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The Development of Social Work in Vietnam: The Role of International Collaboration

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This paper explores the emergence of social work as a profession in Vietnam and the ways in which international collaboration can play a role in its development. The paper reviews the literature pertaining to the social issues that have accompanied recent rapid social and economic change in Vietnam. The authors then describe recent developments in social work and social work education in Vietnam in response to these emerging problems. The role of international collaboration is explored and examples of four recent collaborations are provided that illustrate exchanges of curriculum and related social work knowledge, capacity building, technical assistance, and teaching. Factors that influence successful international collaborations are delineated and conclusions about future opportunities for such collaborations in Vietnam are presented.

Keywords: International Social Work; Collaboration; Social Problems; Emerging Economies

The purpose of this paper is to describe the development of social work as an emerging profession in the rapidly changing economic context of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and to explore the role of international collaboration in its development. As has been true in other developing countries, the evolution of social work in Vietnam is tied to the changing economic, political, and social scenarios in the region. Vietnam has experienced rapid economic growth since 1986. This growth and the accompanying social and demographic changes that come with the transformation

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to a modernized and industrialized country (including dramatic improvements to many people's economic and educational well-being throughout the country), have also had an adverse impact on some individuals, families, and communities. The country has recognized that the growth of social problems requires the professionalization of its social work workforce and further overall development of the profession and social welfare infrastructure. International collaboration between developing countries and outside partners has played a role in the growth of other sectors including health, business, economics, computer science, and engineering. However, the role of international collaboration in the development of the social work profession has not been well described previously.

The paper has three main parts. First, we will explore the social issues that have accompanied the rapid social and economic change in Vietnam. Then, we will describe the recent developments in social work and social work education in Vietnam in response to these emerging problems. Finally, we explore the role of international collaboration by providing examples of four recent partnerships that illustrate exchanges of curriculum and related social work knowledge, capacity building, technical assistance, and teaching, and describe the factors that influence successful international collaborations. We close with conclusions about future opportunities for international collaboration in Vietnam.

Rapid Social Change and Emerging Social Problems

Third-world nations with developing economies share common characteristics including: (a) twice the economic growth rates of developed nations; (b) high rates of foreign investment; (c) rapid shifts from agrarian to industrial segments; (d) high proportions, often 30–50%, of people under the age of 25; and (e) increased rates of urbanization (Napier *et al.*, 2008). This is particularly true in Vietnam. The country currently has a population of approximately 85 million, 75% of whom have lived in rural areas. More than half the population is under the age of 25. The country has 53 different ethnic groups, comprising approximately 10 million people, all with distinct languages and cultures. Ethnic minorities account for 39% of the national population (T. D. Le *et al.*, 2008).

Given the country's demographic characteristics, how has socio-economic reform affected the population? Economic reforms since 1986 have been accompanied by increased levels of government investment in social services, especially towards health and education, resulting in decreased poverty and dramatic increases in enrollment in primary education (T. D. Le *et al.*, 2008). In 2006, Vietnam joined the World Trade Organization and approved a new Socioeconomic Development Plan with a vision of becoming a middle-income country by 2020 (T. D. Le *et al.*, 2008).

Despite its recent economic advances, Vietnam remains a low income country with gaps in poverty rates by rural–urban residence, and by ethnic group, which have widened over time (Thang and Popkin, 2003; MOLISA/UNICEF, 2009). Most poor children live in rural areas. Most minority children were poor and were less likely to enroll in preschool, and had limited access to healthful nutrition and safe water as of

2004 (H. Le *et al.*, 2008). Because the rural areas have substantially higher rates of poverty and poor access to services, compared to urban areas, rates of migration to the cities are high.

85 As is true of other developing countries, increased urbanization, industrialization, and rates of migration to cities are accompanied by a loss of traditional family and community supports. There is an impact on children, for example, when families move to the cities in search of work or better education, or when husbands and fathers move to find work in far away cities, leaving a wife and children behind in rural areas. The composition of the labor force has changed, with women's participation in the labor market increasing to high levels (Vo *et al.*, 2007). These dynamics change or weaken traditional family structure, thereby reducing availability of family support for children (Perezniето and Jones, 2005). The related increases in stress and tension are thought to lead to family violence or domestic abuse. While awareness of this issue appears to be increasing (T. Q. Le, personal communication, 10 February 2010), current research and statistics are lacking on the occurrence and prevalence of domestic violence in the country.

