
Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction in Vietnam: Achievements and Lessons Learned

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Abstract: Over the past three decades, poverty reduction has always been an area that has achieved many impressive successes in the economic development process of Vietnam. Along with high economic development, a series of policies on hunger eradication and poverty reduction has been implemented synchronously at all levels, provinces and cities nationwide with funding mobilized from the Government, communities and International social organizations have significantly improved the face of poverty in all regions of the country. Vietnam has become one of the leading countries in the Asia-Pacific region in applying multidimensional poverty measures to reduce poverty in all dimensions. The study focuses on analyzing the current situation of poverty reduction in Vietnam, thereby pointing out lessons learned to continue Vietnam's poverty reduction strategy in the coming time.

Keywords: Hunger eradication, poverty reduction, achievements, lessons learned, Communist Party, Vietnam

INTRODUCTION

Just one day after taking power in 1945, in the first meeting of the Government on September 3, 1945, President Ho Chi Minh raised six urgent issues, of which hunger relief was the top urgent task. He repeatedly emphasized the task of the State to take care of the people who have food, clothes, and shelter and get an education: "If the country is independent and the people are not free, then independence will not make sense. What; "We can fight for freedom and independence, but the people just die of starvation, if we die, then we will be free, independence will not do anything. The people only know the value of freedom and independence when they are well fed and fully dressed" (Minh, 2011, vol 1, p. 152). That viewpoint is absolutely correct, in accordance with the people. Therefore, poverty alleviation has always been identified by the Party and State as both an objective and a requirement for the sustainable development of the country. Poverty reduction has thus become a major policy, a national program rich in humanity, expressing the fine traditions of the nation.

In 1975, after 30 years of long, fierce war against the invasion to gain national independence, Vietnam's economy was exhausted, facing many difficulties to heal the wounds of the war. Moreover, the mistake of maintaining too long the "centralized and subsidized" wartime policy mechanisms in socio-economic development, the country entered a deep and comprehensive crisis period.

In 1986, from the initial experience in the adjustment of economic policies in agriculture, industry, and commerce a few years earlier, the 6th National Party Congress (1986) of the Communist Party of Vietnam initiated the change a new comprehensive country, emphasizing innovative thinking, first of all, economic thinking.

From here, Vietnam gradually turned to a market economy in agricultural production, implementing comprehensive contracting to households, creating a leap from a country with serious food shortage to an exporter of rice and always a rice exporter. Since then, among the three largest rice exporting countries in the world, food security has been firmly ensured.

In the cause of renovation, poverty reduction has become a major policy throughout the Party through many terms, with appropriate contents and solutions in each period, and up to now. The 6th Congress of the Party marked an important step in renewing awareness of social problems and solving social problems, including important content on promoting poverty reduction. For the first time, the Party has placed solving social problems on the level of social policy in relation to economic development policy. The Party's 1991 platform stated clearly: The great direction of social policy is to promote the human factor on the basis of ensuring fairness and equality of citizenship rights and obligations, and well-combined economic growth with social progress, between material and spiritual life, meeting immediate needs with long-term interests, between individuals and collectives and social communities (Communist Party of Vietnam, 1991).

The Party Congress VII (1991), VIII (1996), IX (2001), X (2006), XI (2011), XII (2016), and XIII (2021) continue to renew awareness of social problems and solve social problems, in which poverty reduction is a very

important task, a structure the organic component of the social development policy system. It is clear that the social policy system must be planned according to the following views: Economic growth must be associated with social progress and equity in every step and throughout the development process. Social policies must focus on developing and making society healthy, exercising fairness in distribution, creating a strong driving force for product development, increasing social labor productivity, and exercising equality in social relations, encouraging people to get rich legally.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Communist Party of Vietnam leads the work of hunger eradication and poverty alleviation

Being aware of the risk of poverty, especially the data of malnourished children has been at an alarming level (nearly 50%), so since the beginning of 1991, a movement to eradicate poverty has been launched. In 1992, the United Nations chose October 17 as the “World against Poverty” day calling on all nations to commemorate this day, depending on the circumstances of each country, to take concrete action to eliminate poverty and suffering. Accordingly, in 1993, the Vietnam Fatherland Front responded to the above call and the decision also took October 17 as “Day for the Poor”.

