

Essential problems in sustainable development of ethnic minority in Vietnam

Do Van Trai, University of Labor and Social Affairs

Pham Hong Trang, University of Labor and Social Affairs

Nguyen Thi Thu Trang, Trade Union University

1 Introduction

Poverty is an issue which many countries have to cope with, especially developing countries like Vietnam. Along with socio-economic development, ending poverty is also one of Vietnamese government's priority missions that aim to create a total and stable change in every part of the society. As a result of this change, multi social welfare programs have created and provided to Vietnamese across the country. This article uses multidimensional poverty definition and its indicators which were mentioned in the national plan names "Conversion of a one-way to multi-dimensional poverty measurement approach to the 2016-2020 period" in September 15th 2015 (Vietnamese Government, 2015). Those indicators include income and career, education, healthcare, living standard, culture and information accession.

2 Research methods and Definition of terms

Based on this approach, authors go to find out answer for the question which is how these five indicators were carried out in ethnic minority groups and then draw a wide picture about their poverty. There were some key methods used in this research, include:

The research method is literately based on analyzing Vietnam poverty reports which leak out successes and limitations in supporting ethnic minority groups break their poverty in various sectors.

Direct observation: the authors paid visits to 4 mountainous provinces in northwest areas like Yen Bai, Hoa Binh, Son La, Dien Bien to observe their daily life and their living conditions as well.

In-depth Interview: Along with observation method, the authors have conducted a number of in-depth interviews with local people, authorities, social workers to figure out situation and its reasons.

Besides that, the authors also used our own experience which we call "experience method" to analyze and assess limitations and find out solutions for enhancing the effects of poverty programs in areas where ethnic minority groups reside.

During the research, authors ultimately tried to connect every single piece of data so that we could figure out the poverty situation and contribute recommendations to change their situation so that they are cable of growing stably. At the same time, Vietnamese Government

also reaches their commitment to international community on sustainable development which is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UN, 1987).

According to the United Nations Organization (UN), poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities; it is a violation of human dignity. It means the lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to bring up a family, not having education and healthcare services, not having the land to plant or a job to earn income, nor having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence and it often implies living on marginal and fragile environments, not having access to clean water and sanitation (UN, 1998).

In Vietnam, poverty is generally defined as the situation where a part of the population is incapable of meeting the basic needs of people to sustain life. Meanwhile, poverty line means to consider whether a family is a poor household or not. The determination of the poverty line in Vietnam from 2015 onwards is based on average household income (called the unidirectional poverty line). From 2016 to present based on 2 standards: average monthly income (total income divided equally among family members, including those who do not generate income such as children, patients etc.) and accession to basic social services (called multidimensional poverty lines).

Criteria for setting up multidimensional poverty lines based on Law on Organization of the Government in 25th December 2001, National Assembly's Resolution No. 76/2014 / QH13 in 24th June 2014, Resolution No. 79 / NQ-CP by Vietnamese Government in November 4, 2015 and the proposal of the Minister of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs (Vietnamese Government, 19th November 2015).

3 Poverty background in Viet Nam

The poverty line for the period 2016-2020 includes income criteria and the level of access to basic social services. The poverty line in Vietnam varies between urban and rural areas. Poor households in rural areas are those who meet one of the following two criteria:

- Have an average income per capita per month of VND 700,000 (equivalent to USD 31) or less;
- Having a per capita income per month of over VND 700,000 to VND 1,000,000 (from USD 31 to USD 44) and a deficiency of 03 indicators measuring the level of access to basic social services or higher.

Poor households in urban areas are those that meet one of the following two criteria:

- Have an income per person from 900,000 VND (39 USD) or less per month;
- Having a per capita income per month of over VND 900,000 to VND 1,300,000 (from US \$ 39 to 57) and a lack of three indicators measuring the level of access to basic social services or higher (Vietnamese Government, 2015).

The basic social services include 5 services: health, education, housing, clean water and sanitation, information.

At the United Nations Conference on November 11th 2006, Vietnam announced the achievement of the MDGs on poverty reduction and reaching the goal 10 years ahead of

schedule (Country report, 2015). According to the unidimensional (old) standard, in the period of 1993 - 2004, the proportion of poor people decreased from 58.1% (in 1993) to 19.4% (in 2004); In the period of 2011 - 2015, the proportion of poor people decreased from 14.2% (in 2010) to 4.25% (in 2016). According to the new standard, the average rate of poor households in poor districts is reduced to less than 40%; poor households in extremely difficult communes, coastal areas and islands, safe communes of ethnic minority and mountainous areas have decreased by 3% - 4% compared to 2016. Vietnam has eradicated hunger for tens of millions of people, pushing back and eliminating hunger across the country.

According to the UNDP survey results, the poverty rate, regardless of any measure, decreased over the period 2012-2016. The poverty rate of income, expenditure as well as multidimensional poverty has decreased sharply. The multidimensional poverty rate decreased from 18.1% to 10.9%, while the income poverty rate decreased from 12.6% to 7.0% in 2016. Although there is a correlation in the poverty reduction rate but there are significant differences in the incidence of single-dimensional and multi-dimensional poverty. For example, the poverty incidence and expenditure (unilateral poverty) of the Northern Midlands and Mountains region is the highest among the six regions of the country, but the multidimensional poverty rate of this region is lower than the Central Highlands and the Mekong River Delta. There are many multi-dimensionally poor households that are neither income poor nor expenditure poor, and vice versa. Only 2.7% of the population is poor on all three dimensions of income, expenditure and multidimensional poverty. The health access indicator has been significantly improved due to the strengthening of universal health insurance policy. The shortage of information fell sharply due to the development of mobile phones and the Internet. Housing and sanitation conditions also improved but the pace of improvement was quite low. Currently, the largest level of deprivation is in the indicators of hygienic latrines and education in adults.

