Basic Social Services for Ethnic Minority Groups in Urban of Vietnam: Current Situation and Solutions

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Abstract: At the moment, there is about 13 million of ethnic minorities living in the urban areas of Vietnam, facing difficulties on their daily life. In order to improve the life quality, the narrow the gap between the minorities and majority in Vietnam, this paper aims at identifying the welfare accessibilities by minorities in the urban life in terms of housing, health care services, employment services and public services as well; and proposing the solutions for improving such conditions to have better life of minorities in the urban. Based on the sustainable livelihood framework as the theoretical approach, and the survey with 600 ethnic minorities, at the age of 18 and above, in three provinces of Vietnam, it is found that the ethnic minorities are facing difficulties on accessing the basic social services due to many limitations, from such this paper also suggests the considerations improving the life conditions for ethnic minorities in Vietnam in the urban life from perspective of social welfare and sustainable development.

Keywords: Social Services, Vietnam, Minorities, Access, Urban Life

1. Introduction

Vietnam is multi cultural background countries with 53 minorities. Each group has its own characteristics of economic, cultural and language. They are living mostly in the rural, mountainous and remote areas in less developed life conditions. There are about 13.5 millions of ethnic minority people living in around 3100 households among 63 provinces of Vietnam; it increases 1.55% in last 10 years [9]. And in the urbanization and industrialization process, the number of those minorities living in the urban areas increases at around 1.5 million (10.5% of the whole national minorities). Recent reports by Vietnam National Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs and General Office Statistics show that the ethnic minorities groups living in difficulties as if they are experiencing their life in the urban areas, it is suggested that further research about the life condition of ethnic minorities in the contemporary urban of Vietnam [9]. This paper, is a part of national research project funded by Vietnam National Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs, titled: *Life of Ethnic Minority Groups in Urban and Industrial Zones in Vietnam: Current situation and proposal solutions (2016)*, aims at identifying the current situation of ethnic minority groups in accessing the basic social services in urban life and proposing the solutions for better life condition of these groups.

2. Literature Reviews

Daily life experience of ethnic minorities has been an attractive research topic, in sociology, management science, and anthropology as well or from interdisciplinary approach as these groups are facing difficulties as their lack of capacities and opportunities to get the better life conditions. Although there are current discussions on the life improvement, social research indentifying their life in urban areas are still limited as the following considerations: In the urban, the poor is vulnerable as the decline of living environment [32], while there is less updated and accessible policy for them in the urban life. So, in order to reduce the

risks for the poor in general and for the minorities in particular, it is suggested to have well-designed policies which are contextual and practical in line with the current economic, social and cultural conditions in the urban areas. In Vietnam, the questions for meeting the welfare needs of the society in general and of the minorities in particular are necessary for the better livelihood [21]. In addition, Vu Van Phuc (2012), in discussion of the prospects of welfare practice in Vietnam to 2020, emphasized the ways on guarantee the social welfare have been the cored action plan for social development as the same aim of social development strategy [31: 13-14]. The implementation of such aims needs more solutions, in terms of social policies by the State as closed relationship between social development and social equality in the designing step and implementing stages of every social policies and welfare practices, and developing multi-forms of social insurances and medicare [31: 92], promoting the administrative role of central and local government on implementing, supervising and advocating policies for such purposes. It seems that the recent research present efforts on improving the welfare for the poor in general and for minorities for the sustainable development in Vietnam [17].

