



PHOTO & CAPTION

Craft Locally, Compete Globally



Photo: VNCI

Four major U.S. wholesalers have ordered more than 1,000 samples to exhibit at the High Point show in North Carolina (above), and two of them have recently visited Vietnam to expand their lacquer and ceramics purchasing.

While Vietnam is now open to global trade, Vietnamese companies that seek to increase their exports and profits still face several constraints. In Ha Tay province near Hanoi, for instance, home accessories firms are challenged by limited product development processes and a lack of external market knowledge. USAID is supporting a project to help this sector compete internationally by identifying policy constraints, improving market access and trade opportunities, and helping companies form a “cluster” group to collectively advance the industry.

In 2004, USAID arranged for a U.S. design expert to train Vietnamese businesses on product design, development and export. He also introduced local firms to U.S. buyers and helped the firms prepare and export sample orders for the High Point home furnishings show in North Carolina in October.

Thanks to USAID’s involvement, firms in Ha Tay and Bat Trang have greatly improved their ability to compete internationally. Four major U.S. wholesalers have ordered more than 1,000 samples worth \$7,600 to exhibit at the High Point show, and two of them have recently visited Vietnam to expand their lacquer and ceramics purchasing. Most of the U.S. sample buyers anticipate placing larger orders for handicrafts with Vietnamese firms.

By linking sellers to buyers, producers in villages can now take advantage of growing consumer demand through an increased understanding of production processes and global markets.