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Proposal for a Set of Indices to Protect Vulnerable Social Groups

¹Nguyen Thi Thanh Huong, ²Tran Thi Luyen, ³Nguyen Kim Toan, ⁴Tran Thi Thanh Tuyen

¹Institute of Regional Sustainable Development, Hanoi, Vietnam

²General Statistics Office, Hanoi, Vietnam

^{3,4}Development Research and Consultancy Centre, Hanoi, Vietnam

Corresponding Author: **Nguyen Thi Thanh Huong**

Abstract

This study suggests creating a set of measures to assess the situation and effectiveness of social welfare policies for vulnerable groups including children, women, the elderly, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. This research emphasizes the need for a comprehensive set of indicators to monitor and oversee these vulnerable social groups in Vietnam. The article outlines important principles for building this indicator set, including reflecting the characteristics of each group, feasibility, effectiveness, and

compliance with legal regulations. Additionally, the study proposes 20 new indicators to supplement the existing set, reflecting specific characteristics of each target group. The goal of proposing this indicator set is to provide a reliable and accurate tool for measuring and evaluating the situation of vulnerable social groups, thereby supporting more effective management and implementation of social welfare policies.

Keywords: Indicators, Vulnerable Groups, Social Policies, Social Protection, Building Principles

Introduction

The current statistical indicator system encompasses numerous multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral indicator sets related to vulnerable groups or susceptible populations. These include the national statistical indicator system, sustainable development indicator sets, and monitoring and oversight indicator sets for children. Additionally, there are sector-specific indicator sets such as those for education, labor, veterans, and social affairs. The issuance of these indicator sets serves the purposes of management and governance by relevant ministries and departments concerning each vulnerable group. Consequently, each set of indicators reflects from the perspective of the responsible authority. However, there is currently no unified set of indicators to comprehensively and thoroughly monitor and oversee vulnerable social groups.

With the aim of assessing the status quo of vulnerable groups and reflecting the effectiveness of social welfare policies for these groups, this article proposes a set of indices to protect vulnerable social groups. These groups include children, women, the elderly, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. The identification of these vulnerable groups in this study is based on the definition of international human rights law, supplemented appropriately to suit the developmental context of Vietnam.

1. Principles for Constructing a Set of Indicators to Protect Vulnerable Social Groups:

Establishing principles for building a set of indicators, in general, and a set of indicators to protect vulnerable social groups, in particular, is crucial. This is the first step in determining the direction of the entire process of identifying indicators and constructing the indicator set. Below are important principles to consider when constructing such a set:

- Firstly, the set of indicators to protect vulnerable social groups must include statistical indicators that reflect the protection for each vulnerable group as stipulated.
- Secondly, the indicators in the set must reflect the basic characteristics of each vulnerable group, specifically:
 1. Indicators to protect children should include indicators reflecting living standards, nutrition, health issues, etc.
 2. Indicators to protect women should include statistical indicators reflecting health, employment, domestic violence, etc.
 3. Indicators to protect the elderly should include indicators related to health, pensions, elderly assistance, etc.
 4. Indicators to protect people with disabilities should include indicators reflecting health protection, subsidies, and the degree of social integration of people with disabilities, etc.

5. Indicators to protect ethnic minorities should include indicators reflecting the collection of ethnic data, state subsidies, or training for minority workers, etc.
- Thirdly, the set of indicators to protect vulnerable social groups must be feasible. Currently, there is very little statistical information available on vulnerable groups. However, conducting a social survey requires significant financial resources, time, and manpower. Therefore, priority should be given to selecting indicators for which data sources are already available to form the indicator set.
 - Fourthly, the set of indicators to protect vulnerable groups must be effective. The indicator set should be used at both the national and provincial levels to meet the management needs at the central and local levels. Additionally, information from the indicator set will serve the needs of various users such as international organizations, domestic and international experts, scientists, etc.
 - Fifthly, the set of indicators to protect vulnerable social groups must be systematic and compliant with existing Statistical Law regulations. This means that the indicator set must be structured into two parts: The index list and the content of the index. Standardizing the content of each index must comply with the relevant legal regulations.

2. Principles for Selecting Indicators to Form a Set of Indicators to Protect Vulnerable Social Groups:

After determining the principles for constructing a set of indicators to protect vulnerable social groups, the next step is to select appropriate indicators to form the indicator set.

