



# DISABILITY RESEARCH AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Newsletter

JULY 2018

## INTRODUCTION

Disability Research and Capacity Development (DRD) was established on December 3rd, 2005 under the sponsorship of the Ford Foundation. DRD functions as a non-governmental and non-profit organization and is operated by and for people with disabilities.

DRD and the community are building a support model based on the rights of PWDs in an effort to promote equal opportunities for PWDs, encourage and create favorable conditions for PWDs to participate fully in all activities like other members in society.

Until now, the DRD has been supported over 3,500 PWDs in HCM City and a network of over 30 disability groups in the southern of Vietnam. With many diverse activities such as introducing internships, employment, skills training, advocacy campaign, moving assistance, scholarships, computers devices, assistive devices, information consultation, peer counseling, propagations, seminars and events raising awareness on disability issues, ... DRD is rated as one of 20 non-governmental organizations efficiently operated in Vietnam and is the leading one in supporting the PWDs to integrate into the community.

DRD would like to send to all sponsors, partners, friends and PWDs community the Newsletter as a channel of information sharing.

Kind Regards.

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## 1 The Best Way To Protect Our Own Rights And Benefits Is To Understand Law And Policy

"Mr. Hoa went to medical examination in 2010 with a disability rate of 81%, but on the certificate of disability recorded the level of "severe" instead of "particularly severe"; because he did not understand the law, he has been receiving 405,000vnd for allowance per month since 2013, instead of receiving 540,000 against Law of PWDs."

"Mr. Huong, whose eyes are dim, did the procedure to determine disability rate, and the council concluded that he was "light", but for more than a year his eyes were completely blind. The other eye was blurred and it caused him a traffic accident. Due to the increasingly severe disability, he applied for re-determination of disability rate to receive a higher monthly allowance, but local officials refused to allow him to reassess him because he got "light disability."

These were two of the cases that they did not know about laws and policies, so they accepted and lost their rights, and this is why DRD or-

ganized training courses on rights for PWDs.

Throughout the two training sessions, 57 PWD participants understand what the rights are, the rights they have under Law of PWDs and the procedures for implementing those rights. At the same time, the participants also understand the social barriers that made PWDs become "disabled" so that PWDs need to know their rights and promote implementation.

And success was beyond expectation that at the training course, participants used the knowledge and experience learned to share together, help those who have not enjoyed their rights. For instance, they helped Mr. Hoa to draft a request application to send to Disability Determination Board requires the re-issuance of disability certificate in accordance with Law of PWDs; or a member of Club Management Board has promised to help Mr. Huong to determine disability rate in 2018.

**Văn Cử**

## 2 Progress Assessment Of Railway Access Regulation To PWDs

In the afternoon of 26th July 2018, representatives of National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Transport, DRD and wheelchair users as well as people with visual impairment had a meeting about progress assessment of railway access regulation to PWDs.

Representative from Ministry of Transport have issued regulation that are currently in place as effective as reducing at least 25% of fares for people whose particularly severe and severe disabilities when using train; setting up notice speaker for visually impaired people and notice screen for people with hearing impairment in the train stations.

In addition, representatives of the parties shared about the shortcomings, difficulties such as no toilets for PWDs, train corridor is not wide enough for wheelchair users to move, train deck is too tall and there are many steps, signboards that do not have the text for the visually impaired, and most of the staff do not know how to support PWDs.

From the above-mentioned difficulties, representatives of DRD and PWDs have proposed solutions to overcome difficulties in the future such as building a wheelchair lifts from the ground to train doors, renovating passenger carriage on all routes to ensure accessibility of technical standards, and trainings skills to support PWDs for staff.

It is hoped that the above-mentioned suggestions will be recognized by relevant agencies, especially Ministry of Transport, so that regulations and policies can be implemented. It contributes to promote social inclusion of PWDs via accessible transportation. **Phan Thị Rát**

## 3 Access To Public Works For People With Disabilities

To promote reasonable accommodation to public works that access to PWDs, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> July 2018, DRD continue to hold the training on “Access to public works for PWDs” for 28 PWDs who are Niem Tin Club’s members, Canh Hien Commune, Van Canh Ward, Binh Dinh.

