

Human development in Thái Nguyên province - Achievements and some emerging issues in this period

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Abstract: *For the past 10 years, Thái Nguyên province has attained many significant achievements in human development contributing to the country's HDI growth. Thái Nguyên has made many efforts in poverty elimination and hunger eradication, developing industries and key economic zones, employment settling, increasing people's income. Education and training as well as public health care that attain important achievements have been placed at the top priority by the authority. The provincial HDI has been one of the highest nationwide, its HDI components have been higher than that of nearly all other in region provinces. However, along with attained achievements, there are many emerging issues and problems requiring effective solutions and guidelines for boosting provincial HDI in the following decades.*

Keywords: Human development, HDI index, Income, Health care, Education, Culture, Thái Nguyên province

Since the 1990s of the 20th century, approaching the viewpoint of UNDP in human development, building national innovation policy, our Communist Party and State have focused on the tasks such as economic growth attached with poverty reduction and hunger eradication, developing health services and education for human development. “Social development and progresses toward boosting industrialization, modernization for the target of wealthy people, a strong country, and an equal, democratic and civilised society must take comprehensive human development as the measure and consider it as a

humanity measure.” (Đặng Hữu Toàn, 2005, p.3). “From awareness changes, our Party and State have built socio-economic development strategies and policies which assure the equity for everyone to access development conditions, whereby people can have chances to improve their material living standard, health and knowledge.” (Hồ Sĩ Quý, 2005, p.22).

Drawing much attention to human development is the directional viewpoint to provinces in the whole country.

Nearly twenty years since the refounding (in 1997), Thái Nguyên province has been developing fast in all aspects, affirming its position in the Northern

Midland and Mountain area in

particular and in the whole country in

general. It also has attained significant achievements in human development in such aspects as health, education and spiritual culture. HDI and other indices are important messages that measure the performance of the whole province in implementing provincial human development strategy and specify the issues required to study.

GDP per capita in Thái Nguyên Province (at districts, cities, towns in 1999-2009^(*))				
Địa phương	1999		2009	
	GDP per capita (USD - PPP)	I _{GDP}	GDP per capita (USD - PPP)	I _{GDP}
Thái Nguyên Province	948	0,375	2261	0,521
Thái Nguyên City	1791	0,482	3738	0,604
Sông Công	1191	0,414	2714	0,551
Phổ Yên	1027	0,389	2403	0,531
Đồng Hỷ	853	0,358	2178	0,514
Đại Từ	758	0,338	1752	0,478
Phú Bình	582	0,294	1326	0,431
Phú Lương	549	0,284	1329	0,432
Định Hóa	501	0,269	1324	0,431
Võ Nhai	494	0,267	1301	0,428

(Source: Vũ Văn Anh, 2012, p.90)

(*) Based on the results of population census in 1999 and 2009, there is a difference compared to the results in the Report on Vietnamese People Development in 2015.

1. Human development in physical aspect

The World Health Organization defined that “health is a state of physical,

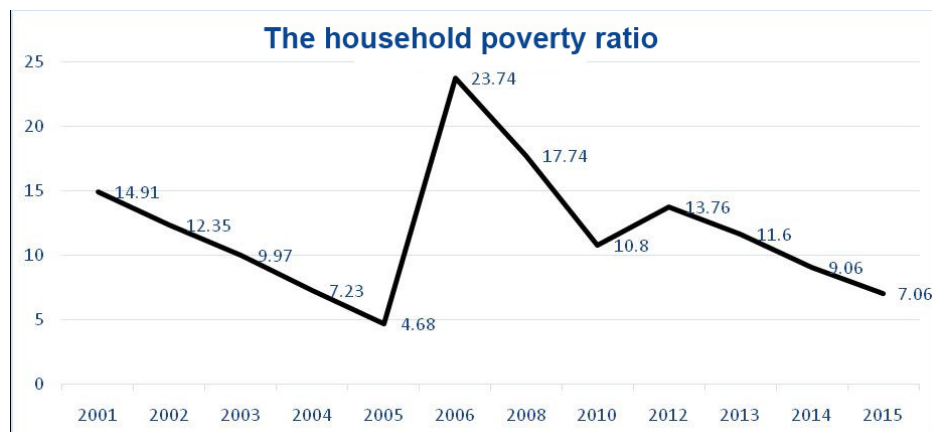
mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease of infirmity” (cited in: <https://sites.google.com/site...>). Thus, mentioning the human development in physical aspect is not only referring to how to make people healthy with no disease, no sickness, but also to create real favorable conditions for people to care themselves and to be cared in the best manner. To develop the physical strength, beside the genetic factor, the material life of an individual is an important factor. Only when the income level increases, poverty reduces, can people afford nutrition foods, healthcare services and good living environment.

