



InterAcción y Perspectiv

Revista de Trabajo Social

ISSN 2244-808X
D.L. pp 201002Z43506

Octubre-diciembre 2024
Vol. 14 No. 3



Universidad del Zulia
Facultad de Ciencias Jurídicas y Políticas
Centro de Investigaciones en Trabajo Social

Interacción y Perspectiva
Revista de Trabajo Social
Vol. 14 N°3 812-828 pp.
Octubre-diciembre

Dep. Legal pp 201002Z43506
ISSN 2244-808X
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ARTÍCULO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Desarrollo de la seguridad social: un estudio de caso en la provincia de Dong Nai, Vietnam

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11181772>

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Resumen

En el proceso de integración internacional, Vietnam en general y la provincia de Dong Nai, en particular, han logrado resultados tangibles en la implantación de la seguridad social, contribuyendo a mejorar la vida material y espiritual de todas las personas. El estudio evalúa la situación actual del desarrollo de la seguridad social en la provincia vietnamita de Dong Nai y propone soluciones para aplicarla eficazmente en el futuro. La investigación se llevó a cabo siguiendo los principios de la metodología del materialismo dialéctico, como la objetividad, la exhaustividad, la historia y la especificidad. Y métodos específicos como el análisis y la síntesis, la generalización, la abstracción, la unidad de la historia y la lógica, la comparación y el contraste, la inducción y la interpretación.

Palabras clave: seguridad social, desarrollo sostenible, provincia de Dong Nai, Vietnam.

Abstract

Development of social security: a case study in Dong Nai province, Vietnam

In the process of international integration, Vietnam in general and Dong Nai Province, in particular, have achieved tangible results in implementing social security, contributing to improving the material and spiritual lives of all people. The study assesses the current situation of social security development in Dong Nai Province, Vietnam and proposes solutions to effectively implement social security in Dong Nai Province in the coming time. The research was conducted on the principles of dialectical materialism methodology such as objectivity, comprehensiveness, history, and specificity. And specific methods such as analysis and synthesis, generalization, abstraction, unity of history and logic, comparison and contrast, induction and interpretation.

Keywords: social security, sustainable development, Dong Nai Province, Vietnam

Recibido: 29/02/2024 Aceptado: 29/04/2024

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1. Introduction

Dong Nai is a province of Vietnam bordered by Ho Chi Minh City to the west, Ba Ria - Vung Tau province to the south, Binh Thuan province to the east, Lam Dong province to the northeast, Binh Duong and Binh Phuoc provinces to the northwest. With an area of about 5 million km², accounting for 1.76% of the country's natural area and 25.5% of the natural area of the Southeast region; this province has convenient road, waterway and airway transportation to provinces and cities across the country. Dong Nai was also one of the first places to access and take over the material facilities, technical means, and modern technologies left by the French colonists. Dong Nai is also one of the places that concentrates and exchanges economy, culture and society with domestic regions as well as with countries in the region and around the world. Therefore, the socio-economic development of the province is of great significance in the socio-economic development strategy of the Southern region.

In the process of international integration, Dong Nai Province has achieved many important achievements in implementing social security, contributing to improving people's lives towards a civilized, modern and humane city. However, along with the achievements in implementing social security, there remain limitations such as high unemployment, low social insurance coverage, unsustainable poverty reduction, the rich-poor gap between urban and rural areas tends to increase, the service attitude of some medical staff towards patients is still not good... That has been and is negatively affecting the implementation of social security in Dong Nai Province. This paper analyzes the current situation and solutions to strengthen social security in Dong Nai Province.

2. Literature Review

The implementation of social security in Vietnam in general and Dong Nai Province in particular has attracted the research attention of many scientists and socio-political organizations around the world from different perspectives such as: The book "The Nordic Model: Scandinavia since 1945" (Hilson, 2008) by Mary Hilson provided a comprehensive picture of the history, politics, culture and economy of the Nordic countries, focusing on the development model of different aspects of life and the social security system in this region, including Denmark with a separate chapter and other Nordic countries, including the social security system, and a separate chapter on Denmark's social security system, explaining why this system is seen as a model for other countries, while providing an overview of the development of these systems and how they have affected society and the economy.

The work "Beyond the statute: Administration of old-age pensions to 1938" (Whyte, 1996 & 2004) by author Gaynor Whyte emphasized that social policy requires every member of society to have a broader vision than the formal manifestations and items declared in laws, policy implementation guidelines and political statements to anticipate practical issues that actually occur. In addition, Gaynor Whyte also presents regulations on eligibility criteria, benefit levels and other legal criteria for income support programs.