However, the poverty rate has decreased in recent years but there is still a situation of falling back into poverty or vulnerable households falling into poverty. According to the multidimensional poverty index, in the period of 2012-2016, 6.7% of the population was poor in both years, 2.6% of the population fell into poverty, and 9.4% of the population escaped from poverty in 2016. Thus, the rate of the population escaping from poverty is significantly larger than the rate of falling into poverty, the poverty rate lasts at a low level.

4 General information of ethnic minority population in Viet Nam

4.1 Regarding population distribution

The ethnic minority and mountainous areas belong to the areas of 51 provinces and cities, 548 districts and 5,266 commune-level administrative units, mainly in the Northwest region, Central Highlands, Southwest and Central Coast (Vietnamese Government, 2017). Ethnic minorities live in communities mainly in mountainous areas, border areas, deep-lying, remote and extremely difficult areas with divided terrain, difficult transportation.

The Northern Midlands and Mountains region has the highest number of ethnic minorities (about 6.7 million), the Central Highlands (about 2 million), the North Central and Central Coast (1.9 million), Southwest region (1.4 million people), the rest live scattered in provinces and cities across the country. Most of ethnic minorities live in mountainous areas, only Khmer, Cham, Chinese live in plains and urban areas (GSO, 2019).

Ethnic minority groups all live in community, intertwined with the Kinh people. In 51 provinces and cities with many ethnic minorities living in communities:

- 01 province with the proportion of ethnic minorities accounting for over 90% of the population;
- 07 provinces have ethnic minority proportion accounting for 70% - 90% of the population;
- 04 provinces have ethnic minority proportion accounting for 50-70% of the population;
- 04 provinces have ethnic minority proportion accounting for 30% - 50% of the population;
- 05 provinces have the proportion of ethnic minorities accounting for 10% - 30% of the population
- 20 provinces have the proportion of ethnic minorities accounting for less than 10% of the population.

4.2 The quality of the population

The average life expectancy of ethnic minorities now is 72.1 years, lower than the national average life expectancy of 73.2 years (CEMA, 2015). The difference in average life expectancy is caused by living conditions and access to health care services.

Child marriage and inbreed marriage are factors that have a negative impact on the life expectancy and population quality of ethnic minority groups. The total child marriage rate of 53 ethnic minorities is 26.6%, which is relatively high compared to the national average. Similarly, the percentage of inbreed marriage among ethnic minorities has an average rate of 6.5 %¹, especially in some ethnic groups with the rate up to over 40 % such as: Ma, Mang and Mngong. Child marriage and inbreed marriage are a problem that needs special attention for some ethnic groups, which can have many consequences including high infant mortality, low life expectancy and risk of decline. Population size reduction is directly related to poverty in some ethnic groups.

4.3 Economic structure

Statistics according to the Provincial Party Congress Document for the term 2015-2020:

- There are 11 provinces with the economic structure is industry, service, agriculture and forestry;
- There are 28 provinces with the economic structure is agriculture, forestry, industry and service;
- There are 12 provinces with the economic structure is service, industry, agriculture and forestry.

The strength of the provinces of ethnic minorities, mountainous areas and especially difficult socio-economic areas is mainly in agricultural and forestry economic development. In which, it is mainly raising cattle, planting industrial crops and developing forestry economy. Main industries are processing agricultural and forestry products, exploiting and processing

¹ Some other ethnic groups also have high rates of inbreeding, including Xieng (36.7 %), Co Tu (27.7 %), Kho Mu (25 %); 11 ethnic groups have a marriage rate between 10 hân and under 20 % such as Co Ho (17.8 %), Chut (16.8 %), Khang (16 %), Khmer (15.9 %), Cham (15.6 %)

minerals and hydroelectricity. Tourism is mainly eco-tourism, experiences associated with the unique culture of ethnic minority communities.

The economic structure of this region is moving towards increasing the proportion of industry and services but the economy is still mainly agricultural and forestry (over 50%).

4.4 Economic growth

Provinces in ethnic minority and mountainous areas and ethnic minority, mountainous and socio-economic regions particularly have high economic growth rates, of which the Northwestern provinces average an increase of 8.4 % / year, Central Highlands average increase of 8.1% / year, South West average increase of 7.3% / year (GSO, 2019). However, the economic growth of the provinces is not equal:

- There are 5 provinces with a growth rate of > 10%;
- There are 46 provinces, the growth rate is from 8 - 10%

Some localities have initially developed areas producing agricultural and forestry goods with high added value such as coffee, tea, rubber, pepper, medicinal plants, timber trees and non-timber products because of low starting point and small size of the economy, the proportion of contribution to the economy is limited.

4.5 Revenue collection

Data from the Ministry of Finance on budget settlement in 2017 shows that in 51 provinces of ethnic minority areas, there are:

- There are 12 provinces collecting more than 10,000 billion VND;
- There are 3 provinces that collect from 8,000 to under 10,000 billion VND;
- There are 12 provinces budget revenue from 5,000 to less than 8,000 billion VND;
- There are 7 provinces from the state budget from 3,000 to less than 5,000 billion VND;
- There are 17 provinces collecting budget less than 3,000 billion dong VND.

Regarding the budget balance ratio:

- There are 11 provinces that can balance the budget themselves;
- There are 7 provinces able to balance over 50% of the budget;
- There are 16 provinces which can reach from 30 to less than 50% of the budget;
- There are 17 provinces that self-balance <30% of the budget (MOF, 2017).

