

**Waseda University Global COE Program,  
'Global Institute for Asian Regional Integration'  
Investigative Research Assistance Achievement Report**

**Affiliation** GSAPS      **Year** Third Year      **Name** LE THANH MAI

**Itinerary** 1 / 12 / 2010 – 2 / 25 / 2010 (Month/Date/Year)

**Destination (Name of city and country)**

Hanoi, Vietnam and Canberra, Australia

**Research objectives**

- To conduct field work, and collect primary data through in-depth interviews with child domestic workers (CDWs), ex-CDWs, and their employers in Hanoi, Vietnam with a view to completing my research on child domestic work in Asian developing countries
- To attend and respond to any questions and comments on my paper entitled *Competing Approaches to Child Domestic Work in Asian Developing Countries: Evidence from the Case Study in Vietnam* at the 2010 Asia-Pacific Week, Australian National University from 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2010; and to network with professors and scholars who share the same interest in Asian studies at the Conference

**Research project**

**Title:** Competing Approaches to Child Domestic Work in Asian Developing Countries: Evidence from the Case Study in Vietnam

**Overall Goal:** Child labour is a sensitive subject and numbers regarding its magnitude play an important role in global policy-making and advocacy efforts. It is estimated that in 2004 there were about 211 million children aged 5-14 years who were at work in an economic activity in the world. Out of these, with 127.3 million in total, the Asia Pacific region harbours the largest number of child workers in this particular age group. In fact, due to economic and social changes as well as cultural factors, it is widespread to find young children working as child domestic workers (CDWs) in many Asian countries. The paper will, first, attempt to conceptualise and contextualise child domestics in Asian developing countries by looking at the definition of CDWs, and the profiles of these children. Then, the study will examine the debate among competing schools of thought to combat child domestic work with their explanatory theoretical arguments, and seek to justify and strengthen the significance of the multi-faceted approach based on the best interest of the child theory, which removes child domestic labourers from the most abusive cases, and humanises the working condition for those already at work. The third part of the paper will look at the living and working conditions of child domestics in Vietnam as the single case study, and attempt to reveal the relevance and significance in adopting the differentiated approach to combat child domestic work in Asian developing countries.

**Achievement**

The field research was conducted in Hanoi, Vietnam from 12<sup>th</sup> January to 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2010, and between 13<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of February, 2010. Adopting the snowball method to identify and approach the interviewees, I have made in-depth interviews with 18 current CDWs, 2 ex-CDWs, and 20 employers to understand the working and living conditions of the child workers in the city. These in-depth interviews are being transcribed in Vietnamese, and will be later translated into English. The

qualitative data will be generated using latent content analysis to deal with the depth and complexity of understanding about the working and living conditions of these child domestic servants. One of the preliminary findings from the qualitative data analysis is that child domestic work only offers the child workers and their family a short-term solution to their poverty. Sooner or later the majority of them will go back to their home town with no further education, no working skills, and thus no future. They are expected to live the same poor life as their parents. The in-depth interviews also reveal that in very rare cases some child domestics who are kinship to the employers are lucky enough to be allowed to attend non-formal education, and vocational training at local educational institutions. So with their employers' kind support, these children could then find a more stable job as a salesperson, or a government officer, and therefore, live a better and sustainable life in the urban areas. On the other hands, the study shows that the further education offer is sometimes used as a strategy to keep the child domestics staying on, and working for the employers. In fact, the house owners never keep their promise, i.e. giving the child worker an opportunity to go to school while working in their house. These children are, more often than not, non-relatives of the employers. These findings have justified the need for the consolidation of the multi-faceted approach within the paternal libertarianism framework.

Between 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2010, I flew from Hanoi, Vietnam to Canberra, Australia to take part in the 2010 Asia-Pacific Week at the Australian National University. The Conference and the Summer School have helped strengthen my academic background about Asian studies in a number of ways. First, among a variety of sections focusing on different areas of the Asia-Pacific region including the Pacific Islands, China, Japan, Indonesia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, I belonged to the Southeast Asia Group where I have been able to learn a lot. Rather than a traditional conference style in which each participant will present his or her own 15-minute paper followed by a few minutes of questions, the Southeast Asia Group used a workshop style during the Asia Pacific Week. This means I was assigned to present my colleague's paper entitled *Khmer Rouge Children's Songs* with my own comments about the main insights of his work. After collecting questions and discussion from the entire group for 15-20 minutes, the author was invited to respond to all the issues raised. I find this workshop style very interesting and stimulating as I have an opportunity to play not only the role of a presenter, but the part of a discussant as well. In addition, when my paper was presented by another group member, I was very delighted to receive tens of questions and observations from my colleagues which sparked a constructive and in-depth discussion about my paper. Also, interestingly enough, on the second day of the workshop, I was nominated to be chair of one of the conference sessions. Although this was my first-hand experience in this position, I believe that I have done a good job, and kept the conference running smoothly and effectively.

Second, during the conference doctoral students have been offered a chance to participate in a wide range of training activities, and participated in a stimulating program of events including keynote speeches, seminars on Asian studies, film screenings, cultural performances and social events. All of these have not only consolidated my research on Asian studies and Asian integration, but also provided me with a valuable chance to network with renowned professors and talented scholars all over the world.

**Confirmed by person in charge of project promotion (signature and seal)**

Academic Adviser

Yasushi Katsuma

Sub Adviser

Kazuo Kuroda

(Note: please write within a length of two A4 pages. Space for each item can be changed to suit.)