However, considering the whole process of welfare and reform of New Zealand's colonial regime, author Tim Garlick analyzed a long process of forming industrial-era schools along with voluntary assistance and pensions from 1860-1930 in the early part of the book "Social Developments: An organizational history of the Ministry of Social Development and its predecessors, 1860-2011" (Garlick, 2012), especially the increasingly clear outlines of pension policy (p. 21-37). In Part 2 of the book, Tim Garlick discusses "Command and control: Social Security and Child Welfare, 1925-71" with the standards of social security, the legal enforcement framework, and the activities of politicians along with synchronous activities in protecting the rights of children in building the social security system; "The Nordic Theory of Everything" by Anu Partanen is a book that provides profound insights into the social security systems of the Nordic countries, including Sweden. The author is a Finnish journalist who lived in the US, and by comparing the US and Nordic countries with four key relationships - parents and children, men and women, workers and employers, government and people, she explains why the social security systems of these countries are considered the best in the world" (Partanen, 2017).

The book "Mechanisms of Immigration Control: A Comparative Analysis of European Regulation Policies" (Hammar, 2020) has many chapters with content on European immigration and immigration management policies, especially the chapter "Closing the Doors to the Swedish Welfare State" by author Tove Hammar focused on Swedish immigration and immigration management policies, emphasizing that this policy has become more stringent in recent years. The author discusses the measures imposed by the Swedish government to limit the size and scope of social security policies for immigrants, including measures on education, health insurance, women and children. The author also emphasized that although these policies have helped reduce government spending and ease pressure on social security services, they have had negative consequences for immigrants, including isolation, reduced income and poor health.

In the exploration of Vietnam's social security landscape, the book "The EU Social Security System and Lessons for Vietnam" takes a comprehensive look at the intricacies of the European Union's (EU) social security framework. It not only delves into a meticulous analysis of the EU's system but also distills invaluable insights for Vietnam as it endeavors to construct its own social security apparatus. The content of the book not only elucidates key concepts, standards, and procedural nuances integral to establishing a robust social security system but also provides a critical evaluation of the efficacy of social policies. Offering pragmatic solutions, the book becomes a roadmap for Vietnam to enhance the quality of life for its citizens, safeguard their rights, and advance their interests. Moreover, in addressing the challenges posed by globalization, the author,

Tuan (2008), also sheds light on pertinent issues concerning the management and development of Vietnam's social security system within this global context.

The book "Social Security Policy – Current Situation and Solutions" gave a general assessment of the social security situation in Vietnam, including social insurance policies, healthcare policies, education and training policies, labor protection policies and social welfare policies. The author also assessed the role of management agencies and organizations in deploying and implementing social security policies in Vietnam. In addition, the author raised some key issues in Vietnam's social security policy system, including service quality issues, lack of resources and funding, fragmentation and asymmetry in policy deployment, as well as lack of information and advice for people. At the same time, the document proposed some solutions to improve the effectiveness of Vietnam's social security policy system, including raising public awareness of social security policies, strengthening the role of management agencies and organizations in policy implementation, promoting coordination between agencies and organizations, enhancing monitoring and evaluating policy effectiveness, and improving the expertise and skills of officials in charge of managing and implementing social security policies (Ly, 2014).

The book "Solving Social Security in Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Lessons for Vietnam" presented how Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines addressed social security issues and provided lessons for Vietnam in developing its social security system. The author explained the economic and social situations in those countries, the challenges and opportunities in developing the social security system. In addition, the document also introduced policies and solutions that have been applied by these countries to tackle social security related issues, while assessing the effectiveness and limitations of each solution (Dung, 2015).

3. Research Methods

According to the World Bank (WB), social security includes health care, education, insurance, cash assistance, labor protection and other social services. At the same time, the World Bank focuses on managing risks and those who bear risks, vulnerable to impacts through organizational and legal measures such as public measures by the State, emphasizing the core, pillar role of social insurance funds. In addition, this organization also proposes and implements three risk management and response strategies at different levels: prevention; mitigation; recovery. Based on this perspective, the World Bank has divided social security into two main issues, namely the organization of the social insurance network and privatization with the role of the Pension Fund. However, author Cuong (2009, p.11) argues that this perspective has only focused on the hunger and poverty reduction strategy and has not promoted and stimulated the connection with other fields of society.

The globalization imprint of social security was recognized in 1946 when the International Labor Organization conceptualized: "Social security is the protection that society provides for its members through a series of widely applied measures to deal

with economic and social shocks that severely reduce or impair income due to illness, maternity, work injury, disability or death. Providing medical care and benefits for families with children" (Phuc, 2012, p. 61).

