

REAL SITUATION OF SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOME ISSUES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHERN REGION IN 2011-2020

VU TUAN HUY *

Abstract: Sustainable development is the development which balance among the economic, social, and ecological goals to maintain the integrity of the system. The goals of sustainable development are to ensure not only the growth, but also the justice from welfare perspective. If economic growth is the indicator of development, then good social security is a synthetic indicator of economic development and social progress toward sustainability. In Vietnam since the renovation, along with economic growth, the income levels and living standards of the people has been changing. In social welfare, spending for education and health care have increased. In other words, effective implementation of social security is an indicator of sustainable development.

Key words: sustainability, sustainable development, social security, social welfare, justice, social progress.

Introduction

One of the basic principles of sustainable development is to maintain the balance among the development factors. If economic growth is the indicator of development, then good social security is a synthetic indicator of economic development and social progress toward sustainability. In Vietnam since the renovation, along with economic growth, the income levels and living standards of the people has been changing. Results of Living Standards Surveys in 2002, 2004, 2006 showed that a general trend in all income groups increased, the goals of social progress such as spending on education and health care, gender equality has been increased. These

results show that the progress in implementing social security is goals of sustainable development in our country today.

Based on the results from ministerial-level Research Program “Perspectives and solutions for Sustainable Development in the Northern region of Vietnam for 2011-2020 period”, this paper analyzes a number of factors in social sustainable development such as income, living standards, population in relation to social security through a number of indicators on education and human resource development and health care. On this basis, the paper raises some

(*) Assoc. Prof., Ph.D., Institute for Regional Sustainable Development.

issues in sustainable development of the northern region from the perspective of social security.

1. A number of indicators of social sustainable development

Income and poverty rate in the

northern region

When compared monthly income per capita Northern region, it revealed that the trend of household income increased and at the same time, the gap between the income groups also increased.

Table 1: Per Capita Income Monthly by Region (%)

Income Levels (in thousand VND)	Midlands and Northern Sub-region	Red River Delta Sub-region	Total
Poverty	19,5	1,0	7,2
Nearly higher poverty	27,0	14,9	18,9
500 - <2000	42,5	74,1	63,6
2000 - <3500	9,5	7,8	8,3
3500 and above	1,5	2,3	2,0
Total	100	100,0	0

Source: Survey Data from Research Program "The Basic Problem in the Sustainable Development of the North", Institute for Regional Sustainable Development 2009-2010.

The results from analyzing structure of income groups in the Northern regions revealed that, there were about 26 % of households with per capita income monthly at the poverty and near poverty level, 64 % of households in the average and over 10 % in the affluent and rich levels. Especially in the Midland and Northern mountains areas, the poverty and nearly poverty level accounted for over 40 % of households in the sample.

There is significant difference in per capita income monthly by ethnic groups of the husbands in the families. While the percentage of poor and near-poor for Kinh people accounted for only 15 %, for ethnic minorities the percentage up to 70 %.

According to self-assessment of the respondents from this survey on the changes in living standards of households by income levels, the results show that approximately 40 % poor and 50% near-poor households have changed upward, about one third of the poor and near-poor group did not change in particular, about 30 poor and 16 % near-poor households have reduced living standards compared to 5 years ago. More than 70 % of households have an average income and more affluent increased living standards compared with 5 years ago.

Until 2009 when the world economic crisis has caused its impacts on economic and social development in Vietnam, the

poverty rate of the whole country as well as in all regions are in a declining trend. The success in reducing poverty in Vietnam derives primarily from economic - social development strategy is geared toward sustainable development, economic growth must be associated with the implementation of social justice and eradication of poverty. Such a strategic orientation also stems from the fact that Vietnam after 25 years of reform is still a developing country and at the low threshold of development.

Table 2: Poverty Rate by Region (%)

Sub-region	Years			
	2004	2006	2008	2010
Red River Delta	12.9	10.1	8.7	8.4
Northeast	23.2	22.2	20.1	24.2
Northwest	46.1	39.4	35.9	39.4

Source: Survey of Living Standards 2010.