The above figures also show that for the 17 provinces with self-balancing ratio below 30% are all provinces with a large ethnic minority population, high poverty rate, underdeveloped economy, and income. The budget is low and it is very difficult to allocate local budgets in the implementation of ethnic policies.

In general, the economy size of the provinces in ethnic minority and mountainous areas is still very modest; the budget revenue is small and the proportion is very low. More than 90% of the provinces in the ethnic minority and mountainous areas need to receive central budget support.

4.6 Attracting investment

According to local reports, in 3 years (2016-2018), provinces in ethnic minority areas, northern provinces and the socio-economic region in extremely difficult circumstances attract

just a few investment projects; These investment projects are mainly in urban areas and suburban areas; the number of investment projects in communes of Region 2 is very small, almost no investment projects in communes of Region III. The main areas of investment are mineral exploitation and processing, agricultural and forestry processing, hydropower, and new urban areas. The project scale is not large, with few strong impacts on the socio-economic development of the region. The source of investment capital is mainly domestic, few FDI projects, investment projects with average technology, and few projects with new technology capable of international competition.

4.7 Essential infrastructure

The Government has had many programs and policies on investment projects to develop essential infrastructure in ethnic minority and mountainous areas and extremely difficult socio-economic regions such as Program 135 and Program. Sustainable poverty reduction National Program in the period of 2015 - 2020, Program on building a new National Construction Program for Rural Development, Program 30A, Decision No. 714/QD-TTg on June 14th 2018 of the Prime Minister on adjusting additional policy processing Program to build cum, residential areas and houses in flooded areas in the Mekong Delta Overall, 98.4% of communes now have roads to the center; over 98% of ethnic minority households have access to the national electricity grid; 100% of communes have kindergartens, primary and secondary schools; 99.3% of communes have health stations; over 90% of communes have radio and television coverage; 100% of communes have telecommunications infrastructure and mobile coverage to meet the communication needs of the people (Country report, 2015). However, the demand for investment in building essential infrastructure in the area is still very large.

a) Traffic Infrastructure

With a group of major Government programs such as Program 135, National Program of New Rural Construction, Program to build people's bridges to ensure traffic safety in ethnic minority areas in the period of 2014 – 2020, there is 100% of the provinces have roads to the center of the district towns, but mostly roads are grade V and grade VI with semi-penetration. There are 54 communes without roads to the center, many roads to the commune centers in ethnic minority, northern and socio-economic areas are seriously degraded, only able to travel in the dry season; just over 70% of villages and hamlets have hardened roads leading to commune centers, while 13,539 villages are mainly earth roads and temporary roads (Vietnamese Government, 2013).

b) Irrigation Infrastructure

The system of intra-field canals, small and medium-sized irrigation works has partially met the needs of production development of the people. However, due to the divided terrain conditions, extreme weather conditions, often subject to natural disasters, floods, landslides and the lack of resources for maintenance and maintenance, the area Irrigation cultivated land of ethnic minority communes still accounts for a relatively low proportion (only about 23.4%). In particular, the northern mountainous region is currently the region with the lowest percentage of irrigated arable land with 11%².

² According to the socio-economic situation survey data 53 ethnic minorities published in 2016, only 390 thousand hectares / 3.553 thousand hectares of arable land in the northern mountainous region are irrigated.

c) *Electricity grid infrastructure*

Ethnic minority areas and mountainous areas are watershed sources, with many rivers and streams providing water for major hydropower plants of the whole country, but this area still has more than 3,400 villages and hamlets without low-voltage power lines; The rate of households using electricity in the whole region is only 93.9%, while 1,422 villages have to use lighting oil and other fuels.

d) *School and classroom facilities*

The network of schools and classrooms has grown rapidly; almost all communes have kindergartens, primary schools, junior high schools and centers of commune clusters with high schools. However, the quality of classrooms in ethnic minority, mountainous and disadvantaged areas is still poor, the number of new solid classrooms accounts for about 77%, up to 23% of semi-solid classrooms and temporary classrooms. This is one of the main reasons leading to the fact that the percentage of schools accredited to meet the standards in ethnic minority and mountainous communes is less than half that of lowland areas.

e) *Health infrastructure*

Health infrastructure in the areas of ethnic minority and mountainous areas is also one of the contents that require a breakthrough in the investment mechanism to meet the health care needs of the people. There are 4,113 commune health stations in the whole region, but there are still 1,325 semi-solid health stations and temporary houses that need to be upgraded and solidified.

The percentage of communes in ethnic minority areas that have standard commune health stations is still low. It is only 69.2% of health stations in ethnic minority areas have doctors to provide medical examination and treatment for people. Among 4.113 communes in ethnic minority and mountainous areas having health stations, only over 45% of communes will have health stations up to medical standards by 2010 and about 20% of them will have commune health stations reaching medical standards for the period of 2011-2020 (MOH, 2011).

f) *Cultural and information infrastructure*

The percentage of ethnic minority communes without cultural houses is up to 53.3%; 18,186 villages and hamlets (accounting for 37.5%) in ethnic minority areas do not have cultural houses / community houses yet. The percentage of villages with loudspeakers is only 56.8% (CEMA, 2015).

5 Poverty situation and poverty reduction among ethnic minorities

According to the Socio-Economic Situation Survey 53 ethnic minorities published in 2016, 53 ethnic minorities have about 13.4 million people (accounting for 14.6% of the national population) with 3.04 million households. According to the Prime Minister's Decision, the ethnic minority and northern Vietnam regions are located in 51 provinces and cities, 548 districts and 5,266 commune-level administrative units, mainly in the Northwest and Western regions. Central Highlands, South West and Central coast areas (Vietnamese Government, 2017). Ethnic minorities live in communities mainly in mountainous areas, borders, deep-lying, remote areas, special difficult regions with divided terrain, difficult transportation.

