

## Socio-Economic Development of Ethnic Minority in Lai Chau Province



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**ABSTRACT:** Very small ethnic minorities are ethnic groups with a population of less than 10,000 people. Currently, the whole country has 16 ethnic minorities with very few people (Si La, O Du, Brau, Ro Mam, Pu Peo, Cong, Mang, Bo Y, Lo Lo, Co Lao, Ngai, Lu, Pa Then, Chut, La Ha, La Hu), living scatteredly in 32 provinces and cities across the country. The common point of the very few ethnic minorities is that most reside in particularly difficult areas, the "poor core" of the country. In Lai Chau, there are 3 ethnic groups: Cong, Mang, La Hu, 3 ethnic groups with extremely few people and extremely difficult economic conditions. Requires strategic attention from Lai Chau province during the period of integration and development.

**KEYWORDS:** Ethnic minorities, socio-economic development, Lai Chau Province

### A. INTRODUCTION

Lai Chau is a northwest mountainous border province, with more than 265km of border with Yunnan province (China) to the North, Lao Cai and Yen Bai provinces to the Southeast, Dien Bien province to the West and Southwest, bordering Son La province to the south. Lai Chau has an important strategic position in terms of security and defense, and is rich in cultural identity with 20 ethnic groups living. The province has the 10th largest area among the country's 63 provinces and cities, and has a relatively low population density, with a total population of 470 thousand, accounting for 0.48% of the country's population. The transportation system helps connect Lai Chau with major tourist destinations such as Sa Pa (Lao Cai), Dien Bien Phu, and the growth triangle area of Hanoi - Hai Phong - Quang Ninh, however Lai Chau is quite far away major growth areas of the country and current connection conditions are not favorable. To improve people's living standards, preserve and promote the cultural identities of ethnic groups, protect the environment, and ensure national security and defense in the province, it is necessary to study planning and develop perspectives and development goals and orientations for the coming period, promoting comparative advantages, limiting and overcoming difficulties and development challenges. The border area of Lai Chau province includes districts: Phong Tho, Sin Ho, Muong Te and Nam Nhun, including 23 communes with 223 villages. Including 10 ethnic groups living together, including 03 ethnic groups with special difficulties that need to be preserved and developed (La Hu, Mang, Cong). The total number of people of working age in 23 border communes of the province in 2020 is over 50 thousand people, of which ethnic minority workers account for over 95%. 100% of border communes are poor and extremely difficult communes, so most state policies are implemented in the area<sup>1</sup>.

### B. RESEARCH RESULTS

#### 1. Overview of the characteristics of the La Hu, Mang, and Cong ethnic areas in Lai Chau province

The La Hu, Mang, and Cong ethnic groups are 3 out of 5 very few ethnic groups in the province, of which the La Hu and Mang ethnic groups are 02 ethnic groups that only live concentrated in Lai Chau, belonging to a special difficulties ethnic group of the province and the whole country. Regarding residential areas: When implementing the project, the La Hu, Mang, and Cong ethnic groups reside in 69 villages in 16 communes of 03 districts: Muong Te, Nam Nhun, Sin Ho. By July 2018, implementing the merger according to Decision No. 1707/QĐ-UBND and Resolution No. 19/NQ-HĐND, the remaining scope of implementation of the Project is 61 villages. Of which: Muong Te district resides in 45 villages in 09 communes; Nam Nhun district resides in 15 villages in 6

<sup>1</sup> Political report of the 13th Provincial Party Executive Committee submitted to the 14th Provincial Party Congress, Lai Chau, September 28, 2020.

