



**MINISTRY OF LABOUR, INVALIDS  
AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

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## **Review of the Implementation of Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg CONCERNING NATIONAL PLAN 32 TO DEVELOP PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK**

**Report of the Progress Review Conducted by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs with UNICEF  
Vietnam**

August 2014



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## SECTION 1:

# INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

## Introduction

In 2010 the Prime Minister of Vietnam issued Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg, to begin the process to create professional social work within the government social welfare system. The Decision put in place a National Plan, with goal that between 2010 and 2020 social work should be recognised as a profession in Vietnam and that a system for delivering social work services should be created at provincial, district and commune levels.

This review examines the progress of the implementation of National Plan 32 in the period 2010-2013. It examines the steps that have been taken so far to develop social work services, looking at the both gains and the challenges in this first phase of the implementation. The review has been conducted by collecting information at national level and from three different parts of the country to examine provincial, district and commune level activities. The northern, central and southern regions were all considered by focusing on the provinces of Quang Ninh, Thanh Hoa and Dong Thap, with particular emphasis on the development of Social Work Services Centres. In addition to examining the provincial level service developments, in each province a district and a commune were also visited. At every level the review process included all possible stakeholders. While the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) has primary responsibility for implementing the National Plan, and though this the Departments of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISA), the areas of health, education and training, culture, law and justice, police and public security, as well as mass organizations were also included. Where relevant and appropriate some civil society organizations were also interviewed. Thus a national picture of current progress

in the development of professional social work has been obtained.

This report presents an analysis and discussion of the information obtained about the present stage of development of professional social work and concludes with recommendations for the next phase of the implementation of the National Plan.

## Background

Social work has a complex history in modern Vietnam. Before 1975 there were two different approaches, one in the South and one on the North. In the South social work was professionalizing, following the influence of the French and then the American models (Oanh, 2002). Within this system there was a small but growing number of Vietnamese graduates in social work at college diploma and bachelors degree levels, for example from the Caritas School of Social Work. In contrast, in the North 'social work' was regarded as an activity concerned with poverty eradication and famine relief, the protection of orphans and the care of elderly and disabled people (especially those who had performed meritorious service). Following 1975 and the reunification of the country the Northern perspective applied nationally and the professionalization of social work ceased, including formal training.

After the implementation of the đổi mới policy in 1986 (which can be translated either as 'renovation' or as 'innovation') the increase in modern social problems and issues was apparent. These include:

- children in need of special protection;
- care and protection of disabled people and

- elderly people;
- family and domestic violence;
- trafficking of women and children;
- prostitution;
- drug abuse;
- crime;
- HIV/AIDS.

Although some of these problems and issues can be found around the world in societies at different stages of economic development, they are exacerbated and given increased urgency by the move to a market economy in which the impact on family life and other social relationships is often rapid and intense. The processes of urbanization that accompany economic development also add to these problems.

Increasing openness (cởi mở) to external dialogue brought evidence that in many parts of the world that had similarly experienced economic development and modernization, the professionalization of social work has been used as part of the social responses to the social and community problems and issues that were created or exacerbated by economic growth. For this reason social work had professionalized not only in Western countries over the previous century, but also more recently it had begun to do so in parts of Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia. Indeed, social work has continued to professionalize and today it exists as a formal profession in 90 countries (as defined by membership of the International Federation of Social Workers).

In the late 1980s approval was given for social work to be taught as a subject within the BA in Women's Studies at the Open University of Ho Chi Minh City (OUHCMC). At the same time the Social Work and Community Development Research and Consultancy (SWCDRC) was formed, also in Ho Chi Minh City, as a civil society organization providing some limited social work services. In Ha Noi several INGOs and UN agencies started to introduce social work within in-service short course training for officers of the Women's Union and the Youth Union. By 1997 such courses were being taught at the then College of Labour, Invalids & Social Affairs (COLISA) (now the University of Labour & Social Affairs – ULSA). This in turn led in 2004 to the approval by the Ministry of Education and Training

(MOET) for a bachelor degree curriculum in social work. Since then the program has grown so that now social work is established nationally as a bachelor degree level subject in 23 universities and 17 colleges. The developmental path of social work education is an important factor in the overall situation facing professional social work in Vietnam, as is discussed in a later section of this report.

In 2005 a large-scale national study was undertaken on the human resource and training needs for the development of professional social work in Vietnam (UNICEF/MOLISA, 2005). That study concluded with 13 specific recommendations about the structure of professional social work services, the education and training required and various aspects of law that would be necessary to create professional social work. The details of these recommendations can be found in Appendix A.

In the following period, there was further developmental work, undertaken by MOLISA with support from UNICEF Vietnam. In 2009 a review of potential models for social work services structures was undertaken, leading to the Proposal Framework on Social Work Development (2009). That report made detailed recommendations that can be found in Appendix B of this present report. Of particular note is that the report concluded that in the early stages of development social work services centres would most likely function at provincial level, with mechanisms for reaching people in need at district and commune/ward level. Links between province, district and commune/ward level services were also spelled out, with targets for future planning as human resources became more widely available and greater clarity was achieved in defining specific roles and tasks of social work. The report also placed a great emphasis on ensuring that appropriate professional education and training would be seen as crucial to the growth of the human resource capacity. There was also a review of the curriculum for the Bachelor of Social Work in 2009, advised by Prof. Angie Yuen of Hong Kong Polytechnic University (at that time President of the International Association of Schools of Social Work), which contributed to curriculum revisions by MOET for the Bachelors and College levels, that were approved in 2010.

Law related to social work roles and actions has been under review for several years. A preliminary report supported by UNICEF Vietnam was provided to MOLISA in 2011. This issue continued to be examined



by a national expert group and was further reviewed in 2013, again with support from UNICEF Vietnam. These documents raise questions about the way in which social work is recognised within Vietnamese law and whether the power and authority to act is defined. At the time of the present review, these findings continue to be discussed and to feed into the amendment of specific laws (for example, in the area of alternative care models for children in need of special protection).

The recommendations from the 2005 and 2009 reports, as well as from other scientific studies, contributed to the formulation of Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg and National Plan 32 to develop professional social work. National Plan 32 is being implemented in stages and by the end of 2013 has been introduced across the country. There are some local differences in the models being used to create social work services, varying according to local conditions and circumstances. Understanding these developments requires consideration of the ideas that have contributed to them, as well as the local needs and circumstances of particular provinces.

## Professional social work

Because there are different understandings of the term 'social work' it is necessary at the start to define the focus of this review. The international definition of social work, agreed in 2001 between the 82 countries that were at the time in membership of the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work, states:

**The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are foundational to social work.**

Certain aspects of this statement do not translate easily into the Vietnamese context, so in 2006 an expert group constituted by MOLISA with representation from relevant universities and from UNICEF Vietnam looked at the international definition of social work to produce a statement with Vietnamese characteristics that is at the same time in harmony with international standards. The group concluded that for Vietnam the

profession should be understood in this way:

**Social work is a highly developed practice based on special principles and methods with the purpose to support individuals, groups and communities in dealing with their social affairs – thereby, social work is mandated for the sake of people's happiness and social well-being.**

## These definitions contain certain key features. These are:

1. That social work as a profession is based on a particular set of sciences and arts. Together this knowledge and skill base, together with a formal statement of ethical principles, is recognised internationally as the defining characteristic of who it to be regarded as professional social work.
2. Social workers must be formally trained and assessed in their knowledge and competence. Although many people contribute to the well-being of the society, without formal education and training the level of knowledge and competence cannot be expected and volunteers in the community cannot be held accountable for the quality of their work in the same way that applies to professions.
3. The nature, scope, roles and responsibilities of a profession must be mandated by the society, through official recognition and support from the government. For example, approval of job codes, salary scales, laws requiring or permitting specific professional actions, all create the basis on which an occupation becomes recognised as a profession. In addition, public acceptance helps to sustain a profession's role and identity.

Certain features follow from these definitions, which can be seen in countries around the world. First of all, social work as a profession is based on recognised and systematic education and training at a minimum of bachelor degree level. Second, in an increasing number of countries social workers are required to register with or to obtain a license from a government approved body. The use of the job title 'social worker' is thus restricted in the same way as occurs for medical doctors, nurses and other professions. Third, there also tends to be a similarity of recognition in employment

of social workers between government and civil society organisations, in terms of roles and tasks. The distribution of action between government and civil society is largely a matter of the political structures and institutions of each country. Nevertheless, social work roles, tasks and responsibility have considerable similarity around the world.

## Scope of the review

In order to examine the way in which National Plan 32 is being implemented, three key areas were identified from the various studies and previous review documents as forming the basis for the National Plan. These are:

1. the structures and systems for the provision of social work services, including organization, management and planning of social work services;
2. issues in education and training of social workers at all levels;
3. the legal framework concerning social work actions and responsibilities as well as social work as a profession in itself.

These key areas together encompass the content, structure and process of social work services. By focusing on these areas of concern the aim of the review is to identify strengths and challenges in the way in which professional social work has developed in Vietnam between 2010 and 2013. So, from this analysis recommendations are made concerning the way in which National Plan 32 might be adjusted for the period 2014 to 2017, as well as the basis for further reviewing the overall goals of the Plan towards 2020.

Therefore the structure of this report focuses on each area in turn, beginning with structures and systems, followed in turn by education and training, and the legal framework. This structure has been followed because it is important to understand what is being achieved and what is lacking and then to consider how professional education and the legal framework can be further improved to support these developments.

## How this review was undertaken

For the purpose of this review a sample of three provinces was selected, to include the Northern, Central and Southern regions. These are the provinces of Quang Ninh, Thanh Hoa and Dong Thap. In addition to providing a comparative view across three different regions, which have particular circumstances, the models of social work service in each of these provinces have some differences from each other. So this selection provides an opportunity also to contrast these models and to consider particular questions that each model raises for understanding the possibilities and challenges for professional social work in Vietnam.

The methodology used was that of qualitative inquiry (Padgett, 2008). As far as possible, all the relevant ministries, departments and mass organisations were requested to participate. MOLISA identified and invited the participant organisations, in consultation with UNICEF. In each province, the review was provided with information through meetings with the range of stakeholders. In these meetings the various participants presented detailed reports about the contribution of their own departments or mass organisations to the progress of the development of professional social work. These reports responded to a series of detailed questions that had been provided by MOLISA prior to the meetings taking place. In addition, the international consultant and other members of the review team asked further questions in order to expand or clarify on the points being made. These meetings were held at the relevant Social Work Service Centres, Social Work Offices (including in a school and a hospital) and People's Committee Offices. Fact-finding and observational visits were also made to a Social Protection Centre in each of the three provinces.

Furthermore, the review process also received information from a very wide range of stakeholders at the national level. These again included all the ministries covering the main areas in which professional social workers are planned to be located in the coming years, as well as other ministries that have specific responsibilities for aspects of the mechanisms for implementing National Plan 32 such as salary scales, laws concerning tasks and responsibilities, and so on. Mass organisations, universities and civil society

organisations also provided information at national level.

Thus, at all levels the following ministries, departments and mass organisations contributed information to the review (although in a small number of specific instances representatives were not able to attend to the meetings but submitted written comments):

- Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
- Education
- Health
- Culture, Tourism and Sport
- Public Security and Police
- Peoples' Committees
- Women's Union
- Youth Union

In addition, at the national level the following participated:

- Home Affairs
- Supreme Peoples' Court
- Universities
- Civil Society Organisations

A full list of participants in each consultative meeting is provided in Appendix C.

In addition to these consultative meetings and fact-finding visits, the review has drawn on policy and legal documents and on previous reports in so far as they are considered up to date and as providing relevant information. The qualitative method that was used draws on a process of comparing different data sources, so that the statements made in reports and meetings can be related to more objective material. So, for example, in addition to official published documents, some of the recent work that has been undertaken on the legal framework for social work, or on the curriculum for degree level qualifications in social work were examined and used in the sections to which they relate. A list of documents that were consulted is provided at the end of this report in Appendix D.

The review has been led by an international consultant who is familiar with social work developments in Vietnam, working together with a national consultant and staff from UNICEF Vietnam. The international consultant undertook the analysis of the data and prepared the main report in consultation with the national consultant and UNICEF Vietnam colleagues. In addition, staff of MOLISA provided administrative and logistical support.



## SECTION 2:

# STRUCTURES AND SERVICES

### Introduction

At the end of 2013, National Plan 32 had begun to be implemented across the country. Social Work Services Centres are already being developed in 30 provinces and a further 33 have approved plans to do so. These developments are based on national decrees, decisions and circulars, which have then been interpreted and applied through equivalent documents at the provincial, district and commune/ward levels. As a consequence, the same policy and plan has taken different forms as it has been implemented in the different parts of the country.

As has been noted in the discussion of the scope of this current review (see previous Section), three provinces were selected for detailed observation and fact-finding. These are: Quang Ninh, Thanh Hoa and Dong Thap. They differ from each other not only in terms of their geographical location, being in the Northern, Central and Southern regions respectively, but also in the different ways in which the social work services based on National Plan 32 have taken shape. The Social Work Office that was examined at the Hanoi Paediatric Hospital was selected because it provides a view of a pilot project in the important area of health services. Within each province, in addition to discussions at the provincial level visits were made to district and commune levels, as well as to social protection centres and to other services as judged appropriate. Examples of these 'other services' include a social work office in a high school and a private social protection centre.

This Section presents a comparative view of the structures and services across these locations. It

concludes with an analysis of the strengths and challenges of these different models.

### Three Provincial Models of Social Work Services Centres

Although all are implementing Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg, the three provinces of Quang Ninh, Thanh Hoa and Dong Thap are developing quite distinct models of social work services. These differences can be seen at provincial, district and commune levels. These different structures are presented diagrammatically in Figure 1 on the next page.

The differences between the three provinces can be summarised in terms of three criteria. First, two Social Work Services Centres (SWSC) are already relatively well developed as they have grown from existing pilot programs that have had international support, while the other is being created through reform of a Social Protection Centre. Second, two of the SWSC provide social work across the range of social issues and problems, while the other specializes on child and family social work. Third, in one province the social work provision of the SWSC is complemented by social work services also being provided in 1 SPC, 4 districts, 8 communes and 8 schools, in the second province there are no other identified social work services, while in the third there is also a Social Work Office in one district. Therefore the scope and the scale of the social work services are quite different between the three provinces.