After 2-day training, participants understand what accessible public works are, what are public works, how to survey accessible public works and the way to promote accessibility right.

In the discussion on basic access categories according to the standards of Ministry of Construction, participants said that Van Canh District People’s Committee has built ramps for wheelchairs and handrails in stairs. This news is very good, but the slope is slightly higher than the access standard. Mr. Nghia shared: “I cannot wait or rely on the state. PWDs here also have to do something to make public works in the district and commune easier to use.” In order to act, he added, “I can speak directly to places where public works are not accessible or speak out with local PWD’s Club.”

Access to public works is the right of PWDs, so they should know the law and standards of access public works to promote the right. Speaking to the leader of Niem Tin’s Club, in the coming time, Van Canh District People’s Committee will be included in the survey list and send petition for reasonable accommodation.

**Trần Nga**

## 4 Training on Law and Policy on persons with disabilities



Law and Policy on People with Disabilities

What is the disability? How does the Vietnamese Law on Disability address issues related to defining disability, medical and healthcare, education, vocational training, employment, recreation, housing, accessibility, social welfare, and so on?

These are the issues discussed and shared in the workshop on “Law and Policy on People with Disabilities” held from 30 to 31/7/2018 in Tay Ninh. This is an activity aimed at raising awareness of the rights and building capacity for people with disabilities under the “Access for All” project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). 41 participants were given the opportunity to share their practical experiences through large group discussions, small group discussions, and case analysis.

Many participants’ stories show that most of them, especially individuals with visual impairment, has a lack of information on law and policy. Therefore, they do not know what their rights are or even what they benefit from the law. Or when their rights are compromised, they do not know where to get help. “I have just been

staying at home all day, hardly going out and communicating with people. Nobody has told me these. Up to now, I have not had a certificate of disability. I had no ideas of what I could benefit from disability identification. I just enjoy what people offer to me, but do not request more. Now I know I have rights as others. After the training, I will request the People’s Committee to identify my disability,” shared a participant.

In response to the question: “Why should persons with disabilities know their rights, laws and policies?” Most participants said that being aware of their rights can help them recognize the stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities or raise their voice when their rights are violated. Moreover, having knowledge of the law will help them recognize some shortcomings that the law needs to be adjusted. “By understanding the government’s law and policy on disability, I can protect myself and others when needed. In addition, I can monitor how the state enforces the law in my local area and then speak up,” said a participant.

**Thanh Tùng**

## 5 2 More Clubs Established In Tay Ninh Province



The first executive board of Club

Continue receiving approval and support from Tay Ninh DOLISA, People's Committee of Long Thanh Bac Commune and Ninh Son Ward, PWD's Club of these two provinces have received the decision to establish and launch on the morning of 5 and 6 July 2018.

Launching ceremony had the participations included: Mr.Le Ngoc Ta – Member of Committee of Association for Protection of Children and PWDs in Tay Ninh; Mr.Bui Dan An – Vice Manager of Hoa Thanh Ward's Office of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs; Mr.Ngo Minh Khai - Secretary of Party Committee, Chairman of People's Council of Long Thanh Commune; Mr.Tran Phuoc Ninh – Member of Standing Committee of Party, Chairman of Vietnam Fatherland Front Committee of Long Thanh Commune; Mr.Nguyen Van Hung - Member of Executive Committee of Party Committee, Vice Chairman of People's Committee of Long Thanh Commune; Mr.Tran Minh Tri – Vice Party Secretary of Ninh Son Ward; Ms.Bui Thi Hong Quyen –

Vice Manager of Tay Ninh City Office of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs; Mr.Vu Xuan Kiem – President of Association of Victim of Agent Orange; Ms.Huynh Thi Nga – President of Ninh Son Ward Women's Union; Mr.Nguyen Van Tu – Secretary of Youth Union; Mr.Le Kim Hoang – President of Red Cross; Mr.Nguyen Thanh Phong – President of Farmer Union; Dr.Vo Thi Hoang Yen – Founder/CEO of DRD, Vice President of The Vietnam Federation for the Disabled; and the attendance of PWDs in Long Thanh Bac Commune and Hoa Thanh Ward.