On May 21, 2002, the Prime Minister approved the “Comprehensive strategy for growth and poverty reduction” announced by the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. In the process of building the Strategy, there is the participation of experts from international organizations in Vietnam such as IMF, UNDP, WB, etc. to synthesize into Vietnam’s development goals. The strategy is concretized by implemented programs and projects, which are regularly monitored and evaluated. Studies have made poverty distribution maps for each commune and household. Vietnam has signed the Millennium Declaration with 8 goals:

1. Eliminate extreme situations and hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education.
3. Strengthen gender equality and empower women.
4. Reduce infant mortality.
5. Strengthen maternal health.
6. Prevention of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.
7. Ensuring environmental sustainability.
8. Establishing a global partnership for development purposes.

In 2005, Vietnam has doubled the poverty line (the previous poverty line according to the average income per capita per month in mountainous - rural-urban areas: before 2000 it was 45,000 VND - 70,000 VND - VND 100,000; after 2000, VND 80,000 - 100,000 - 150,000). The new poverty line includes two levels: monthly average income of 200,000 VND in rural areas and 260,000 VND in urban areas. However, some standard cities have changed due to the cost of living factor such as Hanoi, which set a new poverty line: 350,000 and 270,000 VND/person/month corresponding to urban and rural areas.

In 2006, Vietnam announced the completion of the “Millennium Development Goals” (MDGs) on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, reaching the target 10 years ahead of schedule (2015). Vietnam is considered as one of the most successful countries in poverty reduction in the world and has been recognized by the people in the country and the world for its extraordinary achievements in poverty reduction in terms of extreme poverty reduction. The average annual poverty reduction is about 1.55%, corresponding to over 300,000 poor households escaping from poverty. From 57% of the poor population in 1990, down to 49% in 1992, it continued to 13.5% in 2014.

On November 19, 2015, a breakthrough change was that the Prime Minister issued Decision 59/2015 / QĐ-TTg on the multidimensional poverty line applicable for the 2016-2020 period. Accordingly, the new poverty line is determined to replace the old poverty line with higher poverty escape criteria. Along with that, it has clearly identified 10 indicators measuring the lack of basic social services, determining the level of access for 5 basic social services: Health, education, and housing, clean water and sanitation, information.

The XIIth National Party Congress in 2016 has set out the goals: “By 2020, the rate of agricultural workers in the total social labor will be about 40%; the rate of trained workers will reach about 65-70%. 25% of which are diplomas and certificates; the unemployment rate in urban areas is below 4%; there are 9-10 doctors and over 26.5 hospital beds per 10,000 people; insurance coverage rate Health care reaches over 80% of the population, the average rate of poor households reduction is about 1.0 - 1.5% / year” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016). Next, Directive No. 01 / CT-TTg dated January 6, 2017, the Prime Minister emphasized the launch of the emulation movement “The whole country joins hands for the poor - Don’t let anyone be left behind”.

The 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly at the end of September 2019 with the theme: “Strengthening multilateral efforts to eradicate poverty, promote quality education, and act for inclusive development and climate change” also sets out targets and solutions to poverty alleviation. In which, maintaining peace is a prerequisite for poverty alleviation and poverty eradication.

