



Ho Chi Minh's Philosophical Approach to Social Security in the Context of Vietnam's Sustainable Development

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Ho Chi Minh's Philosophy, Social Security, Sustainable Development, Vietnam

Received: 21, May

Revised: 20, June

Accepted: 30, July

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Ho Chi Minh's philosophical approach to social security as a core component of his vision for the comprehensive development of both individuals and Vietnamese society. Ho Chi Minh's thought on social security goes beyond political and ethical directives, encompassing profound philosophical arguments that reflect a dialectical perspective on the relationship between economic development and social justice, as well as between personal advancement and community responsibility. Building on this foundation, the paper investigates the current application of Ho Chi Minh's thought on social security in the formulation and implementation of policies in Vietnam. In the context where sustainable development has become a central orientation, the article proposes several systematic solutions aimed at promoting the value of Ho Chi Minh's ideology in constructing an inclusive, effective, and sustainability-aligned social security system.

INTRODUCTION

Social security is one of the foundational pillars for ensuring stability, equity, and development in every nation. In the context of globalization, climate change, population aging, and rising social inequality, countries, especially developing ones like Vietnam, are increasingly required to build sustainable, flexible, and equitable social security systems. Ho Chi Minh's thought, serving as the ideological foundation and guiding compass for Vietnam's revolutionary practice early on, positioned social security as an inseparable part of the broader strategy for human development, the elimination of oppression and injustice, and the construction of a democratic and civilized society. His ideas on social security are not only rooted in the lived realities of working people but have also been elevated into a coherent theoretical system. This system reflects profound philosophical insights into the relationship between individuals and society, the state and the people, and economic development and social justice. This article focuses on three main objectives: (1) to clarify the content of Ho Chi Minh's thought on social security as a philosophical value system; (2) to assess the current application of this thought in the formulation and implementation of social security policies in Vietnam; and (3) to propose several solutions aimed at improving the social security system in line with sustainable development goals. In doing so, the article affirms the relevance, enduring value, and vitality of Ho Chi Minh's thought in the modern context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ho Chi Minh's thought on social security constitutes a broad and profound field of theoretical and practical significance that continues to attract scholarly attention from multiple perspectives and through various research works. These contributions include both international studies and domestic Vietnamese scholarship. International scholarship and institutional research have increasingly regarded social security as a central component of national strategies for sustainable development. Although Ho Chi Minh's ideas on social security emerged from Vietnam's specific historical and revolutionary context, they exhibit significant theoretical intersections with modern and universal approaches reflected in global academic and policy-oriented research. The World Social Protection Report 2020–2022 by the International Labour Organization (ILO) emphasizes the role of social protection systems as foundational pillars in promoting human development, poverty reduction, and inclusive societies. It affirms that expanding social protection coverage is not merely an economic or social policy imperative but also an ethical and humanitarian necessity for building equitable societies. Ho Chi Minh's thought, with its focus on improving people's livelihoods, protecting the vulnerable, and promoting holistic human development, aligns closely with this viewpoint.

On a deeper philosophical level, Amartya Sen's seminal work *Development as Freedom* (1999) conceptualizes social security as a means of expanding substantive human freedoms, which he considers the core metric of development. Sen argues that development policies should enhance human capabilities by ensuring fundamental rights such as healthcare, education, employment, and social protection. This resonates with Ho Chi Minh's

assertion that national independence must be inseparable from the people's freedom and happiness, as captured in his famous statement: "If the country is independent but the people do not enjoy happiness and freedom, then independence has no meaning." From the perspective of welfare state models, Gosta Esping-Andersen's *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1990) categorizes modern welfare regimes and proposes criteria for assessing their effectiveness. When compared with the "Social Democratic Welfare State" model, Ho Chi Minh's thought reveals significant similarities in the proactive role of the state, the universal provision of basic social services, and the emphasis on equitable distribution of social resources. This comparison situates Ho Chi Minh's thought within the broader flow of international social policy theories while helping to shape a Vietnamese model of social security that is both nationally grounded and globally relevant.

