



SUCCESS STORY

Vietnam Customs Build Leadership Skills for the Digital Era

“Industry 4.0 requires innovation. If we do not know how to innovate, we will be left behind..the role of people is most important – modernization requires innovative leadership.”

Ms. Vu Thi Thu Ha, Deputy Director of the GDVC Inspection-Examination Department

When Ms. Vu Thi Thu Ha was leader of the Narcotics Control team in the Anti-smuggling Department of the General Department of Vietnam Customs (GDVC), the pressures of the job forced her to lead with a firm hand.

“As the female leader of a male-dominated unit, I had to impose my ideas on my team members,” she said.

In 2021, Ha became Deputy Director of the GDVC’s Inspection-Examination Department, where she is responsible for a team of 20 customs officers. In her new post, her work is broader, with a specific focus on policy-making and field work. When Ha began working in her new role, she soon realized that her approach to leadership had to change.

In November 2021, Ha, along with 13 other GDVC leaders, took part in the first of a series of skills-based Leadership and Management Development (LMD) courses organized by the USAID Trade Facilitation Program. The five-year (2018-2023) Program works with the Vietnamese Government to develop a more attractive trade and investment environment in Vietnam.

Effective leadership and management in the Customs sector is essential for trade facilitation, particularly in the context of Vietnam’s integration into the global market, which has driven the GDVC to embark on an extensive program of modernization and reform.

Ha is well aware of the challenges of the digital era: “Industry 4.0 requires innovation. If we do not know how to innovate, we will be left behind,” she said, “and to achieve this, the role of people is most important – modernization requires innovative leadership skills.”

Since attending the course, Ha has adapted her leadership style to suit her new post. “I encourage harmony among my team members and give them the opportunity to take the initiative – to speak their mind. I know how to listen more and impose myself less,” she said.

Her team has responded well to her new leadership style. “They are more open when we discuss work issues. Gradually, they’ve become more proactive, offering their ideas both with me and with the rest of the team,” said Ha.

As Vietnam accelerates efforts to develop a more attractive trade and investment environment, innovative leadership will be vital. Through its LMD training series, the USAID Trade Facilitation Program is laying the foundations for reforms that will make it easier for enterprises and investors – both foreign and domestic – to do business in Vietnam.
