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Social security within new rural development program in Vietnam from policy science perspective

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## **Abstract**

In Vietnam, social security policy forms as a part of public and social policy. From the policy science perspective one can examine a social security policy within the rural construction program as a policy research, making and implementation process in order to make a part to ensure social welfare, protection, sustainable human and social development in rural area, improve physical and material life of rural people (Le Ngoc Hung, 2016). A correct social security policy needs to be concretized into an action program, index, criteria set and implementation instruction in a scientific way to achieve a laid down objective. This point is clarified through the analysis of the actual situation and results and then suggests solutions to improve the effects of social security policy implementation in new rural development program (equivalent to new rural building program, *chuong trinh xay dung nong thon moi* in Vietnamese) in the following stage.

Social security policies can be clarified through the examination of documents of Vietnam's communist party congresses, resolutions of the Government, decisions of the Prime Minister, circulars and other related legal documents of ministries and organizations.

*Key words:* Social security, new rural, policy, policy science perspective, Rural development, indexes.

### **1. The Party's point of view in the rural development and the system of social security**

Rural development forms an essential part of the Party's point of view of agriculture, rural area and farmers. Resolution numbered 26/TU/2008 dated August 5 2008 of the Party' central commission about agriculture, rural area and farmers has laid down clearly some points of the issue of agriculture, rural area and farmers as follows: Farmers are the actors of the development, the development of rural area is linked closely to the construction of industrial premises, services and urban development is fundamental; Comprehensive development, modernization of agriculture is a key (CPV, 2008; 2012).

Resolution 26/TU/2008 determines one of general objectives of the agriculture, rural area and farmers, that is sustainable development of rural area with economic, social, cultural and environmental features. It is written:

“Rural development entails modern socio-economic infrastructure, appropriate economic structure and production organization forms linking agriculture to fast development of industries, services and urban area as planned, ordered rural society, rich color of nation; improved people knowledge, preserved eco-environment; increased political system in rural area under the leadership of the communist party” (CPV, 2008; 2012).

The resolution points out a concrete objective of new rural area: by 2020 year about 50% of communes obtains all criteria of new rural area.

To realize the objectives of new rural development the Resolution points out clearly tasks and solutions: “implementing the program of new rural development with concrete indexes relevant to every regions, paying attention to difficult communes in the mountainous, island, border areas”.

*Regarding social security*, the Resolution laid down tasks and solutions as follows: “Constructing a system of social safety in the rural area” rather than simply implementing poverty reduction policies or generally policies of improving the life. Namely, continuing the implementation of health insurance policies for the poor, care of children under six, implementing relief policies to hunger families, difficult regions, providing scholarship to poor students. Experimenting insurance policy in agriculture, ensuring minimum living conditions of rural people; Reviewing and reducing items of obligatory contribution for farmers; continuing improving and fully implementation of local democracy rules.

Urgent tasks for 2010 have been pointed out: “launching “the program of new rural development whereas implementing construction of infrastructure first” (CPV, 2008; 2012). From this perspective it can be seen in practice the task “the development of social security system in rural area’ in general and the implementation of social security policies in particular come later as compared to the task of construction of infrastructure items such as roads, markets, clinics and schools.

Thus, the Resolution of the Party has pointed out clearly the objective of development of new rural and social security system in the rural area, and at the same time, laid down tasks and solutions such as constructing rural area with (new and relevant) indexes, whereas the construction of infrastructure system first and then other items.

## **2. Social security in other action programs of the Government**

Three months following Resolution 26-TU/2008 the Government issued resolution 24/2008/NQ-CP launching action program of the Government on the implementation of Resolution 26/TU/2008 on agriculture, rural area and farmers. The Government laid down the objective (the forth of five) of the action program of the government : comprehensive improvement of rural socio-economic infrastructure and development of new rural area as following:

*“... Sustainable developing new rural area in the direction of civilized, rich, beautiful, protection of the environment, preserving nation cultural color; ensuring*

*learning, health care and treatment, cultural, sport events in most of rural regions”<sup>1</sup>.*

The government action program points out the task of launching development of three new national target programs of which the first one is new rural development with a range of main contents. The Government programs wrote:

“National target program on new rural development with the main content: construction and organization of the life of the people in the direction of civilization, modern, preserved nation culture and color and eco-environment linking to the development of urban, township; comprehensive development of rural socio-economic infrastructure relevant to space planning of the construction of villages, communes and sectoral and local development; complimenting the support of the State and Government with the contribution of the rural people; improving the understanding, knowlege, training and educating human resources and well organizing the local life; setting up production organization forms relevant to the requirements of the modern agricultural sector, commodity production including both farming and off-farming and ”one trade for every village” philosophy<sup>2</sup>. The National Target program on new rural development has been assigned to the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development (MARD) to be in charge.