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communes; Sin Ho district resides in 01 village in 01 commune<sup>2</sup>. Regarding population and ethnicity: The population of the Mang, La Hu, and Cong ethnic groups is: 18,068, accounting for 3.9% of the province's population, an increase of 2,160 people compared to 2015 (average increase of 2.39%/year) . Of which: the Mang ethnic population is 4,655 people, accounting for 1% of the province's population, an increase of 550 people compared to 2015 (an average increase of 2.36%/year); La Hu ethnic population is: 11,939 people, accounting for 2.58% of the province's population, an increase of 1,445 people compared to 2015 (an average increase of 2.42%/year); The Cong ethnic population is: 1,474 people, accounting for 0.32% of the province's population, an increase of 165 people compared to 2015 (an average increase of 2.23%/year)<sup>3</sup>. Economic and social life: The rate of poor households in the three ethnic groups Mang, La Hu, and Cong (as of December 31, 2019) is: 64.5%. Of which, the rate of poor households of the Mang ethnic group is: 60.5%; La Hu ethnic group accounts for 71.5%; Cong ethnic group accounts for 19.5%<sup>4</sup>. The living conditions of the people are mainly concentrated in remote villages, especially difficult areas, and the Vietnam-China border, so the implementation of the Project still faces certain difficulties.

The La Hu, Mang, and Cong ethnic groups are particularly difficult ethnic groups in the province, their educational level is uneven, the rate of people illiterate and unable to speak Mandarin is still high, so policy propaganda is to people in difficulty.

The policy support norms are low compared to current market prices, the need for capital is large, and the subjects and support contents are many. The annual budget allocation is not guaranteed compared to the investment period, so the implementation of some contents has not met the requirements. A large number of people do not have the awareness to escape poverty and still have the mindset of relying on supportive regimes and policies of the Party and State.

### 2. Current status of socio-economic development of the La Hu, Mang, and Cong ethnic groups in Lai Chau province

On September 26, 2011, the Prime Minister approved the socio-economic development project for the Mang, La Hu, Cong and Co Lao ethnic groups in Decision No. 1672/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister. ; Based on the Prime Minister's decision, Lai Chau Provincial People's Committee issued Decision No.1695/QD-UBND dated December 30, 2011; Decision No. 370/QD-UBND dated April 21, 2015 on approving the Project "Socio-economic development of ethnic groups: Mang, La Hu, Cong in Lai Chau province for the period 2013-2020 ".

With the completion and exceeding 8/14 targets, specifically: The rate of poor households in the 3 ethnic regions as of December 31, 2019 is: 64.5% (average). However, there are differences between ethnic groups and differences between villages within the same ethnic group. Specifically: Rate of poor households of La Hu ethnic group: Accounts for 71.5%. Among them, the village has the lowest poverty rate of 43%; The village has the highest poverty rate of 100%. The rate of poor households of the Mang ethnic group: Accounts for 60.5%. Among them, the village has the lowest poverty rate of 27%; The village has the highest rate of poor households at 100%. Rate of poor households of the Cong ethnic group: Accounts for 19.5%. Among them, the village has the lowest poverty rate of 17%; The village has the highest poverty rate of 20.8%<sup>5</sup>.

The rate of malnourished children under 5 years old is 30%; 50% of commune health stations have doctors and obstetricians and pediatricians; 70% of villages and hamlets have hardened roads; 70% of villages and hamlets have electricity; 70% of villages and hamlets have running water; 70% of villages and hamlets have solid and semi-solid schools and classrooms; 70% of villages and hamlets have boarding houses for students<sup>6</sup>.

In addition, the effects have very practical significance such as: The infrastructure system continues to be invested and perfected, especially the transportation system, which has created favorable conditions for people to travel and increase exchanges economic and cultural relations with other ethnic groups in the region; create conditions for children to have the opportunity to go to school and study at higher levels, encourage people to actively work and produce, eliminate hunger and reduce poverty, changing the face of the Mang and La Hu, Cong ethnic regions. Along with other support policies, it creates motivation to help people develop in all aspects. The capital source focuses on solving the difficulties of the La Hu, Mang, and Cong ethnic people that previous policies did not have enough resources to implement. Lai Chau province has paid special attention to solving life difficulties for people, implementing sedentary farming - settlement, building housing, and supporting production development.

