



# PROJECT Report

SEXUAL, REPRODUCTIVE  
HEALTH & RIGHTS TRAININGS  
FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS IN  
VIETNAM, 2016-2017

# Acknowledgement

VIETNAM YOUTH ACTION FOR CHOICE HAS TAKEN EFFORTS IN THIS PROJECT. HOWEVER, IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE KIND SUPPORT AND HELP OF MANY INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS. WE WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND MY SINCERE THANKS TO ALL OF THEM.

WE ARE HIGHLY INDEBTED TO LEADERS AND LECTURERES FROM HUE UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE AND PHARMACY AND DA NANG UNIVERSITY OF MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY AND PHARMACY FOR THEIR SUPPORTS IN COMPLETING THE 2 TRAININGS.

WE WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE TOWARDS ASIA SAFE ABORTION PARTNERSHIP FOR GIVING US THIS SEED GRANT TO MAKE THE PROJECT COME TRUE. WE ALSO THANK THE KIPA (HUE) AND IRIS (DANANG) ENGLISH CENTERS TO SUPPORT OUR PARTICIPANTS ON ENGLISH SCHOLARSHIPS.

OUR THANKS AND APPRECIATIONS ALSO GO TO OUR COLLEAGUES IN DEVELOPING THE PROJECT AND PEOPLE WHO HAVE WILLINGLY HELPED US OUT WITH THEIR ABILITIES.

SON LE HOANG MINH  
ON BE HALF OF VYAC LEADER BOARD

## **RATIONALE AND GOALS**

*Vietnam Youth Action for Choice (VYAC)*, established in 2016 under the technical and financial support from Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP), is a diverse and inclusive network of young people in Vietnam who are actively involved in advancing the empowerment and rights of women, children, young people and marginalized groups in Vietnam. To achieve our goal of raising awareness and promoting universal respect for human rights-based choices related to health including sexual and reproductive health, well-being, safety, and equality for all, we committed to build up young people's capacity to be a change agent and additionally work with policy makers to ensure the legal space for better rights-based practices.

After the successful achievement of the **first national Youth Advocacy Institute** on sexual and reproductive health and rights in Hue for recruiting core members from Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy, the reputation and expertise information of VYAC has been recognized by community especially among medical university in some nearby provinces. Thus the **Da Nang University of Medical Technology and Pharmacy (DUMTP) youth union** representative had a collaborative invitation to VYAC to train their students on SRHR knowledge and skills to communicate with community respectfully and effectively. With the fund from ASAP and DUMTP, the training workshop on sexual and reproductive health and rights was conducted by VYAC with the goals:

- Improve the knowledge for DUMTP selected students on SRHR
- Improve sensitivity and attitude of DUMTP selected students on safe abortion, LGBTQ+ and adolescent working skills
- Improve the skills of DUMTP selected students on adolescent working skills including peer education.
- Expand the young partner network on SRHR in middle of Vietnam.

### **Definition**

- Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in this training are including knowledge on genital anatomy, hymen and virginity value, sex and gender, gender corrective and sustainable equality, sexual orientation including transgender, reproductive health and sexual health including marginalized groups such as people with disability, updates on contraceptive methods, safe and legal abortion, sexual rights and rights-based approach, value clarification activity.
- Adolescent working skills are including theory of children and adolescent mental and physical development, knowledge integrated in game and sport including girl empowerment, peer education.
- Selected students: VYAC and DUMTP youth union called openly for applications and interest among DUMTP students to this training, only successful interviewed students were accepted to attend the training working with high potential and commitment.



## **I. Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy**

- Content and technical agency/ trainer: VYAC, HUMP lecturer, and Director of Center for Health Education and Communication.
- Funder: ASAP funded for trainers and all session preparation.
- Local supervisor and support: Dr Nguyen Van Hoa (Vice Dean of Public Health Faculty), Dr Nguyen Hoang Lan (Faculty of Public Health), Dr Phan Dang Tam (Director of Center for Health Education and Communication).
- Advisor: Dr Phan Bich Thuy (ASAP)
- Local partner in charge of Adolescent working skills and empowerment: Mr Quach Hoang Cong (Football For All in Vietnam)
- Location: Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy
- Time: 15 – 16th of November, 2016

## **RESULT**

### **1. Recruitment**

- 220 applications were received.
- 26 out of 57 potential young medical students from medical doctor faculty, public health faculty and pharmacy faculty, and dental faculty were selected after 2 rounds of review – (1) application review and (2) online interview session.
- 2 final-year students taking part as observers. (*Final year student was not encouraged to apply this course because they could not commit after the course*).

