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The Role of the Reputable Person – “Village Elder” in Ensuring Social Security in the Ethnic Minority Area of Dak Lak Province Now

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Abstract

Dak Lak is a province located in the Cambodia - Laos - Vietnam Development Triangle area, so the opportunity to expand economic connections and investment cooperation with countries in Southeast Asia is huge. However, due to the large area, sparse population density, and geographical distance between villages, the ability of people in ethnic minority areas to access social security services is limited. Prestigious people - "village elders" in Dak Lak today make

very important contributions to propaganda work as well as the implementation of social security policies. Thanks to that, we contribute to exploiting all the potentials and strengths of each region and each nation, thereby promoting production, economic development, hunger eradication and poverty reduction, gradually improving and enhancing material and spiritual life for ethnic minorities in the province.

Keywords: "Village Elders", Social Security, Ethnic Minorities, Dak Lak, Vietnam

Introduction

In today's development of new rural construction in Dak Lak, reputable people - "village elders" are playing an important role in a number of social security areas in ethnic minority areas. They have been and are the representatives of each family, clan, village, and hamlet. They convey all knowledge and understanding of social security to local people in a concise manner easy to understand in each ethnic group's own languages. Reputable people - "village elders" are people who always thoroughly grasp the difficulties and problems as well as the thoughts, feelings, legitimate aspirations and recommendations and suggestions of ethnic people to reflect with party committees, authorities, the Fatherland Front, departments, branches, and unions, to research, consider, and resolve issues fairly and reasonably with each beneficiary. These are very practical and effective actions of a team of reputable people - "village elders" in Dak Lak over the years.

Overview and Research method

* Overview

Group of authors Ehtisham Ahmad, Jean Drèze, John Hills, Senv with the research work: "*Social security in developing countries*", (Oxford University Press, April 1991) mentioned the term "Social Security" and the differences in social security in developing countries. As an inseparable part of the country, localities must both implement common welfare policies and proactively propose their own policies and measures that do not conflict with general welfare policy, but still ensuring the set goals. According to the authors: In some European countries and the United States, there are specific and creative welfare regulations and implementation methods, depending on the regional and local councils and the choices of the parliaments of each region and each locality. Researching this work has theoretical and practical value to help the author compare, evaluate and provide appropriate directions for ensuring social security for the people.

Or in the work "*Social Security in Global Perspective (1999) - Social security in a global perspective*" by author John Dixon, it has clarified the content related to the social security issue of a country that is to provide public measures (cash and in kind) for: (i) accidental events that the law stipulates that people have the right to enjoy; (ii) loss of income or income not enough for minimum living expenses, compensation and support for dependents. With this explanation, social security can be understood in a very narrow scope for individuals or households who unfortunately lose or reduce their regular income.

The book "*Saving Social Security: A Balanced Approach*" by two authors Peter A. Diamond and Peter R. Orszag in (Brookings Institution Press, December 2005) not only propose a reform plan that will rescue the program from financial problems and

from those who would destroy the program to save it. The two authors analyze the administration's proposal for individual accounts and discuss the so-called "index price" proposal to restore long-term solvency through changes to the initial benefits. This is the first book to mention social security savings, presented uniquely and with a new approach. The main book is also the "door" for us to continue researching saving resources to ensure social security in a country with many difficulties, especially like Vietnam.

In Vietnam, there are also many research projects on social security, including: the work "*Social security policy, current status and solutions*" by author Le Quoc Ly. The author has clarified the concept of "social security is the guarantee of income and life for citizens in society in case they encounter risks or difficulties in life, with the method of operation" is through public measures, to create "wellbeing" for all members of society. Accordingly, social security is the process by which the State ensures members of society when they encounter risks in life, through social policies. Thus, these policies must reach the beneficiaries through an intermediary stage, which is the team of social policy staff. Or in the work "*Contributing to innovating and perfecting social security policy in our country today*" by authors Do Minh Cuong and Mac Van Tien has clarified some contents of social security policy through analysis: Theoretical basis of social security; provisions of the international convention on social security and the experience of some countries in implementing social security policies; history of social security policy formation in Vietnam; the issue of innovating social security policies in general and social security policies in particular in areas such as social insurance, social relief, and social incentives. Although there is still no clear distinction between social security and social security, it can be said that that work has provided many important arguments for innovating and perfecting social security policy in particular and social security in general in Vietnam in the recent period...