	Quang Ninh	Thanh Hoa	Dong Thap
Province	Social Work Services Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– developed from pilot program</li> <li>– 4 departments: assessment and case management; counselling and community work; communication; administration</li> <li>– 6 social workers</li> <li>– general focus</li> </ul> Social Protection Centres (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 1 social worker (children)</li> </ul>	Social Work Services Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– reform of a specialist Social Protection Centre</li> <li>– 2 departments: general social work; specialist rehabilitation for disabled children</li> <li>– 6 social workers</li> <li>– general focus</li> </ul> Social Protection Centres (2)	Social Work Services Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– developed from pilot program</li> <li>– unified centre</li> <li>– 3 social workers</li> <li>– specialist focus (children)</li> </ul> Social Protection Centres (2)
District	Social Work Services Centres (4) School Social Work Offices (8) Hospital Social Work Office (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– each with 1 social worker</li> </ul>	[not yet developed]	Social Work Office (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 1 social worker</li> </ul>
Commune	Social Work Offices (8)	[not yet developed]	[not yet developed]

Figure 1: the structures of identified social work services centres across three provinces

The ways in which these three models have developed reflect the regional and local conditions and the recent history of social work services in these provinces. For example, Quang Ninh and Dong Thap have both been the sites of particular pilot projects supported by the Children’s Department of MOLISA. Thus they have had a longer period in which developmental work has been undertaken to create services structures and to provide education and training for staff as well as awareness raising among senior provincial decision makers. Quang Ninh also has the advantage of regional economic growth providing the resources for infrastructure (such as the SWSC building in Ha Long City) and for human resource development. Moreover,

as pilot models both Dong Thap and Quang Ninh have received a great deal of financial and technical support from MOLISA, Atlantic Philanthropies and UNICEF.

In each province there are also particular local factors in the focus for social work. The clear focus on children in Dong Thap comes from the support it has received from the Children’s Department. In contrast, in Thanh Hoa the Social Protection Centre out of which the SWSC is being created was a specialist service for surgery and rehabilitation for children and young people with disabilities. In particular, as injury caused by landmines and disability from dioxin poisoning are major local issues, this continues to provide the

context for the development of a general social work service.

Meetings with officers of the DOLISAs and other line departments as well as mass organisations (Women's Union and Youth Union) at district and commune level on Thanh Hoa and Dong Thap showed a much less developed understanding of social work than was evident in Quang Ninh. This was both in respect to the content of social work practices and to how social work as a profession might be seen as a distinct approach to social issues and problems. At the provincial level in all three provinces there was a good knowledge of what professional social work can contribute to the social services sector. Also, there were individual officers who demonstrated good understanding in the district meetings in all three provinces. However, only in Quang Ninh was reasonable comprehension demonstrated at commune level. At the commune level in Dong Thap (Xa My Quy) some individuals showed that they understood what professional social work might contribute, but these were people who themselves had chosen to learn about social work. For example, in two separate instances mass organisation officers reported that they are undertaking social work degrees. In Thieu Nguyen commune (Thanh Hoa province) there was no clear knowledge about social work activities as such. Indeed, this commune was presented as having no significant social issues or problems.

Despite the province's economic situation relative to other regions, Quang Ninh like Thanh Hoa and Dong Thap reported that their plans for implementing Decision 32 have been slowed down by the overall government directives on staffing levels. Therefore, in each case intentions to increase the numbers of designated social work positions have had to be postponed. While there have been considerations given to redeployment of officers from other roles, through retraining, there are also limitations to this arising from the need to maintain other services and also the time taken to make such changes. The SWSC in Thanh Hoa also reported that the salary allowances for social work positions have not yet been allocated at provincial level, so this makes it very difficult to attract officers to this role. Some use has been made of recruiting collaborators a provincial and district as well as at commune and village level (in Quang Ninh at provincial level graduates in relevant fields have been appointed as collaborators) but this is a short term

measure and not seen as a substitute in the longer term for a professional workforce.

Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg and the documents related to it, especially Decree 68/2008/ND-CP and Circular 09/2013/TTLT-BLĐTBXH-BNV, also indicate a model that is based primarily on Social Work Services Centres as stand alone centres at the district level, separated from Social Protection Centres. However, the current situation arising from financial and human resource constraints means that across the country there is a conflict between two sets of policies. Even in Quang Ninh, with its locally higher levels of resource, the establishment of social work services has been restricted to just 4 districts and, within them, to only 8 communes and 8 schools. (Although there is also one hospital social work office designated, there have been problems in recruiting staff with practice capacity.) Thus the goal of creating social work services at district level that is set out in the policy documents has been implemented only in a small number of pilot projects.

## Social Work Services

Even though the structures of social worker services are developing differently in the three provinces, the overall ranges of social work services have similarities. There is an emphasis on children and families, which given the demographics of Vietnam can be regarded as appropriate. Overall, the issues that were reported as being the focus of social work can be summarised as:

- children;
  - orphans or abandoned children;
  - children with disabilities or affected by HIV
  - out of home care (fostering and adoption)
- family
  - marriage counseling
  - domestic violence
- disability
- mental health
- older people – isolated or without family
- social evils prevention

- drug misuse
- human trafficking
- prostitution
- HIV/AIDS
- young people in conflict with the law
- poverty alleviation

As already noted above, there is a difference in emphasis between the three provinces, for example with the more specialized focus on children and families in Dong Thap, but all in three these fields of practice were noted as of concern for the developing social work services.

Similarly, the range of practice methods and approaches described in the three locations are broadly similar. These are:

- assessment and case management
- counseling
- life skills education
- community education and awareness raising
- community development, including mobilization
- needs analysis and research

In terms of the volume of activity, assessment and case management appear to be the predominant types of social work activity. Indeed, this might appear to be somewhat obvious, as all potential beneficiaries have to be identified. At the stage of first referral it may be that needs can be clearly identified as requiring a different service. This is a part of the social work process that is known as 'intake' and it contributes to the initial important assessment phase of social work intervention (comparable to the idea of 'diagnosis' in health professions) (Parker 2013). The importance of effective intake and assessment for social work intervention means that it should be conducted by an appropriately trained professional social worker. So it is appropriate that the implementation of National Plan 32 should expect a significant contribution to intake and assessment by the Social Work Services Centres at provincial level.

In some of the descriptions of these practices

provided to the review there is at times a lack of clarity. For example, the terms 'counselling' and 'life skills education' are sometimes used in ways that overlap, as also happens with 'life skills education' and 'community education', or with 'community development' and 'research'. Of course, it is entirely appropriate that particular individuals, families or communities may receive more than one type of service response. However, the question is whether there is clarity on the part of those who are providing services about the methods and techniques that are appropriate for particular interventions. Such a lack of clarity and consistency can be seen between individual officers in each centre or office as well as between the different provinces.

Having noted this question, the successes of these services must also be recognized. In each province, district and commune the review team was provided with evidence that people with needs in the areas listed above are being reached and responded to. From the figures provided to the review team, Figure 2 provides a summary overview of the numbers and types of responses for each provincial SWSC since commencing their work.



Province	Services, numbers of beneficiaries
Dong Thap (2011-2013)	Victims of child sexual abuse – counselling and case management – 118 Other vulnerable children and families – counselling and case management – 254
Quang Ninh (2011-2013)	Children in special circumstances or at risk – counselling, case management and consultation – 1501 Elders – consultation and case management – 471 People with disabilities – consultation and case management – 452 People with mental ill-health – consultation and case management – 298 Consultations at the centre (HIV, domestic violence) – 41
Thanh Hoa (2012-2013)	Juvenile in conflict with the law – casework – 20 Prostitutes – counselling – 30 Vulnerable people – advice, case management and counselling – 199 – includes abused children and victims of domestic violence Foster care for children – case management – 10 families Victims of landmines – case management and counselling – 10

Figure 2 – summary of social work services provided in three provinces 2011-2013

In addition, in Quang Ninh the Social Work Services Centre has developed a website to promote professional social work (see <http://www.congtaxahoiquangninh.vn>); Dong Thap and Quang Ninh both have 24-hour telephone hotlines for inquiries. All three provinces provide advice and information to members of the population making inquiries and undertake 'case finding' (that is, they use local media and also professional contacts to identify potential beneficiaries who are then invited to receive social work assistance). Quang Ninh also explicitly identified 'life skills education' as part of the role of the social workers.

One of the difficulties in making general findings about the centres is that the figures are recorded and presented differently by each. For review and planning purposes it is essential that a standard system of data recording is used. Because this is a national issue it should be dealt with by MOLISA.

## The relationships between SWSC and SPC in the development of social work

There are significant differences between the three provinces in the relationships between the 'social work services centres' (SWSC) and the 'social protection centres' (SPC). As stated above, two of the SWSC have been created from pilot programs, while the other is being developed through reform of a specialized SPC. Across all three provinces the role of social work includes the assessment of potential beneficiaries for the SPC provision. This includes children in need of special protection (especially in situations where there is no family or they are unable to provide care), disabled adults, people with mental health needs and older people who do not have family care. However, this is not the only way in which clients can enter SPC care, as people can be admitted from the community through other forms of referral – or even in the case of abandoned children by being left at the door of

the SPC. This contrasts with the role of social work in countries where the profession is more developed, in which social workers assess potential clients and use SPC care (under the concept of 'residential care') as one option among others. This type of case management practice assumes that alternative services are available which as yet in Vietnam largely is not the situation.

In Quang Ninh the specialized children's SPC has a senior officer (the vice-head) who is a graduate social worker. This person provides specific social work services not only to children resident in the SPC but also, perhaps even more so, to families in the surrounding community. For example, parenting courses have been provided for families with disabled children, for which the target group is families who have been seeking to place disabled their children in the SPC. In Thanh Hoa some of the social work service intervention has been with disabled young people who are victims of landmines, where they have received rehabilitation in the SPC. Given the origin of the SWSC out of the former specialist SPC, this is now a matter of co-operation between different departments within the one Centre.

The social worker at the SPC in Quang Ninh raised the question of potential conflict of roles between the SWSC and the SPC in the provision of counselling to families. Yet the description provided of the counselling and life skills education (parenting skills) that was being provided were highly specialized and clearly related to the work of SPC, whereas the work of the SWSC did not focus in this way but rather was generalized across all the potential client groups areas.

## Relationships with other Departments and Mass Organizations

In addition to the Ministry of Labour, Invalids & Social Affairs, information for this review was received from the Ministries of Health, Education and Training, Justice, Information & Communications, Home Affairs, and Culture, Sport & Tourism, as well as the national offices of the Youth Union and the Women's Union. With the exception of Home Affairs, this same range of areas was invited to contribute at all levels, namely province, district and commune. So in the visits to the three provinces the review team received reports

from a wide range of line departments and mass organizations; this also included the relevant leaders from the People's Committees at each level. While not every department or organization was represented in every meeting, this range included the Departments of Health, Education & Training, Justice, Public Security, and Culture, Sport & Tourism. The Youth Union and Women's Union were also represented at all the meetings (although at the provincial meeting in Thanh Hoa the Women's Union was not able to report as she had to leave the meeting early).

At the national level there is a generally very clear understanding of the intent of Decision 32 and the National Plan to develop professional social work. Some Ministries (such as Justice and Home Affairs) are involved in developing aspects of the legal framework through which professional social work is becoming structured and will increasingly operate. Others (such as Health and Education & Training) provide services in which it is planned that social workers will be employed to make a contribution or (as in the instance of Culture, Sport & Tourism) are responsible for activities such as the promotion of strong families and the prevention of domestic violence, in which social workers employed in DOLISAs and other departments will collaborate. Broadly, at the national Ministry level there is a positive view of the way in which professional social work will contribute in each area. At the same time, there are some reservations, for example in the Ministry of Health, about the resource implications together with the challenge of enabling other professions to recognise the way in which social work will be a valuable part of service provision and will enhance the work of the other parts. For example, in many hospitals doctors and nurses have no knowledge of how social workers will make their work easier or more effective. An example of this point of view was provided in Dong Thap province, where the Department of Health reported that it was the health station workers and not the doctors and nurses in the hospitals who were supportive of having social workers. Yet the evidence from the Social Work Office at the Hanoi Pediatric Hospital is that now the social work service is established, it is well regarded by the medical and nursing staff who actively refer patients for social work assistance. The social work that is provided in these offices is very similar to that of the larger provincial centres, focusing on assessment, case management, counselling and referral to

community-based help.

In the Youth Union and the Women's Union there was a very good understanding of social work activities. At national, provincial and district levels this was expressed not only in terms of being able to grasp the roles and tasks of social workers who might be employed within the DOLISA structures but also that some Youth Union or Women's Union officers might be educated and trained as social workers and conduct social work activities in their roles within these organizations. Indeed, reports were received in the three district meetings in Quang Yen, Thieu Hoa and Thap Muoi, of officers in these mass organizations who had undertaken or were currently doing social work programs (some of which were in-service and some at Bachelors Degree level).

The understanding of the contribution of social work appears to be quite clear among the different line departments at the provincial level. In each case the reports from the representatives gave detail at this level about the focus for social work, or the relevance of social work activities, for the type of responsibilities that were described by the Ministries. At district level, too, there was a general understanding of the range of areas in which social work might contribute, although there was less clarity expressed by some representatives about exactly what activities social workers would perform. The SWSC in Quang Yen district (Quang Ninh province) and the Social Work Office in Thap Muoi district (Dong Thap province) gave representatives from those districts a greater insight, although there were differences in the extent to which each department was described as being involved in the implementation of National Plan 32. In Thieu Hoa district (Thanh Hoa province), there was agreement between the various line departments and mass organizations that although there is good inter-departmental co-operation in the areas that are regarded as social work tasks, the manner in which National Plan 32 is being implemented is very limited because of various constraints. As with the other two districts an inter-departmental steering committee has been established, there have been many communications activities in the community and many officers have attended in-service short course training. However, changes to practice are slow. The meeting agreed that there were three reasons for this. First, budget limitations means that making changes to staff responsibilities is difficult because the necessary

allowances cannot be provided. Second, to be effective a network of collaborators in the communes is needed and this presents budget challenges as well. Third, although training has been provided it is relatively limited and much more is needed to extend staff understanding.