### **2. Training**

The training started with a very interesting warm up activities did by Mai Thuy. She asked everyone to introduce their name with a word that related to sexual and reproductive health. This worked as an ice breaker and everyone felt more comfortable for the class.

#### ***2.1. A very interesting refresher on genital anatomy***

Dr Nguyen Hoang Lan who is lecturer of faculty of Public Health in Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy asked participants to play two games. The two games were about listing names of different parts of Vagina and Penis on pictures. Hence, after the first session, Dr Lan helped all students recap the anatomies of reproductive organs.

The second session was about hymen and virginity – a controversial topic among community. Dr Lan explained hymen is physical and medical part of female body while virginity is oriented by our society especially a lot of people still believe on virginity is an important for unmarried girls/ women and it is measured by the blood which comes out in their first sex with their husband. She emphasized the difference between two concepts and showed the fact that not everyone bleed after their first sex, not everyone has same type of





hymen or even has no hymen; some actually be torn at their very early age because of playing sport, having accident... So judging girls and women's virginity by their hymen status (bleeding) has no clue.

This session was becoming more and more impressive when Thy introduced the use and benefit of menstruation cup that helped to break the myth among using this tool and the harm to hymen or "*female virginity*" following the belief of major of people in Vietnam.

## ***2.2. Reproductive and sexual health – a diverse and inclusive concept***

Son was in charge in this session to help participants discuss the definitions of health, reproductive health and sexual health according to the World Health Organization. Participants understood about sexual health are: "*a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled.*" Then Son emphasized sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences without being forced, discriminated or suffering from violence.

Follow the definition, Son introduce the principles of ICPD 1994 and how it had done in Vietnam to all participants so they can understand the history of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Sexuality was a super new and open definition for all participants, Son explained how sexuality was influenced by culture, society, geography, and time, and labor... In the end of this session, the whole class discussed sex worker situation in Vietnam and other countries... Many of them used the principles of ICPD and sexual health definition to affirm that sex work should be legal so sex workers can undergo SRH protection, treatment if they get STIs, and other health care services.

## ***2.3. Sex, Gender and Equality***

After this session, most of participants could not understand the difference between sex and gender. During the session, Son helped them to understand **sex is referred to biological term that belongs to our body while gender is social orientation**. The comparison between the proportions of student knows the definition of sex and gender before and after the training showed the improvement of knowledge on these topics among them.

To make them have better understanding on gender and gender equality, Son showed the video of CEDAW – Substantive Equality video with Vietnamese translation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qQhfv5E8zA>. The video surprised class because they realized gender equality is not “girl wins”, “girl power over man” but “equal opportunity”, “equity-based investment”, “recognition”, by giving their own example to describe the substantive equality, they felt more clear about this concept.

#### 2.4. Contraception



Dr Phan Dang Tam facilitated this session. He asked students to write down on stickers and stick them on the walls some changes during the growth period of adolescents in terms of girl and boy. Dr Tam introduced detailed information on oral pills (daily and emergency), IUD/IUS, male and female condom, male and female sterilization, contraceptive implant and injection.

The condom use session was supported by Mai Thuy and Son. There was 79% students wrote that this session was the most interesting session since they had not touched or tried to use a condom before.

#### 2.5. Safe abortion



Dr Phan Bich Thuy presented safe abortion definition (WHO), the procedure and methods to all participants. She explained the difference of safe abortion from the unsafe one. Dr Thuy also gave the fact of the relationship between legal status of abortion and maternal mortality rate so participants understand the restricted legal framework for abortion is not the solution to reduce the situation.

In addition, Dr Thuy and Quy Van Pham helped students to draw some scenarios about how a pharmacist and a person communicate while buying pills or condoms. This partly helped medical students to have an overview about social norm and social barriers which deterred young people to access contraceptive methods and abortion services. In general, 68% students have changed their mindsets after this session and emphasized to spread out the accurate information on safe abortion.



