

Public Diplomacy in Vietnam: Culture and Outreach Activities



In 2009, Public Diplomacy activities in Vietnam reached over 65,000 Vietnamese ranging from political leaders, researchers, educators, artists, journalists, businessmen, community and NGO representatives, students, and the general public.

Cultural Programs

Since 1995, the United States and Vietnam have engaged in a long and eventful journey through cultural exchanges. From classical concerts to boy choirs, from country singers to jazz singers, from step dance to hip hop, from photography exhibits to film festivals, and from university soccer to volleyball, each activity brings the diversity of American culture to Vietnam. Cultural and educational programs - like the Performing Arts Initiative “Ozomatli” and the Cultural Envoy Program - promote mutual understanding and warmer relations between Americans and Vietnamese. Whether it is through music, fine art, or literature programs, both the U.S. and Vietnam have opportunities to share their cultural values and deepen their connections in important ways.

Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP): Established in 2001 to help developing countries, the AFCP emphasizes the preservation of the world’s cultural patrimony as an integral component of U.S. foreign relations. **Since 2001, the U.S. Mission in Vietnam has funded 9 projects with the total value of \$250,000 to help Vietnam preserve its cultural heritage.** The largest grant (\$74,500) was awarded for the preservation of the historical site of the O Quan Chuong City Gate. This grant is part of Hanoi’s 1000th anniversary celebrations and also marks the 15th anniversary of U.S.-Vietnam relations.



Ambassador Marine and the lacquer painting “Nam Bac Mot Nha”

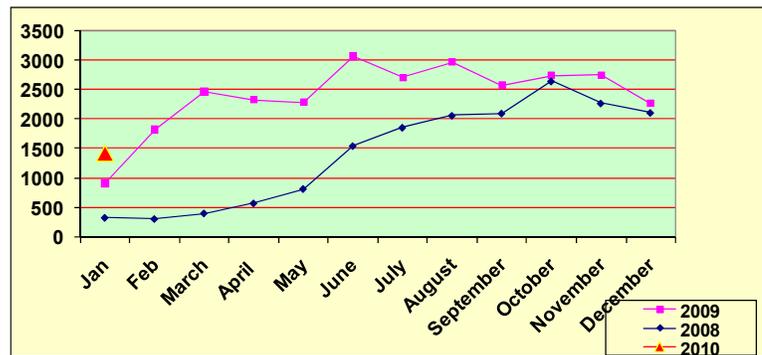
Non-Academic Exchange Programs: Through numerous programs, particularly the International Visitor Program and the Voluntary Visitor Program, the U.S. Mission has invited more than 500 Vietnamese citizens to participate in short-term exchange programs in the United States. The participants come from all walks of life: Vietnamese senior officials, think-tank experts, researchers, educators, journalists, human rights activists, democracy activists, and legal and judicial systems experts. They advocate legal reform, economic reform, environment protection, women’s issues, civil society, ethnic affairs and community development, professional and legal standards, quality control, and access to higher education. These programs provide leading Vietnamese citizens with opportunities to better understand the United States and learn about American people, society, values and institutions.

Small Democracy Programs offer grants of up to **\$20,000** to Vietnamese non-government organizations to strengthen democracy, increase respect for civil society and the rule of law, and advance human rights and women's rights. Since 1995, the Mission has given **17 grants** totaling **\$350,000** to organizations across the country.

U.S. and Mission Speaker Programs: Since 1995, the U.S. Mission has brought nearly 100 U.S. experts working in different fields to Vietnam, and has sent nearly 200 U.S. government officials and Vietnam-based Embassy and Consulate officers to Vietnamese schools, universities and institutions to speak on topics related to the United States. They have spoken about issues as varied as legal reform, intellectual property rights, trafficking in persons, online journalism, creative writing, politics and history, economics and the environment, and bilateral relations between the United States and Vietnam.

Outreach Activities

The Information Resource Centers in Hanoi (American Center) and HCMC provide authoritative and timely background on the content and context of U.S. policy issues and American society. IRC materials cover key subjects about the United States: government, economy, social issues, and culture. IRC visitors can also obtain information on studying in the U.S. and learning English. Primary outreach tools include frequent



Monthly Patrons to the IRC Hanoi over three recent years

Speaker Programs, bi-weekly American English Clubs and Book Club, Reference Update Services, Film Showings and an active Facebook page. Through these activities, the IRCs reach out to Vietnamese students, academics, journalists, government officials and professionals to provide accurate information about various aspects of American culture and U.S. policy. **All IRC programs and services are free of charge and have attracted nearly 50,000 visitors over the last 15 years. The two IRCs combined had nearly 1,800,000 website visitors in 2009 (for both the English and Vietnamese sites) and, as of June 2010, there are over 2,800 Facebook fans.** In addition to a collection of approximately 3,500 reference books, 377 DVDs, 70 periodicals, magazines, and newspapers, the IRCs provides internet and database access on 11 computers.

Book Translation and Grants: Books prepared by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs provide in-depth information about U.S. policies, society, history, literature, arts, and sports. **The American Center has translated, printed, distributed and donated over 40 book collections to Vietnamese schools, universities, research institutions, public library and legal association with the total cost of over \$150,000.**

U.S.-Vietnam Studies Projects (American Corner): The Public Affairs Section in HCMC opened the U.S.-Vietnam Studies Corner in Danang in 2004 as a partnership between the U.S. Mission and Danang University. It provides access to up-to-date information on the U.S. for the general public.