With many poverty reduction mechanisms and policies issued in the recent period, the poverty rate at the end of 2017 in poor districts decreased to less than 40%; The rate of poor households in extremely difficult communes will decrease by 3-4%. Eight districts have escaped from the poor district under the Prime Minister's Decision 30a; 14 districts are excluded from the policy entitlement like poor districts; 34 communes eligible for exit under the Program 135. The proportion of poor households in extremely difficult communes, border communes, safe communes, ethnic minority and mountainous areas in 2017 decreased by 4.33 % compared to 2016 (Vietnamese Government, 2016). Therefore, it is fairly to conclude that the rate of poverty reduction in ethnic minority, mountainous and extremely difficult areas reached the goal.

Policies on investment in socio-economic development and poverty reduction have created a bright change in infrastructure; about 25,000 infrastructure works have been invested and built in communes and villages where people with difficulties live in. Currently, almost communes have roads to the central town; 88% of villages have motorized roads and 42% of villages have standard roads; 99% of commune centers and 80% of villages have electricity; 65% of communes have small irrigation systems to meet production and living requirements; 76% of communes meet national criteria for health. The rate of poor households, especially ethnic minority households have been decreased by an average of 3.5% per year. The central budgetary fund allocated for the National Target Program on Sustainable Poverty Reduction in the period 2012 - 2018 is more than 47,000 billion VND. More than 1.4 million ethnic minorities are entitled to credit programs at Vietnam Bank for Social Policies with a total outstanding loan of 46,159 billion VND.

However, if compared with the national poverty reduction results, the situation of poor and nearly poor households in ethnic minority and mountainous areas, especially the poverty of ethnic minorities is still one of the biggest challenges today. The proportion of ethnic minority households falling back into poverty, generating poverty and near-poor households is still high. The average income per capita per year of poor ethnic minority households is lower than the national average income per capita. The life of the people still faces many difficulties and has an unstable livelihood. The essential infrastructure system is missing. Many targets of infrastructure investment projects of Program 30a and Program 135 have not been completed and have not met the requirements of socio-economic development. Some major goals (reduction of poor districts, communes and villages with special difficulties) were not achieved. Besides, unfavorable natural conditions, a small area of arable land, difficult transportation, complicated weather, divided terrain; Consequences of climate change, drought, natural disasters, floods, flash floods and saltwater intrusion have greatly affected the results of poverty reduction.

By the end of 2017, nearly 865,000 poor households were ethnic minorities, accounting for 52.66% of the total poor households nationwide (meanwhile the proportion of ethnic minority population accounted for 14.6% of the country's population). On the other hand, there are still many ethnic minority groups whose poverty rate is over 40% (6 times higher than the national average of 6.7% currently) (UNDP, 2018).

5.1 The livelihood

Livelihoods of people in ethnic minority areas, especially ethnic minorities, are mainly in agriculture and forestry. The proportion of ethnic minority groups having jobs in industry, construction and services are limited, not yet exploiting potential in the field of tourism and

services of the region. The average income per capita of ethnic minorities currently is about 1.1 million/person/month, less than half of the national average.

a) *About land*

Although the livelihoods associated with agriculture and forestry is predominant, the situation of no or lack of productive land is common among ethnic minority people in general and ethnic minority communities in particular. According to survey data on socio-economic status of 53 ethnic minorities, up to 68.5% of ethnic minority households need more land for production. In which, there are many ethnic groups in the Central Highlands with over 80% of households lacking productive land. Without timely supporting mechanisms and policies to restructure labor, diversify livelihoods for people, it is difficult to achieve sustainable development goals in the ethnic minority & mountainous areas.

According to the observation, ethnic people's lives were extremely tough as their live totally depends on agriculture. Basically they are just able to cultivate one rice crop per year and besides that they have to go to their farm on mountains every early morning but the rice output is still low. The reasons for this are because small farming models, outdated farming techniques, barren land and unfavorable natural conditions.

b) *Employment status of ethnic minorities*

According to statistics, about 6.2% of ethnic minority laborers have been trained, one third of the national average (UNDP, 2018). The underemployment of young ethnic minority people is currently a pressing problem in ethnic minority and northern regions. Among more than 9.38 million ethnic minorities aged 15 and over, there are more than 1.3 million people who have not had stable jobs.

c) *Credit of ethnic minority households*

Currently, there are many preferential lending policies for poor and near-poor households with a variety of subjects and purposes from the Bank for Social Policies such as Decision No. 54/2012 / QD-TTg or Decision 29/2013 / QD-TTg. In the three-year period from 2016 to August 31, 2018, outstanding loans to ethnic minority households reached VND 45,194 billion with over 1.4 million ethnic minority customers, the average outstanding loan per household was 30,5 million to develop production, increase income. However, ethnic minority groups are still facing many difficulties in accessing, especially solutions to use loans effectively. On the other hand, there is no preferential credit policy for households who can start a business or start a business to create jobs and income for people in this area.

5.2 The living conditions of the ethnic groups

Programs and policies of the Party and State such as the National Program of Sustainable Poverty Reduction, Program on Building New Rural, Program 135 and others in recent years have promoted significant socio-economic development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas, especially difficult areas. The Government has also made great efforts in implementing the unexpected support policy, ensuring social security, leaving no people in need of hunger without support.