In Vietnam, a growing body of scholarly literature has explored Ho Chi Minh's thought on social security, highlighting its theoretical depth, practical relevance, and enduring value in shaping equitable and inclusive development. Notable among these is Ho Chi Minh's *Thought on Improving People's Livelihoods* by Pham Quang Minh (2008), which underscores Ho Chi Minh's concrete policies aimed at uplifting the poor, workers, women, and children through land reform, housing, healthcare, and education, and the integration of theory with practice. Bui Dinh Thanh's *Theoretical and Methodological Foundations for Research on Social Policy* (1993) provides a conceptual framework for understanding social policy to humanism, population, and the economy. Similarly, Hoang Chi Bao's *Issues in Contemporary Social Policy in Vietnam* (1993) addresses the interdependence between social and economic policies and the necessity for reform in the current context. Mai Ngoc Cuong's *Key Issues in Vietnam's Current Social Policy* (2013) offers both international and domestic perspectives on income security, poverty reduction, and support for vulnerable groups. Vu Van Phuc's *Social Security in Vietnam Toward 2020* (2012) compiles multidisciplinary insights into theoretical trends and Vietnam's social security achievements and challenges. Le Quoc Ly's *The Value of Ho Chi Minh's Thought in Building a Socialist Society* (2014) highlights the practical application of Ho Chi Minh's ideas in promoting equitable access to public services and long-term development strategies.

Collectively, these works affirm that Ho Chi Minh's thought not only holds historical importance in Vietnam's revolutionary past but also offers a compatible and dynamic foundation for developing a modern, inclusive, and human-centered social security system aligned with contemporary goals of sustainable development.

METHODOLOGY

This study is grounded in the philosophical foundation of dialectical materialism and historical materialism, which serve as both its worldview and methodological orientation. Central to the theoretical framework is the thought of Ho Chi Minh, particularly his views on social security as an organic component of human-centered development, as well as the orientations of the

Communist Party of Vietnam regarding the relationship between social security and socio-economic development. These perspectives offer a normative and analytical lens through which the evolving role of social protection in Vietnam can be examined within the broader trajectory of sustainable development.

Methodologically, the study adopts the core principles of dialectical materialist reasoning, including objectivity, comprehensiveness, historicity, and concreteness. A range of specific methods is employed: analytical and synthetic reasoning, abstraction and generalization, logical-historical integration, comparative analysis, as well as inductive and deductive approaches. These methods support a multidimensional inquiry into the philosophical underpinnings of social security and its practical implementation in contemporary Vietnam.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Core Principles of Ho Chi Minh's Thought on Social Security

1. First, Ho Chi Minh's perspective on social security

According to Ho Chi Minh, social security constitutes a strategic and long-term mission of the revolutionary state, aimed at improving and enhancing the material and spiritual well-being of the people, safeguarding their rights to life, education, healthcare, and access to the fruits of development. Following the success of the August Revolution, with the philosophical assertion that "If the country is independent but the people do not enjoy happiness and freedom, then independence has no meaning" (Ho, 2011, Vol. 4, p. 64), Ho Chi Minh immediately led efforts to ensure that the Vietnamese people could enjoy happiness and dignity as free citizens of an independent nation. He stated: "If we have won freedom and independence but the people continue to die of hunger and cold, then freedom and independence are meaningless. People only truly understand the value of freedom and independence when they are well fed and properly clothed" (Ho, 2011, Vol. 4, p. 175). This perspective not only reflects Ho Chi Minh's consistent goals but also laid the ideological foundation for constructing a comprehensive system of social security policies that ensure the fundamental rights and interests of every citizen.

Ho Chi Minh regarded social security as a concentrated expression of the superiority of the socialist regime. In such a society, extreme disparities between rich and poor are eliminated, and no one is left behind. To achieve this goal, he emphasized the necessity of addressing all aspects of social security: poverty eradication, employment generation, access to healthcare and education, and especially support for people with meritorious services. He declared: "The policy of the Party and the Government must give the utmost attention to the people's livelihood. If the people are hungry, the Party and the Government are at fault; if the people are cold, the Party and the Government are at fault; if the people are ignorant, the Party and the Government are at fault; if the people are sick, the Party and the Government are at fault" (Ho, 2011, Vol. 9, p. 518). This statement placed the responsibility of the state in ensuring social security not only within the realm of political and legal obligations, but also as a moral imperative embodying the very essence of a people-centered government.

Ho Chi Minh's thought on social security represents a synthesis of the Vietnamese tradition of compassion and the revolutionary spirit of humanism, combining the socialist ideal with the imperative of sustainable development. His viewpoint not only offers strategic guidance for building and refining Vietnam's social security system but also holds universal value, applicable to new development conditions, especially in today's context of globalization and international integration.

2. Second, Ho Chi Minh's Thought on the Goals and Components of Social Security

According to Ho Chi Minh, the construction of a new society, a socialist society, is not merely a replacement of institutional structures, but a comprehensive revolution encompassing both the economic base and the superstructure. Within that transformation, social security constitutes a fundamental task aimed at thoroughly addressing the consequences of the old regime and responding to emerging social issues. He asserted that the essence of socialism lies in its humanistic and humanitarian nature dedicated to the complete liberation of human beings, the awakening of internal capacities, and the comprehensive development of the individual, expressing the ideal of "a wealthy people and a strong nation".