In 1948, the United Nations officially included the issue of social security in Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person" and Article 25 of this Declaration clearly stipulates: "1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. 2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection" (United Nations General Assembly, 1948).

Subsequently, as a specialized agency of the United Nations, the International Labor Organization (ILO) continued to adopt a number of Conventions on social security worldwide. In particular, Convention 102 dated June 25, 1952 perfected the concept of social security with minimum standards to ensure support for workers. According to the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) (ILO, 2012): This Recommendation is the first international instrument to guide countries in narrowing social security gaps and progressively achieving universal protection by establishing and maintaining comprehensive social security systems. To work towards this goal, the Recommendation calls for: Giving priority to implementing social protection floors (SPFs) as a fundamental element of national social security systems and a starting point for countries without minimum social protection; and (2) extending social security with the aim to provide higher levels of social security to as many people as possible according to national financial and economic capabilities and following the guidance of ILO Convention No. 102 and other ILO social security standards. Social protection floors should include at least four basic social security guarantees: access to essential health care and basic income security for children, persons of working age who cannot earn sufficient income, and older persons and should be provided at a level that allows living in dignity. Through the concept of social protection floors, Recommendation No. 202 sets out the essential core content of the human right to social security.

In Vietnam, the formulation of the Vietnam Social Security Strategy for the Period 2011-2020 by the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids, and Social Affairs, alongside the issuance of Resolution No. 15-NQ/TW on June 1, 2012, by the Central Executive Committee of the Party, marked a pivotal moment in shaping the nation's social security landscape. These strategic documents outlined the comprehensive structure of Vietnam's social security system, encompassing vital components such as Employment, Social Insurance, Health Insurance, Accident Insurance, Poverty Reduction, and Social Assistance.

Furthermore, the research undertaken in this context is grounded in a profound philosophical framework, leveraging the principles of dialectical materialism and historical materialism. Aligned with Ho Chi Minh's ideology and guided by the Communist

Party of Vietnam's perspective on the intricate relationship between social security and socio-economic development in the country, the study employs specific methodologies. These include analytical and synthetic approaches, generalization, abstraction, the unity of history and logic, comparison and contrast, as well as induction and interpretation. Through this comprehensive toolkit, the research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of Vietnam's social security dynamics and their connection to broader socio-economic development, ensuring a holistic and insightful exploration of the subject matter.

4. Results and Discussion

Implementation of Social Security in Dong Nai Province in Recent Years

First, the issue of employment for workers. In the 1991-2000 period, Dong Nai province overcame the common difficulties of the whole country, the achievements in this period still had many limitations. In 10 years, the whole province has provided jobs for 504,939 workers, including 195,627 people in enterprises (foreign-invested enterprises with 97,593 people; state enterprises; non-state enterprises with 80,074 people); provided on-site employment for 307,305 people. In addition, during this period, Dong Nai sent 2,007 people for vocational training and working abroad (mainly in the form of labor export) (Sang, 2009, p.124).

In the 2001-2005 period, the whole province provided employment for 380,073 people, achieving 108.59% of the province's plan (including 10,163 demobilized soldiers). Of which, 196.59 new jobs were created in enterprises, achieving 83.4% of the plan (including small projects to create jobs according to Resolution No. 120/HDBT dated April 11, 1992 of the Council of Ministers (now is called the Government) provided 41,044 jobs, achieving 68.41% of the plan). Dong Nai sent 1,124 people for training and studying abroad, achieving 37.47% of the plan. The number of workers recruited from other provinces to work in enterprises in Dong Nai province in the same period was 21,058, accounting for 11.6% of the total number of workers recruited to enterprises (Dong Nai Department of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs, 2008). In 2006 and 2007, the whole province provided employment for 172,398 people (Dong Nai Statistics Office, 2009, p. 25). In 2009, the total number of workers in the province's economic sectors was 1,337,670, including 88,115 newly created workers during the year (Dong Nai Statistics Office, 2010, p. 29). In 2010, the total number of workers was 1,435,515, including 89,240 newly employed workers during the year (the growth rate was 101.28% compared to the previous year). By 2011, the total number of workers increased to 1,474,976, including 92,135 newly created jobs during the year (an increase of 103.24%), of which 43,746 were newly employed male workers and 48,389 were female (Dong Nai Statistics Office, 2012, p.32).

