

U.S.-Vietnam Cooperation on Agent Orange/Dioxin Issues



“Agent Orange has long been a sensitive issue for both countries and we have differed over the lasting impact of the defoliant on Vietnam. I am pleased to say we are now engaged in practical, constructive cooperation.”

- Scot Marciel, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State -

U.S.-Vietnam Cooperation

Since **2001**, the United States and Vietnam have worked collaboratively on the issue of dioxin contamination, looking ahead rather than backwards. **Both the United States and Vietnam agree that the health of the Vietnamese people and the safety of its environment will be vital for Vietnam’s future.** The United States and Vietnam have focused on former U.S. bases in Vietnam where Agent Orange and other herbicides were loaded, stored, and transferred, some of which (Danang, Phu Cat, and Bien Hoa) have current soil concentrations of dioxin that exceed international standards.

Under the auspices of the Leahy War Victims Fund and other programs, **the United States has contributed more than \$46 million since 1989 to help Vietnamese citizens with disabilities, regardless of cause.** From **2001 to 2007**, the United States spent over \$2 million to initiate technical dialogues and build the capacity of Vietnamese scientists to analyze soil samples. In **2006**, the governments of the United States and Vietnam established the Joint Advisory Committee, a bilateral forum for high-level scientific dialogue to provide environmental and health advice to both governments. **In 2007, the Department of State and EPA provided \$400,000 in technical assistance to support initial dioxin containment efforts at the Danang airbase.**

Following growing U.S.-Vietnamese cooperation, several donors and non-governmental organizations, including the Ford Foundation, UNDP, UNICEF, and the Czech Republic, committed to funding Agent Orange/dioxin-related projects in Vietnam.

Bilateral Assistance

With the support of a total of **\$9 million approved by the U.S. Congress in Fiscal Years 2007, 2009 and 2010**, the United States continues to pursue programs to address dioxin contamination in close coordination with the Government of Vietnam (GVN). From **2008 to 2010**, the United States allocated over \$3 million for health programs for people with disabilities in the Danang area. **As of April 2010, nearly 4,000 persons with disabilities, and approximately 3,000 family members and caregivers, have benefited from the program, receiving skills training and job placement, corrective surgery and prosthetic and orthopedic devices, and scholarships for children with disabilities.** Over the next year, the

United States and Vietnam will begin to work together to reduce the burden and severity of disabilities in Vietnam.

In partnership with the GVN, the United States has already allocated \$6 million for environmental remediation at Danang Airport. In 2009, USAID initiated the first phase of a dioxin remediation program at Danang Airport. An environmental assessment is currently underway that will identify the most appropriate technology for cleaning up contaminated areas. Following that, designs and plans will be developed for the selected technology to support its implementation. The U.S. Embassy continues to work to identify additional support for these efforts. In recognition of growing USG-GVN engagement, in December 2009, USAID and Vietnam's Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment signed an agreement detailing continued USG-GVN health and environmental remediation cooperation.

Looking Forward

In providing U.S. assistance targeting Agent Orange in Vietnam, our aim has been to strengthen the scientific capacity and infrastructure of Vietnam's research institutions and improve the ability of Vietnamese authorities to protect the environment and promote public health for future generations. Our collaboration with Vietnam on Agent Orange/dioxin issues extends well beyond the government-to-government dialogue. This is part of a multi-actor effort requiring the closest possible cooperation and coordination with international agencies, other donors, NGOs and public and private foundations.