For Ho Chi Minh, social security is not a short-term or charitable measure, but a core component that reflects the superiority of the socialist system. In such a system, human beings are both the center and the driving force of development, serving simultaneously as the agents of revolutionary change and the beneficiaries of its outcomes. He emphasized: "Socialism means ensuring that people have enough food, adequate clothing, increasing happiness, access to education, medical care when ill, and retirement in old age. Outdated customs and practices will gradually be abolished... In short, society will progress, material life will improve, and spiritual life will be enriched; that is socialism." (Ho, 2011, Vol. 13, p. 438).

This thought continues to underpin the policies of the Communist Party and the State of Vietnam today, affirming a developmental approach centered on the human being as both creator and recipient of social progress. Ho Chi Minh believed that the unity of national independence and socialism is essential to ensure that people live in freedom and happiness: "If the country is independent but the people do not enjoy happiness and freedom, then independence has no meaning" (Ho, 2011, Vol. 4, p. 64).

On that basis, Ho Chi Minh set forth a concrete set of goals for national development and social security planning: "To ensure the people have food to eat, clothes to wear, shelter to live in, and access to education" (Ho, 2011, Vol. 4, p. 187). This declaration is not merely a statement of basic human rights; it serves as a guiding principle for the formulation of national development policies. Thus, in Ho Chi Minh's thought, social security is inseparable from economic development and political-social stability. It is not only about meeting the basic needs of the working class but also about manifesting the humanitarian, equitable, democratic, and civilized nature of the socialist regime that Vietnam aspires to build.

For Ho Chi Minh, the human being, human life, and dignity were always the central focus of revolutionary activity. He devoted his entire life and revolutionary career to caring for the people in both material and spiritual terms. Every policy he proposed and every action he undertook reflected a profound love for humanity, respect for human dignity, and unwavering faith in the people.

On Employment Security: Ho Chi Minh consistently emphasized the equal value of all forms of labor, regardless of whether it was manual or intellectual. He stated: “Intellectual workers must be capable of manual labor. If intellectual workers cannot perform manual work, and manual laborers lack intellectual skills, then they are only half a worker” (Ho, 2011, Vol. 11, p. 400). He advocated for bridging this divide, encouraging solidarity between intellectual and manual workers in building a new and better society. At the same time, he stressed the importance of labor discipline, especially for manual workers, as a means of fostering a sense of responsibility, increasing productivity, and ensuring fairness in labor relations. Conversely, workers themselves must practice self-discipline, protect public property, and engage in frugality.

On Poverty Reduction: In the new society envisioned by Ho Chi Minh, poverty was not merely an economic issue but a visible manifestation of social injustice. For him, poverty was a form of oppression that must be eradicated. As early as the nation's founding, he declared: “An ignorant nation is a weak nation” and reiterated: “If we have achieved independence and freedom but our people are still hungry and cold, then independence and freedom mean nothing. We must immediately ensure that people have food to eat, clothes to wear, shelter to live in, and access to education” (Ho, 2011, Vol. 4, p. 175). These pronouncements laid the initial foundation for Vietnam’s poverty alleviation policy and demonstrated his early prioritization of eradicating hunger. Alongside the “enemy of ignorance” and “foreign aggression,” he identified “hunger” as one of the three key enemies of the revolution. Combating poverty was thus a vital mission to lift the people out of destitution and toward a life of stability, employment, and happiness.

To realize this goal, Ho Chi Minh placed special emphasis on increasing production and practicing frugality. He introduced a comprehensive action program that linked production development, emergency relief, and socioeconomic reorganization. He called for: “Increase production! Increase production now! Increase production more! That is our slogan today. That is our practical way to safeguard freedom and independence” (Ho, 2011, Vol. 4, p. 135). Particularly, the rice-saving campaigns were not only effective in addressing famine and supporting the poor, but also reflected his profound humanitarianism and concern for vulnerable populations. Ho Chi Minh’s perspective on poverty reduction went beyond income redistribution; it embodied a deep humanistic philosophy: eliminating poverty means restoring human dignity and freeing people from the fear of basic survival. At the same time, he affirmed the role of the state in protecting the most vulnerable, especially the poor: “The government is the servant of the people; it must ensure their welfare and provide relief to those in difficulty” (Ho, 2011, Vol. 13,

p. 272). On Caring for Revolutionary Contributors. According to President Ho Chi Minh, throughout Vietnam's revolutionary journey under the leadership of the Communist Party, the nation achieved great victories against colonial and imperial invasions, most notably against the French and American forces through the sacrifice of millions of its finest sons and daughters. These individuals gave not only their youth but also their lives for the independence and freedom of the country. Alongside them were millions of families, fathers, mothers, spouses, and children who permanently lost their chance to be reunited with their loved ones.

