

(Excerpt from National Report of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
under the Universal Periodic Review of the U.N. Human Rights Council
updated version)

FACTSHEET

ON VIET NAM'S POLICY TOWARD ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS

1. Legal documents related to the rights of the ethnic minorities

a. The 1992 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam affirms that the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam is the unified State of all nationalities living on the territory of Viet Nam. The State carries out a policy of equality, solidarity and mutual assistance among all nationalities, and forbids all acts of national discrimination and division. Every nationality has the right to use its own language and system of writing, to preserve its national identity, and to promote its fine customs, habits, traditions and culture. The State carries out a policy of comprehensive development and gradually raises the material and spiritual living conditions of the national minorities (Article 5). The State carries out a policy of priority for the development of education in mountain regions, ethnic minority areas and extremely difficult areas (Article 36). The State grants priority to the implementation of the healthcare programme for mountain inhabitants and ethnic minority groups (Article 39). The People's Court shall ensure the citizens of all ethnic nationalities in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam the rights to their own tongues and scripts before the Courts (Article 133).

b. Related legal documents:

The Law on the Elections to the National Assembly provides for the number of deputies from ethnic minorities with a view to ensuring the appropriate representation of ethnic minority groups;

The Law on Nationality stipulates that citizens of all ethnic groups living in Viet Nam are equal and have the rights to the Vietnamese nationality;

The Law on the Promotion of Domestic Investments creates favorable conditions for investors to invest in areas with special socio-economic difficulties;

The Law on Forest Protection and Development provides for the allocation of forest land to households and individuals in rural and mountainous area;

The Law on Education creates favorable conditions for ethnic minority groups to learn and use their mother tongues and scripts with a view to preserving and building on their cultural identities, facilitating students of ethnic minority background to study at schools or other education facilities;

The Law on People's Health Care has allocated proper shares of the State budget for improving and expanding the network of healthcare institutions for ethnic minority groups, especially those living in remote and mountain areas...;

The Law on Legal Aid stipulates that legal aid is provided for ethnic groups in regions with special hardship, regions with large population of ethnic minorities, and mountainous areas.

2. Achievements in exercising the rights of ethnic minorities

Various incentive programmes and policies have been issued, reflecting the special support of the Vietnamese Government for ethnic minority groups.

a. Programme 135 (The Social and Economic Development Programme targeting poor communes): The Programme budget is VND 16,700 billion. For the last 10 years, 2,500 communes of 52 provinces have each benefited VND 1 billion. Under this Programme, 37,000 infrastructure facilities and 500 communal centres were constructed. Among these structures, 35,000 basic infrastructure facilities and nearly 300 communal centres were put into operation. The second phase of the Programme began in 2006. At present, 1,841 poor communes and 3,149 extremely difficult villages are benefiting from the Programme. In 2006-2007, the State allocated VND 3,482 billion to extremely difficult communes of 50 provinces. The total investment for the second phase was nearly USD 1 billion.

b. Programme 134 (Programme to support ethnic minority groups by providing them with land for production, housing and clean water): The total budget for the Programme for the period of 2004-2008 is VND 4,473 billion, which has been used to provide housing assistance to nearly 340,000 households, among them 62,000 households received land for housing. 69,000 households received land for farming, 153,000 households enjoyed clean water supplies, more than 3,000 public clean water stations were built. The goal of housing and clean water for ethnic minorities was completed by the end of 2008, together with other projects in providing lands for housing and farming to ethnic minorities. Where land funds are limited, land allocation for ethnic minorities can be replaced by vocational training and job creation.

c. Credit policies for especially difficult ethnic minority households for production development: Since 2007, the support policies for especially difficult ethnic minority people have been deployed with the provision of interest-free loans to help them develop production. Each household is entitled to a loan of VND 5 million. In 2007-2008, the Viet Nam Bank for Social Policies provided VND 214 billion in credits to 28,000 ethnic minority households for this purpose.

d. Settlement policies for ethnic minority people for 2007-2010: The Commission on Ethnic Minorities had designed a project for settlement benefiting ethnic minorities in the period of 2007-2010. The project was approved by the Prime Minister on March 5, 2007 and has been implemented since 2008. The total estimated investment for this project for the period of 2008-2010 is VND 2,895 billion, of which VND 2,481 billion would come from the Central Government budget (86%) and VND 414 billion from integrated sources (14%) aiming at helping 64,000 ethnic minority households

(with approximately 300,000 people) to settle their livelihood and agricultural production.

e. Policies to support ethnic minority groups having an extremely small size of population: To the ethnic minorities having an extremely small size of population (under 1,000), the Government has invested more than VND 60 billion in production support for the 5 communities of Si La, Pu Peo, O Du, B'rau and R'mam in the provinces of Lai Chau, Dien Bien, Ha Giang, Nghe An and Kon Tum. After 3 years of operation, their material and spiritual life has been considerably improved.