Additionally, there are research directions on the daily life conditions of ethnic minorities in the urban and industrial zones in Vietnam. The first one includes the national surveys such as national census, household living standards with the sole aim on urban economics, or urban planning, urban culture and life styles which draw the specific characteristics of daily urban life, with less consideration on the general themes for the whole country. In this research direction, the migration flow has been considered [11]. Besides, the second on on research about the impacts by urbanization and industrialization process have been noted in the urban life of minority groups as the cultural problems [26, 27]; labor engagement and relationship [23], social supports and policies for specific groups in urbanization [3] which express the directions on urban planning, economic development of urban in mountainous areas, specific solutions on poverty alleviation and literacy improvement, respect about the culture and customs of each ethnic minority group. Other research also considers to the role of workers on industrial zones, and promotion the local workers on the industrialization process [18, 22]. In such research topic, La Thi Thu Thuy et al (2011) also looked at the metal changes and problems of local workers in the industrial zone and work places [10]. Tran Thanh Nam presented findings about the daily life of Khmer in the urban and in the innovation of Vietnam [25], while Nguyen Minh Tuan showed the daily life of Ede in the Highland of Vietnam, it illustrated the view of the life of Ede in terms of economics (infrastructure, housing, living facilities, household incomes) and non-economics (education, healthcare, community participation and gender equality) [18]. In additions, Nguyen Van Quyet also emphasized on the changes and impacts of urban life to the cultural and belief spheres of the minorities [19], and which also leads to the social inclusion process of the

minorities as the social services usage [28, 19, 30], or community participation [24].

It is hard to find the current perspectives and research directions about the accessibilities to social services in the daily life of minorities in urban, and how to find the best ways to make their life better in the urban.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Methodology

This paper applies the approach of human development as the first one which aims at identifying any possible opportunities for the subjects to self-improve their life conditions sustainably [33]. This approach looks at the capacities to live which are significant and unique. In the developing process, Vietnam is facing the trap of middle income as the poor infrastructure, dilemma between the aims and means of social development, the low skill human resources. So, Vietnam considers not only the increase of income but also the improvement of educational, healthcare services and employment opportunities as well [32]. The second approach related to the human capital and social capital. The former implies the potentiality and potential improvement of health quality, personal knowledge as significant tools for the future benefits of a person and a national as a whole. It is suggested as the significant factor to create the higher income and living standard, especially for the poor [20: 5]. This is the notable definition on making the theoretical framework on researching the daily life experiences of the minorities in the urban. The latter is known as the interrelationship of family, relatives, community and society of each individual and family which enrich them the abilities to improve the life condition. It is significant approach but still limited in researching the minorities in Vietnam. The third one is developed from the sustainable livelihood by *Department for International Development, United Kingdom* (DFID) in 1999 and currently applied in anthropological research [20]. There are 5 components making the first idea of this framework: (a) the personal priorities, (b) the personal strategy for such priority list; (c) institutions and policies impact the personal access to the existed opportunities and asserts; (d) personal accessibility to the social resources, (e) life conditions including economics, technology, population [1: 6]. The second aspect of the framework covers the perspective of central position of person and personal livelihood in the development. The third one accepts the view on the role of policy, institutions on human resources accessibility and livelihood impacts [8: 3]. The fourth one identifies the livelihood from the property perspective and capital as significant took for the minorities on their new life experiences in the urban [2: 2039]. The fifth one illustrates the weakness and strengths of this framework on doing research [12: 55; 20].

Besides such framework, Tran Van Kham overviews the social inclusion's approach and its application on doing social

research in Vietnam, and presents some indicators in such research: social pressure, healthcare, community safety, economics and community participation [28: 39]. These indicators are significant to search for the social inclusion of each person in the existed social conditions. Based on such approaches, this paper identifies the life experiences of the minorities in the urban through their accessibility to social services.

3.2. Research Methods

This paper, as a part of research project, applies (a) the documentary analysis (with more focuses on legal and social policy documents about the urbanization, industrialization; recent research works about the ethnic minorities in general and in the urban in particulars, other official reports by the Committee on Minorities and General Statistics Office); (b) survey with 600 ethnic minorities in three provinces of Thai Nguyen, Binh Duong and Dac Lac for those above 18 years old, aims at identifying the impacted factors for their life in the urban.

The sample of the survey is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Sample of survey.