The selection of indicators must adhere to the following principles:

- Firstly, the selected statistical indicators must have concise and meaningful names and definitions, in line with current legal regulations.
- Secondly, the selected indicators must reflect the most characteristic features of each vulnerable group in the indicator set.
- Thirdly, the selection of the number of indicators must be appropriate to avoid wasteful use of resources.
- Fourthly, the selected indicators must ensure that data can be collected and ensure the reliability of the data.
- Fifthly, alongside indicators specific to Vietnam's circumstances, internationally recognized indicators should also be selected to ensure international comparability.
- Sixthly, the selected indicators must be adaptable to meet the requirements of comparison across space and time.

These principles are based on both theoretical foundations in building statistical indicator systems and practical reviews of existing indicator systems related to vulnerable groups.

3. Proposal for a Set of Indicators to Protect Vulnerable Social Groups:

Based on a social welfare perspective, the research team reviewed the existing indicator system while consulting relevant legal documents and policies for vulnerable groups. They also considered the actual situation and expert opinions to propose core indicators that reflect the living conditions and needs of each vulnerable group. The result of the study is the proposal of 20 new indicators suitable for the research purpose:

Vulnerable Groups	Indicators
01. Group of indicators for child protection	Multidimensional child poverty rate as a proportion of total children ⁴
	Proportion of children with special circumstances out of the total number of children ⁶
	Number of children subjected to abuse identified ¹
	The proportion of children under 5 years old suffering from stunting (stunting rate) among the total number of children ²
02. Group of indicators for women's protection	The ratio of women living in poverty among the total number of women
	Number of women victimized by domestic violence
	Rate of unemployed women among the total female workforce
	Rate of unemployed women receiving unemployment benefits among the total unemployed female workforce
03. Group of indicators to protect the elderly	The percentage of elderly people enjoying retirement benefits among the total elderly population
	The ratio of elderly people living in poverty among the total number of elderly people
	The percentage of elderly people undergoing regular health check-ups among the total elderly population
	The percentage of elderly people participating in elderly associations among the total elderly population
04. Group of indicators for protecting people with disabilities	The proportion of people with disabilities receiving monthly allowances out of the total number of people with disabilities
	The proportion of people with disabilities who are covered by health insurance out of the total number of people with disabilities
	The ratio of disabled people living in poverty among the total number of disabled people
	The proportion of people with disabilities aged 15 and above who have received short-term or vocational training
05. Criteria for safeguarding ethnic minorities	Rate of multidimensional poverty among ethnic minority households in the total number of multidimensional poor households
	Rate of preferential loans from the Social Policy Bank among ethnic minority households in the total number of households receiving loans
	Rate of employment among ethnic minority workers in the total number of ethnic minority workers
	Rate of trained ethnic minority workers with degrees or certificates in the total number of ethnic minority workers

Circular No. 13/2021/TT-BLĐTBXH dated September 30, 2021, issued by the Ministry of Labor - Invalids and Social Affairs, provides statistical indicators on the situation of children and child abuse, administrative sanctions for child abuse offenses (code 0101).

The National Statistical Indicator List issued under Law No. 01/2021/QH15 amending and supplementing some articles and Appendix of the National Statistical Indicator List of the Statistics Law (code 1607).

Thus, the proposed set of indices to protect vulnerable social groups comprises 20 indicators, including 4 indicators already existing in the current statistical indicator system and 16 newly proposed indicators. Choosing existing indicators helps reduce the time and cost of data collection because these indicators already have clear methodologies and are collected and compiled by relevant agencies, thus having available data. Meanwhile, the newly proposed indicators reflect the characteristics of each vulnerable

group that are not currently represented in the existing indicator system.

4. Significance of the proposed indicators:

Proposing a set of indices to protect vulnerable social groups is not simply about randomly selecting indicators but must adhere to certain principles as outlined in the preceding content. Each selected indicator carries particular significance:

