

Impacts of poverty reduction policies on the livelihood improvement of ethnic minorities in the north mountainous area

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ABSTRACT: This study was conducted to determine the impact of poverty reduction policies for poor ethnic minority households in the northern mountainous areas of Vietnam. The study surveyed 401 households who are poor households and living in ethnic minority areas in two mountainous provinces (Lao Cai and Dien Bien). By means of regression analysis, it has been shown that poverty reduction policies have an impact on the livelihood improvement of ethnic minority households, at the same time, the two factors of ability to access policies and the adapted policy were found to have a positive effect on their livelihood improvement.

Keywords -Livelihood improvement, reduction poverty, ethnic, support policies

I. Introduction

The northern mountainous region of Vietnam is the largest area in the six regions of Vietnam, there is an important place in terms of security, politics, national defense, economy and ecological environment in country. This region has the biggest ethnic minorities and highest in ratio of poor and near-poor households in Vietnam.

The Vietnam Government has issued many policies to support ethnic minorities in the Northern mountainous region, which are policies such as poverty reduction, sedentary settlement, education policy, and social security policy, association, vocational training policy, housing policy... Ethnic minorities have received many incentives from the policies of the Government of Vietnam. Currently, in Vietnam, there are many studies on policy assessment, including: EMWG (2007), Vu Tuan Anh (2005), Nguyen Lam Thanh (2014), Do Phu Hai (2014), Nguyen Duc Thang (2016), Nguyen Dinh Hung (2019) ...

Almost of the studies analyzed and evaluated the policy making process or the implementation policy. In which, Nguyen Duc Thang (2016), Nguyen Lam Thanh (2014) evaluated policies by some criteria. Nguyen Duc Thang assessed the implementation of poverty reduction policies in the Northwest provinces based on: effectiveness of policies, results of policy implementation, and technical skills, ability to mobilize the participation of residents in the policy implementation process, the ability to mobilize resources (such as capital, land ...). Same as, Nguyen Lam Thanh (2014) added two more criteria, appropriateness and fairness in research. Development policy in ethnic minority areas of Northern Vietnam. Bui Vinh Kien (2009) evaluated policies according to the 3-level approach: (i) Based on the overall equilibrium relationship; (ii) Assess and forecast positions; (iii) Evaluation and forecasting of internal resources. These studies have not paid much attention to the level of improvement and the impact of policies on the level of livelihood improvement of ethnic minorities in the Northern mountainous area. This is a gap for this study to be carried out.

II. Theory

Impact assessment is the process of determining the actual or hypothetical impacts of a development intervention, in which the interventions are designed to influence or be affected in reverse. This can happen before an intervention is approved, after completion, or at any time. Pre-intervention assessments predict potential impact that the result will be used to taking plan, design, and approve an intervention.

Post-impact assessment identifies actual impacts during and after implementation as a basis for remedial action if needed and provides information to taking plan for future interventions. In this study, the

impact of poverty reduction policies on the livelihood improvement is carried out after these policies were implemented.

To evaluate the impact of poverty reduction policies on the improvement of people's livelihoods, this study used the livelihood theoretical framework of DFID (1999), in which the level of livelihood improvement is measured based on the criteria: improve food security, income, reduce risks, sustainable use of natural resources, increase health.

The level of livelihood improvement is measured by 5-level Likert scale. 1: No improvement at all, 2: No improvement; 3: Neutral (level of improvement is not clear); 4: Improve; 5: Good improvement.

III. Research methodology

3.1. Data collection method

Secondary data collection method

Secondary data used in this study were data collected from published documents such as the Statistical Yearbook, journals, mass media...

Primary data collection method

The primary data were collected from survey 401 poverty ethnic minority household heads in Northern mountainous region by used a questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: the demographic information of the interviewee and the main content. In the main content of the information of the change in the livelihood of 401 poverty ethnic minority households in Northern mountainous region. Dien Bien and Lao Cai province are selected as a location to survey.

3.2. Methods of analysing and processing data

Statistical description analysis

Statistical description analysis method was used to describe and analyse the data collected, such as the level of livelihood improvement, the different between the two group, one got supported and the remain group.

This study uses linear regression to estimate the impact of poverty reduction policies on the level of livelihood improvement of ethnic minority households in the Northern mountainous area. The model is as followed:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_{3i} + \dots + \beta_n X_{ni} + e_i$$

In which: Y is a dependent variable, depending on the types of variables X1, X2, X3...Xn.

Y represents the the level of livelihood improvement (measured through 5 observed indicators according to DFID).

X1, X2, X3...Xn are independent variables, which included: individual characteristics of ethnic minority households, the change in income of households after receiving government support policies, ability to access policies and the policies adapted level.