Analysis results from Household Living Standards Survey 2010 shows that poverty rate in the Midlands and Northern sub-region was rather height. It is about 40% of households in poverty, nearly 5 times higher than the poverty rate of the Red River Delta. Further analysis now the poor group in the rural areas from Ministerial-level Research Programme "Perspective and Solutions for Sustainable Development in the North Region of Vietnam in 2011-2020 Period" done in 2011 by Institute for Regional Sustainable Development, only 17.6 % of poor households in the rural Midlands and Northern Mountains compared with 13.2 % of poor households in rural Red River Delta said that their standard of living was higher than 5 years ago. This is an interest indicator for poverty reduction in the Northern mountainous region.

Table 3: Changes of the Living Standards of the Poor Compared to 5 Years Ago (%)

	Midlands and Northern sub-region	Red River Delta sub-region	Total
Increased	17.6	13.2	15.8
No change	70.9	82.1	75.2
Decreased	11.5	4.8	9.0

Source: Ministerial-level Research Program "Perspective and Solutions for Rapid and Sustainable Development in North Vietnam, 2011-2020", Institute for Regional Sustainable Development, 2011-2012.

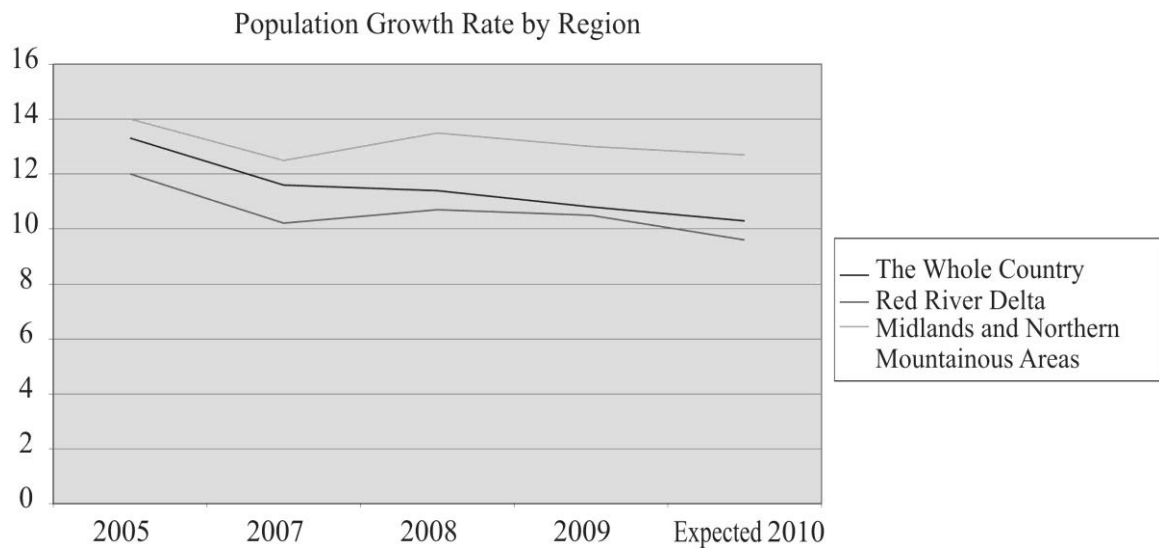
The changes in the standard of living show the positive aspects of economic development and improve living standards for the people in the Northern regions, especially in Central and Northern Mountain sub-region. However, the poverty rate in rural and Northern mountain is the highest compared with other regions in the country that raises the issue which should pay more attention to the poverty reduction because development threshold in this area is at still low rate and the risks of unsustainable development increase when the positive factors reduce and the risks and difficulties due to changes in the

socio-economic structure and the negative impact on natural conditions tend to increase.

Population

In the 2005 - 2010 period, the population growth in the Northern region tends to decrease, particularly the Red River Delta's population growth rate was lower than the annual average rate of the whole country. Meanwhile in the Midlands and northern mountains areas, in the period 2003-2004, the population growth rate increased at the same level in 1997 and then fell but it was higher than the average population growth rate of the national.