Before departing this world, President Ho Chi Minh left behind a powerful message: "First is the work concerning people. For those who bravely sacrificed parts of their bodies (cadres, soldiers, militia members, guerrillas, youth volunteers...), the Party, Government, and fellow citizens must do everything to ensure they have stable housing and living conditions, and at the same time, organize vocational training appropriate to each individual, so they can gradually become self-reliant... For parents, spouses, and children (of wounded soldiers and martyrs) who cannot work and are in hardship, local governments (and in rural areas, commune authorities together with agricultural cooperatives) must support them with appropriate livelihoods, ensuring they do not fall into hunger and cold" (Ho, 2011, vol.15, p.615).

This deeply humanistic message reflects Ho Chi Minh's boundless love for people, his respect, compassion, and unwavering faith in humanity. As a devoted communist and revolutionary, he remained committed throughout his life to the noble ideals of justice and human dignity. His heartfelt concern and trust served as a powerful moral compass and source of encouragement for soldiers and revolutionaries, helping them overcome immense hardships and fulfill their historic duties in every stage of the nation's development.

On Healthcare and Public Health. Throughout his revolutionary career, President Ho Chi Minh consistently placed profound emphasis on public health. He affirmed that health is the most valuable asset of each individual and a decisive factor in achieving success in all national tasks, from economic and social development to national defense. He once underscored: "When the health of cadres and people is ensured, their spirit becomes more enthusiastic. With strong morale and good health, the resistance will win more victories and nation-building will succeed faster" (Ho, 2011, vol.8, p.154).

Accordingly, in Ho Chi Minh's view, health is not merely a biological condition but also encompasses quality of life and the individual's capacity to contribute to the collective development of society. He considered healthcare not only a responsibility of the entire population but also a critical duty of the Party and the State. The healthcare sector, particularly medical personnel, plays a central role in safeguarding the health of the people.

He consistently emphasized the decisive role of human resources in the health system, asserting that both the quantity and quality of medical staff are key to the effective operation of healthcare institutions. Ho Chi Minh advised: "Medical workers must love and care for patients as if they were their siblings, feeling their pain as if it were their own" (Ho, 2011, vol.9, p.343). To him, the

medical sector is a special front that requires not only technical proficiency but also professional ethics, compassion, and altruism. He firmly believed that while ethics form the moral foundation of a physician, medicine is, at the same time, a rigorous science. Hence, healthcare professionals must be both morally upright and technically competent to fulfill their mission of curing and saving lives.

3. Third, Ho Chi Minh's Perspective on Social Security Must Align with Economic and Cultural Development

Ho Chi Minh's thought on social security does not exist in isolation but is closely intertwined with the strategies for economic and cultural development, two foundational pillars in the construction of a new society. He did not consider social security merely as a byproduct of economic growth, but rather as an endogenous driver that contributes to sustainable economic development and enhances the cultural and spiritual life of the people.

According to Ho Chi Minh, comprehensive and sustainable economic development must begin with addressing the living conditions of the people, especially vulnerable groups. Ensuring essential needs such as employment, food security, healthcare, and education not only helps liberate the productive forces but also motivates people to actively engage in production, increase labor productivity, and expand the domestic market. He emphasized: "The Party and Government very much want everyone to have enough to eat and to be warm, and thus have advocated for increasing production and practicing thrift. Only based on increased production and thrift can the living conditions of the people, cadres, and the army be improved" (Ho, 2011, vol.10, p.589); and "to improve the lives of local people in both material and spiritual terms" (Ho, 2011, vol.9, p.225).

From this perspective, solving social problems is not a burden on economic development; on the contrary, it is a prerequisite for mobilizing and unleashing the full strength of the population in production and in improving living standards. In Ho Chi Minh's economic development philosophy, a strong economic foundation and the process of material production are inherently linked to the people's quality of life. He likened this relationship to that between a boat and water: "When the water rises, the boat floats. If our production and economy develop, then people's lives will improve" (Ho, 2011, vol.10, p.562).