Coefficient β_0 is the slope of the model, coefficients $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3 \dots \beta_n$ are determined through the estimation model, it reflects the impact of factors on variable Y.

3.3. Description of survey data

The survey was conducted in two provinces with a largest number of poor households (Dien Bien and Lao Cai). Two group of households that have gotten support and otherwise. The survey was conducted by interview households at these two provinces by the random sampling method. Information about the survey sample is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Data description in the study sample

Criteria	Mean	Std	Min	Max
Dien Bien Province (%)	45,6	0,4986	0	1
Lao Cai Province (%)	54,4	0,4257	0	1
Head of a household (Male) -(%)	83,04	0,3757	0	1
Age	37,05	9,324	18	66
Kinh (Ethnic) (%)	3,49	0,1837	0	1
High school level and higher (%)	1,99	0,1400	0	1
Member of mass organization (%)	64,08	0,4803	0	1
Married (%)	98,75	0,1111	1	6
Distance to commune center (km)	9,71	2,6736	8	20
Households receive support (%)	47.13	0,4998	0	0

Source: survey results (2019-2020)

45.6% are survey data in Dien Bien, 54.4% are in Lao Cai province. In which, 83.04% of household heads are male and 3.49% of surveyed household heads are of Kinh ethnicity. 1.99% of surveyed households have high school and higher education, 64.08% of household heads are members of socio-political organizations. In the

sample size of 401 surveyed households, 47.13% of households received support, 52.87% of households did not receive support.

IV. Result

The improvement livelihood of poor ethnic minorities people in northern mountainous

According to the data source VHLSS2018 (General Statistics Office, 2019), almost of the self-assessment level of these households are “improve a little more”. This shows that people's lives in mountainous region have improved, but most of them are at a low level.

Table 2. Percentage of households self-assessing the improvement over 5 years of households in the northern mountainous and ethnic minority areas

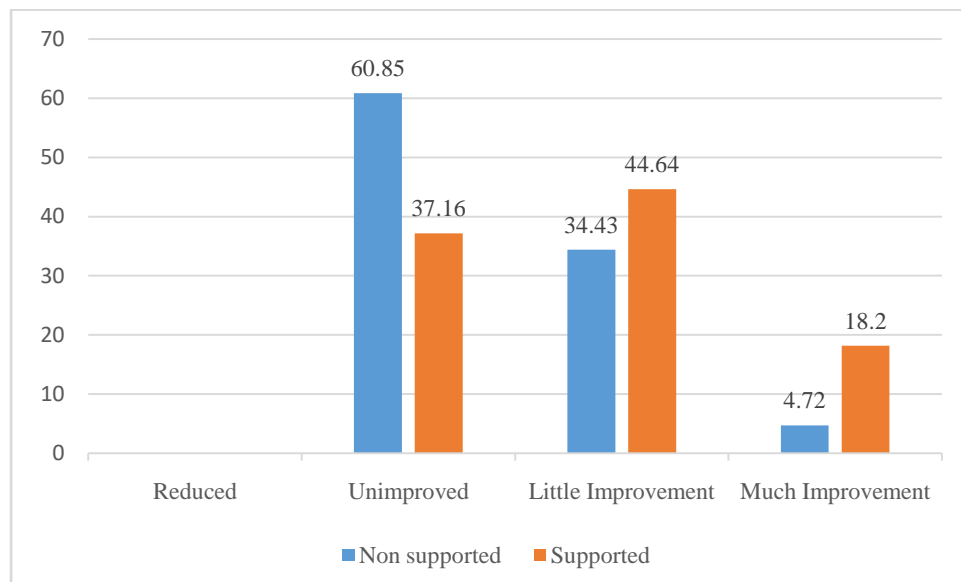
Comparison	Total	Divided by level		Unit: %		
		Big improvement	Small Improvement	Unimproved	Reduced	Unknown
2010/2006	100	34,2	55,0	7,1	3,4	0,3
2012/2008	100	29,8	57,8	8,4	3,6	0,4
2014/2010	100	27,6	61,2	7,6	3,2	0,5
2016/2012	100	33,3	56,0	6,7	3,9	0,1
2018/2014	100	36,7	53,7	6,1	3,3	0,2

Source: General Statistics Office (2019)

To know more specifically, the impact of support policies on the lives of Ethnic minorities in the Northern Mountainous areas. This study conducted a survey of opinions from 401 households (including households receiving and not receiving policy support) on the assessment of the level of improvement in the household's life after the support policy is introduced as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Results of assessment of the improvement in living standards of people in the northern mountainous and ethnic minority areas after supporting policies

Unit :%



Source: survey results (2019-2020)

The results shown that, there have no households had a decrease of life quality after got the support from government. However, the level of improvement between the groups receiving support and not support was different.