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<sup>2</sup> Report summarizing the implementation of the socio-economic development project for the La Hu, Mang, and Cong ethnic groups in Lai Chau province in the period 2013 - 2020. Lai Chau, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Report summarizing the implementation of the socio-economic development project for the La Hu, Mang, and Cong ethnic groups in Lai Chau province in the period 2013 - 2020. Lai Chau, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Report summarizing the implementation of the socio-economic development project for the La Hu, Mang, and Cong ethnic groups in Lai Chau province in the period 2013 - 2020. Lai Chau, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Report summarizing the implementation of the socio-economic development project for the La Hu, Mang, and Cong ethnic groups in Lai Chau province in the period 2013 - 2020. Lai Chau, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Report summarizing the implementation of the socio-economic development project for the La Hu, Mang, and Cong ethnic groups in Lai Chau province in the period 2013 - 2020. Lai Chau, 2020.

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Support policies have contributed to solving life difficulties for people, implementing sedentary farming, building housing, and supporting production development; Organize training classes, improve knowledge, apply scientific and technical advances to develop agricultural and forestry production for the people, initially create favorable conditions for students from poor households of the La Hu ethnic go to school and receive support for food and study expenses to help increase attendance and improve the quality of education; Contributing to reducing the rate of malnourished children and improving the health of pregnant and giving birth women, village medicine cabinets are supplemented with common medicines. All villages have trained medical staff to serve the people; Support cultural development, preservation and development of traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities. Along with the policy of supporting sedentary farming, it contributes to stabilizing life and production for people, especially the La Hu ethnic group with their nomadic lifestyle. Thereby, it has contributed to limiting deforestation for slash-and-burn agriculture, protecting and developing the protective forest area of the Da River watershed.

### 3. RESULTS ACHIEVED

#### *First, people's lives are guaranteed*

From 2013 to August 2020, a total of 1,744 households received housing support. The average support level is 15 million VND/household (excluding loans from the Bank for Social Policies). Total implementation budget until August 2020 is: 26,873 million VND. From 2013 to August 2020, a total of 2,021/3,067 households were supported, reaching 65.89% of the total number of households approved in the Project. The average support level is 3 million VND/household. Total implementation budget until August 2020 is: 6,063 million VND.

#### *Second, the conditions for production development are emphasized*

Direct support for seeds and production materials for households: Support for 22,576 households, with a budget of 13,088 million VND. Support for building demonstration models: Support for building 40 models of all kinds (reaching 52.7% according to the Project), implementation budget is 1,457 million VND. Open production knowledge training classes for people: In 8 years (2013-2020), 323 classes were opened (reaching 15.2% according to the Project), with a total of over 4,000 students participating, with actual funding 3,951 million VND. Organizing tours to learn experience on knowledge of production organization for people with a total implementation cost of 758 million VND, reaching 55.7% of the assigned capital plan.

#### *Third, education is supported*

Support for Kindergarten students: 5,380 students, support budget of 17,950 million VND. The support level is equal to 30% of the minimum salary/student/month. Support for primary school students studying in the village: 4,430 students, support cost of 22,015 million VND. The support level is equal to 40% of the minimum salary/student/month. Support for primary school students studying boarding: 2,552 students, support cost of 11,559 million VND. The support level is equal to 60% of the minimum salary/student/month. Support for Middle School students: 5,392 students, support budget of 34,133 million VND. The support level is equal to 60% of the minimum salary/student/month. Support for high school students and equivalent: 25 students, support cost of 185 million VND. The support level is equal to 100% of the minimum salary/student/month. Supporting students studying at professional schools: 40 students, support budget of 277 million VND. The support level is equal to 100% of the minimum salary/student/month. Support for high school and ethnic minority students: 159 students, support cost of 1,365 million VND.

#### *Fourth, people receive medical support and health care*

Providing medicine to villages: Provided 253 times/69 villages, implementation cost was 307 million VND. The average support level is 1 million VND/copy/year. Support for village health workers: Support for 103 people, cost of 354 million VND. Support for women during pregnancy and childbirth: Support for 1,395 people, cost of 1,395 million VND. Support level is 1 million VND/person. Nutritional support for newborns: Support for 1,536 children, cost of 1,536 million VND. Support level is 1 million VND/child. Support for family members of patients going for treatment at the hospital: Support for 4,144 people, cost of 2,480 million VND.