Some representatives in the other two districts also voiced similar problems with budgets and training, although to a lesser extent. The difference of the strength of these concerns can be explained partly by the development of the district level social work services, and partly by the length of time that social work has been developing in those locations. In Quang Ninh and Dong Thap there are models of social work from which the other departments and mass organizations can learn and they have also had longer in which to become familiar with social work practices. Nevertheless, only in Thieu Nguyen commune (Thanh Hoa province) was there no apparent understanding of the potential roles and tasks of professional social work and the contribution that it can make to the provision of social welfare services.

## The meaning of 'social work'

An important issue that is common to the three provinces, seen at all levels, is the varying extent to which the departmental and mass organization representatives share a common understanding of the nature, roles and tasks of professional social work. These have been defined for Vietnam in government documents. Circular 08/2010/TT-BNV set out the job code for professional social work, defining three levels: senior social worker; social worker; associate social worker. These levels are specified in terms of roles and task and the necessary education and training that is required. Circular 34/2010/TT-BLĐTBXH on the professional standards for social work extends the job codes for each level and establishes the specific practice functions. There are 11 functions, that is: intake; assessment; case planning; psychosocial interventions; community work; monitoring and review of interventions; changing plans; terminating activities; research; providing policy advice; and education and training of others in areas of social work expertise. Accompanying guidance to Decision 2514/2011/QĐ-BYT set out a similar definition for social work in the health system. More recently, Circular

07/2013/TT-BLĐTBXH has also defined the standards for social work collaborators at provincial, district and commune levels. The roles and tasks specified for collaborators are more practical and would be conducted under the instructions of a senior social worker or social worker, following a case plan that has been established by those more senior professional colleagues. The standards for collaborators are those that might also in other countries be consistent with roles such as 'assistant social worker' or 'social work aide'.

Similarly, Circular 09/2013/TTLT-BLĐTBXH-BNV has set out the functions, tasks and structures of social work services centres and social work offices. The range of functions and tasks specified in this document match those provided in Circular 34/2010/TT-BLĐTBXH on professional standards, although they are expressed in slightly different terms and add various tasks of resource management and communications.

Many of the descriptions of social work and the discussions of what is expected of the contribution of social work at the district and commune level meetings with the review team suggest that at these levels there is only limited familiarity with the content of these circulars. In some of the discussions, representatives from the line departments implied that they saw social work in terms of their own functions, or they reported on the areas that have been identified as of relevance to social work but in terms only of existing departmental roles and tasks. For example, the understanding of 'counselling' was widely seen in terms of what might more accurately be called 'advice giving', as part of ensuring that potential beneficiaries received the allowances to which they might be entitled. Thus in these situations social work appears to be seen as a way to offer a more effective means of providing material social assistance and of poverty alleviation. There is an implication in this way of seeing 'social work' that it becomes simply a re-labelling of the existing role of social policy administration.

In two particular areas of activity there is an understanding of the function of social work in terms of psychosocial interventions and community development. The first of these is in responding to the needs of children in special circumstances, such as those who have been abused, those who are abandoned or orphaned, children with disabilities, children and young people in conflict with the law,

victims of domestic violence, victims of human trafficking and so on. The second is in providing community education and the development of programs to address these social problems. In broad terms, both these areas concern family relationships and the safety of vulnerable people when there are serious problems in such relationships. In some of the province and district level meetings there was also a recognition, by some of the contributors, that social work seen in the way that is defined by the government Circulars (see above) also will have a role in relation to care for people with mental ill-health, isolated older people and people who require psychosocial support in relation to general ill-health. Here too the issue is that professional social work becomes necessary when people do not have the capacity to cope with their problems unaided, when family care is not possible and needs are too great for neighbours to respond. This point was underlined, ironically, by the insistent view in Thieu Nguyen commune that the continuing traditions of strong extended family responsibilities meant that there were very few social problems and so, in the view of the commune leaders, no need for professional social work.

## Discussion

From the evidence of the three provinces (including the district and commune levels) and the Paediatric Hospital in Hanoi, as well as interviews with ministries, there are several general points that can be drawn from the current stage of the implementation of National Plan 32.

### *Local Conditions*

First, the way in which the development of professional social work is progressing in each location follows from the previous local conditions in the relevant social service activities, including human resources, training, financial resources, organizational and management structures, awareness among leaders and in the wider community, and so on.

For example, the clear differences between the models of social work services in the different locations are affected by the resources available to each province. So, the newly purpose built Social Work Services

Centre in Quanh Ninh province has been achieved because the provincial People's Committee has been able to contribute to its development, whereas in Thanh Hoa province the reform of an existing Social Protection Centre was the way in which a Social Work Services Centre could actually be created. Similarly, the specialised child and family counselling approach in Dong Thap follows from the previous work undertaken with the Children's Department of MOLISA, supported by UNICEF.

In the same way, the number of social work officers, the type and level of their training and other factors that determine the expertise and approach to social work that is taken in these different settings has developed from the approach that was being taken in Social Protection and Children's Departments of MOLISA and the provincial DOLISAs. The common factor across all the locations that were observed for this report was in the understanding of case management as a social work activity. Influencing this factor is the way in which officers have been trained and the type of information that has been given to leaders. The next Section of this report deals separately with issues of education and training in more depth, but here it is necessary to note that where social work and other officers have been trained and what is the source of information for leaders appears to create a different perception of what should be regarded as 'social work' (as compared, for example, to the provision of monthly pensions). Consequently, there is a risk that some stakeholders think the creation of professional social work is achieved by changing the name that is used for activities that have been provided for many years, as opposed to actually changing the practices that are used to assist vulnerable people, families and communities.

These factors are not unique to Vietnam. In many countries the structures of social work services depend on local factors, even in countries where social work has existed for many years. In federated countries, such as the USA, Canada and Australia, most social work services are provided by states ('provinces' in Canada) and so the types and organization of these services differ between jurisdictions. In this sense the UK is also a federated system, with distinctions between the various 'countries' of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that have produced different forms of social work. In countries such as New Zealand, Japan, Chile, Germany, Sweden and South Africa there are

strong national policies that create a general unity, but even in these countries there are local differences in implementation that reflect local conditions in terms of both needs and resources. Only in geographically small jurisdictions such as Singapore and Hong Kong are there systems that do not have any regional or local differences in structures and services.

Seen in these comparative terms, it may be seen as appropriate that some degree of variation occurs across a large country such as Vietnam. At the same time, there are issues that have already been defined as national. For example, laws concerning child protection, the care of children who are not cared for by their biological parents (as in adoption), human trafficking and so on are national. For this reason the extent to which local differences are acceptable has clear limits. As social work is incorporated into national law as a profession with distinct responsibilities for children who are at risk or those who may be the subject of adoption, for example, it will be necessary to ensure that a minimum national standard of practice is achieved and maintained. This will require some standardization of structures and services, at least at a minimum level.

#### *The Relationship Between Social Work and Social Protection Services*

As has been noted above, in some locations Social Work Services Centres have been created from existing pilot programs. In others, however, they are being developed from the reform of Social Protection Centres. As SWSCs are being implemented in 30 provinces, most of the actual services are located in adapted premises that also continue to provide residential social protection. This raises questions for both services: not only is there a potential problem about the accessibility to social work services for members of the community but also there is a serious risk that the lives of social protection residents will be compromised in some way. Quite simply, these two types of service have very different functions and affect the lives of their beneficiaries in different ways. Therefore they must be separated as clearly as possible.

For the users of social work services, the primary question here is accessibility. As was noted in many of the interviews and meetings held for this review, even

when people understand how social work may assist them they often feel shy or embarrassed to be seeking help. Entering a building that is still seen as an SPC in this way can be even more difficult for members of the community than going to a separate social work office. Although there can be similar issues when an SWSC is a large building with a gate and a watchman, nevertheless the distinctive function of social protection services adds to this and if not managed effectively may make it even less easy to approach the social work services.

In addition to issues for potential social work clients, there are also questions about the implications for social protection residents and safeguarding their situation. The SPC becomes their home and the presence of people who are there for their own need and not those of residents can be intrusive if not managed well. This is very different from having visitors who come to see the work of the SPC or to engage in some way with resident groups. Internationally, best practice in residential social care is regarded as being the promotion of a sense of 'normal life', including notions of not being 'on display'. This clearly is difficult to achieve when people are living in a situation that is also a government social work services office. It should be noted that the review team consider the development in Thanh Hoa to have dealt with this matter sensitively, by locating the social work department in a separate part of the building to the residential rehabilitation service. It is also helped by the specialized function of the rehabilitation service, which by its nature is short-term and more like a hospital or clinic setting than a home. The model used in Thanh Hoa might be considered as one that could be copied elsewhere, but this would be affected by the other factors that have made it possible.

Internationally, best practice has been to close residential care facilities or to limit their use to the most exceptional and difficult of needs (Fernandez & Barth, 2010). The plans for SPCs in Vietnam to 2025 appear to have been the opposite of this until just recently, as figures provided to this review indicated a forecast of expansion in the numbers of both beneficiaries and of staff. If alternative services to provide care and support for vulnerable groups are developed, integrated into law and policy, then it may be possible to redirect this planned growth into social work services. That in turn would over time reduce the needs for large-scale material resource development (for example, it

would not require the buildings as residences for beneficiaries). However, if such a strategy is pursued it must clearly be focused on creating professional social work services and not simply by renaming the practice of SPCs as social work. For example, expanded fostering and adoption programs would potentially replace the requirement for residential child care but would need trained professional social workers as assessors, case managers and counsellors.

#### *Social Work Services – District or Provincial Level?*

The conclusions of studies and reviews, such as that conducted by MOLISA and UNICEF (2005) and MOLISA (2009) made clear recommendations that social work services would best be delivered at the district level. That is, the intention was to have primary services provided through associate social workers and social work collaborators in communes and wards, supported and guided by social workers at the district level who would then also provide secondary level services. Only tertiary level services (such as intensive therapeutic counselling, complex cases and the like) would be provided at the provincial level, which would also be the main location for research, planning and policy work as well as for services that can be easily centralised, such as a telephone hotline. This is a structure that has been found in many countries to achieve a balance between accessibility for members of the community and the relatively small scale need for highly specialized services.

However, although there are some pilot social work offices at district level in Quang Ninh and Dong Thap, including the social work offices in schools and clinics, plus the Paediatric Hospital in Hanoi, most of the development of Social Work Services Centres has been at provincial level. This has largely been a consequence of the limited resources that are available for the creation of social work services, combined with the relatively limited understanding of professional social work and what it can contribute to social welfare.

The greater awareness of social work at commune level in Quang Ninh and Dong Thap can be explained, at least in part, by the way in which there are district social work offices with professionally qualified social workers (that is, who have Bachelor of Social Work degrees) who can support and guide the work being undertaken at commune level by colleagues with

lower levels of training. In so far as resource restrictions have limited the development of SWSCs to provincial level in most parts of the country, the way National Plan 32 is being implemented has changed the nature as well as the structure of professional social work in Vietnam quite significantly.

There are two issues that follow from this situation. The first is that the national policy and related documents do not match the practice. While ideally it is the practice that ought to be developed further to achieve the policy objectives, the review team also heard arguments that the policies should be amended to fit the reality. If the latter strategy is adopted, it should be recognized that this will reinforce the limitations in the implementation of National Plan 32 that have so far been experienced. Identifying this challenge at the present time provides the opportunity to consider this challenge explicitly and to examine the options, including a review of the level of resources, before commitments are made to rewriting the overall goals of the Plan.

#### *Who Is Doing 'Social Work'?*

A further important point is raised by the different uses of the title 'social worker' that were used across the various meetings and interviews conducted for this review. The variety of uses of this term indicates a lack of certainty about what social work is and who should be considered to be a social worker. For example, in meetings at commune and district level some of the participants described how the activities of their line departments were already providing social work. Some of the activities that were described are those that would be recognised by social workers from many countries as core activities, such as assisting victims of domestic violence or child abuse and strengthening families, assisting victims of human trafficking, working with young people at risk of being in conflict with the law to amend their behaviour, and case management for people with disabilities and elderly people. Other activities described as social work, however, were responsibilities that would usually be recognised internationally as social work practices. These include traffic accident prevention, vocational training, job placement, and improvement of living standards. There were also some activities described as social work that are debated in the international literature, such as community education about law and

policy such as the importance of birth and marriage registration; similarly, organising cultural events as part of strengthening community life can be regarded by some social workers as part of the professional range of skills and by others as 'not real social work' (Hugman, 2009). The examples given here are all activities that were described by participants in the meetings and interviews for this review.

The important factor in understanding what is social work and who is a social worker is seen by the international professional peak bodies (the International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work) as being formal education and training in the science and skills that have become defined as social work theory and methods over more than a century (IAASW/IFSW, 2004). The global standards on social work education and training are that a professional social worker should have a university degree level qualification, and this degree should include particular theories, skills and values. The contribution of education and training to the implementation of National Plan 32 is discussed in depth in the next Section of this report. At this point it is helpful to note that the understanding of social work for many of the participants, especially at district and commune level, is that all activities in the social welfare sector are now seen as 'social work' and that anyone engaged in such work is a 'social worker', irrespective of the education and training that they may or may not have received.

Those officers who have received some training tended to make a different claim, in that they saw that even when they were doing the same activities after they had some training it changed the way in which they approached their work. However, at the same time, other than the degree level qualifications this training is usually very short, for example lasting 3 days at a time. However, the importance of training is not always acknowledged by colleagues or leaders: one commune officer who had undertaken a 3 month course complained that he was not seen by others as a professional social worker. (However, there was no discussion about whether this was a judgement about his capacity or if these colleagues saw 'professional' as meaning a college or university degree level training, either of which is possible.)

Another example of the way in which education and training is not necessarily recognised or appreciated

by leaders and managers is in the number of officers who are in positions called 'social worker' who have degrees in other disciplines. The particular examples seen by the review include literature, economics and insurance. This is understandable in the situations where the officers were already employed before Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg was issued and are gradually undertaking social work training. However, several of the officers with such 'other' degrees who are in the centres that were visited for this review have been appointed since then, and the review also received reports that this continues to be the case across the country. Although it may well be that the individual officers have a personal aptitude to develop social work knowledge and skills, this pattern reflects the way in which decision makers perceive the roles and tasks of social work and the importance of professional education and training. While this may be an obvious way to build a workforce in countries that do not have global standard professional education and training, such as in many parts of Africa, or in the developing countries of Asia in which social work is only just beginning to emerge, in Vietnam there are now several thousand university graduates in social work. So this employment pattern points to a different problem, which will be addressed below in Section 3 of this report. For planning organizational and management structures and developing services it points to the need to challenge the view that perhaps 'anyone can do social work'.