From 2016 to September 2018, the Prime Minister granted 117 thousand tons of rice to support localities with large numbers of ethnic minorities; from the central budget of 1,000

billion VND to support the construction of houses for households affected by natural calamities and floods, mostly in ethnic minority and northern regions. Compared to the past, the living conditions of ethnic minorities have improved markedly, but there are still significant differences compared to the common ground in the following aspects:

a) *Housing status*

Ethnic minority groups with solid houses account for 14.5%, which is two third of the national average (46.7%); The percentage of semi-permanent houses of ethnic minority households is 70.2% and up to 15.3% (equivalent to about 46,526 households) of ethnic minority households still living in temporary houses.

In the research sites, there are a great number of families who still traditionally live in unstable house which animals like buffalos and cows live in the ground of their house. This situation brings some serious harm to their health and danger to their life when natural disasters like storm, typhoon and landslide come which yearly happen in these areas.

b) *Access to clean water*

Currently, 73.3% of ethnic minority households have access to hygienic water in daily life, but 11 ethnic minority groups have from 30% to 50% of households have access to hygienic water daily. From in-depth interviews, a great group of ethnic people still remain their habit of using water from stream or storing water from rains for cooking and drinking instead of clean water provided by government. The reasons to explain for this issue are because it is their tradition long time ago and besides that, in order to use clean water, tanks are generally far from their house and they are not always available. This situation is also a huge challenge in health care and improving the quality of life of ethnic minorities living in mountainous areas and areas with especially difficult conditions.

c) *Electricity*

The percentage of EM households using electricity is 5% lower than the national average. Presently, there are 10 ethnic minorities who have less than 80% of the households using electricity, of which, particularly the 3 ethnic groups of Array, La Hu and Lo Lo have less than 50% of households having electricity for daily life. There is a very high rate for simple lighting of ethnic minority households; the average cost of electricity for each ethnic minority household is only 10-20 thousand VND / household / month.

5.3 Education

The proportion of ethnic minority people attending school at the right age is still low. Currently, about 30% of ethnic minority pupils have not attended school at the right age (including primary, lower secondary and upper secondary); the average attendance rate at the high school level for ethnic minorities is 32.3%. In some ethnic groups such as Brau, Xtieng, Gia Rai, Ma, Mnong, Lo Lo, the average rate of students attending school at the right age is below 60%, of which less than 10% of students of upper ethnic minority groups go to school at the right age at high school.

The proportion of ethnic minority people who cannot read and write Vietnamese is still quite high (CEMA, 2015). Presently, 20.8% of ethnic minority people (equivalent to 2.79 million people) have not yet been able to read and write fluently in Vietnamese. Ethnic minority

groups include: Ha Nhi, Co Lao, Brau, Mong, Mang, Lu, La Hu with more than 50% of the population are illiterate.

The rate of trained ethnic minority laborers is low, averaging 6.2%, only about one third of the average rate of the country's labor force. Some ethnic minority groups have the percentage of trained workers at less than 2%, even some ethnic minority groups with nearly 100% of untrained workers such as: Xtieng, Brau, Array, Ro Mam, Ba Na, Phu La, Raglay, La Hu and Kho Mu.

5.4 Healthcare

The rate of using health insurance cards for medical examination and treatment of ethnic minorities is 44.8%, equal to half of the national average rate of 87.2% (UNFTA and MOH, 2017). Some ethnic groups, the rate of using health insurance cards is less than 30% such as: La Ha, Xtieng, Ngai, Xinh Mun, Muong, Gia Rai, Bo Y. On the other hand, due to difficult economic conditions, distance from home access to remote health facilities; difficult access roads significantly affect people's access to health services in ethnic minority and mountainous areas, traditional culture and disadvantaged areas.

The proportion of ethnic minority women going to health facilities for antenatal care is low. About 70.9% of pregnant women get antenatal care at least once in health facilities. This average is quite low compared to the National Sustainable Development Goal (VDG). There are also 11 ethnic groups with the proportion of women receiving antenatal care below 50%, of which the typical ethnic minority group with the lowest rate of pregnant women is concentrated in: La Hu (9.1%), Ha Nhi (25.4%), Si La (25.5%), La Ha (31.9%), Array (34.9%), Mong (36.5%). This situation is quite serious because the proportion of pregnant women receiving adequate antenatal care is directly related to the mortality rate of children less than 1 year of age as well as the impact on the quality of ethnic human resources. To explain for this situation, it could be fair to mention to their culture which does not allow women to show their genital area to others and besides that they popularly invite shaman to the house for blessing.

High proportion of women giving birth at home: The proportion of ethnic minority women giving birth at health facilities is still low. Currently only about 64% of births of ethnic minority women are performed at health facilities. Particularly in some ethnic minority groups such as La Hu, Si La, La Ha, Lu, Array and Ha Nhi, there are more than 80% of births performed at home.

5.5 Culture and information access

For material culture: Currently, there is a situation of concern about the risk of difficulty in preserving and protecting diverse and rich tangible cultural values such as houses, temples, shrines, tombs and tombs, especially cultural relics, history, natural ... in ethnic minority areas, northern regions and the socio-economic region with extreme hardship. On the other hand, traditional costumes, ceremonies and tools, instruments, instruments of ethnic minority communities used in festivals and working life, daily activities are gradually being forgotten.

Unique intangible cultural values such as traditional language, epic and folk songs, folk dances, national beliefs and especially good customs and practices of the community. Ethnic minorities are at risk of disappearance.

According to the overall assessment, the field of information and communication in the ethnic minority and mountainous areas has grown rapidly, basically meeting the information and communication needs of the people. From 2016 to now, 18 types of newspapers and magazines have been delivered with the volume of 51.2 million sheets; VTV5 - Vietnam Television produces and broadcasts most days of the week, including 22 ethnic minority languages; In 2017, nearly 100 books were published with about 250,000 copies, serving ethnic minorities. Mobile phone network has covered all over the mountainous areas; there are more than 16,000 post and telecommunications transaction points, ensuring smooth communication in all situations.