		N	%
1	Gender	599	100
	Male	294	49.1
	Female	305	50.9
2	Marital status	598	100
	Not married	177	29.6
	Married	397	66.4
	Divorce	10	1.7
	Widow	14	2.3
3	Age group	598	100
	Under 30	303	50.7
	From 30 to under 45	190	31.8
	Above 45	105	17.5
4	Residential status	599	100
	Migrated	238	39.7
	Permanent	361	60.3
5	Places	601	100
	Thai Nguyen	200	33.3
	Dac Lac	201	33.4
	Binh Duong	200	33.3

4. Findings

4.1. Current Situation of Accessing Social Services by Minorities in the Urban

In general, the basic social services for minorities include: housing, water, environment safety, education, health care, cultural and recreational activities, etc. They are the basic and fundamental for the daily life of each person to live and work in the urban conditions. Social services in urban are so important which contribute to the realization of social policies and transfer the social development plan into actions; and to balance the contribution and social benefits

among the citizen groups; to protect the accessible rights to basic services for all, especially for the vulnerable groups. Such activities make the better and stronger social security network and sustainable development of urban [4]. So, social services accessibility is a key indicator for understanding the social inclusion and inclusive life conditions for all [28; 29; 30]. In last decades, although many social policies have been made for the urban as the requirements of urbanization and urban development, a large part of urban in general and urban minorities in particular have been not fully accessible to them which provided by the States and other organizations. Its pressures have been stronger as the urban development and the requirements for better life conditions. Findings from the survey in three parts of Vietnam and the national survey in the life condition of 53 minority groups in Vietnam [9] show that the current situation of accessing such services are demonstrated in the following aspects:

4.1.1. Housing, Clean Water and Environmental Sanitation

Survey findings with 600 participants in three parts of Vietnam show that almost local ethnic minorities live in the private houses while the migrants stay in the rental (51%). There is less evidence showing that they are living in the dormitories of the industrial zones, with the acquaintance friends or relatives or the landlord. The ratio of ethnic minority groups access to the workplace dormitory is so small (0.7%) among respondents while discussing the housing demands.

Table 2. Form of housing (%).

	Housing	N	%
1	Living in relative house	26	4.3
2	Living with landlord	15	2.5
3	Rental house	304	50.6
4	Private house	230	38.3
5	Industrial park's dormitory	4	0.7
6	Other	22	3.7

Source: Survey findings

The privacy on using the housing facilities by ethnic minority groups has been responded differently. It is found that the minorities share the bathroom and toilet more than private using (around 4 times). It means that there is low accessibility to the private usage of such facilities by ethnic minorities in the urban life. Many can prepare meals everyday by themselves in the shared facilities.

Table 3. Using the facilities (%).

	Facilities	Sharing	Owning	Not use
1	Bathroom	53.1	46.4	0.5
2	Kitchen	25.8	71.9	2.4
3	Toilet	53.1	44.9	2.0

Source: Survey findings

Accessing the clean water and using the standard toilets for ethnic minority groups in urban are still difficult. The

survey findings about accessibilities to the environmental conditions, clean water by the ethnic minority groups in the living areas are shown that they are living in the bad and wet conditions (mean=2.43); lack of clean water (mean=2.27); bad condition of water supplied systems (mean=2.27); poor environmental sanitation (mean=2.28); dirty and overloaded toilet (mean=2.23)[1]. It means that the quality of living environment is one of the most consideration problems which need further improvements for better life quality for ethnic minority groups in the urban.

4.1.2. Health Care and Primary Care

It is a common habit of the ethnic minorities on buying medicines and self-treating while they are in sick. When ethnic minorities are in health troubles, a majority goes to pharmacy to buy the medicines for self-treatment (account 53.4%), or visit the commune clinics (nearly 50%), while there is low response for public and private clinics at 25.3 % and 25.2 % respectively. It shows that the ethnic minority groups are familiar with self-treatment or visit the local doctors rather than using the higher cost services of district, provincial hospitals or the private clinics.