This was also reflected in discussions about social work services developing in schools and hospitals, in which some participants voiced the belief that teachers and doctors or nurses can become social workers with just a small amount of in-service training, and social work activities should be merely an addition to their existing roles. Yet, although social workers in many other countries may hear similar views being expressed, as social work had developed round the world schools, hospitals and even prisons have found that having professional social workers providing these services enhances the primary functions of education, health and corrections. It becomes recognised that social workers have distinct knowledge and skills that complement those of the other professions, because social workers assist students, patients or inmates with problems that may be disruptive to those other roles and tasks. The social work office in the

Paediatric Hospital in Hanoi is a development that has much to show the rest of the health system how, in a relatively short period of time, social work can become accepted and valued by the health professionals with whom they work. However, it was also noted that in the context of limited resources for salaries and allowances, it may be considered as cheaper to train an existing professional (such as a teacher or a nurse) and pay a small allowance for an additional task, than to employ another officer. If the role of a social worker and the necessary education and training are not well understood, then this motivation becomes even stronger even though it is likely to lead to social work not being well implemented.

Primary responsibility for the implementation of National Plan 32 has been given to the Social Protection Section of MOLISA. So, for many of the participants in meetings and interviews, it is DOLISA officers who are becoming social workers. However, as the point above about schools and hospitals has shown, attention should also be given to developing social work in other relevant sectors. In addition, the work of the Youth Union and the Women's Union clearly involves activities that on an international comparative basis must be seen as social work roles and tasks. These include counselling and psychosocial support, and community development activities including community education. Both organizations focus on areas that broadly can be understood as family, children and young people, social evils prevention and the well-being of people with disabilities and isolated older people. Indeed, officers from both mass organizations are being trained as graduate social workers and also provided with shorter-term in-service social work training. For example, since 2011 the Youth Institute has a Bachelor of Social Work program and social work graduates from various universities have also been employed. At provincial, district and commune levels there were many Youth Union and Women's Union officers who were interested to undertake social work training as they recognised that it would enhance their work; a few reported actually being current students, for example taking the Bachelor of Social Work part-time at a local university or through the Open University of Ho Chi Minh City.



## Summary

Since the National Plan based on Decision 32 was issued in 2010 there have been many rapid developments in professional social work in Vietnam. Social Work Services Centres are being established in 30 provinces, with already given for 33 more, and officers are being appointed as social workers. Different models have been developed in some provinces because of local conditions or the history of social work pilot projects. The predominant model is that of a provincial Social Work Services Centre being developed through reform of a Social Protection Centre, with stand alone centres in a small number of provinces and districts (including schools and hospitals). A very large number of officers have received some basic training in social work, for some providing knowledge and skills used in practice for others creating awareness of social work. All of this has been achieved in three years, which is a considerable accomplishment.

At the same time there are many challenges to the implementation of National Plan 32. These can be summarised broadly in the following points.

- *Resources.* The level of resources that have been available for the implementation of National Plan 32 and the way in which the resources have been deployed has restricted the opportunities to create the structures and services that were set out in the 2009 report (and based on previous research and international comparisons).
- *Location of Social Work Services Centres.* National Plan 32 and Decree 68/2008/ND-CP specify that social work services will be located at district level. This was previously recommended in research and other reports as being providing the balance between accessibility and making best use of professionally qualified social workers to support associate social workers and social work collaborators in communes and wards. Both financial and human resource constraints have been resolved pragmatically by placing the centres at provincial level. This decision has enabled centres to begin to be created but it raises other challenges about the structures and services that will be able to be developed. These challenges include accessibility between social workers in the SWSCs and

potential clients as well as social work staff and collaborators at commune/ward level.

- *Definition of social work.* The professional roles and tasks of social work are set out in Circulars 34/2010/TT-BLĐTBXH, 07/2013/TT-BLĐTBXH and 09/2013/TTLT-BLĐTBXH-BNV. Yet there appears to be a lack of understanding of these documents among some key decision makers and others and various levels. However, the common explanation for why these documents were not being acted on was the lack of resources and of law and policy about particular activities.
- *Who is appointed as social workers.* This affects the level of graduate social work officers. It is noticeable that managers and other decision makers are, at times, reluctant to consider the Bachelor of Social Work as a necessary qualification. Indeed, as will be examined in Section 3 of this report, some are overtly critical of the degree. As a consequence, at least part of the new generation of social workers has professional education and training limited to in-service programs. Alongside this there is some confusion at other levels and in the community about social work as a distinct set of practices or whether it is simply a new name for existing social welfare provision.

For these reasons, it can be said that there are strengths in the achievements that have been made in a relatively short period of time (2010-2013) and at the same time there are some challenges that are potentially serious in the way in which they could redirect the implementation of the National Plan 32 in an ad hoc way. So these observations must be considered in making adjustments to the implementation process.

This Section of this review report has examined the structures and services for professional social work that have been developed. The review also examined issues of education and training and of the legal framework for social work and some aspects of these have been mentioned in this section. However, both of these issues require more detailed attention, so each is addressed separately in the following two section of the report.



## SECTION 3:

# EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### Introduction

There is a large and increasing number of people working in the social welfare sector in Vietnam who have received some education and training in relation to social work. Since the 1990s the universities have provided in-service courses for many thousands of officers in the DOLISAs, other line departments and the mass organizations. For example, in Thanh Hoa province since 2010 there have been 29 courses for 1506 staff. In addition, there are also now more than 2000 Bachelor of Social Work graduates since the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) approved the national curriculum in 2004. In the instances of the Open University of Ho Chi Minh City and the University of Labour & Social Affairs in Hanoi there are also even more social work graduates since the 1990s. However, despite this large number of people having received education and training, there remains a shortage of appropriately qualified officers in the relevant ministries, departments and mass organisations. In this section of the report, issues of social work education and training are discussed as a major element to the implementation of National Plan 32. Because of the scope of the review and the time frame, there was no specific attention given to the detail of postgraduate or vocational levels of education and training.

### Breadth of Education and Training

One of the major issues raised in the different locations is the problem of ensuring that all relevant staff are able to access some form of education and training in social work. This is widely seen as primarily a problem of resources, both financial and human. This appears to create a situation in which staff are sent for training when funds are made available from the ministry

level or from the provincial department level, rather than on a more systematic basis. Although there are plans for particular staff to receive training, this remains contingent on having funding to pay for costs including the coverage of essential work when officers are attending the courses. Some participants in the review meetings commented that training could be made more difficult by normal duties not being covered so that training is undertaken on top of that other work.

The social welfare system faces a particular challenge as it moves from the old model of social protection policy administration to the new approach in which social work has a key role. Because of the employment system in Vietnam (and, indeed, what would be regarded as good human resource management in many systems around the world) one of the main ways in which a social work workforce is being developed is by retraining officers whose previous qualifications are in other areas. Thus there are costs beyond those of paying for the trainers and expenses, such as travel and accommodation, and also lost days of normal work. Therefore the dual process of in-service training for existing officers and the recruitment of new officers who have already received social work education and training is logical.

However, there appears to be no clear agreement about who should be sent for training and what the primary purpose of this training is. Although there is a national goal to create a workforce that possesses social work knowledge, skills and values, other ideas are evident at provincial, district and commune/ward level. In the meetings conducted for this review, some departmental representatives described providing training for those of their staff whose work was seen to be 'like social work' with the implications that these

officers will 'become social workers' over time. Others talked more about training as 'awareness raising' for staff where they are seen as likely to have to work with social workers. Others appear to have sent staff in order to participate in the general development process, because they considered the National Plan 32 to be generally helpful to their area of responsibility in a non-specific way. Some appeared simply to be filling a quota of places in programs that were available, because it is commonly seen as good to offer staff training opportunities when they are available. As a consequence, there appears to be a lack of focus concerning who should be trained. Attention is paid to increasing the numbers of people who have attended some training, suggesting an emphasis on volume rather than ensuring the use of training resources is directed towards clear goals such as ensuring there are sufficient numbers of people qualified in the relevant levels defined in the job code and professional standards (Circular 08/2010/TT-BNV, Circular 34/2010/TT-BLĐTBXH).

The fact of having a large number of people undertaking training programs does not in itself guarantee any particular change in people's understanding or their capacity to work in a specific way. For example, some officers who reported at the review meetings that they are involved in or have attended training nevertheless discussed social work in ways that suggested they were still very unclear about what a social work approach to social need and social issues is. For some it was even as if they saw 'social work' simply as a new term for the ways of working that they had been used to for many years. There does not appear to be much evidence of monitoring and evaluating the impact of education and training programs, at least with regard to the large number of people attending the short courses.

Examples of how the different thinking on the part of managers and other leaders is reflected in decisions concerning who should be trained in social work include administrative and clerical officers, a cook and staff in other comparable jobs undertaking in-service social work programs alongside teachers, health workers and DOLISA district and commune officers. One district described how there had been 56 officers and 25 civil servants who had undertaken the in-service training program since 2011, but there are no social work positions in the district in the DOLISA (or any other department) and so the strategy was one

of 'continue to build capacity and send people to the training' as a goal in itself. At the same time, across the three provinces that were examined for this review, the managers of both Social Work Services Centres and Social Protection Centres all described how the workload of their services is very heavy and that it is hard to be able to spare staff to attend the courses. Budget constraints mean that new staff will not be appointed and opportunities to change the role of existing positions are very limited, so progress is slow.

Some of the representatives who took part in the review meetings have themselves undertaken in-service social work training courses. The overall view is that these courses are very helpful for helping to develop awareness of what is social work, but limited in providing a way to develop new skills or to change practices. At the same time, there were also many instances reported in which new ways of working had come out of the in-service training courses. The difference appears to be that the people for who this was the case are in jobs that are very close to social work and the officers already have knowledge and skills gained from previous education and training combined with effective working experience. This suggests that careful selection of who should attend social work training could usefully consider the roles they play in their employing departments or organizations, their existing levels of knowledge and skill and their capacity to benefit from the training that is available. Selection should be done by the employing ministry, department or organisation working in partnership with the training institution.

## Depth of Social Work Education and Training

Alongside breadth, the other dimension when considering education and training is depth. That is, questions must be asked about the type of training programs that are available and how deep they are able to help participants to go in their understanding and skill development. The factors that are important in determining the depth to which a program can go are the time that is spent in study and the level of complexity in the material that is being studied. So, for example, it might be expected that the difference between an in-service program and a university degree program will not only be the amount of time spent in

study but also the type of learning that is involved.

In Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg and the accompanying Circulars 08/2010/TT-BNV and 34/2010/TT-BLĐTBXH professional social work is defined at three levels: senior social worker, social worker and associate social worker (social work officer). Linked to these professional positions are the relevant levels of education and training, which respectively are: masters degree, four-year bachelors degree, three-year college degree or higher diploma. This structure of employment linked with education and training matches the global standards defined by the International Association of Schools of Social Work and the International Federation of Social Workers (IASSW/IFSW, 2004). It relates to the complexity of knowledge and skill required of professionals who are responsible for assisting vulnerable people to resolve difficulties in their lives and is comparable to other professions, such as doctors, nurses, teachers and so on.

The descriptions of how these levels of education and training are being planned and used in the development of professional social work that were presented to this review varied greatly in their clarity. For example, in one district there is an officer working at commune level who has a Bachelor of Social Work and another with a Master of Social Work, but their roles did not appear to reflect the job code or professional standards descriptions of what could be expected of those who hold these degrees. In fact, they appeared to be in roles that were filled in all other instances across the different provinces by officers with very short in-service training or even no social work training at all. At the same time, as noted in Section 2 of this report, officers at the district and provincial levels in positions called 'social worker' include not only staff with Bachelor of Social Work degrees but also degrees in other fields. Where designated social workers hold other degrees they are mostly attending in-service training in social work (although some are not even doing that). However, it appears that many of these in-service programs are not at the level of the bachelors degree programs but are the same as the training being done by non-graduate officers whose roles are not those of a 'social worker' as defined by the job code or professional standards.

Reasons stated for employing people in 'social worker' positions, since 2010, who do not have social work education and training are discussed in more detail

below in this Section. The reason stated for placing most attention on the volume (breadth) rather than the level (depth) of social work is that the policy requirement to create professional social work out of the existing social welfare system, giving the key role to MOLISA and the DOLISAs means that mostly the challenge is to provide a large number of officers with a basic training and if staff already have a degree the difference in the level (depth) of additional education is not seen as a priority. The explanation for this is often quite pragmatic, with the costs of releasing a member of staff for longer periods of time seen as too great as well as the easier availability of the short in-service programs. The consequence can be that 'social workers' have the same social work education and training as those who are employed in positions that should be understood as 'assistant social worker' or 'social work collaborator'. Such a situation again raises the question of how social work is understood as a professional activity—whether it is regarded as 'something that anyone can do' or if it is simply not distinguished from more traditional ways of administering social welfare.

At the same time, there are a growing number of officers in the Youth Union, Women's Union and civil society organizations who are undertaking social work education and training. These organizations are often accessing the same short-term in-service programs as the government departments. There are also many mass organization officers and some staff of civil society organizations who have Bachelor of Social Work degrees or who are currently studying them part-time. Indeed, one interviewee suggested that social work graduates should seek employment in these areas, as opportunities do not exist to the same extent in government service. However, figures on the numbers of people qualified in or currently studying social work in these organizations were not available to this review. The evidence from meetings and interviews in three provinces and at central level suggests that further information about this growing human resource would be helpful in understanding the current situation and in planning for further growth of professional social work.

## Criticisms of Social Work Education and Training

The common criticism of social work education and

training at university and college degree level is that it lacks sufficient practice learning. This opinion was voiced in all three provinces, in the Social Work Services Centres, the Social Protection Centres, Social Work Offices and by line department representatives from other areas. Within the general criticism there are two particular points: practice as in 'how to work in a specific organization' and 'how to do social work'.