*Regarding the development of groups of specialized sectoral projects*, the Government action program determines seven groups of projects for ministries and government organizations depending on their assigned functions, tasks and coordination with other ones. Among these projects the fourth ones have had details of improving material and non-material life of the rural people including detailed contents such as creation of job opportunities, poverty reduction and living conditions for minority people, education, health, culture and finally ”realizing social security policies<sup>3</sup>.

*Regarding the development of project for the period to 2020*, the government action program decides to develop 36 projects among thwm the fifteenth is ”development of

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution 24/2008/NQ-CP 24/2008/NQ-CP, 28/10/2008, launching action program of the Government on the implementation of Resolution 26/TU/2008 on agriculture, rural area and farmers. Four objectives are: a) Developing comprehensive agriculture in the modern direction; b) traininng rural human resources, c) Improving life quality of rural people; and d) increasing capacity to prevent and fight against natural calamities.

<sup>2</sup> The rest two programs are: The NTP on Adaptation to climate change (Ministry of natural resources and Environment- MoNRE): and the NTP on educating rural human resources (The Ministry of Education and Training MoET) .

<sup>3</sup> d) Increasing material and non-material life for rural people, focusing on creating off-farm jobs, rural industries and services; directing the implementation of a comprehensive strategy of growth and poverty reduction, efforts to improving the life for poor and minority people; developing education, health care, culture in rural areas and implementing social security policies”; See: Resolution 24/2008/NQ-CP 24/2008/NQ-CP, 28/10/2008, launching action program of the Government on the implementation of Resolution 26/TU/2008 on agriculture, rural area and farmers.

social security system for the rural people, (including improving minimal living conditions for them). This project has been assigned to the Ministry of labor and Social affairs (MOLISA) to be in charge of development and submitting to the Government during the second quarter of 2009 for decision. Closely linking to social policies in the development of new rural are other three projects. They are “Project on the development of health care (the Ministry of Health care), Project ”policy mechanism to support sustainable poverty reduction for districts with high poverty rates (MOLISA) and ”Project on housing support for poor households (the Ministry of Construction).

Thus, realizing the perspectives of the Party on the development of social security system in rural area the Government has pointed out and started to implement one of important contents of new rural development project – realizing social security policies”.

### **3. Social security in the set of national indexes of new rural development**

*Set of National indexes on new rural development.* About six months following the issuance of Resolution 24/28/CP, dated 16 of April 2009 The Prime Minister decided to the set of indexes on new rural. This set of indexes has been made to be the foundation for the formulation of the contents the national target program, to steer the experimenting the development of new rural area and examining and evaluating and justifying localities which satisfy criteria of new rural area<sup>4</sup>.

The set of national indexes of new rural (2009) has been systematically designed comprising three grades of new rural area. They include commune as new rural of 19 indexes; district with 75% of communes as new rural areas and province with 80% of its districts as new rural areas. Nineteen indexes of new rural communes have been classified into five areas as follows:

(i) Having planning (1) and implementing that planning

(ii) Socio-economic infrastructure have had 8 indexes, (2) transportation, (3) irrigation, (4) electricity, (5) school, (6) cultural premises, (7) rural market, (8) post-office and (9) housing of the people.

(iii) Economic and production organization with 4 indexes - (10) income level, (11) number of poor households, (12) labor structure and (13) production organization forms,

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<sup>4</sup> Article 1 of this Decision states: “The set of indexes provides the base for working out the contents of the NTP on new rural development; directing the experiment of developing new rural area model in the stage of strengthening industrialization, modernization; Inspecting, evaluating and approving communes, districts and provinces as new rural. The Index set will be adjusted to socio-economic conditions of the country and every time period.”. See: Decision 491/QĐ-TTg, Hanoi, 16/4/2009 of the Prime Minister on the issuance of the national index set on new rural development.

(iv) Culture – society and environment with 4 indexes: (14) education, (15) health care, (16) culture, and (17) environment,

(v) Political system with 2 indexes - (18) sound system of socio-political organization and (19) safe and ordered society.

The set of national indexes of new rural reflects the view of of the Party – the development of rural infrastructure before hand. Out of five areas and 19 indexes the planning with one index and socio-economic infrastructure with 9 indexes rank the first place in the index set.