For Ho Chi Minh, the goals of national development must be oriented towards the people, for the people, and societal progress, grounded in the legitimate material and spiritual interests of the population. If these interests are not addressed, even the best policies will struggle to take root in reality. Thus, from Ho Chi Minh's ideological standpoint, economic and social issues are not separate domains but are, in fact, different perspectives for analyzing a unified, dialectically interrelated, and mutually reinforcing process. Economic development provides the material foundation necessary to effectively resolve social issues, while ensuring social justice through a robust welfare system generates strong impetus for economic growth. This approach not only demonstrates scientific rigor but also offers practical value in formulating

economic and social development policies that align with the country's specific conditions and development trajectory.

The Current Situation of Social Security in Vietnam from the Perspective of Ho Chi Minh's Thought

The achievements recorded over the past 40 years of national renovation have affirmed the leadership capacity and governance role of the Communist Party and the State in implementing social policies. By affirming that human beings are both the goal and the driving force of socio-economic development, the Party and the State of Vietnam have consistently prioritized the care, cultivation, and promotion of human potential, continuously improving the material and spiritual well-being of the people in pursuit of the goals of prosperity, national strength, democracy, equity, and civilization. Vietnam, once one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, has transformed into a lower-middle-income country with rapid economic growth, ranking among the fastest-growing economies in the region and globally. Alongside economic development, Vietnam has made significant progress in the areas of culture and social affairs, particularly in advancing social security and achieving greater social equity. These improvements have contributed to enhanced living standards and the sustainable assurance of social security in Vietnam. These outcomes reflect the effective application of Ho Chi Minh's thought on social policy by the Party in the national process of industrialization and modernization, as demonstrated in several key areas:

First, regarding employment generation, Vietnam has achieved notable progress in job creation and labor market development. During the 2010–2015 period, approximately 7.8 million jobs were created, including around 469,000 workers sent abroad (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016, p. 238). This process not only helped reduce the urban unemployment rate but also increased labor utilization in rural areas. The unemployment rate decreased from 6.9% in 1998 to 2.3% in 2015, before rising slightly to 3.88% in 2020 (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, p. 8). In the first nine months of 2024, the unemployment rate among the working-age population dropped to 2.26%, lower than in 2023. Remarkably, Vietnam has been ranked among the countries with the lowest unemployment rates globally (Nguyen, 2025). High economic growth over the past years, coupled with effective employment policies, has significantly improved workers' average income. Before 2007, Vietnam was classified as a low-income country with a per capita income below USD 1,000. In 2008, it entered the lower-middle-income group with a per capita income of USD 1,154, reaching approximately USD 4,620 in 2024. The steady increase in income levels has contributed to improved living standards and narrowed the income gap between rural and urban areas as well as between the richest 20% and the poorest 20% of the population. The national poverty rate has sharply declined, falling to just 3.4% in 2023.

However, employment challenges remain inadequately addressed to the demands of socio-economic development. For instance, wage policies have yet to reflect fairness across different types of enterprises, and there remains a lack of clear guidelines regarding economic policies to support the restructuring of

industries in line with labor demands and corresponding vocational training. Furthermore, within the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, although overall unemployment has declined, rural unemployment remains a pressing issue due to limited educational attainment, land loss from urbanization, and the persistence of small-scale production practices. The current Vietnamese workforce still exhibits limitations in dynamism, creativity, discipline, and industrial work ethics. Deficiencies in teamwork skills continue to hinder the ability to innovate and share work experiences. Additionally, rural unemployment due to land loss and urbanization, as well as increasing "disguised unemployment" in urban areas, poses substantial challenges for the effective implementation of social security policies.

Second, poverty eradication and reduction efforts. During the period of economic renovation, poverty eradication and reduction have been among the major policy priorities of the Communist Party and the State of Vietnam, aimed at ensuring the improvement of both material and spiritual living conditions for all citizens. Economic growth that is not accompanied by poverty reduction leads to unbalanced development and exacerbates internal social tensions. In contrast, inclusive economic growth that prioritizes poverty reduction creates opportunities for the disadvantaged to escape poverty, access income, and participate in consumption as active social agents.

For this reason, in the process of socio-economic development, the Party and State of Vietnam have consistently prioritized human-centered policies, particularly for the poor. This commitment has earned Vietnam international recognition as one of the leading countries in implementing the Millennium Development Goals related to poverty reduction. The National Target Program on Sustainable Poverty Reduction for the 2021–2025 period, approved by the National Assembly in Resolution No. 24/2021/QH15 dated July 28, 2021, sets out the objective to: "Implement multidimensional, inclusive, and sustainable poverty reduction, minimize poverty relapse and new poverty cases; support poor households in surpassing the minimum living standard and accessing basic social services under the national multidimensional poverty standard, improve quality of life; assist poor districts, and extremely disadvantaged communes in coastal, island, and estuarine areas to overcome poverty and hardship"/ To operationalize this program, several key decisions were issued: Decision No. 36/2021/QĐ-TTg (December 13, 2021) by the Prime Minister established criteria for identifying poor districts and extremely disadvantaged communes in coastal and inland areas for the 2021–2025 period; Decision No. 880/2022/QĐ-TTg (July 22, 2022) approved support measures for 22 poor districts across 17 provinces to lift them out of poverty and extreme hardship in the 2022–2025 period.