However, at the beginning of 2020, the world situation continued to evolve complicatedly, the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, disrupting supply chains, shrinking both aggregate supply and aggregate demand. Domestically, the 4th outbreak of the Delta variant in the southern provinces in general and Dong Nai in particular with many new infections and a rapid increase. In the first 9 months of 2021, Dong Nai's economy

grew slowly, with total retail sales of goods and services reaching nearly VND 137.5 trillion, up over 1.1% over the same period last year; tourism revenue reached VND 471 billion, down nearly 31%; disbursement of public investment capital reached below 50%; nearly 900 enterprises had to suspend production and business activities and dissolve (Gia Cu, 2021). In that context, although Dong Nai's labor force aged 15 and over increased by 0.09% compared to 2020 to 1,756.95 thousand people, the number of workers in economic sectors decreased by 0.28% compared to 2020 (reaching 1,719.64 thousand people). The unemployment rate of working age labor in 2021 is 2.22% (1.82% in 2020), of which the urban area is 1.66%, and the rural area is 2.66%. The underemployment rate of working age labor force is 2.7%, of which the urban area is 3.2%, and the rural area is 2.3% (Dong Nai Statistics Office, 2022, p.16).

Along with the shift in economic structure, Dong Nai's labor structure also shifted accordingly. The shift in labor structure in the province during the same period took place more strongly with a significant decrease in the agricultural sector, while at the same time an increase in the industry and service sector. In 2003, the labor structure in agriculture was 52.51%, by 2007 it had decreased to 33.32%; the labor structure in the industrial sector increased from 26.06% in 2003 to 34.12% in 2007; and the labor structure in the service sector increased from 21.43% in 2003 to 32.56% in 2007^[1]. The transformation of the labor structure in economic sectors in Dong Nai is shifting towards increasing industry and service structure and decreasing agricultural structure. This shift not only facilitates the economic development requirements of Dong Nai, but also facilitates the deployment and implementation of social security activities (both compulsory and voluntary).

In rural areas, implementing Project 1956 (Prime Minister of Vietnam, 2009), Dong Nai province has had policies to encourage rural workers to attend vocational training. In addition, in order to increase the trained workforce, the provincial Social Policy Bank added two more lending objects for vocational training: demobilized soldiers and rural workers. In addition, many facilitating mechanisms and policies have been promulgated by the province, such as support for meals, accommodation, and transportation when rural workers participate in vocational training, which will effectively improve the quality of vocational training for rural workers. Thanks to the aforementioned positive policies, the proportion of trained workers in rural areas has continued to increase: in 2010, trained workers in rural areas accounted for 6.6%, by 2020 this figure increased to 17.8% (Dong Nai Statistics Office, 2012, p.93). Specifically, in implementing the vocational training policy for rural workers (according to Decision No. 1418/QĐ-UBND dated May 16, 2016 of Dong Nai Provincial People's Committee), in 2020 there were 2,457 newly recruited rural workers for vocational training, of which 799 people were trained in non-agricultural occupations, accounting for 31.74% and 1,678 people were trained in agricultural occupations, accounting for 68.29%. The number of graduates was 1,899, providing jobs for 1,731 people, accounting for 91.15%, the rest are still being trained and will graduate at the beginning of 2021 (Chuong, 2022). The rural aspect in Dong Nai province has changed remarkably: agriculture develops steadily, the structure of the agricultural sector shifts properly according to the general development

trend of the province; the average agricultural production value per unit area increases quite highly, reaching VND 85.58 million/ha in 2013. Average per capita income in rural areas in 2019 reached VND 51.59 million/person/year, up more than 2.28 times compared to 2011 (Vinh, 2019). In addition, many types of collective economic production organizations, farm economies, cooperatives and enterprises in the field of agriculture have emerged. The material life and average per capita income in rural areas have been improved, reaching VND 32 million/person/year. In recent years and the future, Dong Nai will continue to implement the project but focus on the occupations where farmers are living, support them with knowledge and skills to do their job and make a living. The province focuses on key occupations such as cultivation, backyard poultry farming, goat breeding, garment industry, etc. to serve locally and provide a source of migrant labor for enterprises.

In urban areas, particularly in industrial zones, 84.5% of workers in the industrial zones of Dong Nai province have signed contracts upon joining companies. This can be attributed to legal education, as the majority of workers voluntarily sign labor contracts and meet the necessary conditions for employment in enterprises. As a result, the signing of labor contracts adheres to prescribed content and forms, and complies with regulations regarding working hours, breaks, and the prohibition of coercing workers to work overtime beyond legal limits. The implementation of maternity leave, occupational accident benefits, and other regulations specified by the Labor Law is also ensured. According to the report by the People's Committee of Dong Nai Province, by 2016, enterprises in Dong Nai's industrial zones had trained and provided employment for 523,146 domestic workers and 5,719 foreign workers. Foreign workers accounted for nearly 60% of the total labor force, with enterprises attracting an additional 20,000 workers annually, especially from countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, China, and Japan. The skill level breakdown of workers in Dong Nai's industrial zones is currently as follows: 8% with higher education (college and university), 32% with vocational training or technical qualifications, and 60% comprising skilled workers and unskilled laborers (People's Committee of Dong Nai Province, 2016, p.12). By 2020, the entire province had recruited 78,105 new workers, with a 25.18% enrollment rate for vocational training or higher education among the total recruits, and a vocational training rate of 65.02% in 2020 (Chuong, 2022). This indicates an increasing educational attainment among workers, meeting the growing demands of both businesses and the labor market, domestically and internationally.