Table 4. Using the medical services (%).

|	Using the medical services	N	%
1	Commune clinics	212	46.9
2	Workplace clinics	121	23.9
3	Private hospitals	112	26.9
4	Self-treatment	229	53.4
5	Visit local doctor/nurse	15	3.7
6	District hospitals	83	19.6
7	Public hospital	107	25.3
8	Private clinics	106	25.2
9	Back to hometown	11	2.7
10	Other	7	1.7

Source: Survey findings

In terms of insurance usage, survey findings present that the ethnic minority groups less prefer the forms of insurance in general and in health insurance in particular while they live in their homeland (for the migrated minorities) or in the past (for the local minorities in the urban). However, at the current life, they pay more attention on any forms of insurance, with two times of using the health insurance as before.

So, it is clear that the increased ratio on health insurance registration also presents that the change of urban life brings the significant impacts to the understanding and practicing of ethnic minority groups about the role of health insurance in general and specific insurance policies in particular.

[1]this mean is developed from 5 scale of Likert, so the gap for each mean value is calculated by (5-1): 5=0.8, i.e: from 1 to under 1.8: very difficulty; from 1.8 to under 2.6: difficulty; from 2.6 to under 3.4: average; from 3.4 to under 4.2: advantage; above 4.2: very advantage

4.1.3. Education Services

It is found that there is a majority of responses at average level on educational services in the community, in which there is more advantage on educational permission for children in schools (mean=3.46), however such ratio for the public schools is lower with mean at 2.97, and the lowest ratio to educational service in the urban life is at the vocational training, with mean at 2.73. Although, such responses to three forms of educational services for ethnic minorities are at the normal ratio while look at the mode value statistically, standing around 3.
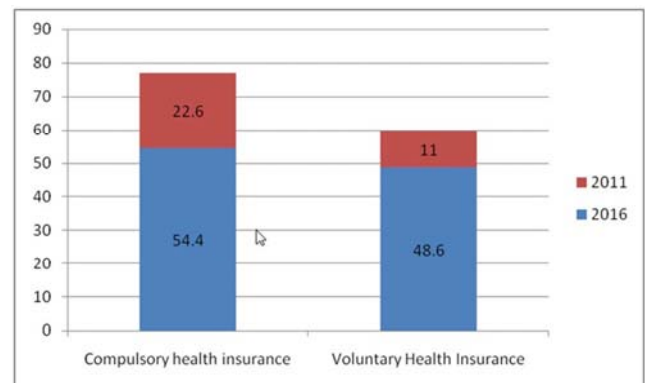
Source: Survey findings

Figure 1. Using the health insurance (%).

4.1.4. Cultural Activities, Sports and Recreation in Community

Primarily findings from National Census on the living conditions of 53 ethnic minority groups in Vietnam (2015) show that the number of communes equipped with common places for cultural activities and the communication (speakers) system are 3501 (35.4%) and 3946 (39.9%) respectively by the end of July 2015 [9]. The most popular activities in which the ethnic minority groups attended in the free time are sleep and relax (mean value: 3.84), chatting with friends (mean value: 3.38). While the less one is accessing internet (mean value: 1.80). Some recreational activities are less frequent including reading news (mean value: 2.20), hanging around (mean value: 2.38) or coming back hometown (mean value: 2.41). It means that the minorities in urban pay more times and considerations on reproducing rather than attending the recreational activities to meet the social demands. So, from the Maslow approach to the social needs, these people are working for meeting the basic need with more priorities at the life experiences in the urban.

In terms of political and community participation, it is found that a majority of ethnic minorities joined in the local vote (75.1%) and attended in the local meetings (43.3%). Other activities in the urban attracted less frequent participation by ethnic minorities, in which there is low ratio of participating in the local groups and clubs, youth association's activities, and hometown fellow-men's groups.

Table 5. Social network and local activities (%).

