



Hanoi Headlines

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Vietnam Boosts Transparency as Supreme Court Portal Goes Live

Vietnam took another step to entrench greater transparency in its judicial system by launching the first web portal for the Supreme People's Court (SPC). The portal -- <http://www.toaan.gov.vn> -- features legal procedures and a manual for judges. Over 240 cases submitted for SPC review and judgment between 2002 and 2006 are currently online, with more to be added soon. Portal visitors also can comment on draft court rulings and pose questions that are answered online.

"I would like to stress the special and effective assistance from USAID in legislative development, publication of court decisions, implementation of intellectual property rights laws and completion of the portal," said Deputy Chief Justice Dang Quang Phuong. This "first online interface" of the Supreme Court with the public is a "milestone in the cooperation of USAID and the Supreme Court." "Our policy is to use the portal for judicial reform," said Deputy Chief Justice Phuong. "Everyone can see that this portal represents access to justice and access to the court," he added.

Joining the April 22 launch event, one of many during this 15th anniversary of normalized diplomatic relations between the two countries, U.S. Ambassador Michael W. Michalak commended the Court for "ensuring that all relevant Vietnamese parties, including Vietnamese citizens, have the right and responsibility to comment on laws and regulations that will have a direct bearing on Vietnam's social and economic development."

The portal highlights the Court's commitment to justice, transparency, and implementation of U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) and World Trade Organization (WTO) requirements.

Since 2001, USAID has supported Vietnam's efforts to develop transparent procedures. Under WTO/BTA requirements, draft laws are to be published 60 days before becoming effective. "The SPC portal and other activities of the Vietnam Government to promote the rule of law are effective ways to ensure transparency and openness in the country's judiciary," said USAID Mission Director Frank Donovan.



Vietnam's Permanent Deputy Chief Justice Dang Quang Phuong and Ambassador Michael Michalak unveil a new web portal supported by USAID assistance. Photo: Richard Nyberg, USAID.



Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, with U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, Michael W. Michalak, NGO representatives and religious leaders looking on, prepares to sign the PEPFAR Partnership Framework with Vietnam's Minister of Justice, Mr. Ha Hung Cuong. Photo: Richard Nyberg, USAID.

Secretary Clinton Signs PEPFAR Agreement at USAID-supported Site

On July 22, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Vietnam's Minister of Justice Ha Hung Cuong signed a Partnership Framework between the governments of Vietnam and the United States for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control. The ceremony took place at the Ngoc Lam Pagoda in Hanoi where USAID supports daycare for children living with or orphaned by AIDS, and HIV counseling. The five-year plan includes support for health services for people living with HIV/AIDS and measures to strengthen the capacity and involvement of non-governmental organizations, multilateral organizations, and the private sector. PEPFAR is the largest health program in Vietnam and has contributed over \$400 million to support the prevention, care and treatment of HIV/AIDS among most-at-risk populations since 2003.

USAID Supports Training for 2,500 in Pandemic Preparedness

Over the past year USAID has provided funding to the Vietnam Red Cross (VNRC) to help the nation prepare for the possible outbreak of pandemics. Under this project the VNRC has trained over 2,500 Vietnamese national and provincial trainers and community leaders in all 63 provinces in pandemic preparedness and response planning. According to Mr. Nguyen Nhu Lam, Vice Chairman of Ha Nam's Provincial People's Committee, "not so many projects within such short time could help deliver such results." The preparedness training and planning carried out under the project will assist Vietnamese authorities to cope effectively with future bird flu and other pandemic outbreak threats. Under the Government of Vietnam's comprehensive National Avian and Pandemic Influenza (API) Program, USAID began supporting API programs in Vietnam in 2005 and since then has provided approximately US\$35 million in assistance and technical support.

Vietnam Enacts Law Supporting Persons with Disabilities

On June 17, Vietnam's National Assembly enacted the country's first comprehensive national law guaranteeing the rights of people with disabilities. The new law mandates equal participation in society for people with disabilities through accommodation and access to health care, rehabilitation, education, employment, vocational training, cultural services, sports and entertainment, transportation, public places, and information technology. This law, drafted with the support of USAID technical assistance, is expected to have a direct impact on the growth of Vietnam's economy, as inclusive policies expand opportunities for Vietnamese with disabilities to be productive and achieve economic independence.

The National Disability Law is the culmination of an intensive effort of more than a decade to develop a legal framework for an inclusive society where people with disabilities have access to programs and support necessary for their full participation. This effort began with the passage of the national Ordinance on People with Disabilities in 1998, and led to a series of initiatives to advance the rights and interests of persons with disabilities. USAID's partner, Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH), has provided significant support to the Vietnamese government in bringing about these reforms.

Senators Harkin, Sanders Visit Health and Remediation Projects in Danang

On July 6, Senators Tom Harkin of Iowa and Bernard Sanders of Vermont traveled to Danang to visit USAID-funded projects to assist persons with disabilities with rehabilitative care and job skills. They also learned more about the Government of Vietnam's efforts, with USAID support, to determine how best to remove dioxin contaminant from the soil and lake sediment left over from the Vietnam War.



Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa (center) and Senator Bernard Sanders of Vermont on July 6 visit a rehabilitation clinic in Danang built and equipped with USAID funding to support Vietnamese with disabilities, regardless of cause. Also pictured are USAID Mission Director Frank Donovan and Ca Tran of Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH). Photo:VNAH

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Taking the Message to the Masses against Trafficking in Persons



U.S. pop/rock group The Click Five perform for an appreciative crowd in Ho Chi Minh City who took home messages about ways to fight trafficking in persons and labor exploitation. The USAID-supported MTV Exit concert tour reached more than 80,000 young Vietnamese this year in Hanoi, Ha Long Bay, Can Tho, and Ho Chi Minh City, and tens of thousands more in a televised program. USAID's implementing partners also distributed HIV prevention messages at the concert venues. Photo: Richard Nyberg, USAID

United States, Lower Mekong Countries Study Infectious Disease Threats

U.S. delegates headed by President Obama's Malaria Coordinator, Rear Admiral (USN, retired) Timothy Ziemer of USAID, convened a conference on June 17 and 18 with representatives from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. The two-day conference, which follows last July's announcement by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton of the Lower Mekong Initiative, was co-hosted by the U.S. and Vietnamese governments.

Senior government officials from Lower Mekong Initiative partner countries met to focus on an integrated regional approach to infectious disease. Admiral Ziemer opened the conference with a discussion of the multiple levels on which the U.S. government is



President Obama's Malaria Coordinator, Rear Admiral (USN, retired) Timothy Ziemer, USAID, gives the keynote speech at the opening of the Lower Mekong Initiative Infectious Diseases Conference. Photo: Richard Nyberg, USAID

engaged to build stronger health response networks in the Lower Mekong region. Participants focused on international health regulations, counterfeit and substandard medicines, and regional successes in collaborative health research.

Admiral Ziemer made special reference to efforts to curb counterfeit drugs in regional markets, noting that cooperation to stop the manufacturing and distribution of counterfeit and substandard medicines is only part of the solution. "We also need to remain focused on the basic elements of providing reliable access to quality curative and preventive services," he said.