Figure 1: The Rate of Natural Population Growth by Region

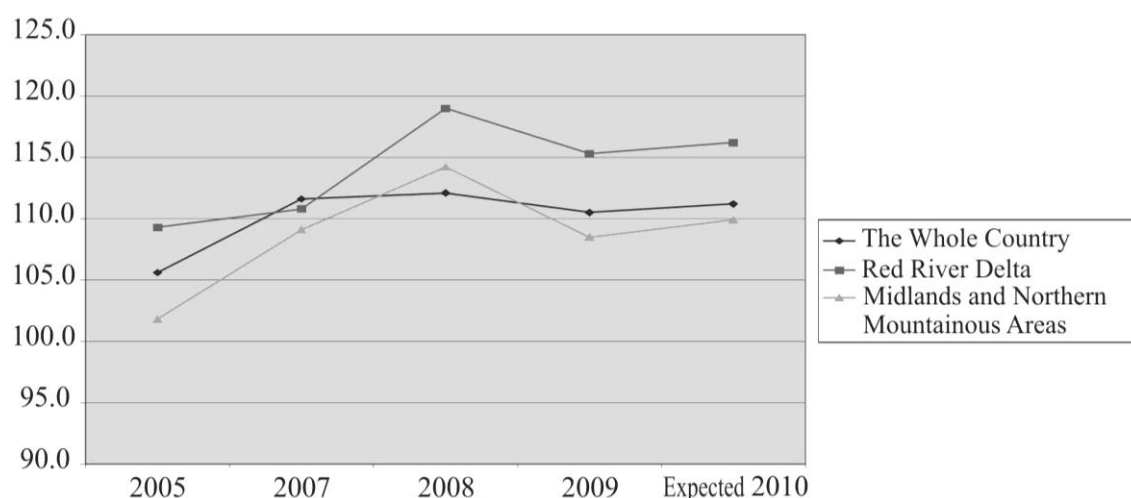


Note: Calculated according to the General Statistics Office source - Statistical Yearbook 2011.

During the 1996-2005 period and specially in the period 2003-2005, the process of urbanization and economic development speed-up at the whole country, the urban population in the North region increased.

However, rural population ratio is still higher than the national average. Approximately 70 % of the population in the Red River Delta and 84 % of the population Midlands and Mountains inhabit in rural areas.

Figure 2: Sex Ratio at Birth in North Vietnam



Source: Calculated according to the Statistical Yearbook 2011.

Other potential indicator for socio-economic development is the relationship between population density and land area which are both resources for development. The issues on land use and management reveal unstable factors for socio-economic development in the Northern region, particularly in the midlands and mountains area.

Education and human resource development

The age structure of population in the Northern region characterize as a "demographic bonus" structure with young and abundant labors. Analyzing some education indicators based on the data sources from the General Statistics Office from 2006 to 2010 has shown some light on the issues of labor quality and its implications for sustainable development.

Table 4: Enrollment Rates at Official School Age by Grade (%)

	2008			2010		
	Elementary	Basic Secondary	Secondary	Elementary	Basic Secondary	Secondary
Whole country	88.3	78.4	54.2	91.9	81.3	58.2
Urban	89.2	82.6	66.4	92.8	86.0	69.6
Rural	88.1	77.1	50.6	91.6	79.7	54.4
Red River Delta	91.3	85.2	69.5	93.3	90.1	73.8
Northeast	89.7	79.9	52.5	91.5	81.3	56.0
Northwest	81.4	63.9	33.4	88.5	69.3	40.2

Source: Living Standards Survey 2010.

According to data from Living Standards Survey 2010, in the Red River delta, enrollment rate for secondary school was higher than the national average, 74 % compared with 58 % respectively. While in the Northwest sub-region, enrollment rates are significantly lower than the national average rate: 89 % of primary school compared to 70 % lower secondary and 40 % upper secondary school. This data showed that in the Northwest sub-region, children enter school lately and high repetition rate causes the to low enrollment rate. Especially in the North West, nearly 20 % of children who never go to school is a worrying indicator for human resource development in this region such as unemployment and poverty.

Other indicator of the population quality is dropout rate at all levels. Dropout rate

increase is factor strongly influence on the reduction of the proportion of basic secondary school in the North region. Real situation of education in the period 2006-2010 revealed some concern issues. Nearly a third of households in rural areas of the Northern region have at least one child dropping out of school.

Analyzing survey data from the research program "The basic issues on sustainable development in the North region" done in two years 2009-2010 shows that 34.9 % of households in rural Northwest rural areas compared to 42 % in rural Northeast and 30.8 % in rural Red River Delta sub-region had at least 1 child dropped out of school before grade 12. Especially in rural Northwest areas, 2.3 % of households in the sample had 5 children dropout.