The outcome of such programmes and policies has actively contributed to improving the livelihood of ethnic minorities.

With regard to poverty reduction: the rate of poor households has dropped rapidly over the years at an average pace of 3-5% per annum, thus helping control the widening of the rich-poor gap in the difficult areas and among ethnic groups. The average grain per capita had increased from 250kg/head/year in 2003 to 350kg/head/year in 2007. Motor roads have been built to communal centres of 1,814 especially difficult communes (98.5%). Investment has made in the expansion of the national power network to the especially difficult communes. To date, 100% of districts and 95% of communes have access to electricity. Due attention has been paid to the development of micro-hydropower, wind power, solar energy. More than 70% of households have access to electricity and in many provinces, 100% of communes have access to electricity.

With regard to political participation: Ethnic minority representation in People's Councils in the 2004-2009 tenure at the provincial level is 20.53%, 20.18% at the district level and 24.4% at the commune level. In People's Committee membership, ethnic minority members account for 10.9% at the provincial level, 11.32% at the district level and 17.9% at the commune level. There are 5 provinces where ethnic minority people account for more than 50% of membership of the People's Committee (Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Lang Son, Son La and Ha Giang). Cao Bang province in particular has 100% of its Provincial People's Committee members being ethnic minority people. There are 73% of members of the provincial People's Committees having graduate degrees and 14.36% having post-graduate degrees. In the provincial People's Councils, the figures are 66.77% and 10.49% respectively. Those figures at the district level are 44.25% and 1.38% respectively. Similarly, at the commune level, the figures are 5.87% and 0.11% respectively.

With regard to education: By the end of 2007, 100% of the especially difficult communes had primary schools, kindergartens and people-supported semi-boarding classes. 90-95% of school age children were enrolled. 90% of especially difficult communes had adequately built junior secondary schools. Most schools were equipped with material infrastructure to ensure the quality of teaching and learning. 100% of districts have senior secondary schools. In a number of remote and mountainous communes, there are boarding and semi-boarding ethnic schools for

clusters of communes. After 17 years of implementation of the policy on nominated enrolment in educational institutions (1990-2007), nearly 25,000 ethnic minority students have been admitted to universities, colleges and professional schools. To date, 51 of the 54 ethnic groups have got their children benefited from this policy.

With regard to healthcare: By the end of 2007, 100% of communes have health clinics, doctors and medical personnel. Most of the especially difficult communes have their own health clinics and medical personnel. Most of villages and hamlets have primary healthcare personnel. Most the ethnic minority population have received regular supply of iodised salt to prevent goitre. Malaria in the ethnic minority regions has been prevented.

With regard to culture: The traditional culture of ethnic minorities are attentively preserved and developed. Some 25 newspapers and magazines have been distributed free of charge to the ethnic minorities. By the end of 2007, 85% of the communes have cultural post-offices. 95% of the especially difficult communes have radio stations and many of them broadcast in their respective ethnic languages, hence the sound reception of the population. The rate of households following the radio and TV broadcasts in the ethnic minority communities is increasing and some 90% of communes have telephone connection, thus ensuring smooth communication. Recently, space of Gong Culture in the Central Highlands, an invaluable ethnic minority cultural heritage, was recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO.

The State also has policies to create favorable conditions for ethnic minority groups to learn and use their mother tongue and writing with a view to preserving and building on their cultural identities. Apart from the Vietnamese language, ethnic minority groups with their own spoken and written languages are encouraged to learn the language of their group. The State has compiled 6 book collections and curricula in 8 languages such as Thai, H'Mong, Ede, Bana, J'rai, Cham and Khmer. In addition, the local governments also pay great attention to combining the preservation of ethnic minority languages and writing into cultural activities..., using ethnic minority languages in festivals, campaigns, television and radio broadcasts, newspapers, publications. In implementing national programs on socio-economic development, the department of culture and information at local levels has actively carried out surveys, researches, preservations and collections of cultural heritages of the areas, combining with the organization of cultural activities. The conservation of traditional costumes, handicraft villages of ethnic minorities had also received great attention.

With regard to freedom of religions and beliefs: The local administrations have proactively designed policies to ensure the right to the freedom of religion and belief in ethnic minority areas. The administrations at various levels have provided favourable conditions for religious followers to conduct their rituals and masses and encouraged clergymen and followers to participate in the building a life of culture in their living quarters.