It can be seen: the above works have shown the important role of social security policy in social progress and socio-economic development in Vietnam today. These works have contributed to pointing out the essence of social security, functions and social security system and pointing out the need to perfect, principles and content of State management of social security as well as the implementation of a system of social security policies suggests solutions to develop and improve the social security system, making an important contribution to socio-economic development and social progress in our country.

* **Research method**

The author uses a combination of theoretical research methods, collecting and synthesizing documents and data from scientific works and articles related to the research issue published in scientific journals. In addition, the author also uses other research methods such as: logical - historical method; statistical - comparison method, classification method, practical summary method... with the desire to evaluate the work of ensuring social security for ethnic minorities in Dak Lak - Vietnam today.

Research results

1. Some overviews of natural conditions and the role of reputable people - "village elders" in some areas of social security in ethnic minority areas of Dak Lak province

Dak Lak is a mountainous province with a natural area of 13,070.41 km², occupying an important strategic position in politics, economics, defense and security of the Central Highlands region of Vietnam. In particular, because the province has an average altitude of 500m above sea level with many high mountains, steep hills, rivers, waterfalls... creating a majestic, pristine natural landscape with a mild climate, Dak Lak has great potential for natural tourism. Besides, Dak Lak is also the province with the largest population in the Central Highlands region today (according to the results of the 2022 Population and Housing Census, the average population of Dak Lak is 1,918,44 thousand people), is the most populous province in the Central Highlands region and ranks 10th nationwide¹ with 15 administrative units; 184 communes, wards, towns; 2,481 villages, hamlets, and residential groups, of which 608 villages have ethnic minorities live.

With favorable natural conditions, not only do the people of Dak Lak have the conditions to develop their economy in the direction of agricultural production, but people migrate freely from other places to Dak Lak to make the economy grow rapidly (especially northern ethnic minorities enter) leading to many issues that need attention and resolution, especially in social security such as: labor, employment, especially deforestation for slash-and-burn farming, natural forest area narrowed, land management, household registration, social order and safety. On the other hand, due to the sparse population density of only 147.00 people/km², the geographical distance between villages is far apart, most ethnic minority residents live scatteredly. There are difficulties in propagating and disseminating the Party's policies and the State's legal policies, so the ability of people in ethnic minority areas to access social security services is limited.

After reform, under the leadership of the Provincial Party Committee, ethnic minorities in Dak Lak continue to uphold the spirit of solidarity, diligence, and hard work to build a new life and develop the economy, eliminate hunger, reduce poverty and get rich, contributing greatly to economic growth and economic restructuring towards gradual industrialization and modernization of agriculture and rural areas. Thanks to that, the life and appearance of ethnic minority areas are constantly "changing". This result is also possible because ethnic minority people in Dak Lak have a very high sense of community and in that community the role of reputable people is very large. Reputable people in ethnic minority areas can be elderly or young; are intellectuals or successful people in production, business, and social activities; People who are active in belief and religion... They live in villages and hamlets, regularly interact with people in villages and hamlets, so they understand all situations related to rural security, social order and safety as well as thoughts and feelings of the people. They also understand customs and habits and speak the language of the local people, so the content and

¹ Ethnic Affairs Committee - Dak Lak People's Committee (2019), Report on the results of ethnic affairs implementation in 2019 and directions and tasks in 2020.