S. No	Group/Indicator	Reason for indicator selection	Formular
1	The proportion of multidimensionally poor children among the total number of children	This is an indicator belonging to the set of global sustainable development indicators. The indicator is used to assess the situation of multidimensional child poverty according to the specific developmental needs of children. The indicator serves as a basis for developing policies and strategies to create conditions for children to develop comprehensively in terms of physical, mental, and intellectual aspects until adulthood.	$\text{The multidimensional child poverty rate (\%)} = \frac{\text{the total number of multidimensionally poor children aged 0-15}}{\text{the total number of children aged 0-15}} \times 100$
2	The proportion of children with special circumstances among the total number of children.	- - This indicator reflects the current situation of children with special circumstances. - The purpose of proposing this indicator is to provide data for authorities to develop appropriate policies aimed at reducing the proportion of children with special circumstances. As this group of children is more vulnerable compared to others and requires special support and intervention from the state, family, and society to ensure their safety and integration into family and community. Currently, children with special circumstances are generally being cared for, nurtured, and assisted (according to surveys conducted in Nghe An and Long An, 100% of children with special circumstances receive assistance). - The National Action Program for Children for the 2021-2030 period sets the target of reducing the proportion of children with special circumstances in the total child population to below 6.6% by 2025 and 6% by 2030.	$\text{The percentage of children with special circumstances among the total child population (\%)} = \frac{\text{the total number of children with special circumstances}}{\text{the total number of children}} \times 100$
3	The number of children detected as being abused	- Child abuse is an urgent and increasingly complex issue today. Violence and child abuse occur not only in the community or workplace but also within families, schools, and childcare facilities. - The indicator on child abuse will reflect the current situation of detected cases of child abuse. Based on this, policies and laws on child abuse can be developed, supplemented, and adjusted, and support can be provided to cases of abused children. Additionally, it also serves as a basis for proposing the establishment of a unified data system across sectors on child abuse.	
4	The rate of children under 5 years old suffering from stunting (stunting rate, height for age) out of the total number of children.	- This indicator aims to monitor the health of children in their early years with the goal of ensuring health for comprehensive development. Stunting reflects the condition where children experience delayed height growth, indicating prolonged chronic malnutrition.	$\text{The percentage of children under 5 years old with stunted growth for their age (\%)} = \frac{\text{the number of children under 5 years old with stunted growth for their age}}{\text{the total number of children under 5 years old measured for height}} \times 100$
	02. Women Protection Indicator Group		
5	The ratio of women living in poverty among the total number of women.	According to statistics from UNDP in 2012, women comprised approximately 70% of the total number of people living in poverty worldwide (Nguyen Thi Thu Huong, 2020) ^[6] . They face high risks and poverty due to discrimination in the labor force, lack of property rights, and heavy responsibilities related to household chores and community duties. Poor women encounter many difficulties in life, especially in maintaining economic activities to sustain family life (Nguyen Thi Thu Huong, 2020) ^[6] . In Vietnam, although there is no statistical data on poverty by gender, according to the report of the 12th National	$\text{The percentage of women living in poverty among the total number of female laborers (\%)} = \frac{\text{the number of households in poverty}}{\text{the total number of female laborers}} \times 100$

		<p>Women's Congress, there were 2.4 million households led by women receiving assistance from the Vietnam Women's Union (Documentation of the 12th National Women's Congress, 2017) (Nguyen Thi Thu Huong, 2020)^[6]. Therefore, using this indicator to reflect the current situation regarding the proportion of women living in poor households is essential.</p>	
6	The number of women who are victims of domestic violence	<p>The National Study on Domestic Violence against Women in Vietnam shows that up to 62.9% of women reported experiencing at least one form of physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence or controlling behavior by their husband/partner in their lifetime. 32.0% confirmed experiencing physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime (General Statistics Office, 2019). Therefore, this indicator is used to compile the number of women who are victims of domestic violence to clarify the current situation of women experiencing domestic violence today, providing information as a basis for proposing protective measures and policies such as care, counseling, temporary shelter,</p>	
7	The unemployment rate among women in the total female workforce	<p>- Women face numerous challenges and barriers in employment due to lower technical skills and often being concentrated in vulnerable job groups such as self-employment, simple agricultural labor, or informal sectors. Women often take on domestic roles in the family, making them a vulnerable group in the labor market. Therefore, they are at higher risk of unemployment compared to men. Hence, this indicator is proposed to clarify the current situation of the female unemployment rate, providing a basis for developing and adjusting labor and employment policies and support for female labor groups.</p>	$\text{The unemployment rate among female laborers in the total female labor force (\%)} = \frac{\text{the number of unemployed female laborers}}{\text{the total number of female laborers}} \times 100$
8	The ratio of female workers receiving unemployment benefits among the total number of unemployed female workers	<p>Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, many businesses and organizations have reduced their scale, dissolved, or temporarily suspended their operations, resulting in many workers having their contracts terminated, leading to unemployment. Among the terminated workers, there are female workers. Therefore, it is proposed to measure the ratio of female workers receiving unemployment benefits among the total number of unemployed female workers to understand how women are enjoying the rights of laborers. This helps them and their families compensate for temporary financial shortages and also helps them have the ability and opportunities to seek employment.</p>	$\text{The percentage of women receiving unemployment benefits (\%)} = \frac{\text{the total number of women receiving unemployment benefits}}{\text{the total number of unemployed female laborers}} \times 100$
03. Indicators for protecting the elderly			
9	The proportion of elderly people receiving retirement benefits out of the total elderly population.	<p>The proportion of elderly people participating in the retirement and social welfare system, as well as the level of benefits received, remains low. The social security system provides little support for the majority of elderly individuals, particularly those who are more vulnerable, as they may not be able to participate in the retirement system due to existing regulations or because the social welfare benefits are insufficiently provided. Therefore, this indicator is developed to understand the current situation regarding the proportion of elderly people receiving retirement benefits, aiming to clarify the financial status of the elderly in meeting their basic living needs and their level of dependence on family members. This information can then be used to propose policy solutions to support elderly individuals with low retirement benefits among those receiving such benefits.</p>	$\text{The percentage of elderly people receiving retirement benefits among the total number of elderly people (\%)} = \frac{\text{(Number of elderly people receiving retirement benefits)}}{\text{Total number of elderly people}} \times 100$
10	The percentage of elderly people living in poverty among the total number of elderly people	<p>Elderly individuals often engage in self-employment or household work, resulting in generally low incomes, precarious jobs, limited access to retirement programs, and insufficient protection by occupational safety measures (UNFPA, 2016). Therefore, establishing this indicator reflects the current situation regarding the proportion of elderly people living in poor households, aiming to assist in implementing timely</p>	$\text{The percentage of elderly people living in poverty among the total number of elderly people (\%)} = \frac{\text{Number of elderly households in poverty}}{\text{Total number of elderly people}} \times 100$