These efforts have yielded remarkable results. Vietnam's poverty rate fell from 58.1% in 1993 to 28.9% in 2002 and further to 13.5% by 2014. During the 2016–2020 period, Vietnam became one of the first 30 countries globally and the first in Asia to adopt the multidimensional poverty standard. The poverty rate declined sharply, from 9.2% in 2016 to 6.8% in 2018 and down to 2.75% in 2020. According to national estimates based on the 2021–2025 multidimensional

poverty standards, as of January 2022, approximately 16.6% of households had income levels below the minimum living standard, 10.83% were classified as poor, and 5.77% as near-poor. The 2021–2025 National Target Program continues to aim for an annual poverty rate reduction of 1.0–1.5%, with targets to halve the number of poor and near-poor households by 2025 and ensure 100% of poor districts and extremely disadvantaged communes in coastal and island regions receive investment in socio-economic infrastructure for regional connectivity and basic public services (Do, Le, Pham, 2025). Vietnam remains a positive example in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (Hoang, 2024), and former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recognized Vietnam in 2015 as “one of the leading countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals” (Nguyen, 2023).

In general, poverty reduction in Vietnam has achieved significant success; however, the impact of economic growth on poverty alleviation still faces limitations. Poverty reduction remains unsustainable in some areas, with high risks of relapse, particularly in ethnic minority communities and remote, mountainous regions. As Vietnam transitions to a middle-income country, the pace of poverty reduction has slowed, becoming a key challenge for economic growth. The adoption of the multidimensional poverty standard has also placed pressure on social security policies and exposed structural weaknesses in inclusive growth.

Currently, poor households are concentrated mainly in rural, mountainous, and ethnic minority areas with inadequate infrastructure, transportation, and production conditions. Many experts argue that poverty reduction depends not only on economic growth but also on other factors, including national target programs, integrated support policies, and direct assistance from government levels. Due to the suboptimal implementation of some socio-economic policies, the goal of narrowing the income gap between the richest 20% and the poorest 20% of the population has not been fully achieved. While Vietnam's Gini index has shown some improvement, income inequality remains high in underdeveloped regions, particularly in the Northern mountainous areas and the Central Highlands. The informal labor sector continues to make up a significant proportion of the workforce, often excluded from social security programs, with unstable income and poor living conditions, especially after exiting the labor force. Additionally, the identification and classification of poor households, as well as the allocation of support resources in some localities, have lacked transparency and fairness, leading to situations in which non-poor households benefit from poverty programs while truly impoverished households are excluded.

Third, the social insurance policy. High economic growth in recent years has created favorable conditions for expanding the coverage of social insurance (SI). The SI system has been increasingly improved in both substance and form, contributing to risk sharing and providing practical support for participants. As of now, health insurance (HI) coverage has reached over 90% of the population (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, Vol. I, p. 65). The Vietnam Social Security sector has promoted the application of digital technology through professional

software and by providing level 3 and 4 online public services via the Electronic Social Security Portal and the National Public Service Portal. Notably, the implementation of the “VssID – Digital Social Insurance” application on smart devices allows citizens and workers to directly monitor their contributions to SI, HI, and unemployment insurance (UI), while also facilitating real-time interactions with social security agencies (Nguyen Tien Hung, 2022).

The nationwide SI participation rate has reached approximately 39.25% of the working-age labor force, equivalent to 18.26 million people, meeting the target set by the Government's Resolution No. 01/NQ-CP dated January 6, 2023. Of this, voluntary SI participants account for about 3.92% of the labor force (nearly 1.83 million people)—exceeding the 2025 target by 1.42% as outlined in Resolution No. 28-NQ/TW dated May 23, 2018, of the 12th Central Committee on SI policy reform. The UI participation rate stands at 31.6% of the labor force, or about 14.7 million people. Particularly, HI coverage has reached 93.35% of the population (over 93.3 million people), exceeding the target in Resolution No. 01/NQ-CP and approaching universal health coverage as envisioned in National Assembly Resolution No. 68/2022/QH15 dated November 10, 2022. The total revenue from SI, HI, and UI in the past year amounted to 472.381 trillion VND, an 8.55% increase compared to 2022, reaching 101.41% of the target set by the Prime Minister (Hoang, 2024). The universal HI policy has significantly contributed to promoting equity in access to modern healthcare services for workers across all social strata.

