

## **An innovative education model to build capacity for the future of occupational therapy (OT) in developing countries: Vietnam case study**

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**Introduction:** The development of occupational therapy in Southeast Asia is in its infancy despite recognition of the need. In Vietnam there are currently no accredited OT university education programs. In partnership with local Vietnamese health and community providers, foreign funded non-government organisations do support the delivery and development of Vietnamese allied health services. This work is sometimes facilitated through funding of aid workers delivering direct care, however there is a growing awareness of the need to develop sustainable services with locally educated clinicians. Importantly there is a recent awareness of the role of occupation in health and recovery.

**Objectives:** To assist local Vietnamese partners to develop occupational therapy for the benefit of Vietnamese people with disabilities.

**Approach:** The education model developed and implemented was based on a sustainable, participatory and decision making approach to support collaboration and ultimately self-direction for the future development of occupational therapy. The project was funded by USAID, and in partnership with the local NGO Viet-Nam Assistance to the Handicapped. Education was staged and undertaken with traditionally and western trained doctors, rehabilitation technicians, community workers, and will be supported by Australian occupational therapy student placements.

**Practice Implication:** The education model implemented builds capacity and supports Vietnamese people with disabilities to regain meaningful occupations and supports governments in developing national disability policies and programs.

**Conclusion:** This program has contributed to occupational therapy's global aspiration to work with developing countries to advance human rights and develop sustainable occupational therapy.