Table 5: Percentage of Households with Children Dropped out of School According to Urban - Rural Areas (%)

	Northwest		Northeast		Red River Delta	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
No child dropout	93.5%	65.1%	89.2%	58.0%	87.5%	69.2%
1 child dropout	4.3%	18.6%	6.5%	18.1%	5.7%	16.3%
2 children dropout	2.2%	9.3%	3.2%	12.3%	5.0%	10.1%
3 children dropout	-	2.3%	1.1%	5.8%	0.7%	3.2%
4 children dropout	-	2.3%	-	3.6%	1.1%	0.9%
Over 5 children dropout	-	2.3%	-	1.47%	-	0.4

Source: Survey data from Research Program "The Basic Problem in the Sustainable Development of the North", Institute for Regional Sustainable Development 2009-2010.

The characteristics of the population structure, economic structure and education

analysis above have shown some issues on human resources in the Northern region. In

current trends, the transformation of the socio-economic structure led to career change. The study results showed that 11 % of respondents in the sample had the idea of job change, of which about 11 % of farmers compared with 13 % of workers and 17 % of other job.

Table 6: Intend to Job Change by Occupation of Respondents (%)

	Peasant	Worker	Service	Other	Total
Yes	10.9%	12.5%	7.5%	16.9%	11.4%
No	89.1%	87.5%	92.5%	83.1%	88.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Ministerial-level Research Program "Perspective and Solutions for Rapid and Sustainable Development in North Vietnam, 2011 - 2020", Institute of Regional Sustainable Development 2011 - 2012.

Approximately one third of respondents have difficulty in finding jobs for their children, in which 40 % farmers and workers compared to 28 % of the state and private service. According to the province, the proportion of respondents who have difficulty in finding jobs for their children in the provinces of Dien Bien, Cao Bang and Quang Ninh were higher than that of Bac Giang and Nam Dinh provinces.

Table 7: The Difficulty in Job Finding for their Children by Occupation of Respondents (%)

	Peasant	Worker	Service	Other	Total
Yes	39.5%	40.0%	28.4%	28.8%	32.8%
No	60.5%	60.0%	71.6%	71.2%	67.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Ministerial-level Research Program "Perspective and Solutions for Rapid and Sustainable Development in North Vietnam, 2011 - 2020", Institute for Regional Sustainable Development 2011 - 2012.

The lack of jobs is an indicator of human resources. Among the causes of jobs lost from workers in 2008 in the Red River Delta and the Midlands and Northern mountains, mostly are enterprises closing or staff reduction, or the employees quit their jobs because enterprises pay debt. According to data from Statistical Yearbook 2011, the unemployment rate generally in a downward trend but not significant. Compared to the national average the unemployment rate in the Northern region is lower.

Table 8: The Unemployment Rate in the 2009-2010 Period (%)

	2009			2010		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
Whole country	2.90	4.60	2.25	2.88	4.29	2.30
Red River Delta	2.69	4.59	2.01	2.61	3.73	2.18
Midlands and Northern	1.38	3.90	0.95	1.21	3.42	0.82

Source: Statistical Yearbook 2011.

According to data from Statistical Yearbook 2011, the unemployment rate had decreased in comparison with that in the previous year. However, when taking into consideration some issues such as economic structure, human resources, the quality of employment, this issue need to be more specific measurement to have a full picture of unemployment. While in rural areas, arable land shrinking due to industrial development and urbanization, however, the service sector underdevelopment which not attract labor from the countryside.

Health and wellness

By the investment and expansion for upgrading quality of health care system, the number of clinics at commune level which satisfies national standards has increased. Compared with other regions in the country, the percentage of commune health centers meet national standards in the Red River Delta and especially number of villages health staff in Midlands and Northern Mountains are the highest.

Community Health Care has been paid attention and extended to the village level. Over 94 % of villages have village health workers. Along with the development of state health networks, private health care system has been developed and made important contribution to

the community health care (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2011).