However, the implementation of SI policies still faces multiple challenges. SI participants represent less than one-third of the total workforce; UI participation also remains low. The majority of SI participants are concentrated in the formal sector, while the overall program scale is still limited. Notably, voluntary SI has not attracted a large number of workers: after ten years of implementation, only about 300,000 people had enrolled, whereas the informal sector comprises around 19 million workers (Le, 2012). This suggests that a large portion of the workforce remains outside the SI system, meaning they will not benefit from post-retirement social protection. Contributing factors may include limited awareness among workers about the benefits of voluntary SI, the policy's lack of appeal, or financial constraints that hinder participation.

Fourth, preferential policies for people with meritorious service to the revolution. As of the end of 2018, over 1.3 million individuals with meritorious service were receiving monthly allowances. Each year, between 6,000 and 8,000 people are granted one-time assistance; more than 580,000 receive periodic health recovery support, and about 40,000 benefits from educational assistance. The work of locating, exhuming, and identifying the remains of martyrs lacking information continues to be promoted. The movement "Gratitude to Those with Meritorious Service," initiated by the Vietnam Fatherland Front and various governmental and social organizations at all levels, has become a national tradition, reflecting the Vietnamese moral value of "remembering the source while drinking water". Activities such as offering savings books, building and renovating gratitude houses, establishing gratitude funds, gifting

commemorative gardens, caring for Vietnamese Heroic Mothers, and supporting relatives of martyrs have contributed to strengthening public trust in the Party's leadership and maintaining political and social stability.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the Ordinance on Preferential Treatment for People with Meritorious Service still faces several limitations. Many cases remain unresolved due to insufficient documentation and verification. The staff responsible for identifying eligible individuals often changes, and coordination between agencies at various levels remains weak, resulting in inadequate case review. In addition, preferential social policies are sometimes delayed or not synchronized with economic policies, thereby affecting their overall effectiveness.

Solutions for Ensuring Social Security in Vietnam by Ho Chi Minh's Ideology

First, enhance communication and mobilization efforts involving political organizations, social unions, and the general public to actively participate in social security initiatives. Raising public awareness and fostering the participation of socio-political organizations and citizens is essential. In the future, to further strengthen social security, diverse and effective communication strategies must be implemented at all levels of government and among the populace. To ensure high levels of consensus, specific measures should include:

Organizing regular public dialogues to address concerns regarding social security policies and improve understanding among the population. The responsibilities of Party committees, governmental authorities, the Vietnam Fatherland Front, and mass organizations must be clearly defined in disseminating and implementing social policy.

Identifying target groups for communication efforts and tailoring methods accordingly. For those directly involved in policy implementation and oversight, training programs should be conducted to provide in-depth knowledge of policy content and discuss solutions for challenges in implementation. Awareness campaigns should also target media agencies and communication staff.

Strengthening information dissemination and public engagement to ensure all stakeholders are informed, consulted, involved in implementation, and capable of monitoring policy outcomes. This contributes to building a positive social environment for effective policy enforcement.

Investing in and developing the media system, particularly the press, to ensure professional and ethical standards in delivering accurate information. The media should proactively shape public opinion and enhance public understanding of social security policies and relevant laws. For this to be effective, press agencies require clear direction from authorities regarding the strategic communication agenda on social issues.

Second, improve the institutional framework for social security in the context of a new development era by building a multi-tiered, flexible, and contextually appropriate safety net that aligns with international standards. Economic development is not only a goal but also a means to improve the

quality of life and promote comprehensive human development. Therefore, social security policy planning and implementation must be closely linked with economic growth, ensuring equitable distribution of benefits to narrow income disparities, promote social justice, and enhance community welfare. Economic growth should be guided by key social development indicators such as poverty eradication, sustainable employment, and human development.

Within a people-centered development framework, income distribution and redistribution policies should be implemented effectively. Functional distribution must reflect individual contributions to the economy, while redistribution mechanisms such as taxes, subsidies, and access to basic public services should reduce inequality and promote social equity. Accordingly, social security policies should focus on:

Developing employment support policies and improving workers' income. As emphasized in the 12th Party Congress: "Create opportunities for everyone to gain employment and improve income..." this entails enhancing the legal framework and promoting fair competition among economic sectors, particularly by encouraging private sector growth through suitable incentives. Improving human resource quality through vocational training aligned with local socio-economic development plans. Employment policies must be linked to forecasting labor market shifts, with increased investment in vocational education. Labor export should be treated as a strategic solution to alleviate domestic employment pressure and upgrade workforce skills.