*The index of social security.* Reviewing names of 19 indexes with 38 index contents terminology 'social security' has not been founded. However, content item 10 – income-, eleven -poor household-, fourteen – education and fifteen – health care- contain elements of of social security policy in broad sense. For example, index 10 – income- consists of 'annual per capita income' as compared to general income level of a province and region (7 regions). Index (11) of poor household entails content of "poverty rate" to general criteria and regional ones. Both these indexes form essential contents of the social security policy. Simmerely, three indexes - 'labor structure', 'education' and 'health care' – have had contents relating to social security policies on job creation, vocational training, minimal education and and health insurance. Index (14) –education – entails the content of compulsory primary education meaning providing minimal education. Index health care means the 'rate of population having health insurance', that is, the content of social security of health insurance.

Among the abover mentioned indexes only 'poor household' one directly reflects the content of social security in the narrow sense and has been guided the implementation in the way of integrating as follows: In August 21 2009, MARD issued circular 54/2009/TT-BN&PTNT instructing the implementation of the set of national indexes on new rural<sup>5</sup> with very detailed guidance on the content and method to define criteria so that local authorities can steer the construction and development new rural area. Circular 54/2009/TT-BNNPTNT guides the use of four policy documents on the implementation of the poor household index. Namely, the development of new rural should be based on Decision 170/2005/QĐ-TTg, dated July 7 ngày 2005 of the Prime minister to determine poverty incidence (under VND 200 thousand for rural areas). Decision 170/2005/QĐ-TTg; Circulars 4/2007/TT-BLDTBXH; and 30/2009/TT-BNNPTNT.

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<sup>5</sup> Circular 54/2009/TT-BNNPTNT guides the use of four policy documents on the implementation of the poor household index.

#### **4. Social security within the national target program on the new rural development**

*The content of poverty reduction and social security.* In June 4 2010, the Pmiminister issued decision 800/QĐ-TTg approving the national target program on new rural development for 2010 – 2020 period. This program generally to underline that the objective<sup>6</sup> of new rural development has been clearlywritten in Resolution 26 -NQ/TU', using some words to concretizing tasks set forth for the period 2010 - 2020. The NTP on new rural development has been stated by the Government as a comprehensive of socio-economic, political and national defence development program.

This program consists of 11 contents of which the fourth one is named as "poverty reduction and social safety". Targeting to satisfy index 11 'of poor household'.

In turn, "poverty reduction and social security comprises 3 details contents, as follows:

- (i) Effective implementation of fast and sustainable poverty reduction program for 62 districts of high poverty rates (by resotion 30a of the Government on new rural;
- (ii) Continuing to implement the national target program on poverty reduction;
- (iii) Implementation of social security program.

These two contents define several policies on poverty reduction, but, the third content is rather general and therefore it cover "social security programs".

#### **5. Regarding the implementation of social security policies in the process of new rural development**

As it is presented above social security policy in broad sence is a system of points of view, decisions, action programs, circulars on action for four groups of contents as follows: (i) labor, job, income and poverty reduction, (ii) social insurance including health insurance, (iii) social support including policy people and regular support to people, and urgent support to people facing difficulties and (iv) basic social services including minimal education, health care, clean water, environment cleanness and legan support. But, in the new rural development, social security policies relate mainly and directly to poverty reduction index. This index mentions "the implementation of social

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<sup>6</sup> The common objective of the NTP on new rural development for 2010 – 2020 is "Developing new rural areas with step-by- step modernized socio-economic infrastructure; adequate economic structure and production organization forms, linking agriculture to industries and services; rural to urban areas, by planning; rural civilized, ordered, rich nation color; inceased knowledge and preserved eco-environment; preserved social security; *improved living conditions* of the people and; toward socialist orientation". See Resolution 800/QĐ-TTg, 4/6/2010, approving the NTP on new rural development for 2010-2020.



security programs” but does not clearly say which programs, policies or indexes of social security. That is why evaluation, performance reports on the results of the implementation of the national target program on new rural development rarely, even never mentioned details of the implementation of social security policies while there is information of the results of income and poor household index implementation.

*Nationally*, the report of the Government made at the end of 2015 wrote (Govt, 2015): all 16 NTPs including the NTP on new rural development have made contribution to the implementation of socio-economic development objectives of 2011-2015 and poverty reduction course. As a result, poverty rate decreased from 14,2% in 2010 to less than 5% in 2015 (2%/annually) by poverty incidence for 2015. By March of 2016 1,761 (19.7%) communes obtained new rural criteria, By September of 2016, the number reached 2,045 communes (23%) and 24 district units have been approved to obtain new rural criteria. On poor household index, the rate of poor households in districts reduced 50,07% in 2011 down to under 28% in 2015. Only in commune of new rural criteria per capita income increased VND 16 million in 2011 to VND 28.4 in 2015, the rate of poor households reduced fast, from 11.6% to 3.6% for the same period.