information that the Party and State want to propagate to the people are conveyed promptly and easily understood by reputable people. Therefore, reputable people are trusted and trusted by fellow villagers; have relationships and great influence on their community, and are consulted by fellow citizens to resolve related issues; capable of influencing and rallying ethnic minorities in certain areas through words, actions or by conventions of customs and traditions... Therefore, in the work of ensuring social security for ethnic minorities, their role is shown: (i) they are the force that propagates the policies, guidelines and policies of the Party and State on Social security and work to ensure social security for ethnic minorities in the fastest and easiest way to understand. Social security policies cannot come into life and reach every person in ethnic minority areas on their own, but must be concretized and guided by reputable people to implement them, ensuring the promotion of good quality of social security policies; (ii) is the force that directly advises and proposes to help the Party Committee, government, Fatherland Front, departments, branches, unions and the Provincial People's Committee build and perfect policies to ensure social security as well as consider, research and resolve issues related to the work of ensuring social security. Because they are the ones who always thoroughly grasp the difficulties and problems as well as the thoughts, feelings, legitimate aspirations and recommendations and suggestions of ethnic minorities. It can be said that reputable people or "village elders" are the force that directly grasps the actual conditions of beneficiaries of social security policies, so they must be the force that directly implements, ensuring fairness for all ethnic minority people.

If in 2018, Dak Lak province had 1,019 reputable people among ethnic minorities approved under Decision No. 2893/QĐ-UBND², then by 2022 the total number of reputable people among ethnic minorities decreased to 942 people³, the district with the most prestigious people is Krong Pak district with 103 people, accounting for 10.03%, the district with the least is Krong Ana with 28 people, accounting for 2.72%.

They are often village elders, important pillars in the process of building and developing new life in the community: "Village elders speak - villagers listen, Village elders shout - villagers respond, Village elders do - The villagers followed suit." The village elder is the ancient "oak tree" that gives shade to generations in the village and is the spiritual support for the whole community. Therefore, all the big and important things of the community and each family from Festivals, weddings, funerals, building a new house, baby's first birthday, coming-of-age ceremony... all must have the "ownership" of the village elders. Therefore, the role of village elders is very important in ensuring social security in Dak Lak province today.

2. The current status of the role of reputable people - "village elders" in some areas of social security in ethnic minority areas in Dak Lak Province

² Ethnic Affairs Committee - Dak Lak People's Committee (2019), Report on the results of ethnic affairs implementation in 2019 and directions and tasks in 2020.

³ Ethnic Affairs Committee - Dak Lak People's Committee (2021), Report on the results of ethnic affairs implementation in 2020 and directions and tasks in 2021.

About vocational training and job creation. Stability, safety, order and economic development are always the goals of state management from central to local levels. In recent years, Dak Lak has continuously strived to create jobs for workers so that they have a stable income to help them be able to contribute to society in general and the province's budget in particular. Since then, the budget source has been reinvested in the province's infrastructure and social security services, thereby contributing to improving the material and spiritual life of the people. To achieve this result, the role and responsibility of reputable people or "village elders" in mobilizing ethnic minorities to participate in vocational training classes and implementing employment policies is extremely important, like:

Along with the direction of the Provincial People's Committee and the Department of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs, reputable people or "village elders" have organized and guided ethnic minorities to implement the provisions of the law on labor and employment: labor contracts, labor discipline, minimum wage, salary allowances, remuneration for employees..., recruitment and labor management. In 2019, we provided employment and career advice to 4,700 ethnic minority workers and introduced jobs to 1,230 ethnic minority workers. By 2022, we will have provided employment and career counseling to about 13,200 ethnic minority workers and introduced jobs to 1,586 ethnic minority workers.

Regarding medical examination and treatment, people's health care and investment in medical equipment, medical examination and treatment facilities in the province are maintained and implemented well, increasingly meeting health care needs for people in the area.

