

This is a short summary of research “Status of ethnic minority human resources and recommended solutions for human resource development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas” commissioned by the EMPCD - a CEMA/UNDP project to Strengthen Capacity in EM Policy Formulation, Implementation and Monitoring. This research provides evidence-based data on status-quo of EM human resource, as an attempt to support the State Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA) in their drafting a proposal to the Government on Human Resource Development for Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas, period 2011-2015, toward 2020.

The full report will be published in UNDP and CEMA Websites:

www.undp.org.vn and www.cema.gov.vn

Status of ethnic minority human resources and recommended solutions for human resource development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas

RESEARCH SUMMARY

1. A New and Challenging Context for Ethnic Minority Human Resource Development

Targets set for the 2011-20 SEDS

Developing high quality human resources is a key strategic target of the 2011-20 Socio Economic Development Strategy (SEDS) of the Government with a specific target set of 55% of the total labour force being trained by 2015. There is a high demand for human resource development in ethnic and mountainous regions particularly as the proportion of untrained labourers in these areas is very high. Ethnic groups like the Hmong and Khmer, for example, have 98% of their labourers classified as untrained. To reach the targeted level for ethnic minorities (EMs) of half the national target (27.5%) in the next 5 years will require an extraordinary effort by the state, enterprises and communities themselves.

Structural economic change and the implications for future EM development

Vietnam is entering a new chapter in becoming a middle income country and increasingly, the advantage of being a low cost labour provider will diminish and new forms of foreign investment will need to be attracted. Approximately 75% of the population of ethnic and mountainous areas (around 50 million people, 44 million of whom are unskilled) are of working age and unless Vietnam prepares a proper policy on ethnic and mountainous human resource development, particularly for some ethnic minority groups facing extreme difficulties, they are likely to be increasingly marginalized in the national economy. Providing medium and long-term vocational training is critical in generating sustainable employment, but EM people have high drop-out rates from school and high illiteracy rates for those above 15 years of age (the Hmong, for example, have an illiteracy rate of 61%).

Future labour force needs in a globalised economy

Under the process of globalization, the labour force is increasingly required to be skilled, flexible, dynamic, and constantly adaptive to meet global market demands. At present, many ethnic people are hesitant to work far away from home, unused to an industrial working environment, and lacking in self-confidence. They are therefore prevented from finding better jobs to increase their income. At the same time, the regions where most ethnic minority people live are mountainous and isolated, with unfavourable transport conditions, and are thus unattractive to investors. Economic development that will generate new jobs is unlikely to be created in these areas under current conditions.

The educational system in ethnic minority areas

Teaching methods in rural and remote areas are not pupil-centred and the one-size-fits-all curriculum and textbooks applied in the regions do not build confidence in ethnic minority pupils to perform well at school. This reinforces the cycle of low educational performance for ethnic minorities making them less adaptable to the changing environment, and rooted in isolation. To develop ethnic human resources therefore, it is necessary to change the teaching approach in schools.

2. Existing Policies and Policy Adjustments Needed for Human Resource Development in Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas for the 2011 – 2020 period

Policies promoting better health for ethnic minorities

A number of policies relating to health care for ethnic minorities and people in ethnic and mountainous areas have brought positive impacts. For example, high priority and attention is given to commune health care service delivery, including commune health care infrastructure improvement and providing medical staff. Mobile health care services and village medical collaborators policies should be continued to help the people in remote and highly mountainous areas, especially the people with shifting cultivation traditions to have better access to health care services. Good impacts from the provision of free health insurance to the poor and ethnic minority households have been observed, and the policy should be enhanced. Preventive health care and vaccination programmes should also continue to be prioritized to address common problems in remote and mountainous areas, like malaria and typhoid. Communication efforts on health care policy, especially reproductive health, should be adjusted to improve the awareness of EM people of health protection approaches.

Boarding school provision, teacher incentives and reservation policy for EM students

Ethnic minority boarding and semi-boarding schools in remote and mountainous areas are critical in increasing school enrollment and educational completion rates for ethnic minority children. Priority should be given to the further development of semi-boarding schools and village-based classes. The learning of ethnic minority languages by teachers or teaching in ethnic minority languages in schools should also be encouraged. Curricula should be revised to be more relevant to actual local conditions and needs of EM students. Relevant incentives also need to be introduced to support early childhood teachers in ethnic minority and mountainous areas, especially in the most disadvantaged areas. The reservation policy for maintaining protected places in higher education for EM students should be continued, but higher priority should be given to graduates from small size ethnic minority groups.