**** In terms of residents' living standard and poverty reduction and hunger eradication implementation:***

Thái Nguyên economy has attained significant progresses by restructuring toward industrialization and modernization. Since 2000, average income of Thái Nguyên has increased steadily from 761.1 USD per capita (1999) up to 1,896.2 USD per capita

(2008) (UNDP, 2011, p.174, 169); and it reached 2,547.11 USD in 2012 (UNDP, 2016, p.181); after fourteen years, average income has increased 3.35 times or equally 234.6%. However, this level is still low, the income difference between urban citizens and suburban residents, among suburban districts and towns are big. Thái Nguyên City has the highest average income and it is followed by Sông Công town and Phổ Yên suburban district; the lowest are Định Hóa and Võ Nhai suburban districts. (The average income of citizens in Thái Nguyên City is over 3.5 times higher than Định Hóa and Võ Nhai in 1999, over 2.8 times in 2009).

According to the Vietnam National Human Development Report 2015(NHDR), the education index contributed 66% to HDI 2012 of Thái Nguyên (according to the calculation of author, basing on NHDR 2015). It can be observed that the people's income grows quite fast and in parallel with the provincial economic growth rate. Nevertheless, in fact, income growth of Thái Nguyên is lower than many other



provinces in the whole country. The value of HDI is contributed the most by achievements in education and health.

From the time Vietnam signed to implement the Millenium Development Goals (2000), in 2001, poverty reduction and hunger eradication became Thái Nguyên province's Action Program and attained optimistic results (Figure "The household poverty ratio", unit: %).

Throughout the period of 2001-2005, poverty rate decreased from 14.91% to 4.68%, cutting down 10.23% in terms of absolute value and equally 68.6% in terms of ratio. On average, provincial poverty rate went down 17.15% per year. In the stage 2006-2015, poverty rate reduced continuously, from 23.74% down to 7.06% (70.3% in

diference). "In 2014, there were new employments to meet the demand of more than 25.5 thousand employees; nearly 294 billion dongs were delivered to approximately 9.8 thousand poor households to borrow; nearly 350 thousand health insurance with the toal value of 211 billion dongs were bought for poor and near-poor households, and ethnic minorities" (Hoàng Hà, <http://m.baothainguyen.vn...>). This is a significant achievement in poverty reduction and hunger eradication of Thái Nguyên province, expressing the humanities in social policies, taking care of the poor, the vulnerable community; bringing opportunities for everyone to develop; strengthening social protection.