100 These changes in economic, social and familial life are having repercussions. There are large numbers of children with disabilities, children affected by HIV/AIDS, children who are orphaned, and children neglected, abused or exploited (MOLISA/UNICEF, 2009). Many children are child laborers, child sex workers, street children, in conflict with the law, and drug users. Along with the million children living in poverty, MOLISA reports that in 2004 there were over 2.5 million children in these 'special circumstances', over 3% of the total child population (MOLISA/UNICEF, 2009). Violence against children is a growing problem and, while the country lacks the specificity of definitions for child abuse and neglect that exist in Western countries, MOLISA has embraced UNICEF's definition of 'children in need of special protection'. Violence in the home and schools has increased dramatically (IRIN, Humanitarian News and Analysis, 2008). It is suspected that cases related to child trafficking for sexual purposes have been increasing, but to date reliable statistics on its prevalence are lacking (Save the Children Sweden in Vietnam, 2006). Quite possibly, children in rural Vietnam are also vulnerable to exploitation for many of the same reasons as in other developing nations, such as 'child fostering'—traditional out-placing of children with extended family members or other families for economic or social reasons (Gozdziak, 2008). There is an increase in drug abuse and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Drug abuse in Vietnam, together with prostitution and gambling, is considered a 'social evil' (Hammett *et al.*, 2008; Nguyen and Scannapieco, 2008) for which responses such as crackdowns, mass arrests, and forced detoxification are used (Hammett *et al.*, 2008). Drug use was originally prevalent mainly in rural mountainous areas but has spread to urban areas making it one of the most common social problems in the country (Nguyen and Scannapieco, 2008). Vietnam is now facing serious problems in the production, trafficking, and abuse of illicit drugs (Nguyen *et al.*, 2000). The AIDS/HIV epidemic is strongly linked with drug abuse since the overwhelming majority of cases in Vietnam are among groups who inject drugs (Nguyen, 2007; Walsh *et al.*, 2008), with female commercial sex workers having the second highest prevalence (Walsh *et al.*, 2008). Efforts to control HIV/AIDS

in Vietnam are closely linked to the government's programs to combat social evils (Nguyen *et al.*, 2000). Discrimination and stigma against people with HIV, exemplified by the harassment of sex workers and drug users, leads to non-compliance with prevention measures.

125 Vietnam's increasing elder population has also been affected by the change in the country's demographic composition and rapid social and economic change. While there is increasing interest in private pensions in Vietnam, the current financial markets are too underdeveloped to ensure success, leaving elderly people largely dependent on income from their own labor and from family. Due in part to the
130 migration of younger family members to urban areas, there is a growing tendency for elderly people to live alone, especially in rural areas. Problems for the elderly include poor physical and mental health, poverty, abuse, and lack of insurance (Evans and Harkness, 2008).

135 **Recent Developments in Social Work and Social Work Education in Vietnam**

MOLISA estimates that 25% of the Vietnamese population is in need of services from a social worker, based on counts of potential service recipients in 2008 (T. Nguyen, 2009). While the development of social work as a profession is seen as necessary and urgent in
140 order to address the current social problems (Nguyen, 2002; Hugman *et al.*, 2007), professional social work in Vietnam is in its early stages. Social welfare services and associated policies are viewed as 'charitable' efforts rather than necessary as a human right, a view that lessens the professionalism of the work. Indeed, the term for social work in Vietnamese, 'cong tac xa hoi', is a general one that means all good and charitable
145 work that anyone can do (Nguyen, 2002). The provision of social services to vulnerable groups currently relies largely on efforts by voluntary groups and non-profit organizations rather than trained, paid professionals. While mass organizations, local authorities, and charitable groups have made significant efforts to provide care, there is currently a lack of a professional system to ensure appropriate and systematic response
150 to various types of need (MOLISA/UNICEF, 2009).