In the end of this session, students had their opportunity to witness and try the Manual Vacuum Aspiration tools.

## **2.6. Human rights and sexual rights**

Thao had a session to introduce human rights and emphasize everyone is deserved to have equal health care accessibility with dignity, accurate education with respect. She also introduced and explained 10 sexual rights (*adapted by CCIHP from the IPPF version*) to the class.

At the end of this session, Thao facilitated the value challenge activity. Some statements were showed on screen for class to discuss and explained the reason. This made them more confident and reflected well all the knowledge on gender, sexual rights, human rights, abortion...they were taught above.



## **2.7. Education methods for adolescent**

Quach Hoang Cong – a gender equality integrated in sport expert from Football for all in Vietnam introduced theory of peer education, education methods base on rights, adolescent characteristics and needs (*GOAL guideline*).

All participants went to the yard to practice how to integrate knowledge of SRHR into sport to teach for children



and adolescent. They were divided into 3 groups and did the sample class. One group taught about gender, another group taught about consent and the last on taught about safe sex. They used football facilities (ball, line, tackles) to make games and after that they gave the key message of the sample class. This session was amazing and inspired.



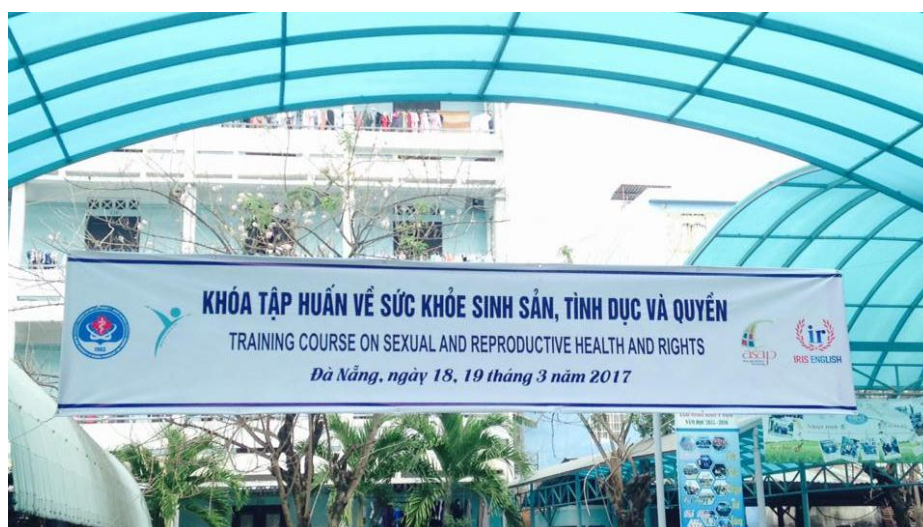
### 3. Closing and acknowledgment

- The closing ceremony had the representative from KIPA English Center also supported each students the English scholarship.
- Dr Thuy gave the closing speech and delivered certificate to all participants.
- Everyone was happy and motivated for taking action in the future.



## II. **Da Nang University of Medical Technology and Pharmacy**

- Content and technical agency/ trainer: VYAC and DUMTP lecturer
- Funders: ASAP funded for trainers and all session preparation and DUMTP funded for accommodation, lunch, tea-break.
- Local supervisor and support: Mr Tran Dinh Trung (Youth Union), Dr Dang Thi Hue (Faculty of Public Health)
- Advisor: Dr Phan Bich Thuy (ASAP)
- Local partner in charge of Adolescent working skills and empowerment: Mr Quach Hoang Cong (Football For All in Vietnam)
- Location: Danang Technical University of Medicine and Pharmacy
- Time: 17 – 19th of March, 2017





## RESULT

### 1. Recruitment

- 39 applications were received however we closed the form on deadline even while DUMTP youth union asked for extended deadline
- 20 out of 39 potential young medical students from medical doctor faculty, public health faculty and pharmacy faculty were selected after 2 rounds of review – (1) application review and (2) online interview sessions.

