

## Sigma's 30th International Nursing Research Congress

### Combating Human Trafficking of Ethnic Minorities in Rural Vietnam: A Global Collaboration

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**Background:** Human trafficking is an extremely profitable endeavor. It is the second-largest and fastest growing criminal industry worldwide. Due to its profitability, human trafficking persists despite government and law enforcement efforts to eradicate it. Though human trafficking is a phenomenon that permeates every region of the world, Southeast Asia is well recognized as its greatest hub. It has been conservatively estimated that at least 225,000 women and children from the region are trafficked every year, accounting for approximately one-third of the global trafficking trade (Perry, 2013). Vietnam is one of the largest sources of trafficking in Southeast Asia, with the vast majority of victims being women and girls. Northern Vietnam is targeted by traffickers due to the close proximity to China, and easy targets of young, uneducated girls from rural villages. It is increasingly common for 14-17 year old ethnic minority girls to disappear from their villages.

The mountainous region of northern Vietnam is populated with ethnic minority groups such as Hmong, Red Zao, Giao and Tay. These hilltribe ethnic minorities are not part of mainstream Vietnamese and are marginalized in many ways. Social inequality is a driving factor in the exploitation and victimization of trafficking (Barner, 2014). Social determinants that put ethnic minority families in this region at risk include social exclusion, extreme poverty, harsh living conditions, lack of education, undocumented children, a strong cultural practice of early marriage, and community acceptance of bride kidnapping. Due to these social and cultural factors, when young girls or families are promised luxuries of well-paying jobs, jewelry, mobile phones, or wealthy husbands they become easy prey to traffickers.

**Purpose:** To present a collaborative approach taken to improve global health by combating human trafficking through a global partnership between nursing students studying global health in rural Vietnam and an established social enterprise.

**Methods:** Undergraduate nursing students and faculty participating in a global health experience in the mountainous regions of northern Vietnam collaborated with a trekking agency/social enterprise organization. This organization employs female trek guides with an aim to encourage economic advancement for these young women. Students and faculty previously partnered with this organization for several years in providing first-aid training and health education to the trek guides. Prior to the in-country global health experience, nursing faculty inquired about health education needs in the local villages. Organization directors and trek guides identified several health issues with human trafficking as a predominant concern for the rural villages of this highland area.

Students researched and prepared educational information on health topics and strategies to combat human trafficking. During the global health experience, students taught the Hmong/English speaking trek guides health education and tactics to reduce human trafficking. Discussions with the trek guides resulted in greater understanding of the problem, in addition to other strategies and personal experiences to enrich the teaching. Nursing students supported trek guides in community-engaged learning as the guides led discussion groups and taught in their own villages and native languages.

**Results:** Discussion groups were held in community centers and ethnic minority households. Nursing students were able to support trek guides in teaching in various settings and helping young girls, mothers, and village women see the ploys of traffickers. Discussions explored tactics used by traffickers and reasons girls became victims. This was followed by the introduction of strategies and education to reduce

the incidence of trafficking and separation of young girls from their families. Local women actively contributed to the dialogues sharing stories and asking questions.

Social determinants were identified as highly influential factors for human trafficking through a victim's quest to escape poverty and seek economic opportunities. Education of individuals, families and communities is a key factor in combating trafficking and the common ploys used by traffickers to lure young girls and deceive families.

**Conclusion:** A successful collaboration was established between a social enterprise organization and nursing students in increasing knowledge and awareness about human trafficking. The global connection between the nursing students and trek guides was an effective strategy in strengthening the nursing education of the students and providing education and support to the trek guides as future leaders in their communities. The collaboration was rewarding for both entities - students were able to teach and learn about the culture, and trek guides were able to improve teaching, English-speaking, and leadership skills.

**Implications:** Human trafficking is a gross violation of human rights and a crime which should be prohibited worldwide (Ronda-Perez, 2016). Due to the highly profitable business of trafficking, exploitation tactics will continue to expand. It is imperative that strategies continue to be identified, modified and employed to combat trafficking and improve safety for ethnic minority girls in highly trafficked areas of rural Vietnam.

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**Title:**

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Ethnic Minorities, Global Collaboration and Human Trafficking

**References:**

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**Abstract Summary:**

Description of a global collaboration to combat human trafficking among ethnic minorities in rural Vietnam. Nursing students studying global health partnered with an established social enterprise in Vietnam to teach strategies to combat the high rate of ethnic minority girls disappearing and falling prey to human trafficking.

**Content Outline:**

- Introduction of human trafficking
  - Worldwide issue
  - Incidence
  - Profitability
  - Victims
- Background
  - Geographic region of Vietnam
  - Ethnic minorities of area
  - Lifestyle
  - Living conditions
- Prevalence of human trafficking in Vietnam
  - Rates of human trafficking
  - Targets
  - Destination countries
- Social determinants that put ethnic minorities at greater risk
  - Poverty
  - Living conditions
  - Social exclusion
  - Cultural practices of bride kidnapping, early marriages
- Nursing students Global Health course
  - Undergraduate three week course
  - Study global issues
  - Learn culture of country
  - Teach health
- Global collaboration with social enterprise
  - Organization established
  - In-country
  - On-going working relationship
  - Knowledge of culture and communities
- Teach the teacher health education format
  - Students taught trek guides
  - Trek guides learned content
  - Trek guides taught health topics in villages
- Health teaching needs assessment
  - Trek guides determined the needs of their communities
  - Organization contributed
- In-country teaching
  - Students taught trek guides in seminar format
  - Small groups
  - Health topics
  - Question and answer
- Village discussion groups
  - Students trekked to outlying villages
  - Supported trek guides in discussions
  - Taught in native language
  - Discussion groups

- Implications and future endeavors
  - Wide-spread issue
  - Raising awareness
  - Strategy modification

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