In recent years, steps have been taken to further the development of professional social work in Vietnam within an inclusive global framework (Le, 2009) taking into account what is already known about the characteristics of successful professional development. The necessary components of social work development were
155 documented from the experience of 10 countries—Chile, Germany, Hungary, India, Mexico, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Weiss-Gal and Welbourne, 2008). These components include: (a) establishment of professional organizations; (b) the formulation or adoption of a professional code of ethics; (c) to varying extents, the development and dissemination of a specific body of
160 knowledge; and (d) the placement of social work training in institutions of higher education. In order for Vietnam to acquire the necessary components of the profession, the first step is for social work to be recognized by the government as a legitimate profession in Vietnam. Once this is done, a legal framework can be established that clarifies the roles and obligations of a social worker, a formal job code (required of

government-sanctioned professions in Vietnam), a job title, professional standards, and a salary scale. Then, social work positions can be defined and implemented in schools, courts, hospitals, health clinics and other sectors of society (Le, 2009). Since social work has not yet been recognized as a profession, very few social work services are available. The few that exist are run by government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and most rely on donations and funding from time-limited grants. Thus, the country can begin the formation of a comprehensive social service delivery system that includes services for those populations defined as needing social work services.

Vietnam has made strides in developing social work education. In 2004, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) took a major step in recognizing social work as a training discipline at the university level by approving a national curriculum for social work. There are now more than 30 universities and colleges providing undergraduate social work training in the country, with more than 1,500 graduates in 2009 (Le, 2009). Vietnam now needs to develop postgraduate programs in social work at master's and doctoral levels to train specialized social workers, university faculty, researchers, managers, and those involved in policy development (Le, 2009; K. H. Nguyen, 2009). It is estimated that there are currently fewer than 50 individuals in Vietnam with master's degrees in social work, all from other countries. Most lecturers in social work programs have moved from other disciplines including sociology, psychology, political science, history, and special education. They need to be trained in social work principles and course content (K. H. Nguyen, 2009). Finally, given the lack of available materials including textbooks and research articles in the Vietnamese language, there is a need for high-quality translations of relevant existing material. Furthermore, much of this material is Western-centric in its perspective so there is a need to adapt these materials to the culture of Vietnam.

In spite of the recent training of social workers at the university level, there still remains a workforce shortage. Given the magnitude and range of social problems, it is estimated that more than 10,000 skilled, professionally-trained social workers are needed to meet the current demand (T. Nguyen, 2009). One way to address this need is to provide training to the more than 20,000 paraprofessionals, existing local workers and community collaborators, and volunteers, as well as members of various mass organizations, i.e. Women's Union, Youth Union, Red Cross Society and Fatherland Front (Le, 2009). These workers, provided with advanced in-service training in social work practice skills, could also serve as supervisors for students in university training programs. Until recently, social work education has been seen as a theoretical body of knowledge imparted through lecturers, with little practical experience included in the curriculum (Nguyen, 2002). Thus, Vietnam is currently facing a shortage in the number of qualified practitioners needed to serve as field supervisors (Le, 2009).

While Vietnam has made considerable progress in the development of social work as a profession, there remains much to be done before the profession is able to address the social problems mentioned earlier. The next section will describe how international collaboration through information/knowledge transfer, capacity building, consulting,

and resource provision can play a role in the further development of social work in Vietnam.

The Role of International Collaboration

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International collaboration in the development of social work is not new to Vietnam. Indeed, professional social workers were introduced to Vietnam by the French Red Cross with the development of the Caritas School of Social Work which operated from 1947 until 1975 and was accompanied by a government directive for the development of a social welfare infrastructure (Nguyen, 2002; Tran, 2009). Recent collaborations have been organized in response to rapid economic growth and have taken place between Vietnam and schools of social work in the US, Canada, Australia, and other countries. These exchanges have provided needed resources, the transfer of experience and information, and consultation on the development of social work programs. The following provides descriptions of four recent collaborative projects aimed at furthering the development of social work in Vietnam.

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Examples of Recent Collaborations

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In 2005, a study was undertaken by MOLISA/MOET/UNICEF to assess human resource and training issues for social work as a foundation for developing a national strategy in creating a social work profession (Hugman *et al.*, 2007). The project involved both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative component involved a survey about the types of work in which social workers might be employed, the extent of need, and some estimate of the existing workforce. The qualitative component involved interviews with key informants about the potential roles of social workers, training needs, and other factors related to the development of the profession. The research was conducted by a core partnership forged between an international consultant and representatives from government and non-government agencies. In addition, because of the lack of social work expertise in Vietnam, an international collaboration was formed with a social work expert from the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia and a Vietnam national project team consisting of two national consultants, representatives from the local government, the large NGOs, and several universities. Results provided valuable information about the types of work in which social workers might be employed and the scale of potential demand. Findings confirmed that the areas of child care and protection, HIV/AIDS, poverty, and disabilities currently utilize the highest percentage of practitioners.