(i) Group of non supported household

60.85% of households believe that their life has not changed after supported, ranked second is the option: improve but not much (34.43%), accounting for a proportion of the lowest with 4.72% of respondents

that it has improved significantly. Thus, it can be seen that the support policy has no impact or little impact on the lives of non supported households.

However, there are still some households who responded that their life have an improvement, which shows that there is a spillover effect of the policy on ethnic minorities in the northern mountainous area, thereby creating positive impacts on the population even households that do not receive support from the government.

(ii) Supported group

The results shown that the more improvement for the supported households. The highest percentage belongs to the "Improved but not much" assessment with 44.64%, the second is the "no improvement" assessment with 37.16%, and finally with a modest percentage of households reported a significant improvement (18.2%).

Data indicates that poverty reduced policies have had an impact on people's livelihood, although most of them have not improved much. However, there is still group that receive support but they do not got change. Some reasons affecting the impact of policies on the improvement of people's quality of life as being supported, but because the level of support is not significant; the amount of money that households have to spend accounts for a large proportion, and many households have to borrow money to be adda. Therefore, after receiving support, the household also carries an additional debt.

(iii) Compare the level of improvement

The difference in the level of improvement between the two groups (Table 3):

Table 3. Comparison of improvement between two groups of supported households and unsupported

Criteria	Unsupported	supported
Average improvement	2,438	3,227
Difference (X_i (supported=1) – X_i (supported=0))	0,788***	

Source: Data surveyed

The improvement of the group of unsupported households is lower than that of the supported group which receive support at 0.788 points, at the 99% statistical significance level. From the average improvement of the two groups of households, it is also shown that for the unsupported group has almost unchanged improvement; The supported group, there is improvement but not really significant. This result shows that it is necessary to find the solution to take policies efficiency for better improve people's livelihood.

Level of impact of support policies on improving livelihoods of poor households in ethnic minority and northern mountainous areas

Research results are presented in Table 4, R2 is 50.16%, showing that the independent variables explain 50.16% of the change of the dependent variable. The poverty reduced policies have a strong impact on the improvement livelihoods of people in ethnic minority areas, at 22.83% (99% statistical significance).

This mean for one more household receiving support, the improvement level increases by 22.83%. Thus, although the results of people's assessment of the improvement are not high, the support policy has a large influence on the level of people's livelihood improvement.

Besides that, accessibility to policies also has a great influence on people's livelihood improvement with an impact level of 38.78% (99% statistical significance). Better livelihood improvement was observed among married men, younger age, and households located near the center of the commune (district).

Table 4. Impact of policy factors on improvement livelihoods of poor households in ethnic minority and northern mountainous areas

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs	401	
Model Residual	130.78495	10	13.078495	F(10,390)	41.26	
				Prob>F	0.0000	
	123.62902	390	0.316997476	R-squared	0.5141	
				Adj R-squared	0.5016	
Total	254.41397	400	0.636034913	Root MSE	0.56303	
Improvement	Coef.	Std. Err	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Gender	0.3014644	0.0766836	3.93	0.000	0.1506995	0.4522294
Age	-0.0118818	0.0031494	-3.77	0.000	-0.0180737	-0.00569
Ethnic	-0.1321861	0.1611797	-0.82	0.413	-0.4490761	0.1847038

Educational level	0.0259735	0.0317408	0.82	0.414	-0.0364309	0.883779
Member of a political organization	-0.0608049	0.0641064	-0.95	0.343	-0.1868424	0.652325
Marriage	0.537815	0.2632283	2.04	0.042	0.0202911	1.055339
Distance	-0.256592	0.0065394	-3.92	0.000	-0.0385161	-0.0128024
Supported	0.2283456	0.0693165	3.29	0.001	0.0920649	0.3646263
Approach	0.3878255	0.039361	9.85	0.000	0.3104392	0.4652119
Adapt	0.116918	0.0336389	3.48	0.001	0.0507818	0.1830542
Cons	1.474965	0.3010381	4.9	0.000	0.8831049	2.066826

Source: Data surveyed

V. Conclusion and policy implications

Ethnic minorities in northern mountainous areas are the groups that face many difficulties in finding livelihoods, so the support policy of the Vietnamese government is necessary.

However, the assessment results from the people who are the beneficiaries of the policy show that the level of improvement is still low, so it is necessary to review and adjust the content and methods of implementation to increase the accessibility of policies ethnic minority households in the northern mountainous area. At the same time, pay more attention to ethnic minority households located far from the central area because these households have a higher level of difficulty and are more difficult to access to the state's support policies than the rest.

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