#### *Fifth, people's spiritual life is improved*

Support for the restoration and production of traditional musical instruments of ethnic groups: Supported 69 copies, with a budget of 1,380 million VND. Average support level is 20 million VND/village. Supporting people and communities to restore and produce national costumes: Supported 198 households, with a cost of 822 million VND. Supporting people to restore and spread traditional culture: Supported 121 people, cost 484 million VND. Support level is 4 million VND/person/year. Support for establishing and maintaining activities of village performance teams: Supported 367 times, cost of 1,564 million VND (from 2013-2017, average support level of 6 million VND/team/year, in 2018 - 2020, support will be VND 4 million/team/year according to official dispatch No. 920/UBND-VX dated May 23, 2017). Support the organization of cultural exchange activities, sports, and traditional festivals: Support the organization of 19 activities, with a budget of 1,900 million VND. Support level is 100 million VND/activity. Support

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for producing training programs about 3 ethnic groups: Support for organizing 57 programs, budget 327 million VND. Support for providing equipment for community houses: Support for 68 houses, budget 1,020 million VND.

### C. CONCLUSION

Economic development in the special ethnic minority area in Lai Chau in recent years has made an important contribution to the socio-economic development of the province; The goals and tasks of the proposed policies are one of the basic solutions to realize the goal of sustainable poverty reduction, improving the material and spiritual life of people (mainly living in especially difficult economic areas, border areas), thereby contributing to consolidating and strengthening national defense and security, fighting to protect and maintain national independence and sovereignty in border areas; maintain political security, social order and safety in Lai Chau province; create trust among ethnic minorities in the leadership of the Party and State.

#### **Some recommendations for implementing economic development in ethnic minority areas, especially few people in Lai Chau in the coming period:**

(1) Continue to promote the propaganda of the Party's guidelines and guidelines, the State's policies and laws on the ideology of great national unity, preserving and promoting the cultural identities of ethnic groups and implementing and implementing campaigns and emulation movements in ethnic minority areas.

(2) Implementing policies needs to be appropriate for each target group. Although the Party and State receive the most attention and support from policies, ethnic minority and mountainous areas still hold many disadvantages in the country such as: the most difficult regions, the lowest quality of human resources, the slowest socio-economic development, the lowest access to basic social services, the highest rate of poor households, but many ethnic policies are issued but lack systematicity and synchronization; Policies are still scattered, fragmented, and overlapping; Some important programs and policies are implemented slowly and do not achieve their set goals; Most policies do not have enough resources and support levels are low; The mechanism for implementing some policies is not appropriate and inconsistent.

(3) There must be policies to attract investment in areas with special difficulties and specific ethnic groups: There must be solutions to awaken the potential, promote the advantages of the region, and help people awaken their internal resources to get rich, own your own land. From local reality, to ensure livelihoods and income for ethnic minorities and mountainous areas, there needs to be policies to support people in building household economic models associated with the characteristics of the mountainous areas such as raising livestock, growing key plants and animals, renovating mixed gardens... Besides, there needs to be a policy to attract businesses to use local labor and support business start-ups.

(4) The policy's objectives need to closely follow reality and specific conditions to ensure feasibility when implementing the policy's objectives and need a strategy for both the immediate and long term.

(5) Focus on having fundamental solutions to remove the "5 most important" limitations for ethnic minority areas in general: this is the most difficult area; the lowest quality of human resources; socio-economic development is the slowest; access to the lowest basic social services; and the highest poverty rate.

(6) Mobilize effective use of resources, prioritize integrating resources from programs and policies; Take advantage of mobilizing capital from domestic and foreign organizations and individuals to implement socio-economic development policies for ethnic minority areas and ensure sufficient resources, avoiding spread and disruption.

(7) Continue to well implement the planning, training, fostering and rotation of staff (decisive factor). Improve the quality and efficiency of inspection and supervision of the implementation of ethnic policies in Lai Chau province.

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