PWD's Club established under PWD's effort and support from the project "Access For All" funded by USAID with encouragement from local state. PWD's Clubs belongs to Association for Protection of Children and PWDs in Tay Ninh; it is a place where PWDs meet, interact, support each other and develop as well as contribute to protect their rights and promote the integration of PWDs. **Thanh Tùng**

## 6 Training on "teamwork skill for management board and members of PWD's club in Tay Ninh"

The training was organized on 19th-20th July 2018 funded by USAID in order to build capacity for 40 leaders and members of PWD's Club at Dong Khoi Commune, Long Thanh Bac Commune and Ninh Son Ward.

The training content was designed to be simple to meet the need to understand and apply teamwork skills for their activities. Through experiential games, from which to form lessons from their own experience, participants can easily grasp:

- The concept of group/team
- The importance of teamwork
- Factors that make up the team
- The stages of team development
- Team working principles
- Communication and motivation in teamwork

Active participatory training method in which the participants was the focus have attracted the active learning of the participants, especially members who were the first time left house and engaged in activities like this. Recorded some post-training opinions and observed as well that the majority of participants had a certain understanding of how the team worked, how the

### 7 Ph.D Vo Thi Hoang Yen - The journey to the 2018 Ramon Magsaysay Award



Vietnam is one of the fastest rising economies in Southeast Asia. As in other newly-emergent economies, social services have sadly not kept pace with impressive economic growth. A social concern that is inadequately addressed involves the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs). In recent years, government has enacted legislation for PWD protection and support services but the implementation gap remains huge for the estimated 13 million PWDs in the country. In such a situation, the action of citizens is vital, and where civil society is weak, as in Vietnam, the leadership of gifted, dedicated individuals is especially crucial.

Vo Thi Hoang Yen, born and raised in a remote village in Vietnam's Dong Nai province, contracted polio when she was two-and-a-half years old. In many other cases, particularly in the

rural areas, this condition would have consigned her to a life of dependence. But with a supportive family and her own courage and will, she succeeded in getting an education. Braving discrimination and the constraints of her disability, she earned college degrees at Ho Chi Minh University, and a scholarship brought her to the University of Kansas, where she obtained a master's degree in human development in 2004. Turning her back on opportunities for a comfortable life in the US, Yen returned to Vietnam.

She had been exposed to the issue and practice of PWD rights in the US, and experienced the stark contrast in Vietnam: the barriers to PWD mobility, access, and employment; the cultural bias that fosters passivity and dependence; the lack of public awareness of PWD needs and rights. De-

work was divided up, the strengths of the members to assign work effectively. In addition, the participants learned how to support each other in the same task to achieve the goals set by the team.

Mr. Y Long shared: "Before, I was just at home, not having any contact with anyone. I do not know what training is. This time I want to go to know. I did not expect much fun. The lesson is too good. Just through the game I learn a lot. I know that to work in a good team, I need to understand what I want to do. Then other members need to respect and help each other to complete a common objective."

"In addition to learning about solidarity, mutual understanding, helping each other while working in a team, I learned that only going out, joining social activity in community can make myself change. Other people can do, PWDs can do even more difficult." – said Ms. Mai

Many sharing also showed that the training and activities that "Access For All" project are doing that helping PWDs remove inferiority complex and be more confidence in themselves and others. Communication and exchange also contribute to membership in and between PWD's Clubs.

#### Thanh Tùng

spite her qualifications, her first job application was turned down because of her condition. Undaunted, Yen immediately set to work.

In 2005, with three other PWDs, she founded Disability Research and Ca-

## Activity

capacity Development (DRD), a non-profit organization based in Ho Chi Minh City whose guiding vision was to create “an equal and non-discriminatory society” for PWDs. DRD embarked on public awareness raising activities; livelihood and life-skills training for PWDs; employment and job placement; and diverse other initiatives. Raising funds from international organizations, proactively working with government and the private sector, DRD systematically established its presence as the leading, most innovative PWD advocacy and support group in Vietnam.