In recent years, Dong Nai's industrial zones have seen a growing number of skilled workers directly involved in production, equipped with specialized knowledge and highlevel skills to adapt and manage modern technologies and equipment. A significant portion of hired labor in private enterprises and foreign-invested enterprises has shown progress, with some foreign-invested enterprises gradually delegating management responsibilities to workers. This provides an opportunity and conducive environment for workers to demonstrate their capabilities in managerial and operational tasks, meeting the demands of the domestic and international labor markets.

It can be affirmed that labor policies addressing employment, reducing unemployment rates, and improving the standard of living for residents have benefited from economic development. However, in the context of Industry 4.0, the increasing demand for skilled labor poses challenges in employment for the predominantly unskilled labor force. Despite a rising trend in trained labor, the overall percentage remains limited. In 2021, the rate of trained labor aged 15 and above with work experience decreased to 21.9%, down by 0.7% compared to 2020. Trained labor in urban areas reached 29.8%, while rural areas only achieved 15.9% (Dong Nai Statistics Office, 2022, p.16).

Nevertheless, Dong Nai province faces a paradox where despite an abundant labor force, many enterprises experience a shortage of labor, particularly in executive, managerial, and specialist roles. The largest existing challenge in the training sector is the disparity between higher education and vocational training, with an oversupply of university graduates and an insufficient number of skilled workers. Low-income levels lead to low living standards, negatively affecting the attachment to professions, dedication, and social welfare for workers. The wealth gap has shown a tendency to increase, especially between urban and suburban areas. Therefore, prompt measures are needed to enhance the quality of life and ensure social welfare for residents of Dong Nai province in general.

Secondly, Dong Nai has effectively implemented various social insurance programs, health insurance, and unemployment insurance, contributing to supporting workers in minimizing risks and actively compensating for reduced income. In 1995, Dong Nai had only around 90,000 people participating in social insurance and health insurance. However, by 2007, the number of people participating in social insurance alone reached approximately 440,000, with a combined total of around 670,000 people including those covered by health insurance (a 744.4% increase within 12 years) (Sang et al., 2009, p.155). In 2010, the total number of participants in insurance programs (including social insurance, health insurance, and unemployment insurance) was 2,450,262, with 516,806 participating in social insurance. By 2015, the number of participants in insurance programs had increased to 3,337,654, with 763,860 participating in social insurance. In 2016, a total of 3,648,630 people participated in insurance programs, including 717,123 in social insurance, 2,232,576 in health insurance, and 698,940 in unemployment insurance. In 2017, the total number of participants in social insurance, health insurance, and unemployment insurance was 2,342,054. Among them, 731,855 were mandatory participants in social insurance, and 717,068 participated in unemployment insurance. The voluntary participants in social insurance were 2,416. The number of people covered by health insurance was 2,339,638, with a coverage rate of 80.1% of the population, an increase of 1.8% compared to the Prime Minister's set target and an increase of 2,711 people compared to the plan assigned by the Vietnam Social Insurance. In just 10 months of 2017, the insurance revenue for social insurance, health insurance, and unemployment insurance reached over VND 13,633.7 billion, achieving 82.6% of the assigned plan and a 14.5% increase compared to the same period in 2016. Social insurance, health insurance, and unemployment insurance debts accounted for 2.81% of the total receivables according to the 2017 assigned plan (Dong Nai Statistics Office, 2020, p.110).