Achievements of hunger eradication and poverty reduction in Vietnam

Only two years of 2016 and 2017, the average poverty rate of the whole country has decreased by 1.8%, higher than the target set by the Party Congress. Up to now (Decision No. 1052 dated July 29, 2019, of the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs “announcing the results of the review of poor households, near-poor households in 2018, the multidimensional poverty line applicable for the period 2016-2020”), the total number of poor households: 1,304,001 households, of which: poor households in terms of income are 1,167,439 households; The poor households lack access to basic social services: 136,562 households; the rate of poor households: 5.23%; The total number of near-poor households: 1,234,465 households; Proportion of near-poor households: 4.95%. It is expected that by the end of 2019, the average rate of poor households nationwide will decrease to below 4% (a decrease of 1.3% compared to the end of 2018); On average, the rate of poor households in poor districts decreased to below 29% (a decrease of nearly 5% compared to the end of 2018); On average, the rate of poor households in communes with extreme difficulties in coastal and island areas, communes with extreme difficulties, in border communes, in safe communes in ethnic minority and mountainous areas decreases by 3 - 4% compared to that of with the end of 2018.

Vietnam has significantly reduced its multidimensional poverty rate, down from 16% in 2012, from 9.88% in 2015 to 9.2% in 2016 and 7.69% in 2017, to 5% in 2018 (more than 6 million people escaped poverty in 6 years). The rate of the population participating in health insurance reaches 86.4%, equivalent to 78.2 million people. The number of beneficiaries of monthly social benefits and health insurance cards is 2,839,568, including 42,434 children in extremely difficult circumstances, 1,617,367 elderly people, 1,006,923 people with disabilities, and 172,844 other subjects, including HIV/AIDS infected people of poor households, single people raising children from poor households. The average income per capita is about 32 million VND / year. Labor productivity in the agriculture, forestry, and fishery sectors has increased over the years. Up to now, 99.4% of communes nationwide have roads for cars to commune centers, especially in highland areas with complicated terrain. 100% of communes and 97.8% of villages are covered by the national grid, 99.7% of communes have primary schools and kindergartens, 99.5% of communes have commune health stations, 60, 8% of communes have markets and 58.6% of communes have cultural houses.

It can be affirmed that, for nearly 35 years, the country has achieved great achievements of historical significance. The high and continuous economic growth rate for many years has created for Vietnam a new position and facing new opportunities. The consistent and humane viewpoint of the country’s development goal is that for the people, striving to ensure social justice in every step of economic development, not leaving anyone behind has become the motto of practice of both the political system and the entire society. Accordingly, hunger eradication and poverty reduction is a strategic content of Vietnam aimed at solving the problem of poverty, constantly improving the people’s material and spiritual life, and sustainable socio-economic development.

However, poverty persists among ethnic minorities living in mountainous and remote areas in Vietnam. The rate of poor households in the poor district is still high compared to the national average (Decision No. 1052 dated July 29, 2019, of the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs “announced the results of the poor household review, near-poor households in 2018, the multi-dimensional poverty line applies for the period 2016-2020”), specifically:

The total number of poor households in 64 poor districts according to the Government’s Resolution No. 30a/2008/NQ-CP dated December 27, 2008, on the Fast and Sustainable Poverty Reduction Support Program is 259,406 households (accounting for 33, 63%); The total number of near-poor households is 116,275 households (accounting for 15.07%). Of which: 56 poor districts of Group 1 have 230,933 poor households (accounting for 36.51%), 97,615 near-poor households (accounting for 15.43%); 08 districts escaping from poverty Group 3 has 28,473 poor households (accounting for 20.51%) and 18,660 near-poor households (accounting for 13.44%); The total number of poor households in 29 poor districts of Group 2 is 121,827 (accounting for 34.14%); the total number of near-poor households is 50,832 (accounting for 14.25%).

The results of poverty reduction in ethnic minority and mountainous areas are not really sustainable, the quality of poverty reduction is not high: Poor ethnic minority households account for a high proportion of the total number of poor households in the country (52.66%) and accounting for 27.55% of the total number of ethnic minority households; The rate of ethnic minority households falling back into poverty, arising poor, and near-poor are all higher than the national rate. The income per capita is low; Indicators of lack of basic social services for poor ethnic minority households remain high, especially indicators of housing quality, housing area, hygienic toilets, and water used for daily activities

Lessons learned from the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy in Vietnam

Firstly, poverty reduction must be placed under the leadership and direction of the entire political system. Party committees at all levels, local authorities approve specific programs, resolutions, and plans; at the same time, there is close coordination of the Fatherland Front, political and social unions, organizations, and individuals to consistently implement the policy of poverty reduction.