Over the past thirteen years, DRD has directly assisted some 15,000 PWDs with skills and capacity building activities, scholarships, job placements, donations of assistive devices and computers, and, using social media, a website on laws for the disabled and a digital map showing PWD-accessible public infrastructure. DRD’s innovativeness was showcased in a pilot “motorbike taxi service,” with a hotline for free transportation for PWDs on specially-designed motorbikes. The project became so popular that DRD could not meet the huge demand. Moreover, DRD has worked with government and the business sector in crafting PWD-related policies and promoting PWD-friendly environments, as in buildings and transportation.

Yen is the quintessential achiever. Confident, hardworking, and articulate, she teaches at Ho Chi Minh Open University and has recently completed her doctorate studies in social work from La Trobe University in Australia, continuing to direct DRD

**Heroes of PWD**

The 2018 Ramon Magsaysay Awards  
Asia's premier prize and highest honor

**Sonam Wangchuk**  
India  
HARNESSING NATURE, CULTURE, AND EDUCATION FOR COMMUNITY PROGRESS

**Howard Dee**  
Philippines  
CHAMPIONING THE HUMAN FACE OF PEACE, JUSTICE, AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

**Maria de Lourdes Martins Cruz**  
East Timor  
BUILDING A CARING SOCIETY BRICK BY BRICK

**Vo Thi Hoang Yen**  
Vietnam  
CLAIMING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DIFFERENTLY ABLED

**Bharat Vatwani**  
India  
RESTORING HEALTH AND DIGNITY TO TROUBLED LIVES

**Youk Chhang**  
Cambodia  
PRESERVING HISTORICAL MEMORY FOR HEALING AND JUSTICE

Meet the 2018 Ramon Magsaysay Awardees at the Awards Presentation Ceremonies on August 31, 2018 in the Main Theater, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Roxas Boulevard, Metro Manila. The Ceremonies start promptly at 4:30 p.m.

Listen to the Awardees at their individual public lectures. Schedules are available at [festival.rmaf.org.ph](http://festival.rmaf.org.ph).

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even while doing her studies. It is Yen’s own drive to be able to live independently, and to see this in other PWDs as well, that is at the heart of her advocacy. Autonomy, inclusion, a sense of dignity, releasing and enhancing the capacities of the differently-abled—this is what she is about. Despite the continuing challenges and frustrating resource constraints, Yen remains inspired. She says, “PWDs write or call me, thanking me for helping them change their lives... This is what drives me to continue.”

In electing Vo Thi Hoang Yen to receive the 2018 Ramon Magsaysay Award, the board of trustees recognizes her dauntless spirit and prodigious energy in rising above her condition; her creative, charismatic leadership in the sustained campaign to break down physical and mental barriers that have marginalized PWDs in Vietnam; and for being a shining, inspirational model for the young in her country and elsewhere in the world.

Source: [RMAWARD](http://RMAWARD)

## Woman with polio shines a light for all with disabilities



Iron will: Dr Võ Thị Hoàng Yến. Photo Australia Award Vietnam

**B**orn and raised in a poor family in the southern province of Đồng Nai, she contracted polio when she was two-and-a-half years old. In addition to her sickness, she was rejected from jobs solely because of her disability and experienced widespread discrimination from society at large.

But she stood up from the dust, and with incredible will, determination and wholehearted love from her mother, she was able to qualify to attend two major universities in HCM City. She later won two full scholarships to earn a master's degree and a doctorate in the US and Australia.

She came back to Việt Nam and started a project to help other people with disabilities lead a better life. She is Võ Thị Hoàng Yến – founder of the organisation Disability Research and Capacity Development (DRD). She recently won the honourable Ramson Magsaysay Award, which honours transformative leaders across Asia.