Some indices about healthcare							
	2000	2005	2008	2010	2012	2013	2014
Doctor/10,000 residents	7,8	8,4	8,9	10,7	10,7	10,9	11,9
Bed/10,000 residents	31,44	30,2	33,0	35,0	39,3	40,6	43,2
Clinics have doctor (%)	100,0	100,0	92,2	92,2	97,8	86,7	90,1
Under-1 children fully immunized (%)	93,34	98,6	100,0	97,2	98,7	91,1	96,5
Under-5 children malnutrition (%)	32,0	26,9	20,6	18,5	16,7	15,9	15,5
Infants weighed under 2,500 g (%)	3,52	3,2	2,1	2,9	3,2	6,1	4,5
Mothers and infants cared by medical staff after birth (sau sinh) (%)	98,7	99,5	95,0	82,4

(Source: Thái Nguyên Statistic Department, 2014)

Healthcare for residents

On the basis of economic development, provincial Party Committee keeps taking care of residents' health, improving the quality in examining and treating diseases. For the past years, medical network has been consolidated and expanded, medical centers has been planned in the whole province. Suburban district hospitals, healthcare stations in mountainous communes and medical staff have been improved, facilities have been invested and new equipments have been purchased. Number of beds in hospitals have been increased. Besides, number of trained medical and pharmaceutical staff have gone up rapidly. Medical centers have provided free examination and treatment for the poor, the near-poor and under-6-year-old children. The provincial government subsidized to buy health insurance for 100% near-poor households, helped the poor and the near-poor to access to healthcare services. (Thái Nguyên Provincial Party Committee, 2015, p.43). Steadily, in the stage 2010-2014, local budget's allocation for healthcare climbed up from 394.9 billion dongs to 809.5 billion dongs (twice up after 5 years). In 2014, this expenditure was 8.5% of local budget, higher than the expenditure for economic development (6.9%). (Thái Nguyên Statistic Department, 2014, p.67). This situation proves that human development plays an extremely important role in provincial socio-economic strategy.

The figure below (p.33) shows that for the past 10 years, number of doctors

and beds in provincial hospitals have a remarkable increase. Mother and child healthcare is paid special attention to. Malnourished under-5 kids have decreased 50% after 15 years.

In 2014, under-1 children that were fully immunized reached 95%; mother and infants after birth cared by medical staff got more than 80%. This is a rather good result compared with the average rate of the whole country in general and the Northern Midland and Mountain area in particular.

With those results, life expectancy index of Thái Nguyên residents whereby has been growing fast over the time. In 1999, provincial life expectancy was 70.06; it was 2.34 years higher than the national index and 4.81 years higher than the Northern Midland and Mountain area (UNDP, 2011, p.169). Thái Nguyên ranked 23 out of 63 provinces nationwide, stayed in high life expectancy category. In 2012, life expectancy of Thái Nguyên residents was 73.08 (UNDP, 2016, p.181) which was the highest in the Northern Midland and Mountain area. Over fourteen years, life expectancy index of Thái Nguyên has increased from 0.75 to 0.8, it means that this index increased 0.05 point in terms of absolute value and 6.66% in terms of percentage. Healthcare for residents in Thái Nguyên basically is well implemented.

2. Human development in intellectual aspect

In the process of leading and guiding the implementation of socio-political tasks, Thái Nguyên Provincial Party

Committee has taken education as one of important driving force for its development. Additionally, staying in the position of one of big national human resources education and training centers, the provincial education and training have been paid special attention and reformed positively.

In the expenditure structure of provincial budget, education always takes the biggest share of the annual total expenditure and increases steadily. In 2010, it costed 1,220.7 billion dong, in 2014 it increased to 2,303.4 billion dong, nearly twice after four years (Thái Nguyên Statistic Department, 2015, p.66-67). The investment in education was more than one-fifth of the provincial budget expenditure, higher than the expenditures of all other fields. These educational achievements for the past years has confirmed the efficiency of allocating budget for education, also it has contributed significantly to training high-quality human resource, serving the national and provincial industrialization and modernization.

School system from pre-school to high-school has been expanded and upgraded. About the past fifteen years, number of schools and teachers has increased. In pre-school level, number of schools rose from 182 (in 2000) to 206 (in 2010) and 223 (in 2014), equally number of teachers increased from 1,586 (in 2000) to 3,639 (in 2010) and 4,570 teachers (in 2014) (Thái Nguyên Statistic Department, 2015, p.263, 265) - for 15 years number of teachers has increased nearly 3,000. According to population

structure and the real children at schooling ages, this ratio was appropriate that satisfied the learning need of the provincial students.

