

**SOCIAL PROTECTION IN VIET NAM: THE CONCEPT,
SITUATION AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS**

Dang Nguyen Anh

Social protection is a concept widely used but with different connotations in different countries. In Viet Nam, this concept is closely linked to the content of social assistance, a "life vest" to protect members of the society from falling into miserable situation. Reviewing a number of definitions of social protection used by international agencies, the author analyzes the situation of social protection activities in the forms of regular supports, add-hoc supports, assistance for the poor, supports for those who had great contribution to the country, and other vulnerable groups. Ever-increasing economic and social risks, such as the global economic-financial crisis, natural disaster, epidemics, climate changes, and so on, are making the vulnerability of the marginalized and unprotected groups more serious, especially in the context of increasing social inequality and social differentiation. The author concludes that with the target of universal coverage of the social security system of Viet Nam by 2020, emphasizing human right targets, especially the right of not being discriminated, and the target to protect marginalized groups, the social protection system is confronting with the urgent need to improve its quality rapidly, diversify activities, increase coverage, and ensure sustainability, contributing to the implementation of social equity target.

**Strategic Orientations in Sustainable Urban Development in
Viet Nam**

Ngo Viet Nam Son

In the new urban areas that have been emerging in Vietnam today, two big issues imply deep concerns about the sustainability of urban development, in terms of social and environment quality.

First, there is a global threat of climate change leading to sea level rising and the change of ecology, in which Vietnam has been considered one of the countries that would be most badly affected when the sea level rises. But this issue has yet to be considered and resolved, or has still been at the level of warning information, in the recently approved master plan.

Second, there is a lack of adequate social and technical infrastructure and of an effective sub-urbanization policy, leading to the fact that most people want to aggregate to the areas near city center, rather than to live in the new urban areas. Thus, the pressure on city center area becomes heavier, worsening the traffic jams as well as the living and working environment there. This paper suggests important strategic principles, illustrated by selected urban development projects that have been developing in Vietnam and related experiences in other countries, to provide solid ground for the decision making process about design and management of urban areas that responds to the two big issues above.

Inequality in Access to Employment Opportunities

Bui Thi Thanh Ha

The paper presents analysis of aspects of inequality in access to employment opportunities among laborers, using data from 2012 survey of the Institute of Sociology. Analyzing current situation of labor and employment, job mobility, forms of job-seeking assistances, as well as employment trends, the author attempts to highlight issues concerning inequality in access to employment opportunities and its causes. Factors influencing employment opportunities pose certain challenges as well as advantages for each social group under consideration. The findings contribute to a better understanding of labour market imperfections in the current social management and development situation.

Social Differences in Participation in Grassroots Democracy Process

Vu Manh Loi and Tran Thi Minh Thi

Using data from the Grassroots Democracy Survey 2001 in Yen Bai, Nam Dinh, Dak Lak, and Can Tho, and the Social Stratification Survey in 2012 by the Institute of Sociology in Ha Nam and Tien Giang, the authors provide analysis aspects of grassroots democracy, including participation in voting for local People Council, participation in discussion and monitoring development activities at commune level by different social groups by living standards and occupational categories.

Evidence presented in the paper suggests that implementation of grassroots democracy during the past 10 years stagnated. The poor and those who are at the bottom stratum of occupational hierarchy did not have full access to information and opportunities to participate actively in this process. The State and concerned agencies need to review carefully the implementation of grassroots democracy policies at commune level and develop measures to promote grassroots democracy, creating favorable conditions for people, especially marginalized groups, to participate actively. On their part, local people need to understand their right to information and their roles in monitoring local development processes. Ensuring full and active participation, improving quality of participation in the grassroots democracy process have been becoming increasingly urgent in the context of intensifying modernization and global integration of Viet Nam.