In 2021, the entire Dak Lak province issued 981,314 health insurance cards to the poor, near-poor and subjects supported by the budget (including 67,403 poor people), with an amount of 428,253 million VND. The number of poor, near-poor and other subjects receiving medical examination and treatment with health insurance cards is 515,408 people, with an amount of 291,657 million VND. Health care and medical examination and treatment for ethnic minorities have been emphasized, and epidemic prevention and sanitation work has been implemented promptly and effectively. Basic health indicators of ethnic minorities have improved in a positive direction. Also in 2021, over 1.75 million people were examined, inpatient treatment for over 211,000 people, and surgery for over 51,000 people. Thereby, it shows that in order for social security to be guaranteed, the entire political system has paid great attention to health care for local people in general and for ethnic minorities in particular⁴.

Regarding hunger eradication and poverty reduction. This is an area that the Party, State, Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs and the People's Committee of Dak Lak Province pay special attention to in order to improve the material and spiritual life of the people. In 2019, with the support of reputable people - "village elders", Dak Lak granted loans to 59,643 poor households, policy beneficiaries, and ethnic minority households in difficult areas with loan turnover of: 1,948,815 million VND; At the same time, organized training and guidance on how to do

⁴ Ethnic Affairs Committee - Dak Lak People's Committee (2021), Report on the results of ethnic affairs implementation in 2020 and directions and tasks in 2021.

business for 600 poor people in the province, including 212 households participating in the demonstration model.

On the basis of support and classification of households enjoying support from social security policies, deploying the construction of 2,605 houses according to Decision No. 33/2015/QĐ-TTg with implementation funding is 103,223.5 million VND⁵.

3. Some solutions to promote the role of reputable people - "village elders" in some areas of social security in ethnic minority areas in Dak Lak Province in the coming time

Firstly, raise awareness, responsibility and strengthen the leadership and direction of the political system and the Department of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs in Dak Lak to promote the role of reputable people - "village elders" in some areas of social security in ethnic minority areas in the near future.

Second, the work of mobilizing and promoting the role of reputable people - "village elders" in some areas of social security in ethnic minority areas must be under the unified direction of the Party Committee, governments at all levels, with close coordination of functional departments and branches, in which the police, ethnic, mass mobilization, and front agencies are the core.

Third, continue to promote propaganda activities and raise awareness of the position and role of reputable people - "village elders" in a number of social security fields serving socio-economic development, ensure security and order in ethnic minority areas.

Fourth, regularly pay attention to and fully and promptly implement regimes and policies for reputable people - "village elders" in a number of social security areas such as: updating information, training, fostering knowledge; visit, meet, welcome, and give gifts on holidays; Material support when sick, in trouble or in trouble; Experiential learning tour; Praise and reward outstanding and reputable people... ensure the principles of openness, transparency, timeliness, right people, and right regime to encourage reputable people to participate in activities and promote their role with the community. Strengthen inspection work, promptly detect, prevent, and remove difficulties and obstacles in organizing and implementing policies for reputable people.

Fifth, take care of building and training a team of officials at the grassroots level, especially ethnic minority officials in general, and a team of officials working to mobilize reputable people - "village elders". The team of cadres working to mobilize reputable people has an extremely necessary role and position and has a great influence on the effectiveness of this work. They are people who are truly capable of grasping policies and the Party's ways, the State's policies and laws, connecting the Party and State with the people more closely through a team of reputable people; Have knowledge and understanding of ethnic minorities, customs and practices, have knowledge of ethnic policies, have experience and have the spirit of sacrifice, endure hardship, and be close to ethnic minorities, being trusted by the people... are very important conditions in the work of mobilizing reputable people.

Conclusion

Reputable people - "village elders" in ethnic minority areas in Dak Lak are currently the most decisive factor in the successful implementation of social security tasks, contributing to the promote the spirit of people's mastery in economic development, hunger eradication and poverty reduction, gradually improving and enhancing the material and spiritual life of ethnic minorities in the coming time.

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⁵ Ethnic Affairs Committee - Dak Lak People's Committee (2019), Report on the results of ethnic affairs implementation in 2019 and directions and tasks in 2020.