By 2020, the number of insurance participants increased to 4,240,634, including 838,580 in social insurance, over 2.6 million in health insurance, and 800,928 in unemployment insurance (Dong Nai Statistics Office, 2022, p.128). The number of beneficiaries of social insurance, health insurance, and unemployment insurance is increasing, with timely resolution of pension and insurance payment schemes. This contributes to the stability of workers' lives and socio-political stability in the region. Regular beneficiaries of social insurance are mainly those who have completed their social insurance payment periods and have transitioned to the period of receiving social insurance benefits. It can be said that social insurance policies have a significant impact on the social welfare of a large number of people nationwide and specifically in Dong Nai. Therefore, provincial agencies frequently guide labor-utilizing units, actively direct various levels of social insurance, and instruct them on procedures and documentation for settling social insurance regimes for both labor-utilizing units and citizens. Therefore, resolving social insurance policies in a timely and regulated manner, adjusting pensions and social insurance benefits accurately for beneficiaries, conducting regular reviews and supplementing managed benefit files, and actively managing the beneficiaries are essential. This instills confidence in the people, contributing to ensuring social welfare in the province. In the first 10 months of 2017, Dong Nai's social insurance accurately resolved and fully paid 1,438,812 cases of retirement, social insurance benefits, and unemployment insurance, a 20.6% increase compared to the same period in 2016. In 2020, the number of monthly beneficiaries of social insurance was 59,642 people, and the number of people receiving social insurance benefits was 1,974,455 (Dong Nai Statistics Office, 2022, p.157).

In addition, the process of implementing insurance policies in Dong Nai province has certain limitations that need to be addressed in the future. Firstly, the coverage of insurance in the non-state sector is very low. Although the overall social insurance coverage in Dong Nai is twice the national average, most of this is attributed to foreigninvested areas. Conversely, the business sector in Dong Nai, where over 65% of the labor force participates in national economic sectors, only represents about 11% of the total number of people participating in social insurance in the province, with a coverage rate of only 6.6% for the entire labor force. In recent years, the participation structure of the business sector in social insurance remains low, with no significant shift. Moreover, the situation of arrears, delays, and evasion of social insurance payments persists in Dong Nai. While this is only a temporary limitation, if left unaddressed, it may become systemic, creating a "disregard for the law" chain effect among labor-utilizing units.

Furthermore, the quality of social welfare in Dong Nai, while improving, is still relatively low compared to the cost of living and the fluctuation of the consumer price index. This is without considering the challenges in managing insurance beneficiaries, particularly those in remote areas and belonging to ethnic minority groups. Ethnic minority populations in Dong Nai are relatively large, primarily residing in remote and challenging areas.

Thirdly, regarding efforts to eradicate hunger and reduce poverty, the close relationship between poverty and social welfare is essential. A locality that consistently experiences poverty among a significant portion of its population cannot be considered successful in social welfare, as ensuring social welfare requires addressing poverty. During the 2001-2005 period, with higher poverty standards (under 130,000 VND/person/month in rural areas and under 160,000 VND/person/month in urban areas), the total number of poor households in Dong Nai at the beginning of 2001 was 52,827 households (accounting for 12.26% of the total households). With just a minor adjustment to the poverty criteria, the number of poor households increased from 1.21% in 2000 to 12.26% in 2001 (applying the new poverty criteria).

The poverty reduction program for the 2001-2005 period in the province set the main goals of reducing 45,000 poor households out of the total 52,827 households in 2001. This aimed to decrease the poverty rate from 12.26% in 2001 to below 2% by 2005. Poor communes were expected to have essential infrastructure, improve the basic living conditions for the poor, prevent them from falling back into poverty, and reduce the rich-poor gap from 5.7 times to 5.2 times. After 5 years of implementation, the province successfully reduced 49,002 poor households, achieving 108.89% of the poverty reduction plan. The total number of poor households decreased from 52,827 households to 3,795 households, reducing the poverty rate from 12.26% in 2001 to 0.87% by the end of 2005. Out of 171 communes, wards, and 11 provincial-level units, 114 no longer had poor households. In the period from 2006 to the present, compared to the national poverty reduction targets, Dong Nai has been a leading province nationwide in eradicating hunger and reducing poverty.

The province has surpassed the national poverty criteria. The Prime Minister's Decision No. 07/2006/QĐ-TTg on January 10, 2006, approving the program for socioeconomic development in especially difficult areas of ethnic minorities and mountainous regions for the 2006-2010 period, stated the goal of striving for no poor households and reducing the poverty rate to below 30% by 2010. Dong Nai has far exceeded these targets. In mid-September 2005, the province announced the completion of Program 135, lifting 16 particularly difficult communes out of poverty. Dong Nai has been free of poor households for a long time, with only 9.84% of households classified as poor according to the new criteria. According to the government's program, to help rural areas escape poverty, each province should have over 80% of communes with small-scale irrigation works to ensure agricultural production. Dong Nai has essentially completed the construction of internal canals since the 1990s, ensuring irrigation for crops. Additionally, the government aimed to provide electricity to 80% of hamlets by 2010. Dong Nai has already achieved 100% electrification for hamlets and residential areas, with over 95% of households using electricity. The government's goal was for 70% of households in each region to achieve an average GDP income of over 3.5 million VND per person per year by the end of 2010. Dong Nai has made substantial progress in this regard. In 2017, the project "Renewal, development of social assistance in the 2017-2025 period, and vision to 2030" was implemented in various localities in Dong Nai province. It is evident that the provincial government has been leveraging internal potential and