First, most of the reasons given by senior officers for employing staff with degrees other than social work is that the Bachelor of Social Work programs do not adequately prepare students to work in their organization. So, instead, they have recently employed graduates who have either background knowledge relevant to working in a specific field or even who have some prior experience in their organization. Examples of this include a graduate in economics working in a health setting, who had previous experience of the hospital system and a graduate in social insurance who had demonstrated prior knowledge of the DOLISA structures and systems. Both these graduates, and others, were employed in positions designated as 'social worker'. The implication in this criticism is that senior officers expect that graduates will already know how to function within their systems through being trained in this as part of their education.

Second, a smaller number of senior officers stated that some Bachelor of Social Work graduates had demonstrated knowing 'about' certain practices but when asked to undertake this in work with a service user had not known 'how to' undertake that practice. One example given of this criticism, in a Social Work Services Centre, was in relation to counselling, where a recent graduate had not been able to provide this for a family without being given very specific instructions and guidance. In effect, the senior officer stated, this newly qualified social worker had not been adequately prepared for performing the role of a social worker.

These are two different criticisms. The first concerns the expectation that university degree level education will train people to work in specific organizations or systems. The second is about whether a university degree adequately prepares graduates to be able to perform the general range of roles and tasks specified in the job code and professional standards, as these apply across all organizations and systems. So these criticisms need to be discussed separately.

With regard to complaints about graduates being

educated to work in particular departments or organizations, a widely voiced suggestion is that the universities should specialize in preparing people to be 'job ready' in the areas in which those universities are seen to specialize. So, for example, it was suggested that the University of Labour and Social Affairs should focus only on training people to work in the DOLISA system, while the University of Education should train social workers to work in schools and colleges, and so on. The Youth Union has established a Bachelor of Social Work at the Youth Studies Institute to ensure that it is able to recruit graduates who know about Youth Union activities, or even to be able to send its officers to undertake the degree with prior knowledge of the system. In the social work office of the Hanoi Paediatric Hospital the suggestion was slightly different, that social work degrees at several universities might offer a particular specialism related to health services practice.

These sorts of suggestions reflect the traditions of universities in Vietnam, with relatively small institutions that have a specific focus. This situation differs from most of the countries in which social work has a long history of being taught at university level (in Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand) or have adapted their professional education systems from those countries (such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea). So it may be that there is a conflict of expectations in Vietnam between the government departments and social welfare organizations who are used to recruiting from what were historically staff training colleges (for example, ULSA was previously the College of Labour and Social Affairs) and the universities who in modernizing have focused on developing social work programs that prepare students to be social workers across many settings. In fact, such criticisms are also made by social work service organizations in other countries. However, in those countries where social work is well established and general professional education is the standard, the debate is more usually resolved by employing organizations developing more systematic induction programs for new recruits, who are taught about the system in which they are working as part of beginning the job. At the same time, employers often favour graduates who undertook field education (practice) placements in their sector or have taken specialist electives as part of the degree. In Australia, for example, it is common for students to seek the final field education placement in the area in which they hope to work for this reason. Elective

subjects as part of third and fourth year studies may also be used within generalist programs. In the USA some universities use 'concentrations', in which a specialised final year follows a common, generalist foundation.

Some of the universities in Vietnam are aware of this as a problem and are beginning to plan to focus on certain fields. For example, the University of Education has a specialism in social work with people who have disabilities and ULSA is considering a similar speciality alongside another specialty in working in the DOLISA system. However, it should be noted that such steps will require careful co-ordination so that all the sectors in which social workers might work have an appropriately education workforce. Given the predominance of the DOLISA system in the current implementation of National Plan 32, this suggests that co-operation between MOLISA and MOET is essential, as well as between the provincial DOLISAs and local universities. Yet local universities will also have to be able to educate social workers for other systems as these develop, such as school and hospitals, as well as the mass organizations and civil society organizations. Therefore it is necessary to maintain a strong common curriculum with specialisation for a sector achieved through the approach of field education (practice placements), electives or concentrations.

The preparedness of graduates to perform professional social work roles and tasks is a different problem. That a graduate social worker knows 'about' counselling' but does not know 'how to do' counselling would be a situation in countries where social work is long established that would mean the person would not have been able to graduate. Indeed, the assumption of the global standards for social work education and training in social work established by the international peak bodies (IASSW and IFSW, 2004) is that on graduation a social worker should be able to perform such roles and tasks at the level appropriate for a beginning practitioner. That is, a new graduate might reasonably require some guidance in working with a complex case, but should be able to demonstrate competence in more straightforward situations. The way this should to be achieved is through a combination of practice with theory in the curriculum of university degree programs. Around the world the exact scope of this norm varies somewhat, but can be seen usually to be between 800 and 1000 hours of supervised and assessed practice as part of the

four-year degree. The length of field education is not defined in the global standards. What is actually stated is that 'field education should be sufficient in duration and complexity of tasks and learning opportunities to ensure that students are prepared for professional practice' (IASSW and IFSW, 2004, clause 3.7). It is this preparedness that is being questioned by the senior officers in the departments and organizations, but the criticism points to the necessity to develop this aspect of education and training further. The other important factor in these arrangements are that the practice is seen as learning and not simply as job experience, so there is an educational focus and the student is assessed according to criteria established by the universities in collaboration with representatives of employing organizations and of the professional social work association of that country. This suggests that the primary question is that of how practice learning is organised, supervised and assessed, rather than just the number of hours or days in which the student is learning. Greater partnership between the universities and colleges and the service organisations is necessary to achieve this.

It appears that arrangements for practice learning in Vietnam vary a lot between different universities and different parts of the country. Although all universities now follow the pattern approved by MOET of having two periods of field education (usually called 'placement' or 'field education'), at some universities each is of between 6 and 8 weeks duration, while at others each can be as many as 13 weeks. This means that some graduates can have twice as much practice education as others.

Finding appropriate opportunities for students to gain relevant field instruction is also a challenge. Another international standard is that those who act as field instructors and undertake assessment of practice should themselves be qualified social workers. As until very recently there have been few graduate social workers in service agencies, finding sufficient people who are qualified to take this role is extremely difficult. Some universities have dealt with this by allocating the task to university staff and constructing field placements around project work in which groups of students can work together and be supervised by one lecturer. However, although this does provide opportunities for larger numbers of students to gain this experience, it also can limit the type of experience they have. The Social Work Services

Centres and Social Work Offices that were visited as part of this review all reported that they now provide field education placements. This development is to be welcomed very much as it should start to improve graduates' capacities. However, in the next period of the implementation of National Plan 32 there will continue to be shortage of sufficient graduate social workers in post to provide field education placements for all students. In order for students to gain practice learning that reflects the reality of the professional role it will be necessary to rethink how this international standard is applied in Vietnam. Otherwise the situation will become circular, in that effective field education cannot be provided because there are not sufficient qualified social workers in post, and there are not sufficient qualified social workers in post because the field education is not effective in preparing graduates for practice. This is a situation that has faced every country in which professional social work has developed and Vietnam needs to find creative solutions to this problem at least in the near future. One way of doing this might be to accept field supervision by officers who are not qualified in social work but who are regarded as good practitioners in their organizations and then supporting this work with intensive short-courses on supervision of students plus on-going support and advice from the universities concerning social work concepts and models.

## Other Factors in Education and Training

In addition to the above aspects of education and training, other factors are also affecting the development of professional social work. The first of these is the extent to which those people who are teaching social work themselves have sufficient knowledge of practice. There have been a relatively large number of faculty in Vietnamese universities who have obtained Bachelors or Masters of Social Work from overseas universities and increasingly faculty are being trained in Vietnam universities. However, whichever is the case, these faculty have usually not been involved in practice other than on field education placements, so the emphasis on theory in the university and college programs may be difficult to overcome. One suggestion is that lecturers might spend short periods of time in social

welfare departments or organizations to gain more experience, but this again raises the question of resources both for the universities and for the agencies. Another solution is to involve practitioners more in making presentations in classrooms, possibly as 'guest lecturers' providing small amounts of time. This does happen in some programs but is not seen as a normal way to overcome 'the theory-practice divide'.

The growth of social work degree programs in Vietnam has not been accompanied by the development of local educational materials and much of the material used in the programs is adapted from other countries. There are two aspects to this problem. First, it takes time to develop and write learning materials such as books and articles. This is happening but progress is not rapid. Second, the concepts and theories of social work are often 'imported' from other countries. Faculty from other countries have been utilized in Vietnam to assist in the development of social work education and continue to be involved. Because social work is concerned with the way that people live their lives, some aspects of social work theory have to be adapted or even rethought in order to be appropriate for a specific context. This is a process that has become known as 'indigenization' or 'authentization' (for example, see Yan and Cheung, 2006). This process is only in the early stages in Vietnam and should be expected to continue so that as with other countries the profession develops 'to international standards, with local characteristics'.

Finally, there are now many graduates of the Bachelor of Social Work programs. Most of these are not working in social work, either directly or indirectly, but have sought careers in other areas simply because of the lack of opportunities in social work. This can partly be addressed by increasing the number of designated social worker positions and by targeting Bachelor of Social Work graduates when new staff are being appointed. It also should raise questions about the expansion of undergraduate social work numbers in universities. Not only are the relatively scarce resources of qualified and experienced faculty needed to provide the 'bridging' education and training for officers and others who are currently in what are to become social worker positions, but also the continual production of graduates in a field for which there are insufficient opportunities may be using resources that could be directed to other aspects of social work development.



## Summary

The development of professional social work in Vietnam was led partly from the use of social work education and training to improve the quality of the social welfare system. This has, in some respects, allowed the growth of social work education and training to move faster than has been possible for practice and service systems. Yet the provision of education and training is vital in developing a relevant workforce. Thus education and training continues to be a significant driver in the implementation of national Plan 32. This situation appears to have created several challenges. This section has identified these, which in summary are as follows.

- *Breadth of education and training.* A very large number of people have received basic, short-term, in-service training. However, there does not appear to be a clear strategy as to how this form of education and training is used. It appears to have several functions: to train members of the workforce who are moving into social work related roles; to educate other members of the workforce, leaders and others about social work; and simply as the currently available training to reward or encourage staff. Consequently, the impact of this education and training is difficult to determine. Thus there is a need for a standard assessment process, linked to a structure for those in training to build on previous knowledge and skill development.
- *Depth of education and training.* While a great deal of attention is currently being paid to the short-term, in-service training, over the last decade a very large number of people have graduated from universities with the Bachelor of Social Work. Yet relatively few graduates have been employed in the social welfare system. While this is partly because very few new jobs can be created, leading to a necessity to re-train existing officers, there is also a reluctance to prioritise social work graduates for social work positions because of perceived deficits in the practice aspect of the degree programs.
- *Criticisms of education and training.* Senior officers in the departments and organizations

question the extent to which existing programs adequately prepare graduates for practice. There are problems in how this can be achieved, as without appropriately trained officers to supervise field education placements it is often difficult to provide good learning opportunities, while having such officers in post requires appropriately trained staff to be appointed who have had good learning opportunities. Thus there is a circularity in the relationship between practice and education and training that needs to be addressed. There is also a need to develop an 'indigenized' body of Vietnamese social work concepts and theories along with Vietnamese educational materials for social work programs.

- *The importance of resource use in social work education and training.* Social work education and training is a key element in the implementation of National Plan 32, as it has also been a main encouragement for the development of the profession in Vietnam. There are already considerable resources invested in this sector, so it is important that how these are used is also part of the review of the National Plan. Greater effectiveness in education and training will enhance the overall development of professional social work.

In addition to resources, structures and systems, and education and training, the question of a legal framework and associated policies was also identified in many of the meetings and interviews undertaken for this review, so this aspect will be considered in the following Section.



## SECTION 4:

# LEGAL FRAMEWORK

### Introduction

Since 2011 MOLISA, through its Legal Department, has been conducting a review of the framework of law affecting professional social work. That review has been supported by UNICEF Vietnam. In this section of the present report, issues concerning the legal framework of social work are examined through the information obtained from meetings and interviews, together with the work that has been undertaken in the legal framework review.

Around the world there are commonly two types of legal documents related to professional social work. The first of these are laws and other legal instruments that specify the roles, powers and responsibilities of social work. Such legal documents state what professional social workers have the authority and power to do, as well as stating those tasks and activities that social workers must undertake in specific circumstances. In other words, some laws give permission for action while place requirements on social workers. The second type of legal documents are those that concern social work as a profession. These include laws and other statutory instruments that specify the nature of social work, criteria for member of the profession and, in some countries, how the professions is to be structured. Both these types of legal documents are discussed in this report.

### The Legal Framework for Practice

In all of the provinces, districts and communes that were visited for this review, leaders and officers commented on what they see as gaps or weaknesses in the legal framework for social work practice. These included many areas of activity, including children and families, mental health, disability, elderly people, hospitals and clinics, but mostly focused on those tasks where social workers have to exercise authority and

may need to compel clients to do particular things.

One example that was discussed in all three provinces was that of children who are at risk. A director of a Social Work Services Centre expressed the view that there is a lack of a clear mechanism to provide authority for investigations of various types of risks for children. This director noted that Circular 23/2010/TT-BLĐTBXH provides some basis for such action, but it focuses specifically on child sexual abuse and violence and does not create the power to act in other circumstances. The intention to protect children facing all types of risk is stated in Decree 144/2013/NĐ-CP, but this addresses the violation of child rights at a more general level and does not provide the necessary powers to act in particular situations. Other forms of risk for children need to be addressed by specific legal documents, it was argued, or else power and authority should be provided for social workers to act using a document such as Decree 144 as the basis for determining the grounds for action. This latter idea suggests applying the decree through decisions or circulars and so avoiding the necessity to create a full law. Nevertheless, whichever strategy is pursued, the key point is that at present the social work services do not think they have the necessary legal framework to act in all the circumstances that are brought to them for help.

In certain types of risk to children, such as human trafficking, the current emphasis is on the child's access to advice and assistance within the legal system, so this has been the responsibility of the Departments of Justice. In all three provinces that were examined for this review, officers from the DOLISAs and Departments of Justice talked about the distinctive roles for social workers and lawyers to be confirmed in law. At present much depends on locally arranged co-operation, which lacks legal strength. This will be more of a challenge as social workers develop clearer roles of case management. Not only will there be a

need for more community-based support services (including education, training and personal care) but also social workers will need more authority to direct the lives of children and young people. In this sense, in many countries social workers act on behalf of the state to exercise the responsibilities normally fulfilled by a parent. Reference was also made in this respect to the development of the role of social workers to accompany children and young people when being interviewed in legal situations, for example in situations of alleged abuse. This also is a common practice in many countries.