Mainstreaming multidimensional poverty reduction into national development strategies. Implementation must be tailored to local conditions, from planning to targeted support, avoiding superficial or hasty actions. Accurate classification of poor and near-poor households is vital to ensure appropriate and effective assistance.

Reforming and expanding the social insurance system, especially increasing coverage of social and unemployment insurance, which is currently concentrated in the formal sector. Suitable mechanisms are needed to encourage informal sector workers to participate, thereby ensuring security for the entire workforce.

Promoting healthcare socialization and piloting public-private partnership models in medical services. Public hospitals should be managed as public-benefit enterprises. Efforts should focus on expanding universal health insurance coverage while simultaneously enhancing public healthcare service quality.

Encouraging innovation across economic, social, scientific, technological, and cultural fields to create new drivers for development. Social management should aim at inclusive growth, with a focus on low-income groups, continuously improving both material and spiritual living standards.

Third, enhance the capacity and efficiency of the public administration and personnel responsible for delivering social security services. Vietnam has made significant strides in reforming its administrative apparatus and improving the capacity of social and economic management officials, contributing to qualitative transformations throughout society. However, gaps

remain in coordinating social security with socio-economic development. Thus, it is necessary to continue refining state management mechanisms and improving the competencies of officials and implementing organizations through the following:

Ensure a deep understanding of social policies among implementing agencies. This requires training programs tailored by policy type, implementing authority, and region. These programs should also improve skills in policy execution, public communication, and mobilization.

Provide professional training and ethical education for officials involved in implementing social security at both the central and local levels. Given the direct impact of these policies on people's lives and social trust, officials must possess strong ethical standards and a sense of service, especially when working with vulnerable groups.

Develop long-term training policies for officials engaged in social security in the context of modern socio-economic development. Many current staff members lack specialized training, often coming from unrelated fields or working part-time. This results from the lack of dedicated university programs focused on social security implementation. Hence, building a systematic and sustained training policy is critical.

Improve recruitment and training standards for civil servants involved in social security. Candidates should meet the criteria for job relevance, ethics, age, and communication capabilities. Training content must include both knowledge and practical skills related to policy implementation and target group engagement.

Strengthen organizational structures at both central and local levels. Despite past progress, policy implementation at the grassroots level still faces challenges. Harmonizing central and local coordination is essential for effective and equitable policy execution. For example, in poverty support programs, commune-level authorities must clearly understand eligibility criteria and coordinate with appraisal units to avoid inconsistent application across regions. Enhance inspection, monitoring, and evaluation of the relationship between social security and socio-economic development. Regular audits help identify strengths and weaknesses in implementation, allowing for timely adjustments. The ultimate goal is to close policy gaps and prevent negative outcomes during enforcement.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ho Chi Minh's thought on social security represents a synthesis of revolutionary humanism, Marxist theory, and profound insights drawn from the lived experiences of Vietnamese working people. With a dialectical philosophical vision and sharp practical understanding, Ho Chi Minh not only affirmed the central role of human beings in the development process but also emphasized the responsibility of the state and society to ensure the material and spiritual well-being of all citizens, especially vulnerable groups. In the current context, as Vietnam moves toward the goal of sustainable development, inheriting and applying Ho Chi Minh's thought on social security holds not

only theoretical significance but also profound practical relevance. However, in practice, the application of this thought still faces limitations, such as the lack of policy coherence, inadequate responsiveness to the needs of vulnerable groups, and insufficient integration with the national sustainable development strategy.

To fully realize the value of Ho Chi Minh's thought in building a modern social security system, a systematic and long-term approach is essential. This includes continued research to deepen the understanding of his ideas, institutional reforms to enhance policy implementation, and public awareness campaigns to strengthen the role of citizens as active agents of change. Only by situating social security within its organic relationship to sustainable development can Vietnam truly realize the goal of comprehensive human development and the construction of just, democratic, and civilized society ideals that Ho Chi Minh tirelessly devoted his life to achieving.

FURTHER RESEARCH

This research still has limitations, so further research on this topic is still needed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This study was fully funded by Mekong University, Vinh Long Province, Vietnam. Project name: "Applying Ho Chi Minh's Thought on Social Welfare Towards the Era of National Renaissance in Vietnam" (Vận dụng tư tưởng Hồ Chí Minh về an sinh xã hội hướng đến kỷ nguyên vươn mình của dân tộc Việt Nam).

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