the province's advantages, maximizing support from the central government, organizations, businesses, communities, and society to achieve the goal of ensuring social welfare. This creates conditions for people to improve their self-reliance in welfare, continually enhancing both material and spiritual aspects, ensuring social justice, stability, and sustainable development (People's Committee of Dong Nai Province, 2018). At the end of 2019, the People's Council of Dong Nai Province issued Decision No. 118/2018/NQ-HDND on the Approval of the multidimensional poverty standards for Dong Nai Province for the 2018-2020 period. According to this decision, at the beginning of 2020, there were still 5,500 poor households in the province, accounting for 0.64% of the total households, surpassing the provincial party committee's recommendation to reduce the poverty target. Out of these, 1,582 households were classified as poor A, accounting for 0.19% of the households, while the rest were poor B. Near-poor households numbered 5,755, making up 0.66% of the total households (Department of Labor, War Invalids, and Social Affairs of Dong Nai Province, 2021, p.5). Consequently, the People's Committee of Dong Nai Province issued Plan No. 6129/KHUBND on the comprehensive survey and review of poor and near-poor households in the province for the 2022-2025 period.

The new criteria for the survey are expected to cover approximately 7.5% of households in the province, about 68,100 households, with the new poverty standards being 1,450,000 VND/person/month in urban areas and 1,200,000 VND/person/month in rural areas; near-poverty standards are 1,900,000 VND/person/month in urban areas and 1,550,000 VND/person/month in rural areas; standards for households with average living standards are 2,550,000 VND/person/month in urban areas and 2,050,000 VND/person/month in rural areas and below. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of sustainable poverty reduction has been limited, and the disparity in living standards and cultural enjoyment between urban and suburban residents has grown. The verification and assessment of newly recognized poor households, newly emerged poor households, and households escaping poverty in some localities have not followed the correct procedures and have been influenced by subjective factors. Some areas have not decisively addressed lazy and unemployed poor households, relying excessively on state aid policies. Additionally, the cadre team responsible for poverty reduction lacks both quantity and capacity. The rapid natural population growth continues to exert pressure on achieving the city's poverty reduction goals. The expansion and development of the target groups for social insurance, health insurance, and unemployment insurance are below their potential, and the coverage of social insurance is increasing slowly.

Fourthly, the policy for individuals with merit and social privileges is one of the fundamental pillars of the social welfare system in Dong Nai province. During the period from 2001-2005, according to the report from the Department of Labor, War Invalids, and Social Affairs, various sectors and units in Dong Nai province resolved over 19 thousand cases of individuals and families of those who participated in resistance activities, receiving one-time allowances, along with 2,570 revolutionary contributors. The Department of Labor, War Invalids, and Social Affairs provided regular allowances to 728 resistance activists and their offspring affected by toxic chemicals, supported house repairs for 1,375 individuals with a budget of 9.2 billion VND, issued 164 savings

books with a total amount of 121 million VND for policy beneficiary households, mobilized assistance for 259 policy beneficiaries, and provided regular nursing care for 2,387 beneficiaries, with a total expenditure exceeding 1.5 billion VND. The gratitude repayment fund from 2001-2005 collected a total of 16.9 billion VND.

Additionally, various departments and localities in Dong Nai province organized trips to Hanoi for some policy beneficiaries, renovated martyrs' cemeteries, built memorial parks and monuments, collected and preserved martyr remains, etc. The total cost for caring for wounded soldiers, martyrs, and contributors from 2001-2005 was 71.225 trillion VND (Pham Van Sang et al., 2009, p.318). As of the end of May 2015, Dong Nai province recognized and implemented preferential regimes for 55,251 contributors to the revolution, with 13,745 beneficiaries enjoying preferential allowances. Across the province, 24,875 households of revolutionary contributors had a standard of living higher than the local average, and 97 Heroic Vietnamese Mothers received lifelong care from units and enterprises. In recent years, through activities to care for contributors, the entire province has mobilized over 82 billion VND, constructing 2,600 charity houses for Heroic Vietnamese Mothers, martyr families, veteran revolutionary cadres, seriously wounded veterans, and disadvantaged contributors. They repaired 3,468 damaged and downgraded houses, issued 2,831 charity savings books (averaging from 1 to 3 million VND per book), provided assistance to 845 disabled and seriously ill veterans, parents, and wives of martyrs without relatives, and mobilized over 57 billion VND for the Gratitude Repayment Fund. In 2013 alone, the "Gratitude Repayment Fund" program raised nearly 6 billion VND. Particularly, in line with the Prime Minister's Decision No. 22 on supporting the construction and repair of houses for contributors (Prime Minister of Vietnam, 2013), the Department of Labor, War Invalids, and Social Affairs coordinated with the Department of Construction to review and propose approval from the provincial People's Committee for the construction and repair of over 1,000 houses in 2013 and 2014.