Along with the national development, the proportion of ethnic minority households using telephones increased significantly in the period of 2010-2018, but the percentage of households with conditional use of phones and audiovisual devices. like television, uneven radio. Some ethnic groups have the percentage of households with telephones below 40%, much lower than the national average. Similarly, 51/53 ethnic groups have less than 10% of households owning computers and have access to the internet. Some ethnic minority groups do not even have computers and internet (La Hu, Khang, Khang, Kho Mu, Xinh Mun, Brau, Ro Mam).

6 Challenges in poverty reduction to ethnic minority groups

Vietnam's poverty reduction policy is implemented in the context of a number of subjective and objective disadvantages. The reasons for the high poverty rate of ethnic minorities in Vietnam include:

- Geographically isolated and limited market access.
- Socially isolated, linguistic and cultural factors.
- Limited access to quality land. Traditional manual farming (deforestation, exploitation of fallow land, shifting cultivation and shifting cultivation or shifting cultivation and so on. These are ethnic minorities not only inadvertently destroying the country's natural resources but also creating a favorable environment for vectors (mosquitoes, fleas, and ticks, mites etc.) to access blood and spread dangerous infectious epidemics. from person to person and animals to people.
- Low migration rate.
- Low education level. Many ethnic minority areas continue to maintain backward customs and practices (superstition, funerals, worship ...)
- A part of the poor who enjoy the policy has a psychology of expectation, dependence and no will to rise out of poverty.

6.1 Lack of representation and participation of EM people in policy formulation

Integrated development strategies, plans, and policies focus on development structures and tend to focus on areas around the delta. These strategies and policies often ignore indigenous knowledge, diversity, different types of needs and vulnerabilities in ethnic minority groups. This makes integration policies not successful in the development of ethnic minority issues, does not provide the opportunity to increase income appropriately, or mobilize community strength in development.

Policies for ethnic minority groups often have very little participation of EM people in determining needs; program design, decision making, management, implementation, and monitoring. Normally, the EM group is only considered the "beneficiary group/beneficiary" of different programs and policies, not the active actors who can contribute. Ethnic minority

women face many challenges when representing or participating in formal or informal decision-making process in the family, community and national level.

6.2 The lack of coordination in policy implementation

In Vietnam, there are more than 30 poverty reduction policies and programs with more than 120 components but only calculate programs and policies for ethnic minority people/communities and mountainous areas. There are 187 different resolutions, decrees and regulations of the Government on supporting poverty reduction for ethnic minorities. However, the policy environment is fragmented, overlapping and thin resources. This has reduced transparency in both goals and achievements. Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system and conduct more research to consider possible social impacts of EM development policies; pay attention to gender inequality and differences in ethnic minority groups. Search for pioneering factors in poverty reduction; identify common practices for best practices to replicate positive practices in ethnic minority communities by using the approach "Community-based development".

In terms of the organizational arrangement, the Committee for Ethnic Minorities is responsible for making policies and consultations for ministries of the Government of Vietnam, agencies and local authorities on policies to develop ethnic groups. However, due to limited organizational capacity and weak support mechanisms, integration and advocacy for ethnic minorities - including representation of ethnic minority voices, is very difficult. A large number of policies and programs on ethnic minority poverty reduction have been issued and implemented by many different ministries/agencies, creating a situation that cannot be coordinated to coordinate.

Limited capacity is not only seen in coordination skills, but also in social service delivery systems. For example, ethnic minority women often do not care about health care services due to the distance from health centers, poor quality of health care, inability to pay and they want to have medical workers are female. Therefore, the implementation of the policy will be more effective when considering comprehensive approaches for ethnic minorities at both national and provincial levels.

While Government policies are not comprehensive enough, there is a lack of effectively decentralized local plans with specific objectives and resource allocation, which hinders the requirements and application of clear resources for EM development. Many policies on ethnic minority groups assigned to the provincial level do not provide sufficient resources to achieve the program objectives, due to limited financial capacity and inefficient use of resources.

6.3 Discrimination

Among various issues, inequality for EM women is remarkable. They had to take care of their farming, agricultural production and care of their families but were restricted from accessing community services and activities. The common point of gender discrimination and economic deprivation shows that women of poor households are representative of a group of people that are forgotten by society, facing greater discrimination in meeting their basic needs are more than men of poor households and they are more likely to fall into poverty in the context of crisis. However, many infrastructure development projects have not taken into account its negative impacts on local/ethnic minority people such as their livelihoods, habitats, cultures, and traditions; in consultations after 2015 in Vietnam, consulted EM groups feel like being "left behind" in the development process, they are increasingly affected as a result of rapid

economic development (but unsustainable) and the result of impacts on economic shock and climate change, and "decline" in the strength of community cohesion, their cultural and traditional values. Public awareness of EM people is often biased which partly causes inequality. The dissemination of gender stereotypes and stereotypes is pressing on ethnic minority women.

Most Hmong girls for example are limited to participating in the decision-making process at all levels, including those that affect their lives, which are considered as systems. Gender decentralization has limited their choices in forming and expressing views. Existing stigma, combined with the lack of a comprehensive legal framework to ensure no discrimination, has created economic disparities and inequalities that hinder the effective use of public services. , and prevent the introduction and adoption of new / better approaches to working with these communities.