In order to improve the effectiveness of the policy, the Government has combined all hunger eradication and poverty reduction programs into one program as “National Target Program for Sustainable Poverty Reduction 2016-2020” (According to the Decision 1722-QD/TTg, dated September 2, 2016, by the Prime Minister), with the most common management focal point is the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs. Which includes 5 component projects are: Program 30a (rapid and sustainable poverty reduction for poor districts); Program 135 (Socio-economic development program for extremely difficult communes in ethnic minority and mountainous areas); Support for production development, livelihood diversification, and poverty reduction models replication in communes outside of Program 30a and Program 135; Communication and information poverty reduction; Capacity building and monitoring and evaluation of program implementation.

The above programs have attracted many resources to develop poor areas, create jobs, and increase income for people, especially farmers and ethnic minority areas. With the ethnic traditions and responsibilities of organizations in the entire political system, the above-mentioned programs were quickly deployed and brought into life with high people’s consensus, creating a new spirit for many classes of people people join hands to implement.

Second, it is necessary to identify key areas as districts, communes, villages, and villages with high poverty rates and ethnic minority areas in order to focus on investment resources.

The first thing is to investigate and review to identify the right poor households, the causes of poverty, the need to escape poverty as a basis for building a poverty reduction master plan, and ensuring sufficient resources to reach the right people, on time degree, against loss and waste. There are also many places where all resources are concentrated in a continuous-time to perform quite synchronously, the changes will be faster and save money. There are also many places due to the low, fragmented, and spreading policies to support product development, some overlap in content and locations and beneficiaries, so the efficiency is not high, causing waste of resources. The situation of overlapping, dispersed, unfocused, even policy debt is still quite common. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the effectiveness of coordination among ministries, branches, and localities in policy formulation and promulgation. Focusing on collecting opinions of Ethnic Councils in the development of poverty reduction policies for ethnic minority and mountainous areas, attracting the participation of people in the process of policy formulation and implementation.

At the same time, attention should be paid to the resettlement of ethnic minorities and mountainous people in extremely difficult communes, villages, especially households migrating for hydropower projects, including free migration due to lack of residential land, productive land, lack of means of production, greatly affecting the sustainable poverty reduction, ensuring the environment, political security and social order and safety, etc.

Third, strengthen inspection and supervision of the implementation of poverty reduction policies, programs, and projects.

In fact, a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system has been set up to improve the effectiveness of the poverty reduction program, but many places have not yet implemented it effectively. Where creating opportunities for the poor to participate in monitoring groups to contribute to the implementation of the poverty reduction program, the project will be implemented faster, more effectively, and with the right beneficiaries. Where and when to do well the inspection and supervision, that place can limit and prevent corruption and waste. In general, the loss due to poor management and corruption from national projects on poverty reduction remains at all levels. Many advisory agencies and local authorities called for the project to have a lot of money to invest (even knowing it was ineffective) but still unilaterally (due to individual interests, group interests). Many projects lack connection, are ineffective, causing frustration among the people.

The goals of improving the quality of basic social services: health, clean water, sanitation, education, and tertiary education have not yet met. Inclusive growth patterns with innovative initiatives involving the poor are few. Poor organizations and individuals and policy beneficiaries participate in irregular and ineffective monitoring.

Fourth, communication and propaganda must be conducted regularly and synchronously to create a unity of perception, opinion, and way of doing things.

Reality has affirmed the important role of propaganda. Good examples of good people and good deeds were propagated and replicated. Communication is given special importance and rapidly developed, covering the whole country. 4G and 3G telecommunications networks are available to remote, border, and island areas. This means that high-speed internet is everywhere in Vietnam with cheap prices, making it accessible and accessible to all people. The achievements in the field of information and propaganda have made an important contribution to raising awareness of each citizen to get out of poverty by themselves and have experience in implementing poverty reduction tasks.