Moreover, the province allocated 2,010 hectares of land to support over 4,000 disabled and wounded veterans, martyr families, and their children in organizing production and business activities. It utilized funding sources to address employment, poverty reduction, and provided over 2,000 policy households with preferential interest rate loans to develop their family economy, increase income, and improve living standards. Currently, there are no policy households that are poor in the province, and all 171 communes and wards are recognized for effectively implementing policies for veterans and martyrs. The province implemented a fee exemption for vocational training for 421 beneficiaries with a budget of over 923 million VND, provided meal support for 322 beneficiaries with a budget of over 154 million VND, etc. In summary, from 2012 to 2021, the province has carried out the construction and repair of charity houses for contributors using funds from various sources. This includes the construction of 646 new houses, amounting to 28.923 billion VND, the repair of 1,702 houses, costing 33.352 billion VND, and the issuance of savings books to 606 families of contributors, totaling 1,630 billion VND. During this period, contributors in the province had an average standard of living equal to or higher than the local average, with an average rate of 98% or more (Huy, 2022).

It can be said that in recent times, Dong Nai has made significant efforts in implementing the principle of “drinking water while remembering the source” and supporting those with contributions. The lives of contributors in Dong Nai have been greatly improved compared to the general population. However, the funding allocated for implementing preferential policies for contributors still has many limitations. It has only partially met and improved the material life of the mentioned groups. Nevertheless, it holds great spiritual significance, reflecting the care of party committees, authorities, and the entire society. It aligns with the tradition of remembering the source, simultaneously contributing to educating the younger generation.

However, social assistance activities still face many difficulties due to the city's budget and funding for this work not meeting the actual needs. The level of support is low compared to the basic material needs of the beneficiaries, especially those receiving regular allowances. The range of beneficiaries in the city is diverse, and some vulnerable groups continue to be overlooked, leading to social destitution. Meanwhile, other groups emerging due to economic and social changes also need to be considered for inclusion in the appropriate beneficiary lists for a special urban context. These are issues that need early research to establish mechanisms for adjusting and supplementing the coverage of social policies to appropriately assist the intended beneficiaries in a special urban setting.

Solutions for developing Social Welfare in Dong Nai Province

Firstly, thoroughly and deeply understand the implementation of social welfare at every step, every strategy, and every economic and social development policy within the Party apparatus, government, departments, social organizations, and the people of Dong Nai province. This creates a unified understanding and action in the political system of Dong Nai province, aiming at development for the sake of humanity.

Secondly, intensify the construction, adjustment, and improvement of social welfare mechanisms and policies. Simultaneously, identify which issues need focused resolution to meet the urgent societal goals. Social policies and programs need to be tailored separately to suit each target group, each locality, and specific social issues at different times.

Thirdly, propel international collaboration within the realm of social welfare by tapping into global resources, engaging with experts, and initiating technical projects to test novel policies and programs. Bolster research capabilities, orchestrate seamless project implementation, and diligently monitor and evaluate project outcomes. To realize this vision, Dong Nai province must intensify promotional efforts, proactively seek foreign aid programs, allocate aid judiciously for their intended purposes, and uphold transparency in the utilization of international assistance.

Fourthly, fortify public awareness through robust propaganda, legal dissemination, and education at all levels and across various sectors, instilling a profound understanding of the pivotal role social welfare plays in both economic and social development, as well as in the lives of the labor force.

By implementing these comprehensive solutions, the city will leverage positive aspects, mitigate and prevent the downsides of market mechanisms, laying the groundwork for sustainable and harmonious economic development. It aims towards becoming a city with a good quality of life, prosperity, and modernity.

6. Conclusion

Studying the current situation of social welfare in Dong Nai province is an essential issue. Throughout its development, Dong Nai has achieved positive results that contribute to improving both material and spiritual aspects of life, continually enhancing Vietnam's position on the international stage. However, the negative aspects of the market economy and international integration have adversely affected the lives of laborers, leading to issues such as unemployment, wealth disparity, and risks arising from economic crises. Therefore, more than ever, the construction and improvement of a multi-layered social welfare system that is flexible in protecting laborers in Dong Nai province, and Vietnam as a whole, is urgently needed to achieve sustainable development.

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