Adoption laws are in the process of being redrafted. It is intended at national level that social workers will be given a central role in the assessment of the social situation of a child, working with a birth parent if the child is not fully an orphan, and matching with potential adoptive families. This matches 'best practice' standards internationally by creating a role in Vietnam that is performed by professional social workers in countries that are signatories to the Hague Convention (such as Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, The Philippines, South Africa, the USA). Currently in Vietnam some (and in certain situations all) of the tasks are performed by the police, officers of the Departments of Justice and other public security and law enforcement officers. As with situations of abuse or other risks, the legal framework needs to be clearer to enable each department to fulfill its responsibilities.

Domestic violence is an issue that was discussed in each location. This is a social problem that affects many (perhaps all) societies. Intervention in such circumstances, however, can conflict with very strongly held cultural beliefs about family relationships. Consequently, since the abolition of the former Commission on Population, Families and Children (CPFC), responsibility in this area has been given to the Departments of Culture Sport and Tourism. The emphasis has tended to be on communications and raising awareness in the community. In all locations the Departments of Culture Sport and Tourism welcomed the possibility that social workers in the future will have a role to intervene to assist victims. However, the officers of the Social Work Services Centres reported that as they do not have the legal power or authority to intervene aggrieved alleged perpetrators can challenge them. Although at the ministry level it was noted that the law on domestic violence states that any government officer can ask a perpetrator to stop

the abuse, it was also recognised that this is not the same as giving the power to issue a sanction, rather it permits a social worker to offer education if this is accepted. What is required is for a social worker to have the authority to arrange safety for a victim (usually a woman) without being impeded by the perpetrator (usually a man). One system that now operates in many countries is that of 'safe houses', a version of which exists in some parts of Vietnam (provided by Departments of Culture, Sport and Tourism, Women's Unions, or the two organisations working together). Yet it was reported by many participants that there is a need for clear law, because such intervention can confront cultural expectations about a husband's authority in the household, even when the abusive exercise of such authority conflicts with the wife's civil rights to safety against assault.

A report prepared on behalf of UNICEF Vietnam for MOLISA in 2013 examined primary legal documents and secondary published material regarding laws concerning professional social work activities in: Australia; Canada; Hong Kong; Japan; Malaysia; New Zealand; Singapore; South Africa; South Korea; The Philippines; the UK; the USA. The following areas of practice were identified as commonly addressed by specific laws and other legal documents:

- o Children
  - Child protection
  - Adoption
  - Out-of-home care (fostering)
- o Family and marriage
  - Divorce – mediation
  - Domestic violence
- o Mental health
- o General and physical health
- o HIV/AIDS
- o Disability
- o Isolated and vulnerable elderly people
- o Criminal justice
  - Juvenile corrections
  - Adult community corrections (probation)

- Prison welfare (including welfare of prisoners' families)
- o Social security
  - Assessment and psychosocial support of beneficiaries with complex individual or family needs

These legal documents all either empowered or compelled social workers to perform specified tasks or duties. Vietnam is currently at a stage in the development of professional social work where it may not be necessary to amend or create laws for social work roles and responsibilities in all these areas. Some of the above areas could be addressed by decisions or circulars specifying social work as an addition to existing regulations. However, in the most contentious areas or where law is in any case to be amended more broadly, providing the authority and powers for social work will be necessary.

The 2013 review of legal documents found that on an international comparative basis, all countries where social work law was surveyed allocate statutory roles to social work in relation to the protection of children in respect not only of abuse but all forms of special circumstances. Likewise, all allocated social work statutory roles in respect of adoption and fostering. Most have legally defined and sanctioned roles and tasks for social work in relation to all the areas noted above.

As Vietnam is currently completing the review of laws relating to social work and has already made commitments in certain areas or practice (such as child protection and adoption), this will strengthen the development of professional social work. However, in so far as the other listed areas are also important for social work to be able to become more effective, shorter term measures such as decisions and circulars appear to be a useful mechanism and the evidence in all the review sites suggests that these should be progressed as soon as possible.

## The Legal Framework for Social Work Services

As part of the creation of professional social work, legal and para-legal documents have introduced changes in the social welfare structures and systems.

Decree 68/2008/ND-CP made significant changes to the procedures regarding Social Protection Centres including the establishment, operation and dissolution of both public and private institutions. As part of the implementation of Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg, Circular 09/2013/TTLT-BLĐTBXH-BNV provides guidance on the functions and structures of public Social Work Services Centres. The Circular 09 gives specific guidance on the way in which professional social work services are to be organised, stating the internal structure such as the roles of the director and vice-directors, as well as the departments of administration and general affairs, consultation and support, training, community development and other departments according to need and the decisions of the relevant People's Committee. This Circular specifies in detail the areas of need that the Centres are to address, broadly matching the international norms that are listed in the previous section of this report. Circular 09 also states 15 types of professional services to be provided. These are:

- 1) providing services for clients in need of immediate protection (intake, assessment, safety plan, and first aid and primary health treatment);
- 2) providing counselling services and physical care;
- 3) providing consultation on social policies and programs, cooperating with relevant organisation in making safety plans, referral and accessing appropriate services;
- 4) developing and implementing intervention plans;
- 5) providing prevention plans to protect clients;
- 6) supporting clients' community integration;
- 7) case management;
- 8) providing educational and capacity building services;
- 9) community development (proposing social policies and programs for clients, building the network of community social work collaborators and volunteers, community resource mobilising);
- 10) organising information sharing and awareness raising;

- 11) conducting research and surveys concerning social welfare;
- 12) managing financial resources, public property, and personnel;
- 13) mobilising and receiving domestic and international financial and in-kind support;
- 14) providing fee-paying services;
- 15) conducting other activities required by relevant authorities.

As with the specification of the areas of need to be addressed, these expectations broadly match international practice in public social work services.

A central feature of these regulations is that the Social Work Services Centres are specified as separate organisational units, with their own structures. Moreover, following the earlier studies and advisory document of 2009, the relevant Decisions and Circulars specify that the Social Work Services Centres will be at district level, accountable to the district People's Committees. However, as reported at every level from the central ministries through provinces, districts and communes, there are not the resources for this policy to be implemented. There are two major differences between the formal legal and para-legal documents and actual practice in that, first, almost all of the Centres which have been created so far are at provincial level and, second, in all but two provinces Social Work Services Centres are being created through the reform of Social Protection Centres. These two points will be addressed separately.

In relation to the location of Social Work Services Centres at provincial level, both MOLISA and the relevant DOLISAs explained that the resource implications of creating a Centre at district level were simply too great. In creating a Centre there is a need for both the physical resources of buildings and also the human resources of appropriately trained staff. In both these aspects, there is a widespread view that the requirements of the Decisions and Circulars cannot at present be matched with the physical or human resources that are available. Although the development of human resources is being pursued (as discussed in the previous Section of this report), this is being undertaken in a context of the reduction of government staffing levels. Alongside this, there are serious restrictions on the financial and physical

resources available to create the necessary offices and other facilities for the operation of Social Work Services Centres that can fulfil the specifications of Circular 09. So, because of the limitations of both physical and human resources, so far it has only been possible in most parts of the country to create Social Work Services Centres at provincial level. Thus the practice and the legal and para-legal documents do not match at this time.

The development of most new Social Work Services Centres from existing Social Protection Centres follows from these restrictions. Although in provinces such as Dong Thap and Quang Ninh there are stand-alone Social Work Services Centres, this is because the centres have been given additional funding either from the provincial People's Committees or from international partnerships (such as with UNICEF Vietnam). Indeed, it appears that the provincial Social Work Services Centres in Dong Thap and Quang Ninh are exceptions and that the normal pattern currently is the one being developed in all other provinces.

This review was only able to examine one Social Work Services Centre that is representative of the large majority, in Thanh Hoa. The Centre has been developed following the specifications of Circular 09 in terms of the areas of need to be addressed and the types of services to be provided. However, not only is it at provincial level but also it is being developed out of an existing specialised Social Protection Centre. The way in which the Centre has been adapted physically has separated the social work services offices from the residential rehabilitation, so that it is possible to keep the functions apart. However, an additional factor in this location is that the social protection function does not provide long-term care and shelter for vulnerable people but is a short-term surgery and rehabilitation facility for people with physical disabilities (now mostly young people). In that sense, it more resembles a clinic or hospital than a social protection centre, at least as this would be understood internationally. That is, rather than providing general long-term social care to replace the care that might be expected to be provided within families, this facility provides acute (short-term) interventions only. Internationally, residential group care has been heavily criticised in recent years, especially in services for children. In particular, evidence of abuse of children in such centres has led to their closure in OECD and other countries when there are sufficient resources and skills to create family-based

alternative care such as fostering (Fernandez & Barth, 2010). Only institutions for juvenile offenders have remained as group care centres. For adults, centres tend to be specialised, such as in care for unsupported elderly people who need assistance or for younger adults with physical or intellectual disabilities. However, in all cases it is seen as good practice to keep residential care separate from the services that are provided into the community, so that the lives of residents are maintained with dignity. Furthermore, in many countries such social protection services are provided by non-government or private sector organizations (such as social enterprises), even where they are funded and supported by government, as this enables them to be managed in less bureaucratic ways.

The current situation lacks clarity and consistency. In particular, the mismatch between Circular 09 and the current provincial level of Social Work Services Centre developments is unhelpful. However, this is not simply a matter of replacing the intention to create social work services at district level with a focus only on the provincial level. In those places where it has been possible to create Social Work Services Centres or Social Work Offices at district level, these are achieving the accessibility and greater community focus that was intended by the goal of locating social work at this level. So a careful consideration should be given to whether the current reality of an emphasis at provincial level will see this replace districts as the long-term objective for the creation of SWSCs or be regarded as an additional step towards district level centres as the future goal.

## The Legal Framework for Social Work as a Profession

At present the legal documents concerning social work as a profession are a series of decisions and circulars. For example, from the earliest phase the implementation of Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg was supported by Circular 08/2010/TT-BNV, issuing the job code, and Circular 34/2010/TT-BLĐTBXH, setting out the professional standards in relation to each social work title. More recently these documents have been followed by Circular 07/2013/TT-BLĐTBXH establishing the professional standards for social work collaborators at the level of communes, wards and districts, and Decision 2514/2011/QĐ-BYT that provides the basis for

the creation of professional social work in the health system. Together these documents provide a basic framework on the criteria for the role of the social work profession and they also begin to establish an internal structure for the profession.

In many other countries, as social work has become well-established laws or ordinances have been found to be necessary to provide clarity in defining social work and to establish regulatory mechanisms to promote the profession of social work and at the same time control its function and role within the society. So such laws share objectives to:

1. define the profession of social work, including the qualifications that a person must have to be regarded as a social worker;
2. promote the interest of the profession by safeguarding its reputation and integrity;
3. establish regulatory mechanisms, including statutory boards or committees that have the authority to exercise control over the practice of individual social workers;
4. exercise control over education and training in the profession;
5. advise Ministers and other leaders regarding professional social work;
6. promote and publicize the profession of social work within the wider society.

For example, all but one of the OECD countries where social work is a developed profession have this type of law concerning social work<sup>1</sup>. In Asia social work is less well developed, but in countries such as Japan and South Korea social work is regulated by law, while in Hong Kong and Singapore regulation is through ordinances. As Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region of China, an ordinance is the highest and strongest form of legal document, and the Hong Kong Social Workers Regulation Ordinance, Chapter 505 (1997) is seen as very effective legal framework. These laws state who may use the title 'social worker', restricting it to possession of a recognised university degree in social work, as well as providing mechanisms

<sup>1</sup> The exception, Australia, has had a system of 'self-regulation' in which the government gives authority to the profession to regulate itself. However, Australian social work has experienced problems in recent years because of the lack of law and this is now under review.

to register or license practitioners holding these qualifications. Not only does a registration or licensing system enable employing organisations to know who may be regarded as a qualified social worker, but also in cases of malpractice the registration can be cancelled or a license revoked and so such a social worker can be barred from practice.

In The Philippines, South Africa and the UK there are composite laws about social work as a profession and the structural organisation of social work services, while in other countries such laws are separate. This is simply a reflection of the legal systems and histories of these countries. In addition, the laws of many countries including South Africa and the UK also regulate para-professional levels of social work, such as 'assistant social worker' roles. Terms such as 'associate social worker' and 'social work technician' may also be used. One of the problems facing unregulated social work is the lack of clarity about professional training and practice. This confusion can be seen in Vietnam among many people. In this current review the senior officers at provincial level were very clear that the term 'social worker' relates to two particular roles as defined in Circular 08/2010/TT-BNV and Circular 34/2010/TT-BLĐTBXH. However at other levels, especially in communes, the term social work appears now to be used by some people to refer to all DOLISA workers, including at times some DOLISA workers who are defined in the Circulars 08 and 34 as 'associate social worker', or those who have in-service short-term training. By comparison, the distinctions between 'doctor' and 'doctor assistant', or 'nurse' and 'nursing assistant' or 'teacher' and 'teaching assistant' are all well understood. Circular 07/2013/TT-BLĐTBXH regulates the role of social work collaborators at commune, ward and district level, and again it was not clear from the locations examined for this review how this is actually being used in practice. However, it is clear in the document that this is intended to be an adjunct role and not to be the same as an 'associate social worker' as defined in the other Circulars.

Having the legal framework for social work set out in law or ordinance provides a very strong basis for the profession. In many instances, the review was told, decisions and circulars are issued by a particular ministry. Thus they lack force in other ministries. Furthermore, laws and ordinances can be used in framing other laws, for example by doing the work

to say what social work is and who can act as a social worker, so that other legal documents only have to refer to the framework law and not have to set out such definitions each time. The comparable example about which the review was informed is that of the profession of lawyer, that in Vietnam was very weak until a law was passed in 2006 (Law 65/2006/QH11). Since then law has become a much stronger profession to the benefit of Vietnamese society.