Facilities, new-applied training program in pre-schools and 100% teachers standardized and above have contributed significantly to educate and develop children in early years of their lives. In compulsory education, this indicator of all 3 levels of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education have increased drastically through years. Number of schools increased from 414 (in 2000) to 438 (in 2009) and 446 (in 2014); number of teachers fluctuated above 11,000 teachers for years and 100% of teachers were at least qualified. The ratio of students going to school at right ages annually was over 95% and in low secondary education was above 90%; the rate of students graduated secondary education in 9 administrative units (district level) is over 97% annually. Nation-standardized primary education popularization in Thái Nguyên was admitted in 1995; the compulsory primary education at right ages has been recognized from 2002. The student mobility for schooling achieved 25% (this ratio of all country was 22,8% on average) (Thái Nguyên Provincial Party Committee, 2015, p.40).

Many colleges, higher education institutions, vocational centers including Thái Nguyên University (which is the center of training human resource, studying and transferring technology advances) are concentrated in Thái Nguyên province; contributing

significantly to socio-economic, political and cultural development of Northern Midland and Mountain area.

For the past few years, system of higher education institutions, colleges and vocational institutions in Thái Nguyên have been invested in buildings and facilities; developing new joint training programs; reforming syllabi contents and training methods; making policies to attract and support lecturers to improve their abilities. The topics on scientific studying and technological transfer in the fields of sciences, social sciences and humanities have been closer and closer to the daily situations; and it helps to improve the quality of training human resource and to innovate teaching methods and studying. In addition, it contributes to the provincial socio-economic development.

For 14 years (1999-2012), Education index of Thái Nguyên went up from 0.83 to 0.88, increased 0.05 point in terms of absolute value and 6.02% in terms of ratio. The ratio of literate adult increased slightly from 94,7% to 97,7%; the general enrolment increased at 69,02%. If in 1999, education contributed the most for HDI value, in 2012 this index contributed almost nothing to the HDI's growth. However, education index was very high what makes a high HDI of this province.

3. Human development in spiritual culture aspect

Mentioning to culture is mentioning to human - and building culture is for

developing human. Human development in spiritual culture aspect is both content and result of implementing cultural activities. During the past years, press agencies, the Radio and Television as the official organs of Provincial People's Committee have followed closely political missions, improved the quality of information, articles; increased periodic publications, amount of time and area for broadcasting in order to deliver timely the policies, legal documents of our Party Committee and State; and the resolutions of provincial Party Committee to residents; as well as reflected truly new economic development models and many other social issues.

Thái Nguyên was the province where the National Tourism Year 2007 were organized. There are some interesting tourist destinations such as Museum of the Vietnamese ethnic culture (in Thái Nguyên City), the tourist area Phụng Hoàng Cave and Mỏ Gà stream (Võ Nhai), the historical monument of the former Safety Zone (ATK) in Định Hóa district. The most popular here is Núi Cốc Lake which is also the largest provincial tourist area. It has attracted many tourists from inside and outside the province to visit and relax. On February 17th 2016, the ground-first-breaking ceremony of the "super project" of 15,000 billion dongs invested to build Núi Cốc Lake tourist area happened. The big goal of this project is to link tourist areas in Thái Nguyên province with the rest in regional

provinces, whereby exploiting endowed tourist potential and advantages, especially spiritual and eco tours in Núi Cốc Lake, contributing to socio-economic development and giving employment to provincial residents (Tuần Hợp, <http://dantri.com.vn/xa-hoi/sieu-du-an...>).

In the whole province, there are ten libraries operating in suburban districts or towns. The spotlights in the field of library information is that the learning resource center of Thái Nguyên University was founded in 2007 within the support of World Bank. This center covers many kinds of references, regularly updated, providing a modern international-standard facilities, meeting the demand of provincial residents in general and Thái Nguyên University's lecturers, students... in particular in learning, researching, and transferring scientific and technological advances.