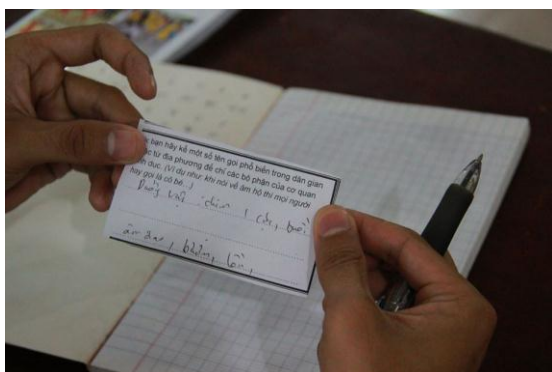
### 2. Training

In the beginning of first day, Mr Tran Dinh Trung - the representative of Youth Union in DUMTP had a speech to open the training workshop and also acknowledge the collaboration between ASAP, VYAC and DUMTP.

The training started with a very interesting warm up activities did by Mai Thuy. She asked everyone to introduce their name with a word that related to sexual and reproductive health. It worked as an ice breaker and everyone felt more comfortable for the class.

#### 2.1. A very interesting refresher on genital anatomy

Dr Dang Thi Hue who is lecturer of faculty of Public Health in Da Nang Technical University of Medicine and Pharmacy asked everyone wrote down all the slang words in Vietnamese that describe sexual genitalia for both boy and girl. We had a long list of slang words to describe penis and vagina that people are usually use it, for penis we say “cu”, “cac”, “chim” (bird), “cau be”, “cua quy”...for vigina we usually say “buom” (butterfly), “co be”, “banh beo”, “lon”...some words are actually used as swearing words but in practical, a lot of young people feel embarrass to say “penis” and “vigina” – the very scientific words. So the first session, Dr Hue helped all students to feel



more confident when talking about sexual genitalia especially they are medical students.

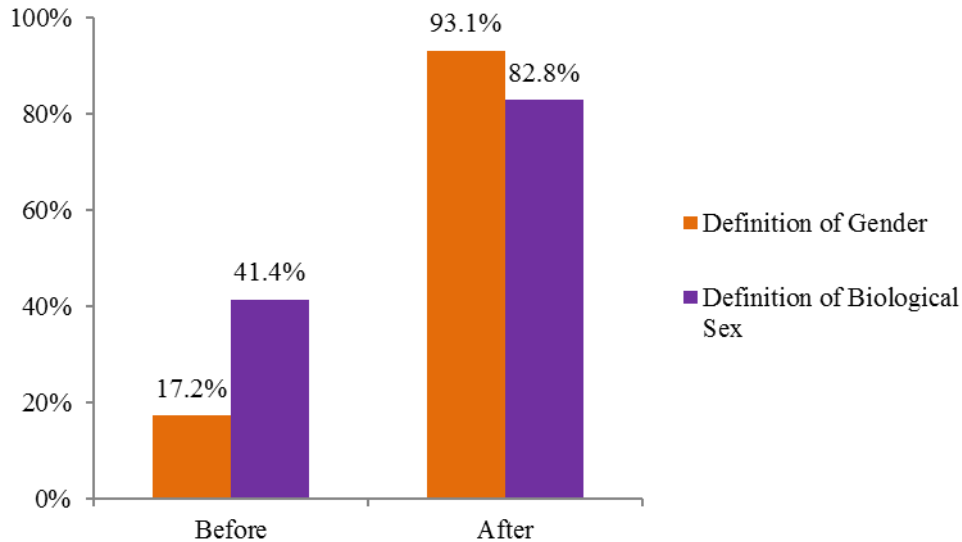
Mrs Hue also taught them about hymen and asked their opinions of hymen and virginity.

With a very funny way of teaching, Mrs Hue had given all young students an interesting and friendly session about sexual genitalia including hymen and virginity.