**Hoàng Hồ** had a chance to hear Yến shared about her inspirational journey.

*Inner Sanctum: I would like to congratulate you on winning the Ramson Magsaysay 2018. What does this*

*mean to you and to people with disabilities (PWDs)?*

Honestly, the prize was a great surprise to me. But then I think that what I have done so far is recognized by the world as having a positive impact on the community of the disabled. And it is very likely that information about the prize will also help Viet Nam - and even the world - know and care more about community development programmes in the country.

*Inner Sanctum: It's been almost 13 years since the day you started the project Disability Research and Capacity Development (DRD). What was the turning point that led you to this journey?*

When I graduated university in 1990, I applied for a chief accountant position at a company. Because I was sitting there before the director came in, he didn't know that I'm a PWD. He was very satisfied with my interview and I was accepted. But after my first day at work, I was told to return home and wait for another call, and that call never come.

After that, even though I continued to study at another university, I still couldn't get any job. Without any ex-

planation, I knew that it was because of my disability. Why are PWDs discriminated against? I was shocked and worry about the future of PWDs like me.

From then on, I had the desire to do something for the disabled. I was lucky to receive a full master's scholarship from the Ford Foundation to study in the US. After studying human development at Kansas University, I refused to stay and work in the US despite many job offers and came back to Việt Nam to fulfill my mission. After my return, I taught at Hồ Chí Minh City Open University and Đà Lạt University, and with seven others, I started planning and building DRD to support people with the same pain.

*Inner Sanctum: After studying human development and social work abroad, what lessons do you think are best applied to your project in particular and policies for the disabled in Viet Nam in general?*

We have and still are implementing three approach methods: (1) increase ability and rights for the empowerment group; (2) supporting PWDs in the social model; and (3) assets-based approach. DRD always seeks to improve the ability of the disabled so that they can best leverage their abilities. Many students have received DRD scholarships and participate in skills classes and group activities, which transform their lives.

Unlike my generation, students with disabilities are receiving a lot of support. The monthly allowance, medical insurance and tuition discounts and scholarships for the disabled have contributed to creating opportunities for them. New public transport and public works also began to take into account people with disabilities. However, despite the progressive legal framework and strong government commitment, there is still a big gap between the policies and the practical

implementation.

*Inner Sanctum: You have shared about the difficulties of obtaining sufficient funding, which is mainly available from international organizations? Do you have hope that in the future the disabled will receive more funds and development policies from government and society?*

The world aims to get rid of specialised centres for the disabled so that they can live with their families or communities and participate in all fields of society. However, for disadvantaged (financial, environmental, etc) countries like Viet Nam, the disabled face many difficulties living in their families or in the community. So the centres may be a better choice for them. However, as far as I know, the disabled living in these centres can only develop their abilities or have a

better quality of life if they are equipped with the knowledge of laws and policies on PWDs.

I think the disabled are often on the priority list when individuals or organizations plan to do charity, so it is not too hard to find material support.

However, if these individuals or organizations are still interested in ordinary charitable causes, they tend to have less interest in supporting programmes like DRD. International donor organisations change their sponsorships over the years and usually only fund poor countries, while Viet Nam is considered a middle-income country, so NGOs such as DRD are also facing problems. We have difficulties in maintaining activities, even though we are evaluated as effective. For a long time, we have heard about the government's intention to transfer

public services to social organisations to work effectively, but it is unclear what has been done so far and how DRD might be able to access such resources.

*Inner Sanctum: What are your expectations for the future?*

Although DRD has completed the strategic plan up to 2017-2025, it is difficult to know how much will be achieved because the world is changing so fast. Our plan to raise funds and build a cultural centre named "Beautiful life" is also underway. I hope that the added prestige from the Ramon Magsaysay Prize will help DRD gain more supporters, and if there is more support and more qualified personnel, DRD will achieve its goal.

Source: [VNS](#)

## Closing:

DRD's Newsletter is a publication that DRD publishes periodically to all sponsors, partners, friends and PWDs who would like to update our news and activities as well as other PWDs organizations.

DRD is always looking forward to receiving your feedback and support to make DRD's Newsletter more rich and helpful.

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Sincerely,  
Editorial board.