Another aspect of law regulating social work is that which provides the framework for a professional association. Internationally, these types of laws vary a great deal. Indeed, some countries such as the UK with otherwise strong law about social work practice and professional registration professional associations are not regulated separately but are controlled legally under more general laws about civil society organisations. Vietnam is similar in this respect to countries such as Hong Kong, in that a professional association will need to be legislated. At present this role is allocated to the Vietnam Vocational Training Association and Vocational Social Work through Decision 272/2013/QĐ-BNV. However, although much of the Decision addresses social work rather than vocational training, many of those who are involved in social work as officers or as academics are concerned that this combining of two quite distinct occupational groups is unhelpful to social work. There are two reasons for this. First, it does not distinguish between these different areas of work, so those who are examining social work from outside such as leaders and community members may think that social work is the same as vocational training and have wrong expectations. Second, the function usually performed by a professional association for its member cannot be achieved. These include the creation of networks for sharing of scientific information, skills development, ensuring that all social workers have an understanding of the ethical code and so on. Indeed, an important part of this role for an association is to enable the members of a profession to develop a code of ethics. Among social work officers and academics there is confusion about whether such a code has been produced as no-one reported having seen it. Networks are developing but these appear to be regional relationships developed through the centres and offices rather than through the current association.

The global peak body for social work, the International



Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), now has more than 90 countries in membership. The formal members of the IFSW are national social work professional associations and Vietnam was admitted to membership in 2012 under the title of the Vietnam Association of Social Workers. Indeed, while a very small number of countries have associations combining social work with other closely related professions, such as the Palestinian Association of Social Workers and Psychologists, Vietnam is the only country whose association is combined with a different area of activity. Thus there is an anomaly that needs to be corrected as soon as possible. The president of the Vietnam Vocational Training Association and Vocational Social Work acknowledged that in the near future it will be important to have an independent social work association to help build up social work in Vietnam as well as providing the basis for stronger international partnerships. However, she indicated that this was an issue for the legal processes and so will need to be carefully planned.

## Summary

There are two distinct and important aspects of law in the development of professional social work. The first is the range of laws that regulate the activities of social workers and the second is the legal framework that creates social work as a profession.

Vietnam has some laws and para-legal documents already that provide the basis for social work activities. The country is in the process of amending existing laws and developing new laws that will further extend and strengthen social work responsibilities. Awareness of current laws about social work activities and of the developments taking place in such laws appears to be greatest among officers at ministry and provincial levels, and in the Social Work Services Centres. At the same time, at district level knowledge of such law is not so widespread especially for officers from departments other than the DOLISAs; at commune level such law is even less well understood. At the district and commune levels the officers tend to focus much more on their own specific responsibilities and tasks and not to be aware of what social work might contribute.

The law amendments that are in process at the

time of this review, such as the law on adoption, or being considered, such as the law concerning young offenders or that regarding administrative law, are drawing on international standards in the way in which they are planned to incorporate social work activities. However, thought will need to be given also to having appropriately trained social workers in sufficient numbers in the right parts of the system in order for these laws to be implemented successfully.

Law concerning social work as a profession currently does not exist. The para-legal documents that have defined social work at this point are Circulars that provide guidance on the implementation of Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg and more recently Decision 2514/2011/QĐ-BYT. While these have been successful in making a start to the process, leaders and officers in all levels of the system commented on the lack of strength in such documents. At the present time there is some misunderstanding about what social work is and consequently who should be called a social worker. This is seen not only in the wider community but also among some leaders and officers at all the different levels in the system. Such a lack of clarity also contributes to confusion about the education and training that is necessary and the importance of particular qualifications in achieving this (as also discussed in Section 3 of this report). In all the locations that were visited as part of this review the need for a strong legal framework is recognized.

Strengthening general professional structures, such as a professional association, will contribute to improving wider knowledge of social work and its standing in the society, as well as create a mechanism for social workers in Vietnam to share developments in knowledge and skills and ensure that the profession continues to grow and improve. It will also enable social work in Vietnam to strengthen its communications with the social work profession in the region and around the world.

The review of social work law being conducted by MOLISA offers the opportunity to address many of the issues that have been identified in this Section. This continues to be an essential part of the implementation of Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg and the National Plan 32 for the development of professional social work.



## SECTION 5:

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Introduction

This report presents the findings of a mid-term review of the implementation of National Plan 32 for the development of professional social work in Vietnam, following Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg. The review was conducted in January 2014, three years after the National Plan was instituted for the period 2010-2020. It received information from all the relevant ministries in Hanoi, People's Committees and relevant departments and mass organisations at provincial, district and commune levels in Dong Thap, Quang Ninh and Thanh Hoa, and some of the universities and the civil society organisations that are contributing to the development of professional social work. Visits were made also to Social Work Services Centres, Social Work Offices and Social Protection Centres in the three provinces and to the Paediatric Hospital in Hanoi.

The review focused on three main aspects of the development of professional social work. First, it examined the structures and services that are being created. In particular, it investigated the Social Work Services Centres and Social Work Offices, as well as the relationship the other parts of the social welfare system at provincial, district and commune level. Second, it considered education and training for professional social work. Not only did the review look at the Bachelor of Social Work programs in the universities but also it inquired into the way in which education and training is being used as a vehicle to raise awareness of social work and to enable wider changes to take place in the social welfare system. Third, the review examined the legal framework for the development of professional social work.

This final section presents conclusions and sets out recommendation for the next phase of the implementation of National Plan 32.

### Conclusions

In the three years since Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg was issued considerable progress has been made. The previous approach to social welfare provision emphasised financial support for vulnerable people in particular categories of need, social protection centres for those who did not have family care provision (especially children, disabled people and elderly people) and encouragement for citizens to be good neighbours. As the society has changed rapidly through economic development and urbanisation these systems were increasingly faced with the complexity of social need. In addition, knowledge of a more modern, professionalised way of responding to such needs have been gradually introduced from other countries. Although this process began in the 1980s and 1990s, it has achieved substantial changes in the last decade, leading up to and including Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg.

The significant developments of the last three years have as their focal point the creation of the titles of senior social worker, social worker and associate social worker in Circular 08/2010/TT-BNV and the professional standards for social work in Circular 34/2010/TT-BLĐTBXH. From this, the creation of Social Work Services Centres and Social Work Offices has proceeded quickly, with officers employed in designated social worker positions. Alongside this,

there have been some developments in introducing the concept of social work to the practices of DOLISAs at district and commune levels although this is much more patchy and less clear. In addition, the Youth Union and Women's Union have begun to educate officers in social work and to introduce social work practices into their work, as have some of the civil society organisations.

Although the numbers of beneficiaries receiving social work assistance appear to be small relative to the overall numbers of vulnerable people in the society, the activities of the Social Work Services Centres and Social Work Offices appropriately addresses the range of social needs that is envisaged in the earlier studies and reports and in Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg. As awareness of these services improves in the society and the services become more established there is already evidence that they will be effective.

At the same time, there are several challenges to the implementation of National Plan 32 that were identified in this review. First, at every level in all locations, there is a very widely held view that these developments require much greater resources. One aspect of this is in having the appropriate centres from which social work services can operate. In most locations Social Work Services Centres are being established through the reform of existing Social Protection Centres. This raises questions of whether this solution will then bring unintended consequences, such as lack of accessibility for the community and also a negative impact on the lives of vulnerable people who are resident in the centres. In addition, because of these resource constraints almost all of the Centres have been established at provincial level and not at district level as originally envisaged in Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg, Circular 09/2013/TTLT-BLĐTBXH-BNV and other related Circulars. This also raises questions of accessibility—for example, locating Social Work Services Centres at provincial level means that a much greater effort in outreach is required to make contact with potential service users.

Financial resource constraints also affect the development of appropriate human resources. Intended staffing numbers have had to be severely limited and opportunities to employ new officers who have the relevant education and training are much more restricted than was anticipated. This in turn presents a challenge for the way in which in-service education and training for officers already in post can

be extended and made more effective, because the resources needed for this are also seen as insufficient. Without effective education and training of officers there is a serious risk that many people will come to regard the development of social work as simply a new name for an exiting set of services and practices. If this occurs it will undermine the considerable efforts that are being put into this major change of the social welfare system.

There is some evidence that in many places, especially at district and commune level, the difference between the previous system of administering social policies for vulnerable people and professional social work is not well understood. This has the potential to lead to a situation in which it is believed that social work has been developed when all that has happened is that existing practices and systems have been given a new name. It may be that awareness on the part of other departments will only develop over time, but within the DOLISAs and the leaders in the People's Committees at each level it is important to ensure that the nature of social work as a new way of working is understood. All organisational and behavioural change of this kind takes time and leadership, but it also requires appropriate levels of resource as well as clear and effective direction of the use of these resources. This is a significant challenge for the next phase of implementing National Plan 32.

Education and training have played a major role in demonstrating the contribution that social work can bring for the social welfare system in Vietnam. The growth of education and training, especially the Bachelor of Social Work programs in the universities, has been a catalyst for this change. However, the growth of university education and training has not been connected to the development of professional jobs. Throughout the review process many people commented on the large number of graduates who have never worked in the field, even that the discipline is chosen as a way to get into university simply as a means to obtaining a degree. Questions were asked about the continued expansion of university places without some effort to direct these resources more consciously. Two possibilities for directing further growth were discussed. One is that the need for social work educators, at college and university levels, will require greater support. The second is that there is a need for regional programs to focus on rural and remote communities, including ethnic minority people,

and this will require further resources.

In addition, it was noted that new appointments to designated social worker positions created under National Plan 32 have in many cases been of people with degrees in disciplines other than social work. Exploring this point raised criticisms of the extent to which the university graduates are prepared for practice and that, without this additional factor, it was as effective to appoint a person who understood the system and was interested to learn about social work knowledge and skills. From the university perspective there can also be problems in co-ordination with service organizations, suggesting that greater dialogue and co-operation would be beneficial.

Finally, this review has identified questions about the legal framework of social work, concerning both social work activities and social work as a profession. The review of the legal framework for social work currently being conducted by MOLISA is intended to address these points. The evidence from this review of the implementation of National Plan 32 provides evidence that both these aspects of law are considered necessary by those who are involved in the field. Indeed, they regard the lack of such laws and para-legal documents as holding back the development of professional social work and adding to the lack of awareness that has been identified.

So, in summary, it can be said that the National Plan 32 to develop professional social work is making good progress, especially when the various constraints are considered. Some of the gains follow the objectives that were established by earlier studies and set out in Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg and its accompanying documents. However, there are also aspects that have been amended or adapted to take account of constraints and this is an appropriate time to take account of these and make more planned decisions about the direction of development in the next phase of the ten-year plan. In addition, this review has identified other issues that many people in the field think should be reconsidered in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the different parts of the developmental process working together. Based on these findings, this report finishes with sixteen recommendations for making adjustments to the way in which the implementation of National Plan 32 continues in the next period of time.

## Recommendations

### *General*

1. The overall level of resources should be addressed more consciously. In order to achieve the objectives of the National Plan following Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg a more conscious and deliberate budget commitment needs to be made. This will require costing for what is required in the new system and decisions to be based on this.
2. At the same time, commitment to allocate resources depends on awareness of the gains that can be made. Therefore, awareness raising among leaders remains a high priority.

### *Structures and Services*

3. It is vital that social work positions are created at all the levels of the system. Having a job code and salary scales approved nationally are not sufficient in themselves. Therefore, planning and action must occur at each level to ensure that this happens.
4. As the location of Social Work Services Centres at provincial level is already occurring, systematic planning should be conducted urgently to revise the necessary circulars and guidelines that currently are in conflict with practice. Such a process will also require reconsideration of the relationships between the three levels of province, district and commune/ward.
5. Locating Social Work Services Centres at provincial level raises the possibility of considering smaller Social Work Offices at the district level as a cost-effective way of providing access to social work services closer to the potential beneficiaries, as has been developed in Thap Muoi district (Dong Thap province) and Quang Yen district (Quang Ninh province). It might also be possible to use provincial SWSCs as a resource to support the development of Social Work Offices in schools, hospitals and clinics, and courts, although this would depend on collaboration between ministries and departments at each level.
6. As in many provinces social work services

are being created through reform of Social Protection Centres, very careful consideration must be given to the potential problems of accessibility this might pose for social work clients as well as the possible negative impact on resident social protection beneficiaries, especially children. This would be considered explicitly in the revision of professional standards and practice guidelines. These guideline should also ensure that the difference between the procedures of social work and social protection services are very clear. This will also be assisted by opening up such services to civil society (NGO) and private (for example, social enterprise) providers in specialised areas, including child-care, disability services and care of the elderly.

7. With the introduction of community-based provision, such as fostering for children, there are plans to reduce the overall reliance on Social Protection Centres. It is anticipated that this will create opportunities to retrain existing officers in social work. This requires careful preparation and implementation to ensure that it does not simply result in renaming previous practices as 'social work', but that new services and practices are developed in conformity with Circular 08/2010/TT-BNV and Circular 34/2010/TT-BLĐTBXH.
8. Consideration should be given to explicit permission for some differences in the implementation of the National Plan 32 according to local conditions in the different provinces in so far as this is in harmony with the political and legal structures of Vietnam. For example, the different approaches to the operation of Social Work Services Centres seen in Dong Thap, Quang Ninh and Thanh Hoa are all ways of addressing the development of professional social work that appear to be appropriate to their context.

#### *Education and Training*

9. The use of education and training programs as a form of awareness raising needs to be reconsidered. A large number of people have been provided with short-term training. This creates in some people's minds the idea that they are 'trained in social work'. But it also uses valuable educational resources without systematic planning. Focus would be better given to training those who are intended to perform a role in relation to social work services in their duties. For example, the resources might be more effectively directed to longer-term training for those who it is intended will become social workers.
10. Expansion of undergraduate (Bachelor of Social Work) programs should be focused, for example on the need for educators who are skilled and knowledgeable to teach in social work programs. Another area of need is for educators to train social workers for regional, rural and remote practice and with ethnic minority communities.
11. Greater focus on the effectiveness of existing programs in preparing graduates for practice could be part of the forthcoming review of the curriculum to make better use of scarce resources.
12. Consideration should be given to whether or not it would be beneficial for degree programs to develop concentrations on particular fields of practice, or for those already doing so to review the relevance of current specialisations. This will require co-ordination to ensure that key areas are not missed.
13. Criticisms of the preparedness of graduates to undertake practice should be addressed. This will require a review of the amount of field education (practicum) in each program, recognising that the international benchmark is between 800 and 1000 hours over a four-year degree, which equates to two placements of between 12 and 15 weeks. Developing appropriate learning opportunities and training practice supervisors is part of this, especially as many current potential supervisors do not have social work qualifications.
14. Programs should also ensure that they have sufficient academic staff who are trained in social work and who have some practice experience. The latter part of this point presents some issues of resources, as it requires in-service training. However, teaching for

practice requires an understanding of practice.