Regarding health insurance, when the policy of health insurance launched in 1993, for state employees and officials, health insurance is compulsory. However, the number of voluntary insurance is relatively low. In Red River Delta, there were 25.7 % of households in urban areas compared to 28.3 % households in rural having voluntary health insurance. Meanwhile in the Midlands and northern mountains, there were 40 % in urban areas compared with 10 % of rural households having voluntary health insurance. In rural areas, especially in the Midlands and northern mountains, the percentage of households with compulsory health insurance is lower than in urban areas. In contrast in this sub-region, number of persons who are benefit from the policy of free health insurance were 50-60% (Vu Tuan Huy, 2010).

The main reason for low rate of voluntary health insurance in rural is low income. On the other hand, dissemination and education on health insurance is limited only to the leaders, awareness of people about the importance of health insurance are incomplete, health care services by health insurance is inadequate.

Table 9: The Rate of Health Insurance Households by Urban and Rural Areas (%)

	Red River Delta		Midlands and Northern Sub-region	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Health insurance for pupils	59.6%	54.8%	54.4%	29.6%
Compulsory health insurance	59.3%	31.9%	30.9%	7.3%
Voluntary health insurance	25.7%	28.3%	40.9%	10.3%
Health insurance free for poverty	2.1%	1.2%	2.0%	19.3%
Health insurance free	20.7%	37.6%	49.0%	64.4%

Source: Survey data from Research Program "The Basic Problem in the Sustainable Development of the North", Institute for Regional Sustainable Development 2009-2010.

After nearly 20 years, health insurance has gradually developed, achieving a number of important achievements: Number of participants in health insurance has increased, especially the poor and policy beneficiaries; access to health services of the subjects improved markedly. Health insurance is one of the significant financial resources to ensure social security, contributing to the goal of equity in health care for people. Besides the causes of policy, quality of service, the problems in economic and social development, the environment pollution are the direct causes of the health problems.

2. Some issues on sustainable development in the North region from the perspective of social security

The above-analyzed result which raised some issues about the health and commune health care system for sustainable development in the Northern region. The social differences increased with economic growth. The gap between rich and poor also led to inequalities in health care increased. In the one hand, environmental pollution caused by waste in industrial production, using chemicals in agricultural production, and domestic waste are factors that affect people's health. On

the other hand, consumer behavior and negative attitudes in health care due to lack of knowledge is the cause of disease. These health problems not only increase the difficulties for health care services, but also reduce the quality of labor and human development indicators in the country.

High poverty rate also rise to social problems and social evils such as drug addiction, prostitution, HIV/ AIDS which in turn increase of health care costs and the negative influence on the development of human resources, especially in the poor provinces have high prevalence of HIV/ AIDS. Adolescent working far from home without adequate education or dropping out of school are vulnerable and risks of social evils due to the lack of social control also relate to poverty. The most important reason leading to reduce living standards in 2010 compared to 2006 in the Northern region is family members who suffered from illness, low income and food prices rise. Especially in the midlands and Northern mountain areas, increase of production costs and reduction of the land area are the significant factors. One third of respondents from Living Standards Survey 2010 said

these reasons. Analysis of income differences between sub-regions and occupational groups showed some social problems which indicate not only the unsustainability of economic development, but also the unsustainable social development when the economic difficulties caused by the crisis and the unfavorable regional characteristics, reducing of households capital accumulation would lead to difficulties in the economic development of the household, combining with the other social problems will make economic restructuring at the regional level will be more difficult. The development policy should pay attention to the needs of people in ethnic minorities with diverse customs and culture, increase the opportunities for people participate into the development. On the basis of appropriate policies, the resources invested by the Government should be directly to the poor is an important factor to implement effective policies.

In the trends of the current economic development, globalization and the integration, the progress of science and technology resulted in changes of socio-economic structure, the emergence of the new career and the disappearance of the unsuitable trades. This feature also affects the process of education and training, the attitude and behavior of employees. Career changes are the needs both of society and individuals development. Ensuring social security is to solve the issues raising above and which is not only spending but also as an investment in development. Effective social security also is an indicator reflecting the value of equality and creating social cohesion. The gap of rich and poor is inevitable,

however, in the development trends and social change towards a sustainable way, this is one of the basic values and therefore, when the gap increased to the point of social polarization will lead to decreased social initiation and thus affect the sustainability of economic growth.

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