## 2.2. Reproductive and sexual health – a diverse and inclusive concept

Son was also in charge in this session. We did it as same as Hue training

## 2.3. Sex, gender and Equality

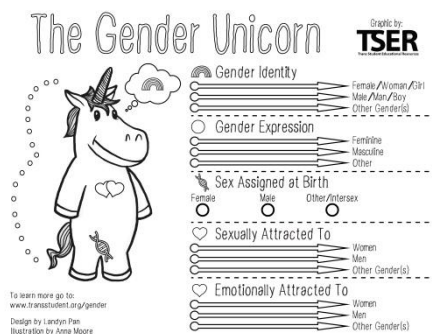


**Figure 1: The proportion of student knows the definition of sex and gender before and after the training**

As the same session in Hue, Son showed the video of CEDAW – Substantive Equality video with Vietnamese translation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qQhfv5E8zA>, in order to make students have a better understanding on gender and gender equality.

After showing the video, some students had excellent samples on sustainable equality such as “investing in better mobility system is better for both male and female workers to carry big things instead of excluding female workers due to the belief that female is weaker than male”.

## 2.4. Sexual orientation



### English version

Son also facilitated the session on sexual orientation by using the Vietnamese version of The Gender Unicorn (translated by Son). Participants listened to Son’s explanation and also did their own self-identification, so they could have better understanding about diverse sexual

### Vietnamese version

orientation. This is also a good exercise for younger peer education to help children easy to express themselves through coloring activity.

### **2.5. Contraception**

Dr Phan Bich Thuy facilitated this session in a very creative way, she used world café model that helped all participants shared their own knowledge on contraceptive methods and also wrote down their confusions and questions to each contraceptive methods. After a very interactive activity, Dr Thuy introduced detailed information on oral pills (daily and emergency), IUD/IUS, contraceptive pad, male and female condom, male and female sterilization, contraceptive implant and injection.



We found out a lot of student wondered about oral pills and cancers for example: breast cancer and cervical cancer because they told us they have been taught that using oral pills for long time can cause breast cancer and other birth control can cause cervical cancer. To help students understand about that, Dr Thuy used many research and the national guideline to explain that the risk of breast cancer is only increasing among those who have cancer or family history of cancer. In addition, we shared them a lot of resource material about the links between contraception and cancer so they can read later.

The condom use session was funny when Mai Thuy provided male condoms and a penis model to practice the accurate usage. Additionally, Mai Thuy and Son also introduce female condom – this was their first time seeing female condom.

### **2.6. Safe abortion**

The question “Should we be proud or shameful on abortion situation in Vietnam?” was raised for discussion. Most of them thought and also have been taught abortion is last choice, abortion is not good, however everything was changed because of Dr Thuy story about how she – herself – had changed from being anti-abortion (when she was very young) to be very supportive and prochoice. The story was very touching and helped young people understand “*if we are not in her shoes, we don’t decide*”.

This session also change the way they counsel girls and women who had unwanted pregnancy, they practised to use rights-based counseling to give women choices to make her own decision.

One participant shared her story when she helped her friend accessed to abortion service, she thought she did the wrong thing, she felt guilty until she heard Dr Thuy story and now she believes she did it right.

### **2.7. Human rights and sexual rights**



In this session Thao and Nhu also did the power walk to help participants understand more about each case; they shared how they felt when they stepped into a woman's shoes. The session about human rights is required a long term reading and research, so we asked them to read more, and use rights-based view to analyze each situation.

Before the training, less than a half (48, 3%) of class understood sexual rights however after the training, the proportion was increasing to 96,5%.

### ***2.8. Education methods for adolescent***



This time, Mr Cong introduced 2 main skills which had not had illustrated for Hue's students: STEP (space, task, equipment, people), & SMILES (safety, maximum, involvement, learn, enjoyment, success). All participants also tried their hands on using football as a tool to integrating SRHR contents. Mr Cong and Mai Thuy also pointed out the advantages and disadvantages of 4 groups after their first attempts on

modeling GOAL's games for students of all ages (2 groups for primary school, 1 group for Secondary school and 1 group for High school students).

### **3. Closing and acknowledgment**

- The closing ceremony had the representative from IRIS English Center also supported each students the English scholarship.
- Dr Thuy gave the closing speech and delivered certificate to all participants.
- Everyone was happy and motivated for taking action in the future.



## LESSON LEARNT

- Two training workshops were got high appreciation from the HUMP, DUMTP, and participants for delivering good knowledge on SRHR and safe and free space for medical students to discuss on SRH issue including abortion, human rights.
- Participants know how to integrate SRHR information into life skills and acknowledged some leadership skills as well.
- The trainers have improved their performances progressively after the two trainings.