6.4 Education

Human resource development is a core issue in poverty reduction, inequality reduction and sustainable development for ethnic minority areas. In our experience, focusing on preschool and primary education plays the most essential and effective role in human resource development. When children are exposed to risks at an early age, there will be long-term effects on the path of comprehensive learning and development later. This often leads to inequality and an impact on opportunities for the next generation.

World Bank found that in about 30% of ethnic minority households, at least one child dropped out of school before completing one class, compared with 16% for the Kinh (WB, 2012). The percentage of ethnic minority girls having the lowest enrollment and enrollment rates among the groups, the highest drop-out and retention rates, the lowest primary school completion rates and the transition rate from primary to lowest middle school. The main reasons for this situation include:

Language barriers are still a major obstacle to achieving the quality of education. More than 90% of ethnic minority children speak ethnic languages at home, and many of them may have little or no opportunity to interact with Vietnamese before primary school, but all reading and learning materials are equal to Vietnamese. As a result, ethnic minority children often do not speak fluently and understand Vietnamese.

Teachers often have limited capacity and awareness of child development and teaching methods. While ethnic minority children should only learn Vietnamese as a second language, teachers are only equipped with traditional teaching methods and teachers think that EM children, as well as Kinh children, can understand what teachers say. The majority of teachers come from the Kinh group, those who do not speak the language of ethnic minority children do not understand their culture. Therefore, they do not help children understand the lesson thoroughly.

Inappropriate teaching/learning materials and understanding of EM cultures: Curriculum and textbooks are rarely relevant to local circumstances, resulting in poor learning outcomes. There is no mechanism in the community or in the education system to motivate teachers or communities to participate in developing or adjusting appropriate programs and materials for teaching and learning.

Awareness of children, parents and the community on child rights is low: Although children's participation has been recognized by society as an important children's right in Vietnam, it is rare to fulfill all that meaning. Ethnic minority children are not regularly consulted on issues related to them, and their ability to participate in a wider development process, therefore, is limited. Ethnic minority children are even more vulnerable by their education, cultural and linguistic differences with Kinh children.

Lack of accountability mechanisms: Referring to the public and children's perspectives on school planning and management as well as monitoring children's learning is not common in Vietnam but people often think that teaching sexuality is the job of "technical expert". The Parents' Association exists in theory but mainly works as a "channel" for government direction and procedures. There is no mechanism in place to promote cooperation between community officials and education authorities to ensure conformity with the context of EM people in school management as well as the quality of teaching.

Poor infrastructure, lack of teaching and learning facilities: In most remote areas where ethnic minority groups reside, infrastructure for teaching and learning is in shortage or repair, insufficient number of classrooms and boarding facilities. In many cases, ethnic children have to study in temporary wooden classes. Lack of toilets and clean water makes them vulnerable to pneumonia.

6.5 Livelihoods

Many EM communities depend on and will continue to depend on subsistence agriculture as livelihoods. We need appropriate policies to recognize and support this form of agriculture. However, it is often the government programs that promote agricultural and technical models that are irrelevant or unsuitable for upland areas; while effective investments often benefit wealthier farmers. Food security for ethnic minority communities is largely dependent on small-scale agriculture, their integration into small-scale agricultural trade networks, industrial tree markets, and non-agricultural labor opportunities. Food security is still precarious in many remote areas, promoting high-value crops and monoculture needs to be carefully considered.

Expanding livelihood options is not only the center of any rural development strategy - both agricultural and non-agricultural, but also through migration. Support to access and develop value chains for the poor with great potential. EM communities have taken advantage of such economic opportunities. However, the capacity of local authorities needs to be strengthened to develop these opportunities. The requirements need to pay attention to both physical and institutional changes.

Some valuable ideas have been proposed on how to develop a wider rural economy, such as the concept of 'one product village'. However, the implementation of such methods needs to be implemented comprehensively and address barriers that prevent EM people from taking advantage of such opportunities. This includes access to credit packages, language barriers as well as cultural norms. The number of EM migrants is increasing; they demand support in social integration. Access to better information is extremely important. The private sector can play a huge role. Community and commodity policies still play an important role in rural development strategy, especially in supporting remote areas and areas with difficulties.

7 Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations for policy formulation

As mentioned previously, Vietnamese Government has issued a group of policies and programs to help mountainous provinces turn over their socio-economic situation and we could see impacts from those policies and programs. However, it is clear that ethnic minority groups have got to stand by their feet before receiving national budget. Therefore, in coming years, Vietnamese Government can focus on enhancing the officers' capacity in these areas by providing education chances at different levels so that they are able to implement policies and program well. Otherwise, Vietnamese Government also plays a central role by connecting mountainous provinces and investment companies and provides incentive policies.

7.2 Recommendations for coordination in policy implementation

- Strengthen interdisciplinary coordination, with clearer set tasks for lead agencies.
- Enhance the role and capacity of the Ethnic Minority Committee and National Assembly/ Ethnic Council system.
- Support the review of policies for ethnic minorities to reduce incompatibility, enhance cohesion, comprehensiveness for the most vulnerable groups in the EM community and the effectiveness of development policies existing social and poverty reduction.
- Ensure resources are concentrated and prioritized for the poorest ethnic minority areas as well as for the most vulnerable groups such as children, women and the elderly.
- Develop organizational capacity and budget allocation to implement results-based methods, gender sensitivity, and participatory monitoring; and ensure accountability in policies for ethnic minorities.