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The second collaborative project involved a partnership between the School of Nursing and Social Work at Memorial University (MU) in Canada and the University of Labor and Social Affairs (ULSA) in Hanoi, which was initiated to reduce poverty in rural areas of Vietnam. This coordinated approach, beginning in 1997, included various projects related to improving health and human services (Gien *et al.*, 2007). One of the projects offered training opportunities to improve the quality and quantity of rural social workers. It used a capacity building approach in partnership with the ULSA to

develop and sustain an education program including training the trainers and facilitating community outreach. To overcome limitations of previously delivered short-term courses, the project consisted of a 10-course program that was recognized for credit towards a Bachelor of Social Work in Canada. A two-month course at MU
245 Canada was planned for those who completed the 10-course program in order to expose trainees to Western social services and the Western post-secondary educational model, including teaching methods and strategies. According to Canadian external evaluators at mid-term, the project has been extremely successful in building the capacity of the ULSA to educate professional social workers at the bachelors level, and according to
250 project leaders, has contributed to raising the professional status of social work in Vietnam.

The third example of collaboration involved introducing vocational qualifications in care into the Vietnamese system of social services for two of the country's key sites for care provision: Social Protection Centers and communes (Taylor *et al.*, 2009). Social
255 Protection Centers (SPCs) offer a variety of residential services for orphans, isolated and vulnerable older people, and adults with physical disabilities and mental illness who are without family support. Communes, of which there are approximately 10,000 in Vietnam, offer practical and emotional support to residents of villages and communities. Both organizations are currently responding to a range of social issues
260 due to rapid economic growth, including the rise in the number of street children who are at risk of abuse and exploitation as they are driven from their communities, often to major urban areas. SPCs and communes have staff who are already working with populations in need and who require additional training, but may not require degree-level education in order to be effective. Consultants from the Glasgow School of Social
265 Work worked with NGOs including Save the Children, Hommes de Terre, UNICEF, and Plan International to address the issue of providing good quality care within these two types of organizations. The consultants met with key individuals from a number of ministries and with young people and staff employed within the two types of organizations. Together they introduced social work training along with systematic
270 assessment of competence within SPCs and communes, implementing a set of work-based vocational qualifications similar to the UK's S/NVQ in Social Care. Though Vietnam did not have a system of vocational qualifications, according to project leaders the country had a tradition of using in-service and community-based training to support the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and thus the new system resonated
275 strongly with the Vietnamese culture. The successful introduction of vocational qualifications of care to the Vietnamese system of social services complements the university-based social work programs by providing needed training to semi-professional and volunteer workers, and addresses the growing demand for more highly-trained social workers in the country.

280 The fourth and most recent project involves the collaboration between the School of Social Work at San José State University (SJSU) in California and the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH) at Vietnam National University (VNU) in Hanoi to develop and pilot a postgraduate program in social work. In order to fill Vietnam's need for lecturers and professionals with advanced social work training,

UNICEF funded the two-year project that began in June 2008, which included the transmission of a foundation-level social work curriculum through 22 courses in the areas of policy, human behavior, practice, and research. The framework for this curriculum had already been established along with many concepts about the profession, through the work of senior Vietnamese social scientists, UNICEF, and social work academics from Australia, Canada and Hong Kong SAR (Hugman *et al.*, 2009). In this most recent project the majority of courses have been taught by SJSU faculty. Upon completion of the curriculum, more than 70 Vietnamese students from all regions of the country (including undergraduates, bachelor's degree graduates, and professors with masters and doctorates in other disciplines) are awarded a certificate in social work. Further impetus to this work was provided by the recent decision by the Vietnamese government, based on recommendations from MOLISA, to develop the field of social work as a profession (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2010). The decree provides direction and resources for development of the profession through to 2020.

