

SATURDAY, JULY 18, 2011
5:15 P.M

Two Vietnamese with disabilities received scholarships to study online for a Master's degree in Comparative and International Disability Policy at American University's School of International Service

Gia Minh, Editor of Radio Free Asia

A graduate program in disability policy opened on July 18, with an opening ceremony taking place at the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD).



Source APCD.org

An activity at the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD).

In this first cohort of the Master's of International Affairs in Comparative and International Disability Policy (CIDP), there are two Vietnamese students with disabilities: Ms. Huynh Ngoc Hong Nhung – Vice President of Can Tho Association of People with Disabilities and Mr. Tran Ba Thien – a computer teacher for the blind at Van Lang University.

Gia Minh, Editor of Radio Free Asia, interviews these two students for more information.

Gia Minh: *First of all, could you tell me about the opportunity and requirements of the CIDP program?*

Mr. Tran Ba Thien: The Master's program is led by the Institute on Disability and Public Policy (IDPP). I met certain standards of the course, including having a bachelor's degree, English proficiency, and relevant work experience.

Ms. Huynh Ngoc Hong Nhung: I heard about this program through the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability's Web site. I received a Master's degree in Rural and Regional Development at the Asia Institute of Technology in Thailand in 2008. I then returned to Vietnam to work to develop employment opportunities for persons with disabilities (PWDs). After three years of working, I wanted to find a program to study public policy as well as to

enlarge the network of PWDs, so I applied to the CIDP program. I received the fellowship awarded by The Nippon Foundation because I met certain requirements, including obtaining a Bachelor's degree, having English proficiency, and having relevant work experience.

Gia Minh: What research interests do you plan to pursue during this Master's program?

Mr. Tran Ba Thien: When referring to PWDs, people often have a quite negative and pessimistic perspective, and may look down on the abilities of PWDs. My research will focus on changing this public perception of PWDs. Instead of having people focus on what PWDs have lost, having them focus on what abilities they have remaining. If people look at PWDs in a more positive way, people can encourage PWDs to integrate into the community effectively.

Ms. Huynh Ngoc Hong Nhung: The topic of my research is "What supports are provided to enable and encourage PWDs to enter the labor market in Vietnam?" I will focus on proposed supports from the government, local communities, and PWDs themselves. I would like PWDs to be able to identify their needs and who can help them. Then, with the support of public policy from the government, PWDs can use their abilities to contribute to communities, and can be removed of prejudices that people without disabilities may have of PWDs. I hope my research can advise the Vietnamese Government, and serve as a contribution to Vocational Training Laws and Social Insurance Laws for PWDs.

Gia Minh: *In the CIDP program, participants will gain knowledge to ultimately contribute to the public policies of their own countries, and to help the needs of PWDs and more for society. Do you have experience with this?*

Mr. Tran Ba Thien: I have participated in the establishment of laws to help PWDs for 10 years. Since 2001, I have participated in the construction of benchmark construction of public works for PWDs. From 2009 to 2010, I participated in making draft laws for PWDs. Vietnamese Disability Law will take effect on January 1, 2011. When making recommendations on these laws, I mostly rely on my personal experiences. Thus, I hope I can get professional knowledge from this Master's course. I will also learn about the experiences of PWDs in other countries such as the Philippines, Cambodia, and the United States through research and resources at American University. After graduation, I will become a useful advisor to the Vietnamese Government in creating laws to integrate Vietnamese with disabilities and PWDs around the world into society, and how best to apply this disability public policy process in Vietnam.



There are two PWDs from Vietnam entering the CIDP program: Ms. Huynh Ngoc Hong Nhung – Vice President of Can Tho Association of People with Disabilities and Mr. Tran Ba Thien – a computer teacher for the blind at Van Lang University.

“After graduation, I will become a useful advisor to the Vietnamese Government in creating laws to integrate Vietnamese with disabilities and PWDs around the world into society, and how best to apply this disability public policy process in Vietnam.” **-Mr. Tran Ba Thien**

Ms. Huynh Ngoc Hong Nhung: My undergraduate major is Rural and Regional Development Planning, but I work in the disability field. In some ways, I consider the disability field in Vietnam to be part of rural development because the disability field is just beginning to develop. I think now is the time to develop public policies for Vietnamese PWDs. Since 2008, I have had opportunities to participate in making draft disability laws and draft proposals to assist PWDs proposed for the period 2011-2020. I do not have extensive experience in public policy or working with PWDs who have different types of disabilities. For example, this program is the first time I have directly interacted and will study with people who are blind, so I can and will learn a lot from my experiences of studying with them. Even though I am disabled, I do not understand the full scope and range of all “disabilities.” I think PWDs of all abilities should be involved in public policy as advisors and advocates because no one can understand PWDs’ needs better than themselves.

Gia Minh: *Vietnamese Disability Law became effective at the beginning of this year. In your opinion, does the law achieve and fulfill your expectations?*

Ms. Huynh Ngoc Hong Nhung: The law is still in the process of written instructions. It is hard to see clearly now, but I believe the law will make changes faster in the near future.

Mr. Tran Ba Thien: The law cannot make effective change immediately. Compared to the previous century, I believe that the situation of Vietnamese PWDs have improved a lot. However, their situation does not compare with a developed country such as the United States. There are still limitations and restrictions for Vietnamese PWDs, which is the reason why Ms. Huynh and I applied to this CIDP program.

“I think PWDs of all abilities should be involved in public policy as advisors and advocates because no one can understand PWDs’ needs better than themselves.” -**Ms. Huynh Ngoc Hong Nhung**

Gia Minh: Thank you for sharing your time with Radio Free Asia. I wish you both the best, and hope you achieve your expectations in this program.

Ms. Nhung and Mr. Thien: Thanks. We hope so.

The Institute on Disability and Public Policy (IDPP) offers Southeast Asia's first virtual Master's program with significant financial contribution from The Nippon Foundation. The CIDP Master's program will consist of 39 credits and is offered by American University's School of International Service.

IDPP is a collaborative network among American University's School of International Service – Washington, DC, USA; Mahidol University – Thailand; the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKY School) at the National University of Singapore; the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) at the Rochester Institute of Technology – Rochester, New York; the University of Indonesia – Jakarta, Indonesia; the University of Malaya – Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; De La Salle Philippines; and Ateneo de Manila University – Philippines.

Source: http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/2-vn-disb-bach-join-mast-prog-07182011084845.html