*Locally*, Reports on the results of implementation of the NTP on new rural development of provinces indicate that they all have completed indexes of income and poverty reduction but, there is no information of the implementation of social security policies. For example, province Tra Vinh did increase income level of the whole province from VND 4.59 million in 2010 up to 24.06 million in 2015 and 51 out of its 85 communes fulfilled index 10 of income. And, at the same time, the rate of poor households decreased from 12.47% in 2010 down to 7.66% and 37 out of 85 communes satisfied index of reducing poor household number for the same period (Steering Committee of the NTP of New Rural Development, Tra Vinh Province, 2016). In Province Lam Dong, the rate of poor household decreased from 12.6% in 2010 to 2% in 2015, while that of poor minority households decreased very fast, from over 50% to 6% accordingly (Steering Committee of the NTP of New Rural Development, Lam Dong Province, 2015). In province Tien Giang, the rate of poor households was down to less than 5%, 113 out of 139 communes satisfied the index of poor households, the per capita income in rural area increased from VND 9.24 million in 2011 to 22.4 million in 2015 (Steering Committee of the NTP of New Rural Development, Tien Giang Province, 2015). Ninh Binh province succeeded in reduction of the rate of poor households from 6.3% in 2011 down to 3.7% in 2015, increasing the per capita income in the rural area from VND 9.24 million in 2011 to 22.24 million in 2015 (Steering Committee of the NTP of New Rural Development, Ninh Binh Province, 2015).

## **6. Some issues looking from the perspective of science of social policies**

From the perspective of social policy science, one can see that social security system in Vietnam comprises of a number of actors with complicated relationship characterizing the period of transition. The problem raised here to ensure the effects of implementation of social security policies within new rural development one needs to clarify the theoretical and scientific basis of as foundation for studying. Making and enforcing indexes, criteria on social security (Lê Ngọc Hùng, 2016).

Some other issues that have been presented in the main report assessing the implementation of New rural development program (NRDP) for 2010-2015 (Đức Bình, 2016). The most outstanding one relates directly to social security policies, i.e. some localities just concentrated in making investment in infrastructure construction of transportation, building offices, cultural houses, schools, etc. Rather than in production development, less attention paid to increasing incomes, improving the life quality of the local people and environment protection. This point has been also indicated in the main report: among the indexes of New rural development is that of poverty reduction but in most of cases there is no clear information of the results of the implementation of social security policies though index 4 of the NTP of 2009 clearly stated 'poverty reduction and social security'. The NTP on sustainable poverty reduction for 2012 – 2015 stated clearly the objective " comprehensive and effective implementation poverty reduction policies in order to improve the living conditions of the poor, first of all on health care, education, culture, clean water and housing, increasingly comfortable access to basic public services.

Another issue is the debt of communes: nationally, 53 out of 63 provinces and cities are in debt of more than VND 15,200 billion of which 3,637 (40.7% new rural development communes have due debt) with average debt of VND 4.2 billion one. The total debt of 15 localities which have had the biggest ones account for 80,7% of the total debt. In the North, debt counts for 75.3% of the total debt occurred in the new rural development process. This may be caused by the fact that some provinces spent too much money on the construction of infrastructure projects, neglecting social security program.

The actual policy and its implementation of the NTP on new rural development program period of 2010-2016 indicate that social security policies in particular and the system of social security in general have not been paid adequate attention. The resolutions of the CPV and Government have laid down the task of development of social security system in rural area, the NTP on poverty reduction also have had important contents of 'poverty reduction and social security'. There may be lack of concrete policies on social security criteria and indexes in new rural development program.

Resolution 15-NQ/TW dated June 1 2012 on “Some issues of social policies for 2012 – 2020” and Resolution of the XII National Party congress highly appreciated the achievement in the implementation of social policies and, at the same time, pointed out weaknesses of social security policies that need to be overcome in the coming time. However, the results of social security policy implementation have been assessed as not sustainable, e.g. there is the situation of becoming poor, illiterate again, low rate of people having social and health insurance, big gaps of social security indexes among localities., difficult living conditions among the minority people. From the practical implementation of Resolution 15-NQ/TW some experience and lessons can be drawn for improvement of policies and seeking for more effective ways of social security policy in the coming period of 2016-2020 as follows: (i) social security policy is an objective, motivation for fast and sustainable development of new rural area, therefore, economic policies should be linked to social security policies in the rural areas; (ii) Social security policies should be implemented in a comprehensive manner, with center and focal point; (iii) The leadership of the CPV should be strengthened in making and implementing social security policies with more active participation of different partners in the society and international support; (iv) social security strategy and action plan should be made basing on scientific facts with concrete and feasible objective, contents, criteria, indexes and solutions and decisive organization of implementation linked to profound and effective advocating activities, creating high agreement and participation of the society.