After formal signing ceremonies initiating the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two universities, SJSU sent faculty to teach 14 courses, during four sessions between January 2008 and August 2010 in the areas of social work theories and policy; social work practice for individuals and families; the law, social work, and diverse groups; family violence; special-needs children and youth; and substance abuse. Seven of these courses were taught by two SJSU professors who are native Vietnamese speakers, while the others were taught by faculty who are non-Vietnamese speakers with professional interpreters provided by VNU. The approach was highly collaborative. While VNU chose the course topics, instructors were given wide latitude over the content and methods of teaching, and VNU staff and faculty assisted with administrative issues, grading, and awarding course credit towards a social work certificate. To address gaps in content expertise in Vietnam, VNU directed the instructors to teach the courses similarly to those taught in the US. Nevertheless, instructors had to modify course content to address differences in culture as well as the varied levels of exposure to social work issues in the students. It proved very helpful to ask students to think about and discuss how the material fit their experiences. Most of the existing content for social work education is Western-centric, and some concepts and phrases have different meanings cross-culturally. For example, a concept like 'oppression' has different implications given that, by definition, all oppression had been eliminated when the country was reunified after the French and American wars. Instead, students preferred categorizing some people as being treated inequitably, for example due to stigma from a disability, having been victimized by domestic violence, or having been exploited. The concept of 'independence' is not necessarily as desirable an objective as it is in Western-European countries since it carries implications of being separated or cut off from family and community. Instead, 'standing on one's own feet' is a more desirable description of self-reliance. Indeed, the success of the teaching relied on collaboration with students in adapting the Western-centric concepts to the experience of the Vietnamese. SJSU's partnership with USSH has also included an exchange of information during a conference in 2008, hosting visiting scholars in the

fall of 2009, and providing consultation on the development of a master's level social work program and development of a field practicum.

In addition to providing consultation and helping build capacity through teaching courses in the UNICEF-funded program, this collaboration has been a true exchange and has been beneficial to SJSU as well. Among all cities in the United States, San José is home to the largest concentration of Vietnamese Americans, and as a consequence many Vietnamese students attend the university and the school of social work. SJSU students are excited about the collaboration and are eager to participate as translators, trainers, and advisors on the cultural relevance of our curriculum and courses as we make information available to our Vietnamese partners. Project leaders hope that the knowledge gained in the process of collaboration will help make SJSU's social work curriculum even more relevant as we train social workers to work with Vietnamese clients in the San José area. Indeed, instructors have learned a great deal from their teaching experiences in Vietnam, and faculty eagerly embraces the opportunity to teach future social work professionals and the possibility of working collaboratively on research projects with Vietnamese scholars.

Factors that Influence Successful Collaborations

In their work on building collaborative relationships in developing a masters-level business education in Vietnam, Napier *et al.* (2008) describe successful collaboration as requiring: the desire and ability to seek collaboration; the availability of the appropriate partners; and the availability of funding from private or government sources. However, this conceptualization neglects to identify the approach used in the collaboration. In the literature on international development, approaches have ranged from those in which experts identify, define, and propose solutions to others' problems to an emphasis on processes in which genuine partnerships are formed to advance sustainable development (Whitmore and Wilson, 1997). In order to create systematic, sustainable solutions to its social problems, it is necessary for Vietnam to develop the profession of social work that is relevant for Vietnam and that reflects its distinctive culture, history, as well as political and social structures (Le, 2009; Tran, 2009). Collaborations that do not incorporate Vietnam's cultural values will have little chance of success. The current Vietnamese effort in dealing with family violence in the northern areas of Vietnam is an example. In March 2007, with financial and technical support from members of the international community (i.e. from Sweden, SDCs; Netherlands, Oxfam Novib; USA, Ford Foundation; Denmark, LOKK; and UNICEF) the House of Peace, the first and only shelter for victims of family violence, was established. It is based on a Western model for victims of human violence in which the location of victims of domestic violence in shelters is kept confidential to protect the victim. Despite solid international funding and technical support, the House of Peace has continually been operating under capacity because in Vietnam, cultural values prevent married women from spending nights at an unknown, secret location. Another approach has been designed and spearheaded by Dr Le Thi Quy of Vietnam National University of Social Sciences and Humanities. In this model, the problem of family violence is dealt with at the

grassroots level with each commune taking responsibility for educating members and providing a safe house to which victims can escape. The houses are located in respected homes, protected by the government and the people, and their addresses announced openly and widely within the communes. Even though formal research is needed to
365 evaluate the effectiveness of this model, initial observations by residents at these communes seems to be encouraging (T. Q. Le, personal communication, 10 February 2010).

