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Building bridges through fashion, creating a future through education

At the “Áo Dài Fashion Week”, Isabelle Müller from Kapfenhardt promoted Vietnam’s cultural heritage. Her foundation has been active there for years.

ILONA PROKOPH | UNTERREICHENBACH

“In a world where cultures are increasingly coming into contact with one another, fashion can be far more than an expression of beauty, craftsmanship and creativity,” says Isabelle Müller. This year, the writer, who lives in Kapfenhardt, a district of Unterreichenbach, is celebrating the tenth anniversary of her German “LOAN Stiftung” (LOAN Foundation). She founded it because her mother Loan was not allowed to attend school as a child in Vietnam in the 1930s because of her gender.

Over the past ten years, Isabelle Müller and her foundation have invested around 1.8 million US dollars in children in particular need in Vietnam. By building boarding schools, schools and kindergartens, they give children from ethnic minorities in the poorest regions of the country a self-determined future through education. From 18 to 20 September, Isabelle Müller even took part in person in the “Ao Dai Fashion Week” in London, presenting Vietnamese fashion on the catwalk.



In September, Isabelle Müller presented Vietnamese dresses at a fashion show in London. PHOTO: ISABELLE MÜLLER

As the founder of a foundation that is now well known in Vietnam, she supported the event as a platform where cultural heritage, creativity, community and international exchange came together. “For me, wearing the Vietnamese dresses was far more than a

fashion choice," says the author. The 62-year-old is convinced that hope grows wherever people are willing to give to one another, to share and to create opportunities. For her, the "Ao Dai Fashion Week" went beyond a mere fashion show: it offered an opportunity to bring the Vietnamese way of life closer to an international audience through the creations of local designers and artists.

London, according to Müller, is a city known for international diversity and creative exchange. "I hope that the 'Ao Dai Fashion Week' in London will soon be comparable to the major fashion festivals in New York, Milan and Paris," says Isabelle Müller. Growing international recognition, she says, could open up new opportunities to engage with Vietnam.

Isabelle Müller's commitment was also in the spotlight at the "Vietnam International Awards 2026": on Saturday, the author received the People's Choice Award in a worldwide public vote, and an international jury also honoured her foundation with the award in the Education category. Müller was thus the only nominee to celebrate two awards at once.