	Social network and local activities	Being invited (%)	Participation level				
			Min	Max	Mean	SD	Mode
1	Community meeting	43.3	1	5	2.76	1.48	1
2	Local voting	75.1	1	5	2.96	1.19	3
3	Local festival	41.7	1	5	2.53	1.21	3
4	Cultural and extra activities in local	35.4	1	5	2.23	1.01	1
5	Workplace extra activities	26.8	1	5	2.07	1.08	1
6	Charity activities	26.8	1	5	2.10	1.10	1
7	Clubs	8.7	1	5	1.68	0.94	1
8	Local associations	18.6	1	5	1.88	1.01	1
9	Home country Fellow association	10.4	1	5	1.67	0.92	1

Source: Survey findings

In brief, it is found that the social services for urban are poor and presents the limitations in terms of lacking the principle on various and comprehensive forms, sharing between State and society, and among social groups; less encouragement of participation by the local organizations, industries, and local people for active participation; lack of linkage between planning and developing the actions for each social service; investment for enlarging the service provision system is less compatible and engagement with the general urban development plan. Many indicators for the social service development are out of date in comparing to the current conditions. The prominent reason for such limitation is that the quick urban development spread out the nationwide while the payment capacities by the ethnic minorities are left behind, and there is still limited in the State's supports for improving and enlarging the social services in urban. In additions, many local governments do not strictly follow the government guidelines and policies on developing the urban areas comprehensively with the setting up the social services for the urban peoples in general and for the ethnic minorities in particular. Other reason for such situation is that there is lack of supervised unit to control the quality of social services publicly, especially for those public ones, and there is no clear line to identify the role of governmental units on service provision and supervisions for extra activities by the third parties.

4.2. Limitations for the Service Accessibilities by the Ethnic Minority Groups

From literature reviews and survey responses, it is found that some barriers for such accessing are presented in the following reasons:

4.2.1. High Pressure from Livelihood in the Urban

Ethnic minorities face intensive pressure about their life in the urban, and such pressure increases gradually as the daily expenses in the new living conditions in urban. They spend more times on meeting the basic needs and for the livelihood. From the survey, it shows that it took the minorities around 9.14 hours per day for working in the workplaces, with the min value at 4 hours and max value at 15 hours (nearly two times of the normal working load). On the question of facing any social problems in the urban life, the problems with high responses by the ethnic minorities are "difficulty on finding the sustainable job", "pressure for being breadwinner for the family", and "employment competition". Around 23.9% of ethnic minorities in this research shared that due to the low monthly income (around 4 million VND, equal to 200 USD), their life is not sustainable, and they have to work in extra time, so they do not have enough time for cultural and recreational activities in their urban life.

4.2.2. Limitation of Accessible Capacities to Social Services

In spite of recent education improvement nationwide, qualification level of ethnic minority groups is still low and a clear gap between groups. Due to such education level, it took these groups more time on working but less productive and income. The following table shows the monthly income and the proportion of income sources of minority groups in Vietnam in comparison of educational levels of householders.

Table 6. Relation between householder's educational level and monthly income (%).

Householder's educational levels	Monthly income for each household member (1000 VND)	Income resources (%)			
		Salary	Agriculture, Forestry and fishery	Non-agriculture, forestry and fishery	Other
(A)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Illiteracy	1099.4	37.1	44.1	10.1	8.7
Primary level	1157.6	36.1	45.4	11.0	7.5
Secondary level	1265.5	38.5	41.6	12.9	7.0
High school	1610.2	40.4	31.5	19.2	8.9
Elementary occupation	2030.7	53.7	16.5	21.5	8.3
Vocational training	1824.1	66.1	16.1	8.9	8.9
Professional training	2245.3	59.7	19.6	7.2	13.5

Householder's educational levels	Monthly income for each household member (1000 VND)	Income resources (%)			
		Salary	Agriculture, Forestry and fishery	Non-agriculture, forestry and fishery	Other
College	2459.4	79.1	8.3	10.5	2.1
Professional college	2747.2	73.7	11.7	3.1	11.5
University	3732.8	71.5	8.0	5.7	14.8
Master	4780.5	90.1	4.9	0.2	4.8

Source: [9]

4.2.3. Less Success of Community and Government Supports About Social Service Accessibility of Ethnic Minority Groups

The ethnic minority groups spend more time on working for livelihood and live under great pressure of employment and incomes, so their social network in the urban is so weak. They visit their relatives and friends less frequently (mean at 2.53). There is more frequent visit to the home country fellows (mean at 2.46), co-workers (mean at 2.57), however its statistics is still at low ratio. In the opposite directions, receiving visits from other stakeholders are less frequent, by relatives with mean at 2.22; by home country fellows with mean at 2.39); or co-workers with mean at 2.37. As living in such weak connection and network, the ethnic minorities face difficulty on giving and taking supports from others and from local government and community.