7.3 Recommendations for handling discrimination

- Organize policy dialogues, especially dialogues with the most vulnerable groups including EM women;
- Empowerment and participatory capacity building for EM people so that they can participate effectively and show leadership in the decision-making process.
- Mobilize experience and network of NGOs / CSOs / CBOs in building capacity for EM people in community-based projects to promote the participation of EM people.
- Conducting research on women's leadership; raise awareness to change the way of thinking of the community and solutions to change traditional gender standards, in order to create a favorable environment for the participation and leadership of EM women.
- Implement fully, reasonably or amend targets for women to participate in the main participation at all levels; hiring ethnic minority women to serve in agencies; any measures to empower and enhance their voice with the aim of engaging EM women leaders in advocacy and mobilizing communities to participate in legal reforms and customary laws.

7.4 Recommendations for enhancing education

- It is in need to organize courses on capacity building for teachers and enhancing children's participation and promoting parental involvement. The government should continue to invest in kindergartens and primary schools, focusing heavily on the quality of education. Most importantly, these initiatives must recognize and preserve the unique cultural heritage of EMs.

- Communication and advocacy programs need to be changed; they not only focus on participation but also focus on decision-makers who are responsible for their decisions.
- School planning should be developed in a participatory manner with appropriate solutions to encourage the participation of female, parent and community students and be integrated into the local SEDP process.

7.5 Recommendations for livelihood

Increase support for developing "software" such as information, knowledge, equal rights, and association. This has important implications in the planning and budgeting process - both at the time of investment and maintenance. For this reason, National target program on sustainable poverty reduction (NTPSPR) must be clearly demonstrated in the local SEDP planning process. Community participation and people in planning and implementation will be very important.

Most importantly, the new NTPSPR must be developed on the basis of good practices and improvements in other poverty reduction programs. For example, Program 135-phase 2 has developed good practices related to community participation in the construction of infrastructure and communes that own the investment projects. Community monitoring committees have proven possible quality improvement, cost-effectiveness, and maintenance. When accompanied by the appropriate capacity building process, funding mechanisms for communes can create opportunities and autonomy for communes in deciding their development investment plans.

7.6 Specific mechanisms and policies for start-up

Committee of Ethnic Minority Affairs consults its government to provide policies and programs which supports start-up projects in areas of ethnic minorities, mountainous areas and areas with exceptionally difficult socio-economic conditions.

Firstly, policy on investment capital to support business start-up projects in areas of ethnic minorities, mountainous areas and areas with exceptionally difficult socio-economic conditions.

Secondly, information and communication policies to support the launch of startup projects as well as support the consumption of products of business start-up projects in ethnic minority areas, mountainous areas and areas with socio-economic conditions.

8 Conclusion

Poverty reduction in general and poverty reduction for ethnic minorities in particular have been concerned by the Government of Vietnam. In the period of 2012 - 2018, the Government has issued 46 documents to guide and deploy the implementation of the National Target Program on sustainable poverty reduction. The central ministries and branches have issued circulars and documents guiding the organization of implementation. Localities have issued specific mechanisms and policies, such as policies to support poor households with multi-dimensional deprivation; support for housing, residential land and production land for poor and poor ethnic minority households; preferential credit policies, loans for labor export, production development, livelihood diversification for poor households of local ethnic minorities and ethnic minorities.

For areas where socio-economic is developed, the beneficiaries have been expanded by raising the poverty line higher than the national standard, so more families facing economic difficulties have been supported timely.

The support to the poor covers all aspects: Health care (issue of health insurance cards), preferential loans to develop production, vocational training, job creation, labor export, opening job fairs, attaching importance to developing traditional jobs and plants and animals suitable to the local soil. However, the government needs to work more to ensure these outcomes are sustainable in the future.

References:

Committee of Ethnic Minority Affairs (2015). General Statistics of 53 minority ethnic groups' socio-economic situation.

Country Report (September 2015). 15 years achieving the Vietnam Millennium Development Goals.

General Statistics Office of Vietnam (December 2019). Results of the Population and Housing Census.

Ministry of Health (22nd September 2011). Decision no 3447/QĐ-BYT.

Ministry of Finance (2017). Annual Report.

Vietnamese Government (December 2013). Decision No. 2529 / QĐ. –TTg.

Vietnamese Government (September 15th 2015). Decision no 1614/QĐ-TTg.

Vietnamese Government (November 2015). Decision no 59/2015/QĐ-TTg on promulgating multi-dimensional poverty lines applicable to the period 2016-2020.

Vietnamese Government (September 2, 2016). Decision No. 1722/QĐ-TTg.

Vietnamese Government (28th April 2017). Decision No. 582 / QĐ-TTg.

Vietnamese Government (September 15th 2015). Conversion of a one-way to multi-dimensional poverty measurement approach to the 2016-2020 period.

UNDP (December 16th 2018). Report of Multidimensional Poverty in Vietnam.

UNFPA and Ministry of Health (2017). Barriers to access to healthcare for mothers and family planning of ethnic minority groups.

United Nations (1987). The report of World Commission on Environment and Development.

United Nations (20th May 1998). Statement of Commitment for Action to Eradicate Poverty.

World Bank (2012). Well begun, not yet done: Vietnam's remarkable progress on poverty reduction and emerging challenges.

Author's Address:

Do Van Trai

Social work Faculty, University of Labor and Social Affairs

No 43, Tran Duy Hung Street, Trung Hoa Ward, Cau Giay District, Ha Noi City

Vietnam

vantraido@gmail.com

Author's Address:

Pham Hong Trang
Social work Faculty, University of Labor and Social Affairs
No 43, Tran Duy Hung Street, Trung Hoa Ward, Cau Giay District, Ha Noi City
Vietnam
hongtrangulsa@yahoo.com

Author's Address:

Nguyen Thi Thu Trang
Informatics Division, Trade Union University
No 169, Tay Son Street, Quang Trung Ward, Dong Da District, Ha Noi City
Vietnam
trangnt@dhcd.edu.vn