## SIDE EVENT: TEA AND TALK – LAUNCHING VYAC IN HUE

After the first training on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Hue in 2016, Vietnam Youth Action for Choice was having a launching event: Tea and Talk.

This is the first time in Vietnam, there is a youth group working on sexual and reproductive health and rights particularly freedom of choice and abortion rights. VYAC introduced 3 young leaders as the first generation:

1/ Le Hoang Minh Son (Mr) – Son is working for a non-profit organization in Hanoi (the Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population) as Youth Program Coordinator in term of sexuality research, communication and training.

2/ Nguyen Thi Thao (Miss) – Thao is working at the same organization with Son. She is one of champion from UNFPA initiative award for young people in Vietnam. Thao developed successfully an application to provide SRHR information for young people.

3/ Mai Doan To Thuy (Miss) – Thuy was preventive medicine student, her leadership was proved from her contributions to these trainings by having a great coordination and connection between VYAC and other institutes.



*Left to right: Thao, Dr Thuy, Mai Thuy and Son*



The first session of Tea and Talk, we invited 3 professional speakers to deliver the message of the important of peer education and the necessity of right to sexual and reproductive health information and education:

1/ Dr Phan Bich Thuy (Mrs) – ASAP chairwoman, VYAC senior advisor

2/ Dr Vu Hoang Lan (Mrs) – Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy

3/ Dr Phan Dang Tam (Mr) – Director of Provincial center for Health education and communication



*Left to right: Dr. Lan, Dr. Thuy, Dr. Tam*

These three doctors received a great number of questions from young delegate through online forms and Q&A papers. Those questions were very various such as safe sex, pleasure, contraception, masturbation, pre-marital sex, abortion, etc. Dr. Lan and Dr. Tam openly spoke about sex before getting married and how to avoid unwanted pregnancy. Dr. Thuy told us a story about the pleasure and the diversity in sexuality related to a famous book: “The Earl’s Mistress” of Julia Quinn. Son – the leader of VYAC also answered some kinds of questions about how VYAC could help youth voice to be heard and organized more courses in every single high school in Hue.





In the Tea and Talk night, we did a live stream on Facebook as well. This enabled other people who could not come to the event questioning guests and watching the Tea and Talk. There was a competition of “how fast you can wear a condom” which was really a remarkable closing to all of participants.

In conclusion, the event was successful and receiving a lot of encouragements from participants both young and adults.



## ANNEX 1: ORGANIZERS



**Le Hoang Minh Son (San):** is a youth Champion of Asia Safe Abortion Partnership from 2014, a leader of Vietnam Youth Action for Choice, who was a trainer for the two trainings in Hue and Da Nang. Son was in charge of preparing and editing this report



**Mai Doan To Thuy:** is a youth Champion of Asia Safe Abortion Partnership from 2016, co-leader of Vietnam Youth Action for Choice, who found the collaboration between universities and VYAC and was primary in charging of organizing the two trainings in Hue and Danang.



**Nguyen Thi Thao:** is a youth Champion of Asia Safe Abortion Partnership from 2014, co-leader of Vietnam Youth Action for Choice, who took lead of several sessions in the two trainings.



**Dr Phan Bich Thuy** is chairwoman of Asia Safe Abortion Partnership and technical advisor of Vietnam Youth Action for Choice. Dr Thuy was leading safe abortion session in both trainings in Hue and Danang.



**Pham Van Quy** is a student in pharmacy faculty. He was VYAC member. Quy assisted Dr Thuy to prepare the safe abortion session during the training in Hue.



**Nguyen Tran Nam Nhu** is a preventive medicine student in Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy. Nhu is a team leader of VYAC on sexual rights topic. She was a teaching assistant during the training in Danang and having a great preparation for the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of this comprehensive report.



**Dinh Thi Thuy** is a student of Dental faculty in Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy. Thuy was youth champion of Asia Safe Abortion Partnership in 2016. She gave her best assistant for the training in Hue especially in logistics preparation and financial paper work.

## ANNEX 2: STUDENTS LIST

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