Leaders of all levels of the party committees and local authorities have been more frequent in direct dialogue with the poor, clearly defining their responsibilities as well as raising their sense of effort to rise up against feelings of inferiority complex depend on; the poor are active and autonomous in their process of escaping poverty. Party committees, authorities, the Fatherland Front, and mass organizations have focused on guiding the formulation of economic development plans based on the abilities and aspirations of poor households. At the

same time, clearly defining responsibilities in helping poor households with capital, agricultural extension, vocational training, production experience, etc.

Fifthly, to strengthen the contingent of capable and dedicated cadres in the work of poverty reduction, especially at the commune level

Cadres is an important factor determining the success of poverty reduction programs and projects. Therefore, it is important for the Party Committees at all levels to regularly organize training courses to improve the capacity of the district, commune, and village officials in order to create a common consensus on awareness and how to do it.

In the implementation process, the weak awareness of the staff also appeared. The capacity to make policies and decisions is still weak. Criticism and development of programs and projects have not been appreciated, so there are still much-unfinished construction, inactive and ineffective operations. Even though resources are difficult at times, financial discipline is still lax. In particular, the situation of embezzlement and waste in projects and programs in many forms but little detected and handled. According to the results of the State Audit, the error of the next stage is higher than the previous period. Specifically, in the period 2012 - 2015, the State Audit proposed a financial settlement of VND 102,879 billion, but in the period of 2016 - 2018, the State Audit proposed a financial settlement of VND 141,478 billion.

The achievements of organizations in the political system in many localities still remain. Many places meet the new rural standards, but only reach the “shell”, while the inner core is production organization, production relations, and people’s income does not meet. The situation of falling back into poverty in many localities are typical examples of achievement disease and the subjectivity of local leaders and the sustainability of poverty reduction programs and schemes.

Sixthly, poverty reduction is not only the responsibility of the State and the entire society, but first of all depends on the self-consciousness of the poor and poor communities.

The results of poverty reduction in ethnic minority and mountainous areas are not really sustainable, but the people still have their thoughts of relying on support policies of the State and the community. Therefore, the most critical issue is that poor households have to overcome their inferiority complex, strive to rise up, actively do production, and know how to save money to escape poverty.

Addressing ingrained poverty requires a new, innovative approach with the wide participation of social partners, local communities, and locally tailored solutions. The Party continues to lead with the right guidelines, perseverance with high political responsibility. The State adopts socio-economic development mechanisms and policies to assist the poor. The Fatherland Front and socio-political organizations must focus on propaganda, mobilization, inspection, supervision, and mobilization of the poor to know how to escape poverty by themselves so that the results of poverty reduction are truly sustainable.

CONCLUSION

The program on hunger eradication and poverty reduction in Vietnam, bearing in mind the social development philosophy of President Ho Chi Minh, has been achieving great achievements. This is really a program of profound humanitarian significance, is the driving force to promote the realization of the goal of hunger eradication and poverty reduction to ensure comprehensiveness, equity, and sustainability. Studying and following the anti-poverty spirit of President Ho Chi Minh must turn into a living reason, a desire to get rich and rise in the life of the entire people and the nation of Vietnam in the current period.

Carrying out his teaching, from 1986 up to now, the country renewal initiated and led by the Communist Party of Vietnam has achieved important achievements: The country has escaped from the crisis, the economy grows quickly, and the people’s living standard has been markedly improved. However, the problem of differentiation between the rich and the poor emerged among regions and population groups. Especially in mountainous areas, areas with ethnic minorities, people’s lives are still very difficult. Therefore, the issue of poverty reduction has become a topic of discussion in many national forums from an early age. The Party and State always consider comprehensive and sustainable hunger eradication and poverty reduction as a cross-cutting goal and one of the most important tasks, contributing to the implementation of the socialist orientation. The task of hunger eradication and poverty reduction has been formulated by the Party and State into major national programs “National Target Program for Sustainable Poverty Reduction”.

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