In 2014, Department of Culture, Sports and Toursim of Thái Nguyên served 1,284 film shows including 774 celluloid film shows, 432 video film shows for remote communes; 30 shows for political mission, 48 shows for beneficiaries of social welfare. In 137 art performance shows, there were 25 shows for political missions, 88 shows for residents in extremely poor and 24 shows for beneficiaries of social welfare (Department of Culture, Sports and Toursim of Thái Nguyên, 2015, p.7). Through cultural activities, provincial Party Committee, district and commune

governments inflexibly integrate contents of the three movements including '*Studying and following Ho Chi Minh's moral example*', the movement '*The whole nation united to build cultural life*' and '*United efforts to build new rural areas*', making the social environment wholesome. The models, samples of outstanding cultural villages in implementing cultural activities continue to expand.

4. Some emerging issues

At this time, in state-owned factories and enterpries (almost are in the field of heavy industries) in Thái Nguyên province, most of the facilities, technology are out of date, untimely updated. Labor income is low, living standard is limited.

Governnance at levels is loose; the quality of health examination and treatment in private health centers is weak. These factors influence on health, money, psychology of patients and their families (Vũ Hải, Giang Linh, <http://laodong.com.vn/suc-khoe/su-that-ve...>; Nhóm phóng viên, <http://www.baomoi.com/Sai-pham-tai...>). In mountainous districts, healthcare stations have been set however they lack comfortable facilities, medical staff. Moreover, preferential policies are not good enough, propagations are weak; the residents populate sparsely, hardly to travel. Hence, healthcare performance here is ineffective.

Foreign-invested enterprises in province mostly hire a large number of unskilled

workers without requirements of training. (Thái Nguyên Statistic Department, 2014, p.17). In short term, this can help to provide some certain employments, nevertheless the impacts on human development are by no means small in long term. Education, quality of human resource always play a crucial role in human development despite being considered in any aspect, it is the sustainable base for expanding opportunities for residents to select jobs and access to social services.

Education index of Thái Nguyên always ranks at the top-HDI category. However, training quality in fact has suffered from shortcomings, “in some certain perspectives, it has not met the social requirements, missions and demands” (Thái Nguyên Provincial Party Committee, 2015, p.54). In addition, since 2005, the situation of “*brain drain*” has been happening. Many lecturers, cadres after being trained to improve their ability have moved to other provinces to work. Thái Nguyên province has not made and exploited the best of its human resource.

Poverty reduction and hunger eradication have attained many good results, however “they are unsustainable, poor and near-poor households rate is high” (Thái Nguyên province Party Committee, 2015, tr.54). There are large differences in infrastructure, conditions to develop comprehensively between urban citizens and those who live in rural areas, among cities, towns and suburban districts.

According to UNDP studies, social protection of Vietnam in general and Thái Nguyên in particular is dual regressive now. It means that the poorest receive benefit the least from social protection programs (Hoàng Thị Mỹ Hạnh, 2013, p.137).

A hot social evil that Thái Nguyên has suffered from over the years is drug. In spite of drastic actions of relevant authorities, Thái Nguyên ranks 3rd out of the country in the field of drug addicts and high rated HIV/AIDS infected people. The consequences of these evils in society and economy are serious. It is unable to state that a province which has been suffering social evils over many years has a suitable environment for human development.

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Along with national reform process and nearly 20 years since refounding day of Thái Nguyên, it has attained achievements in human development. These achievements are attached closely with advances in the provincial socio-economic development. After all, development is not for itself, it is for human and setting a humanity environment for people to develop comprehensively their abilities in health, education, and spiritual culture. Therefore, in order to implement fully human development of Thái Nguyên, it is required to have right directions, effective solutions, and an appropriate process to resolve emerging issues □

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(continue to page 20)

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