Thus, collaborations need to use approaches that allow for the transfer of necessary
370 information, whether it is specific curricular content or details of a particular intervention or treatment model, while concurrently considering the unique circumstances of Vietnam and culturally-appropriate adaptation. The business education literature indicates that knowledge transfer initiatives tend to fail when they impose the 'sender's' knowledge rather than allow local, culturally-relevant knowledge to emerge (Napier, 2005). As was described earlier, the success of the effort to
375 implement vocational qualifications of care into the Vietnamese social services system can be attributed to its good cultural fit with the local culture. In transferring knowledge through courses taught at VNU, SJSU faculty worked assiduously to garner information from Vietnamese students to make courses relevant to Vietnam's current social and political context. International collaboration can range from 'drafting experts' to help
380 solve a problem to a collaborative partnership where more cooperation and exchange are involved. While the role of a true 'collaborative partnership' has increasingly been recognized as an essential strategy in health promotion and public health in developing countries, including Vietnam (H. Le *et al.*, 2008), this approach has not been well explicated in the literature on social work in developing countries. All four projects
385 described earlier can be considered collaborative partnerships as each was formulated to help develop social work in Vietnam that fits with the culture and environmental needs of the country at a particular time. The collaborations also worked as true exchanges in which the knowledge gained was mutually beneficial.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, communication, resources, and personal
390 characteristics of those involved may contribute to the success of international collaboration. Gien *et al.* (2007) discuss how constant and continued communication was essential to the success of their project that addressed capacity-building needs in rural Vietnam. They describe involving their collaborative partners in every step of the
395 project from planning and design to conclusion, and the need to inform all partners of the project's progress and challenges so they could be involved in decision making as being extremely important in ensuring the success of their effort (Gien *et al.*, 2007). Personal attributes may also be critical to the success of an international collaboration. Characteristics of effective 'development' workers parallel characteristics of good social
400 workers which include: professional commitment, flexibility, teamwork, and perseverance (Whitmore and Wilson, 1997). Gien *et al.* (2007) also describe how team members need to be mature, flexible, pro-active, tenacious, and highly creative so as to arrive at alternative solutions and to cope with the complexity and unpredicted challenges of international work. Finally, the stability of international collaboration is

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dependent on the time and resources committed on the individual level on both sides of the partnership.

Challenges to international collaboration can include communication problems due to inadequate resources, limited infrastructure, differences in language, time zones, cost, and work styles. Cultural differences that lead to misunderstandings and frustration can be minimized if the team makes a genuine effort to understand the history, political, economic, and cultural context of the partner country. Unlike other fields, including business and engineering which often benefit from generous donors who fund foreign scholars and provide needed resources for collaborative projects in Vietnam, social work relies often on charitable contributions and volunteer efforts, which can make it difficult to sustain progress.

Conclusion

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, nearly two billion people (30% of the world's population) and 7% of the GDP have been in the process of transitioning from a planned to a market-based economy (Napier and Thomas, 2004). Thus, strong social work infrastructure and trained, skilled social work professionals are in high demand to meet the growing social issues that accompany rapid social change and economic growth, especially in developing countries. While much has been written about international collaboration in developing economies in fields such as business, science, and technology, little has been written about models of international collaboration in social work. This paper has highlighted the contributions of four collaborative partnerships, each of which has brought knowledge and expertise to bear on pressing issues related to the development of social work in Vietnam, while keeping at the forefront the unique cultural and historical context of the county. The collaborations can also be described as mutually beneficial with each partner gaining valuable knowledge from the exchange. As social work in Vietnam is in its early stages of development, there are opportunities for further collaboration targeted to address social problems explicated earlier in this paper including: child welfare and child protection; substance abuse and HIV/AIDS treatment; and issues related to the growing elder population. Through international collaboration, information including curriculum and training models, as well as methods for intervention and treatment in each of these areas can be transferred, made culturally relevant, and ultimately help expedite the development of social work as a profession in Vietnam.

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