kong, ably supported administrative elements. Unfortunately, APASWE was unable to support the project, though the Association’s President was involved from the beginning and was kept up to date with progress.

Two key topics (for in-depth study over two days) were identified by VAVETSOW in 2016, rather than four topics as in 2015, and this was repeated in 2017. For the key topics regional trainers or practitioners were identified, and Vietnamese co-trainers. They worked together on the content (including local case studies), the PowerPoint and delivery. There were curriculum development topics, action planning, evaluation sessions and each year a speaker who could talk with clarity about the path that social work had taken in a neighbouring country. The planning, delivery and reporting took approximately eight months. The involvement from the beginning to end by Janet Williams and Kan Yip ensured that lessons learnt were taken forward to improve the workshops year on year and it enhanced communication and trust.

**3. Key Outcomes**

There is now a group of between 100 and 150 (mainly) educators, across Vietnam, who have attended one or more workshops and been involved in in-depth training on a practice issue relevant to the development of policy, practice and the curriculum in Vietnam. They also learnt about social education methodology for field practice, competency approaches, and learning and assessment generally. The training style and the regular feedback modelled adult learning methods. These participants can cascade expertise locally and nationally through the networks formed during the workshops and it is happening already in the bi-monthly workshops organised by VAVETSOW.

Feedback, formal and informal, from participants and observations showed that the training was effective and respectful. The model of co-training has evolved to work effectively. The evaluations from each year expressed appreciation of the content and the attitudes of the trainers. Participants identified how they would use their learning immediately in their teaching. We noted that Action Planning had developed over the three years with participants identifying more realistic immediate and medium-term proposals.

**4. The future and sustainability**

There is a need for further capacity building in Vietnam on topics related to practice, policy, professionalisation, curriculum development and educational methods. Some of this is happening already but VAVETSOW has identified where further help would be particularly useful. Many Vietnamese social workers have a clear understanding about which approaches would be suitable, or indeed unsuitable in Vietnam. Angie Yuen maintains contact with VAVETSOW regarding infrastructure and future needs for the development of social work.

The experience of IASSW working with the Vietnamese team has been positive and the outcomes appear effective and sustainable. This is due to the strength of VAVETSOW, the enthusiasm of the participants and organisers and the degree of consultation and joint working that went into the workshops. Workshops were well attended. Additional help would complement the work of VAVETSOW and could take the form of further workshops or exchanges, visits and help in curriculum development. The support of IASSW could also be helpful in VAVETSOW’s work with other ministries where understanding of social problems and social work responses is very limited.

A full, completion report for the United Board is currently being prepared by Janet Williams, Mrs Nguyen Thi Thanh Huong and Agnes Yeung for the United Board. This will be sent to the United Board, and made available to IASSW, at the end of January 2018.

Janet Williams (Capacity Building Committee Member). 8 January 2018