The NTP on poverty reduction for the period of 2011-2015 determines three concrete objectives of which the first one is to increase income level of the poor households and reduce the rate of theirs; the second one is to implement social security policies on poverty reduction (health care, education, clean water and housing) in a comprehensive way; and the third one is construction of infrastructure. However, among goals to be achieved by the year 2015 only one of them was determined- reducing poor district and communes and one of increasing income of poor households and the rest of 6 basic indexes are for socio-economic infrastructure.

Vietnam is now implementing the social security policies with two sides of this notion. In a broad sense, it consists of poverty reduction programs, labor market regulation programs and others<sup>7</sup>. In narrow sense, it is implemented by cash support,

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<sup>7</sup> In broad meaning, social security consists of: (i) poverty reduction programs (The NTP of sustainable poverty reduction; NTPs 135 and 30a) and poverty reduction policies (excluding education and health care); (ii) Programs regulating labor market (vocational training, labor export and employment); (iii) Social and unemployment insurance (State budget pays pensions to people retired before 1995 and supports volunteered insurance); (iv) support to buying health insurance, (v) supporting electricity fees for poor households, (vi) supporting education (exempting and reducing education fees, providing scholarship, supports to students with lunch), (vii) social care, (viii) urgent supports, (ix) social grants (monthly cash supports by Decrees 67, 13, 136). Total spending by the Government for all those social security programs (broad meaning) increased from 2.6% of GDP in 2008 to 3.36% GDP in 2010 and down to 2.8% GDP in 2013; including 1.07% GDP spent on policy people the total spending on

pension, grants and other forms of support. But, even in the narrow meaning, it tends to be complicated and broadened in both paying way and sources for social security policies.

In the narrow meaning, the structure of total spending for social security of Vietnam is as follows: (i) cash support includes welfare monthly paid in cash payments, case-by-case support in case of calamities; support to people of low income; electricity support (since 2011); (ii) Social insurance including pension, pension for the people retired before July 1995 (paid from the state budget) and pension paid to people retired after July 1995 (paid by Vietnam Insurance), (iii) Supporting people who devoted lives and time during the war time; (iv) exempting irrigation fees for farmers: contribution to the unemployment insurance fund that is managed by Vietnam Insurance (since 2009), support to state employees working in difficult regions (since 2011), supporting flood prevention projects, resettlement of minority people (since 2009); supporting socio-economic planning in rural areas (since 2009); supporting communes located along Lao and Cambodia - Vietnam border lines (since 2010), supporting growing water products in islands (since 2010) (MOLISA, 2013).

Thus, even in the narrow meaning the social security system also entails poverty reduction component, rural infrastructure construction and new rural development. The total spending on social security in this narrow sense accounts for 4% of GDP and it has not been changed during the period of 2007 – 2011, whereas “the welfare of social insurance including pension shares more than a half though it decreased down to 2.3%, the support to war time people was down from 1% to 0,9%, cash grants were doubled, from 0.2 to 0,5%, and other increased by three times, from 0.1 to 0.3% during 2007-2011. This reality indicates the model of social security of Vietnam is very diversified and complicated characterizing the transition to the market economy that requires to be concretized by setting indexes, criteria to support the implementation during the new rural development in the coming time.

In short, the analysis of social security policies in the new rural development indicates the objectives, indexes and their contents of social security have been clearly stated. The instruction on the implementation, the results of the implementation of social security policies show that this policy has not been implemented as it is required. Therefore, from the perspective of science of modern social policy it requires to continue study and find effective method to implement this policy more effectively in the development of new rural area. At the same time, it needs to improve information collection, process it and publicize data of social security in the rural area that is in very shortage nowadays, to provide adequate facts for research and renovation, improvement

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social security in broad meaning is 3.87% GDP. UNDP. *Growth for all people: Report on Human development Vietnam 2015 on inclusive development*. Publisher of social science. Hanoi. 2016: 127-128,

and implementation of social security policies in the process of fast and sustainable new rural development.

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