		and effective support policies for elderly individuals living in poverty.	
11	The rate of elderly people receiving regular health check-ups out of the total number of elderly people.	<p>- Access to health insurance for elderly people living in poverty faces significant challenges. The reasons include individual factors, family circumstances, social networks, policy systems, and infrastructure at the place of residence. Access to health insurance for different groups of poor elderly people varies among age groups, health status, elderly people's perceptions, family structure, family support, and the availability of health services.</p> <p>- When participating in health insurance, the elderly can minimize medical expenses to the fullest extent possible; they can feel assured when accessing modern medical services, comprehensive timely medical examinations and treatments to quickly recover their health.</p> <p>- Therefore, the establishment of this indicator aims to understand the current situation of elderly people receiving regular health check-ups (using health insurance cards or free of charge) to early detect and effectively control age-related diseases, thereby providing policy solutions to support elderly people in receiving regular health check-ups.</p>	$\frac{\text{The percentage of elderly people undergoing regular health check-ups among the total number of elderly people (\%)}}{\text{Total number of elderly people}} = \frac{\text{Number of elderly people undergoing regular health check-ups}}{\text{Total number of elderly people}} \times 100$
12	The rate of elderly people participating in elderly associations out of the total number of elderly people.	This indicator holds significant psychological importance for the elderly. Currently, aging is occurring rapidly in our country. In addition to physical care and health, policies that encourage the elderly to participate in Elderly Associations are needed to help them integrate, live happily, and stay healthy.	$\frac{\text{The percentage of elderly people participating in elderly associations among the total number of elderly people (\%)}}{\text{Total number of elderly people}} = \frac{\text{Total number of elderly people participating in elderly associations}}{\text{Total number of elderly people}} \times 100$
	04. Indicators for protecting persons with disabilities		
13	The proportion of persons with disabilities receiving monthly financial assistance out of the total number of persons with disabilities	The proportion of persons with disabilities receiving monthly financial assistance specifically reflects the social assistance policies for persons with disabilities. However, it also highlights the needs of persons with disabilities who are classified as having moderate disabilities, as they may also require assistance.	$\frac{\text{The percentage of disabled people receiving monthly allowances among the total number of disabled people (\%)}}{\text{Total number of disabled people eligible for allowances}} = \frac{\text{Number of disabled people receiving monthly allowances}}{\text{Total number of disabled people eligible for allowances}} \times 100$
14	The proportion of persons with disabilities covered by health insurance out of the total number of persons with disabilities	The proportion of persons with disabilities covered by health insurance reflects the social assistance policies for persons with disabilities. However, it also highlights the needs of persons with disabilities who are classified as having moderate disabilities, as they may also require assistance.	$\frac{\text{The percentage of disabled people covered by health insurance among the total number of disabled people (\%)}}{\text{Total number of disabled people}} = \frac{\text{Number of disabled people with health insurance}}{\text{Total number of disabled people}} \times 100$
15	The proportion of persons with disabilities living in poor households out of the total number of persons with disabilities	The proportion of persons with disabilities living in poor households reflects the current situation regarding the rate of persons with disabilities residing in impoverished households. This indicator can help formulate support policies for persons with disabilities, not only for those with severe or profound disabilities, but also for those with mild or moderate disabilities.	
16	The percentage of disabled individuals aged 15 and above receiving vocational training, either short-term or intermediate vocational training or higher	<p>The disabled often face challenges in accessing vocational training (short-term or intermediate). Consequently, this limits their opportunities to find employment, thereby hindering their ability to support themselves and contribute to their families' welfare, especially those facing hardships.</p> <p>This proposed indicator aims to assess the current participation rate of disabled individuals aged 15 and above in short-term and intermediate vocational training programs. If the participation rate is low, it can inform policy adjustments and provide support for disabled individuals in vocational training. Conversely, if the participation rate is high, it indicates that disabled individuals have opportunities to seek suitable employment, thereby contributing to their gradual stabilization and integration into society.</p>	$\frac{\text{The percentage of disabled people aged 15 and above undergoing short-term or vocational training}}{\text{Total number of disabled people}} = \frac{\text{Number of disabled people aged 15 and above undergoing short-term or vocational training}}{\text{Total number of disabled people}} \times 100$
	05. Indicators for protecting ethnic minorities		