Appropriate vocational training for rural, EM areas

Various new models on vocational training have been applied, such as vocational training linked to employment generation through supporting enterprises to create jobs, mobile vocational training, community-based vocational training. However, these policies haven't been successful

in attracting the participation of ethnic minority labourers. One of the reasons for this is that rural vocational training support has focused on short training so that the skills developed have been of sufficient depth or quality to gain employment. The jobs created for short course vocational training graduates are usually not local and are poorly paid, and therefore inadequate to meet the needs of EM people. At the same time, longer term vocational training courses require a certain level of education which many EM people simply do not have. Vocational training for ethnic minority youth should therefore be revised to move the focus to longer term vocational training in combination with basic education. Reservation policies for places in VT institutes should also be introduced.

National poverty reduction programmes and policies

National poverty reduction programmes and policies are focused upon poor ethnic minority areas but much could be done to reduce overlap between programmes, and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the support provided. The support to poverty reduction and rural infrastructure development in ethnic and mountainous areas should be continued in the future, but integrated into a smaller number of comprehensive programmes with higher flexibility that better meet the needs for ethnic minority human capacity development. In particular, giving more autonomy to grassroots levels would be beneficial, so that interventions can be introduced by local authorities based on community needs, avoiding overlaps and giving higher priority to households from small size ethnic minority groups in the most disadvantaged areas.

3. Possible New Policies to Promote Human Resource Development in Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas for the 2011 – 2020 period

Reproductive health care, supplementary nutrition and mobile health care

New incentives to promote reproductive health should be introduced to encourage visits to health care centers by ethnic minority women, especially pregnant women through giving financial support for travel, free health care advice, medicine and even nutritional supplement support to both pregnant women and infants. Incentives should be provided for giving birth at health care centers and getting children vaccinated, and village midwife training strengthened.

Policies for improving health should be introduced in cooperation with educational policies through giving free school meals and/or free milk to students in remote and disadvantaged areas with priority given to early childhood students, then primary students. Mobile health care services should also be strengthened to improve access to and the quality of the health care services to people in the most disadvantaged areas.

Encouraging healthy marriage practices

Incentives should be introduced to encourage young ethnic minority people in disadvantaged areas to marry at a later age. They could be given gifts (cotton wadding, mosquito nets) if they come to get a marriage certificate at the commune peoples committee office. Better information on sex and marriage, and parental advice services in ethnic and mountainous areas should be

supported, along with awareness raising of the negative impacts that can result from close blood relative marriage.

Teaching in ethnic minority languages

Teaching in ethnic minority languages should be encouraged in those areas with a high concentration of a particular ethnic group. High budgetary support should be given to implementing Decree 82/2010/NĐ-CP, regulating teaching and learning in ethnic minority languages in schools, issued in July, 15th 2010. The support (i.e. scholarships) should be given to ethnic minority students entering public universities/colleges as well as to EM students supported through reserved places. Incentives should also be given to teachers to learn EM languages and cultures. In particular, high priority should be given to allocating resources to implement the ‘early childhood development’ programme in ethnic minority and mountainous areas, to help ethnic minority children to have good language preparation before going into the first grade of primary school.

Vocational training and labour market information

Revisions should take place to ensure ethnic minority students who haven’t completed secondary education can access free education before getting vocational training. Free tuition fees and financial support for textbooks and notebooks, and for living costs should be given to them because most of the vocational trainees are key contributors to the family economy and the opportunity cost of missed employment needs to be offset so that they can participate. Cooperation between the educational agencies and others should be promoted so that labor market information is shared and schools can give good advice to students on selecting an occupation to pursue. A specialised ethnic minority university should be established to provide vocational and higher education training to ethnic minority students.

Government staff recruitment and retention

A policy of applying a higher multiplier on salaries for government officials and civil servants working in mountainous and remote areas should be applied to attract and retain qualified staff. In addition, government staff in these areas should be supported with housing. Government staff recruitment policy should be changed in ethnic minority and mountainous areas, with foreign language exams replaced by ethnic minority language exams to give better opportunities to ethnic minority graduates to get jobs in government agencies at the local level. In the areas with high ethnic minority populations, targets on the percentage of ethnic minorities employed in the local government should be defined.