### *Legal Framework*

14. Laws and associated para-legal documents are necessary to strengthen the authority of social work to act for the well-being of clients. Attention should be given to maintaining the current program of amending and revising laws to include social work roles and responsibilities in all relevant areas.
15. Laws and associated para-legal documents are necessary to strengthen the authority of social work to act for the well-being of clients and to promote the civil rights of vulnerable people (as is consistent with the current review of administrative law). Attention should be given to maintaining the current program of amending and revising laws to include social work roles and responsibilities in all relevant areas.
16. Law or ordinance concerning social work as a profession is vital. Although the current Decisions and Circulars have enabled the development of the profession to proceed, this needs to be strengthened through specific framework law or ordinance. For example, the current Decisions and Circulars specify the job titles, salary scales and professional standards but these are not necessarily being fully implemented, because they are specific to the Ministry issuing them. As has been found in many other countries, law or ordinance is an effective way to ensure clarity and consistency. Such laws provide a foundation for substantive laws by defining social work so that there is clarity and control over the interpretation of the title, capacity and authority.
17. Following practice in other countries, consideration should be given also to formation of a separate and distinct professional association of social workers, in order to promote the on-going development of knowledge and skills through formal networks. This could be facilitated by law or para-legal documents.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A – RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE NATIONAL STUDY OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE AND TRAINING NEEDS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK IN VIETNAM (MOLISA/UNICEF, 2005)

1. Social workers should be engaged in providing counselling, family casework, case management, groupwork, community development, program planning, social policy and social research in all areas of social need.
2. Social workers should be engaged in working with children in need of special protection, adults (such as isolated elderly people) who are in need of social protection, the treatment and/or rehabilitation of those who are involved in or affected by social 'evils', social care and support to patients in hospitals and other services and to students in schools and universities, social and community development, and in the planning and development of these services.
3. Social workers should be employed in all the government and non-government organizations that provide services to meet the needs that have been defined above. (These include MOLISA and the DOLISA system, Women's Union, Youth Union and other mass organisations, People's Committees, and civil society organisations.)
4. Social workers should be fully trained in programs relevant to the professional level at which they are working.
5. Social work training at different levels should be integrated and flexible, to enable sufficient numbers of people to become qualified and to promote opportunities for career progression. The university bachelors degree should be seen as the main professional level.
6. Workers already in practice, or those who are resident in provincial and rural areas, will require flexible access, including modular and distance modes of learning.
7. All training in social work, and especially the para-professional and main professional qualifying levels, should contain a sufficient emphasis on practice.
8. A system of articulation between levels, and between professional social work and other related programs of training, should be developed.
9. The para-professional level is vital to the possibilities of developing social work in Vietnam. This level should be seen as part of professional social work.
10. A job code is now a very urgent requirement for the development of professional social work in Vietnam.
11. The public profile of social work is low. Attention should be paid to this by all stakeholders.
12. A professional association for social work should be formed.
13. Planning for a social work workforce should be based on an optimum number that provides sufficient qualified people in the various organizations but is realistic in terms of the likely growth of the profession.



## APPENDIX B – OBJECTIVES STATED IN THE PROPOSAL FRAMEWORK ON SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION DEVELOPMENT 2010-2020 (MOLISA, 2009)

### 1. Overall objective

Develop social work into a profession in Viet Nam; improve social awareness on social work; develop a network of social workers that is sufficient in number and strong in quality, while developing a system of social work service delivery at different levels; contribute to develop an advanced social security system.

### 2. Specific objectives

#### 2.1. For the 2010-2015 period:

- a) Develop and enforce professional code, standards on social workers titles; social workers code of ethics; standards and procedures for social work services delivery; study and apply a salary scale for social workers.
- b) Develop, promulgate or amend relevant legal documents to create a comprehensive legal environment for the development of social work.
- c) Develop the nationwide network of social workers and collaborators to reach an increase of 15% by 2015; ensuring that every commune or communal town has at least 1 or 2 social workers who are in charge of merely social work, or collaborators with a monthly subsistence allowance equal to the minimum salary provided by the government.
- d) Develop a minimum of 10 pilot models of social work service delivery centers in some districts and provincial towns located in different regions.
- e) Provide formal training, retraining and on-the-job training for 50% of social workers and collaborators working in communes, communal towns, social work service delivery facilities and Departments of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs at all levels.

- f) Develop and improve formal training and vocational training programs and contents in social work at elementary, intermediate, graduate and postgraduate levels; enhance the quality of social work trainers.
- g) Improve the society's awareness of the social work profession.

#### 2.2. For the 2016-2020 period:

- a) Develop and enforce professional standards for social workers according to the types of social work delivery facilities/organizations and target groups; develop, promulgate and make improvements to relevant legal documents to create a comprehensive legal environment for the development of the social work profession.
- b) Develop the nationwide network of social workers and collaborators to reach an increase of 15%; replicate the model of social work service delivery centers in districts and provincial towns.
- c) Continue to provide formal training, retraining and on-the-job training for 50% of social workers and collaborators working in communes, communal towns, social work service delivery facilities and Departments of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs at all levels.
- d) Socialize social work activities through encouraging domestic and international organizations and individuals to get involved in formal training, retraining and on-the-job training for social workers and delivering services to social targeted groups.
- e) Improve the society's awareness of the social work profession.

## APPENDIX C – PARTICIPANTS IN REVIEW MEETINGS

### *Dong Thap*

#### **Inter-sectoral meeting, Dong Thap province**

Mr. Tran Minh Hong, Deputy Director, Dong Thap DOLISA  
Mr. Le Tien Quan, Head of Social Protection Division, Dong Thap DOLISA  
Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Hoa, Deputy Head of Social Protection, Dong Thap DOLISA  
Ms. Le Thi Tuyen Nga and Ms. Lai Thi My Dung, Social Protection Division  
Mr. Huynh Van Be, Head of Education and Communication, DCST  
Ms. Tran Bach Phan, Head of Internal Political Security, DPS  
Mr. Le Trong Nhan, Deputy Head of Rural Youth Division, Dong Thap Youth Union  
Ms. Mai My Hanh, Head of Economic Section, Dong Thap Women's Union  
Ms. Nguyen Ngoc Nam, Deputy Director, DOH  
Mr. Pham Thanh Phong, Deputy Director, DOJ  
Ms. Le Thi Phien, Director of Provincial Social Work and Child Protection Centre  
Mr. Nguyen Huu Thoi, Head of Continuing Education Section, DOET

#### **Meeting at Thap Muoi district**

Mr. Nguyen Vinh Nga, Director, Thap Muoi District DOLISA  
Ms. Nguyen Thi Truc Mai, Director of Health Centre  
Ms. Ho Thi Thuy, Vice-chair, Women's Union  
Mr. Vo Van Doi, Chair, Youth Union  
Mr. Dang Cong Nam, Head of Cultural, Sport and Tourism  
Mr. Tran Van Hai, Deputy Head, Police  
Mr. Nguyen Nhat Truong, Specialist, District People's Committee

#### **The meeting at My Quy commune, Thap Muoi district**

Mr. Ho Viet Tham, Vice-chair, Commune People's Committee  
Mr. Phan Van Phung, Cultural and Social Affairs Officer  
Ms. To Thi Kim Phuc, Chair, Women's Union  
Mr. Tran Trung Hieu, Chair, Youth's Union  
Mr. Le Van Hien, Deputy Head, Commune Health Station

Mr. Nguyen Van Dien, Commune Police

Mr. Le Minh Thang, Justice Officer

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tan, DOLISA

### **Meeting at the Provincial Social Work and Child Protection Centre**

Ms. Le Thi Phien, Director

Ms. Tran Thi No, Social Worker

Ms. Le Thanh Hieu, Social Worker

Visit/meeting at the Social Protection Centre

Mr. Le Van Rang, Director

Mr. Le Van Giau, Deputy Director

Ms. Phan Thi Muot, Director, Cao Lanh District Child Counselling and Support

### **Meeting with the Club of professional social worker in HCMC**

Mr. Le Chi An, Vice-chair, Lecturer, Open University

Ms. Ton Nu Ai Phuong, member, Lecturer, Open University

Ms. Bui Thi Thanh Tuyen, Executive member, Lecturer, University of Humanities and Social Sciences

Ms. Le Thi Ngan, member/accountant, Executive member of Thao Dan social protection organisation

### *Quang Ninh*

#### **Inter-sectoral meeting, Quang Ninh Provincial SWSC**

Mr. Đặng Hữu Bình, Director, Quang Ninh SWSC

Mr. Cầm Thanh Hải, Director of Social Protection, Quang Ninh DOLISA

Ms. Lê Thị Hương, Quang Ninh DOLISA

Mr. Phạm Minh Tứ, Quang Ninh DOLISA

Ms. Bùi Thị An Dung, Women's Union

Mr. Lý Anh Dũng, Youth Union

Ms. Trương Mạnh Hùng, Quang Ninh SWSC

Mr. Trần Văn Lượm, Quang Ninh Department of Culture and Communication

Mr. Ngô Văn Sơn, Quang Ninh Department of Justice

#### **Mr. Hoàng Tuệ, Quang Ninh Department of Public Security**

Quanh Ninh Children's Social Protection Centre

Ms. Mai Thị Loan, Director, Children's SPC

Ms. Trần Thị Hồng, Deputy Director, Children's SPC

Ms. Trần Thanh Vân, Officer, Children's SPC

*Thanh Hoa*

### **DOLISA**

Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Xuan, Director, Thanh Hoa DOLISA

Mr. Nguyen Quang Huy, Deputy Director, Thanh Hoa DOLISA

Mr. Le Ngoc Hao, Head, Social Protection section, Thanh Hoa DOLISA

Mr. Ly Van Chuong, Head of Vocational Training section, Thanh Hoa DOLISA

Mr. Le Dinh Tung, Head, Employment , DOLISA

Mr. Do Cao Quang, Deputy Head, Child Care and Protection section, DOLISA

Mr. Tran Van Hung, Deputy Head, Social Protection section, DOLISA

Ms. Ngo Thi Thu, officer, Children's Fund

Ms. Nguyen Thi Lien Huong, officer, Children's Fund

Mr. Le Nguyen Trong Xuan, officer, Social Protection section, DOLISA

Ms. Trinh Thi Ngoc Mai, Officer, Social Protection section, DOLISA

### **Social Work Service Centre**

Mr. Vu Van Khanh, Director, Social Work Service Centre

Mr. Truong Hai Duong, Deputy Director, Social Work Service Centre

Mr. Tran Thanh Binh, Head, Supportive Device Production Workshop

Mr. Le Van Hung, Deputy Head, Supportive Device Production Workshop

Ms. Le Thi Sam, Case Management and Community Development

Dr. Nguyen Hong Anh, Head, Surgery and Rehabilitation Clinic

Dr. Nguyen Xuan Thu, Deputy Head, Surgery and Rehabilitation Clinic

Ms. Nguyen Thi Loan, Deputy Health, Operation Section

Ms. Nguyen Thi Hien, Deputy Health, Operation section

### **Inter-sectoral meeting, Thanh Hoa province**

Ms. Le Thi Hoa, Head, Labour and Social Welfare, DPI

Mr. Vu Thai Son, Deputy Director, Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism

Ms. Hoang Thanh Hang, Provincial Youth Union

Mr. Bui Dinh Son, Department of Justice

Mr. Nguyen Van Long, Department of Education and Training

Mr. Trinh Viet Trung, Department of Health

Mr. Nguyen Dao Tuan, Department of Public Security

**Inter-departmental meeting, Thieu Hoa district**

Mr. Le Xuan Dao, Vice-Chairman, Thieu Hoa district People's Committee

Mr. Dao Hong Quang, Director, district DOLISA

Mr. Phung Van Binh, Director, district DOHA

Mr. Hoang Minh Thi, Deputy head, district DPS

Mr. Le Van Tien, Head of Office, district People's Committee

Mr. Le Duc Hanh, Direct, district Education Department

Mr. Nguyen Thi Thu, Secretary, district Youth Union

Mr. Hoang Ngoc Linh, Deputy Head, district Finance Department

Mr. Le Van Hung, Deputy Director, district Health Centre

Ms. Do Thi Thanh, Deputy Director, district DOLISA

Mr. Mai Xuan Luu, Office, district DOJ

Mr. Nguyen Hoang Nghia, Officer, district DOLISA

**Social Work Office, Hanoi Paediatric Hospital**

Ms Duong Minh Thu, head of Social Work Office

## APPENDIX D – OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND OTHER REFERENCES

### Official Documents

Decree 68/2008/ND-CP – Regulating Conditions and Procedures for the Establishment, Organisation, Operation and Dissolution of Social Protection Institutions

Decision 32/2010/QĐ-TTg – To Approve the National Program on the Development of the Social Work Profession

Circular 08/2010/TT-BNV – Issuing the Job Title and Codes for Social Workers

Circular 34/2010/TT- BLĐTBXH – Issuing the Professional Standards for Social Workers

Decision 2514/2011/QĐ-BYT – Defining Professional Social Work in the Health System

Circular 07/2013/TT-BLĐTBXH – Regulation of the Professional Standards for Commune/Ward/Town Social Work Collaborators

Circular 09/2013/TTLT-BLĐTBXH-BNV – Providing Guidance on Mandates and Organizational Structure of Public Social Work Service Centers

Circular 23/2010/TT-BLĐTBXH – Regulation of the Intervention Process to help Child Victims of Violence and Sexual Assault

Decree 136/2013/ND-CP – Regulating the Social Assistance Policy for Social Protection Subjects

Decree 144/2013/NĐ-CP – Regulating Administrative Sanctions Concerning the Investigation, Rescue, Protection and Care of Children

Decision 272/2013/QĐ-BNV – To Approve the Creation of the Vietnam Vocational Training Association and Vocational Social Work

Decision 647/2013/ QĐ-TTg – To Approve the Scheme on Caring for Helpless Orphans, Neglected Children, HIV/AIDS Infected Children, Victims of Toxic Chemicals, Seriously Disabled Children and Children Affect by Natural Disasters and Community-Based Disasters in 2013-2020

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