Ethnic minorities in urban have not received enough the local government supports during their inclusion. As facing difficulties in their life, they frequently dealt with by themselves (mean at 4.28), while ask for local government support and supports from local associations accounts for the low responses, with mean at 1.97 and 1.93 respectively. And there is less support from the local people for the ethnic minorities who are migrants as such mean is at 2.19. It leads to the discussion that the ethnic minority groups do not make the good connection and their engagement to the local people and local life in aspects of social activities (with local people) and in aspect of governmental administration (with local government and associations). In case of creating such connection, it is still unclear and weak to boost up the social trust of the ethnic minorities on looking for the support sources.

4.2.4. Social Services in Urban Are Limited

There are many difficulties for ethnic minorities on accessing the urban social services due to the limitation of the welfare and support system in Vietnam. It is caused by the quick urban development and enlarge nationwide while the social demand increased multiply and variously; the public supports and national budgets for improving the social services networks are still limited. In such contexts, many local governments do not follow strictly the governmental guidelines to have comprehensive and strategic plan to make and deliver the social services successfully (Chính phủ 2016). Social support models for ethnic minority groups in urban are not enough and less effective which also cause the multi-layer barriers for them to access in their daily life.

5. Conclusions

From these findings in literature review and survey in Vietnam, this paper draws the following conclusion as:

Firstly, it is suggested to have the continuity in renovating and updating the social service system for ethnic minority groups in urban: it means that the service providers pay more attention on enlarging the housing services and simplifying the procedures on service provision, related to the housing, for ethnic minorities in urban. In additions, the services on clean water and living environment are considered for this policy subjects. The government approves the policy to encourage the participation of non-governmental sectors on providing the basic services such as education for children, employment and vocational training for work forces in the ethnic minority groups in urban. In term of health care, it is recommended that the health care system from local levels encourages and coordinate with non-public sectors for providing the services in health check and treatments to improve the health quality for these groups with priority policies and supports.

Secondly, it is necessary to improve and strengthen the support activities for ethnic minority groups on accessing social services in urban: There are recommendations for improving the legal supports, advisory and communication activities about the possible policies in which the ethnic minority groups can take benefits and promotion the capacity on urban life. In additions, it is advised to restructure the public service system for providing the actual supports for ethnic minority groups in Vietnam with steps. At first, it is required to combine the support units in urban and in industrial zones to have two way support models from governmental organizations and the ethnic minority groups. In additions, for the long term purpose, training the qualified staff and promoting the local community's autonomy to work with ethnic minority groups successfully which lead to remove any restrictions on service provision for the ethnic minority groups, and to aim at constructing the equal life contexts for all.

Thirdly, it is required to improve the capacities on accessing the social services of ethnic minority groups in the urban life: The best and most sustainable way to support the ethnic minority groups in general and those in urban in particular is supporting them to self-improvement and resilience of their personal strengths and capacities. It means that the government should encourage the related parties and sides to provide the vocational training, employment

activities and extra skill training for ethnic minority people rather than leave these tasks to the employers or the educational system. Besides, there are competitions and festivals to motivate and improve the working skills for the workforces of ethnic minorities which could enrich them with practical's kills and opportunities to follow the better jobs and higher income. Besides, it is necessary to organize the community work and cultural festivals to enlarge the interactions between groups and shared the same interests. The government also collects information from the regional countries to extract the good examples for Vietnam in supporting the ethnic minorities groups in the developing and globalization process.

Acknowledgement

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