17	The percentage of ethnic minority households in multidimensional poverty among the total number of multidimensional poor households	The proportion of multi-dimensional poor households belonging to ethnic minority groups reflects their economic conditions and their ability to access basic social services such as education, healthcare, vocational training, etc.	$\frac{\text{The percentage of ethnic minority households in multidimensional poverty (\%)}}{\text{Total number of multidimensional poor households}} = \frac{\text{Number of multidimensional poor ethnic minority households}}{\text{Total number of multidimensional poor households}} \times 100$
18	The proportion of households belonging to ethnic minority groups receiving preferential loans from the Social Policy Bank out of the total number of households borrowing loans	This indicator evaluates the effectiveness of social welfare policies targeting ethnic minority populations.	$\frac{\text{The percentage of ethnic minority households receiving preferential loans from the Social Policy Bank (\%)}}{\text{Total number of ethnic minority households}} = \frac{\text{Number of ethnic minority households receiving preferential loans from the Social Policy Bank}}{\text{Total number of ethnic minority households}} \times 100$
19	The proportion of employed laborers from ethnic minority groups out of the total ethnic minority labor force	The indicator reflects the proportion of employed laborers from ethnic minority groups out of the total ethnic minority labor force, indicating their employment rate and income generation. Ethnic minority populations are classified as vulnerable and lack the ability and opportunities to escape poverty. This group often suffers and is affected by diseases, climate change, natural disasters, and limited access to resources and opportunities (Central Committee Office of the Communist Party of Vietnam, 2019).	$\frac{\text{The percentage of ethnic minority people employed compared to the ethnic minority labor force (\%)}}{\text{Ethnic minority labor force}} = \frac{\text{Number of employed ethnic minority people}}{\text{Ethnic minority labor force}} \times 100$
20	The proportion of trained laborers from ethnic minority groups holding degrees or certificates out of the total ethnic minority labor force	The majority of ethnic minority laborers are currently engaged in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries and lack technical expertise. Therefore, it is challenging for them to participate in industrial and service sectors. When ethnic minority individuals receive training and find employment, it promotes the structural transformation of the labor force and gradually contributes to the goal of sustainable poverty reduction. Data on trained ethnic minority laborers assist management agencies and policymakers in devising appropriate solutions to enhance training opportunities for ethnic minority workers, enabling them to enter the labor market.	$\frac{\text{The percentage of trained ethnic minority workers (\%)}}{\text{Total number of ethnic minority workers}} = \frac{\text{Number of trained ethnic minority workers}}{\text{Total number of ethnic minority workers}} \times 100$

Conclusion

The task has proposed 20 indicators representing 5 target groups (with 4 indicators for each group) to form a set of indices to protect vulnerable social groups. These indicators are fundamental representations for each disadvantaged group. The selection of indicators is based on the characteristics and situation of each group and aims to align with the 4 pillars of national social security as per the spirit of Resolution No. 15-NQ/TW dated June 10, 2012, the 5th Central Committee Executive Committee Meeting (XIth term) on some issues of social policies for the period 2012-2020, and to ensure the implementation of social security policies for multiple target groups as per Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW (2023) on continuing innovation, improving the quality of social policies, and meeting the requirements of nation-building and protection in the new period.

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