

Poverty Reduction: A Case Study in Kien Giang Province (Vietnam) During Vietnamese Plans of Industrialization and Modernization

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Abstract

Eradicating hunger and reducing poverty is a crucial aspect of Vietnam's overall socio-economic development strategy, particularly in Kien Giang province, a southern province of this country. Across a brief history of Communists plans on industrialization and modernization, some achievements of decreasing proportion of poor households and enhanced living standards are palpable, although limitations and challenges still persisted. The article is based on methods such as descriptive statistics, synthesis and analysis of documents, comparison, and logic. The research shows that the poverty rate in Kien Giang province has decreased in recent years, with disparities in poverty levels across different areas within the province. Poverty is mainly concentrated in remote areas and among ethnic minorities. The causes of poverty in Kien Giang province include both subjective and objective factors, primarily the lack of land or productive land, lack of capital for business and production, lack of labor skills, and lack of production means. Such poverty has significantly impacted the socio-economic development of Kien Giang province, affecting economic growth, employment, social security, and wealth disparity. The solutions proposed by the author to improve poverty reduction efforts in Kien Giang province in the future include developing the agricultural sector and promoting rural industrialization, improving infrastructure in difficult areas, focusing on education and training, especially vocational training, creating jobs, and implementing policies to support and protect impoverished groups.

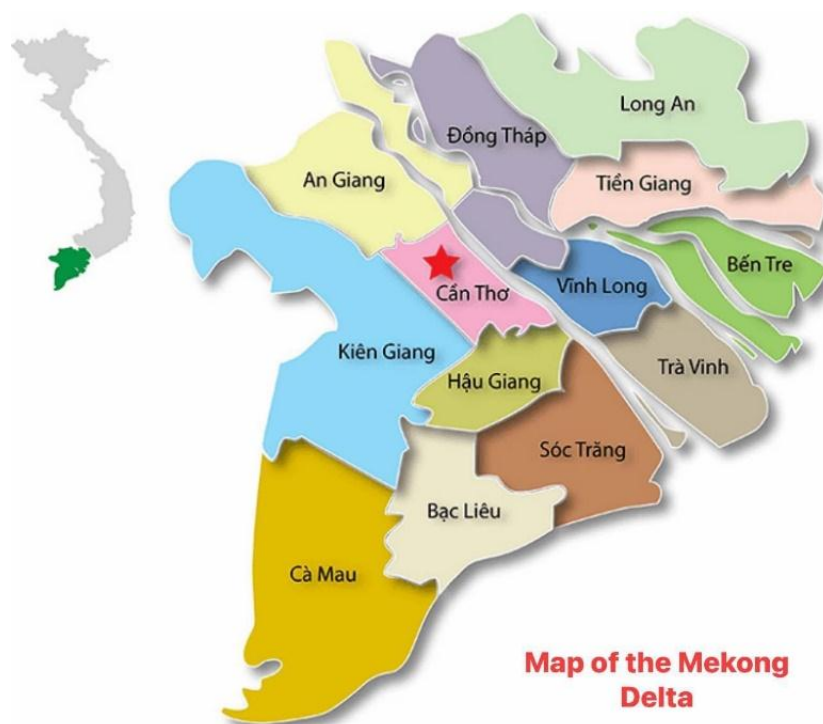
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I. INTRODUCTION

Eradicating hunger and reducing poverty lies at a political emphasis of Communist Party of Vietnam and the Communist state with the intention of sustainable development that “Leaving No One Behind “ in tune with United Nations’ regulation. Kiên Giang is one of Vietnamese Mekong Delta province. It has favorable conditions for socio-economic development, including geographical location, natural resources, as well as historical and cultural conditions. Leaving the war behind, Communists politicians of Kien Giang focused on hunger eradication. The local Communist Party of Kien Giang formulated a complete the number 11 Resolution on this boiling affair and a local steering committee was installed bottom-up (Kien Giang Provincial Party Committee, p.2). Local officers assumed that this issue was in hours of need to leverage for local economic growth. This committee adhered to a consistency of a policy that aimed at hunger eradication and poverty reduction as a nub of matter and needed a timely solution. Meanwhile rescuing households from a poverty-stricken situation may take a long duration of implementation and requires perseverance, regularity, and continuity, so those provincial achievements may kindle a hope for furtherance. In particular, this authority succeeded in poverty eradication in 1994, which made substantial contributions to a national campaign of sustainable national target program on poverty reduction and enhancing the living standards of local residents (Kien Giang Provincial Statistics Office, 2010, p.177). Nevertheless, those efforts proved insufficient to keep certain difficulties and challenges of Kien Giang on this affair at bay. Scrutinizing to what extent provincial activities reached a climax of its implementation and what is the boundary of their abilities to go further in this project propose the scientific importance of in-depth research to make policy amendments and provide valuable information to turn this intention to fruition.



Research on poverty alleviation in a developing country like Vietnam is not a new field of study. Poverty reduction is a subject of interest for many researchers, each presenting new arguments, practical insights, and solutions for sustainable poverty reduction in different regions and localities. Some notable studies on poverty in Vietnam include:

"Policies for Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction: Current Situation and Solutions" by Le Quoc Ly, published by National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2012. The author has provided a relatively clear and convincing explanation of poverty issues, the causes of poverty, and analyzed the current state of poverty in Vietnam. Additionally, the author proposed a system of important solutions to reduce poverty in Vietnam.

Ha Que Lam's study titled "Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction in Ethnic Minority Areas in Our Country Today – Current Situation and Solutions," published by National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2002. The author provided numerous statistics demonstrating the high poverty rates in mountainous regions, where many ethnic minorities reside. This research highlights how traditions, customs, and the natural living environment strongly influence the effectiveness of poverty alleviation activities in various localities and among different target groups. It also discusses an important solution: the need to strengthen state management of hunger eradication and poverty reduction activities.

Dr. Tran Thi Hang, with her work "The Issue of Poverty Reduction in the Market Economy in Vietnam Today," published by Statistics Publishing House, Hanoi, 2001, analyzed the state and causes of poverty, clarified the achievements in poverty alleviation in Vietnam, and proposed directions and solutions for poverty reduction in Vietnam. These solutions include economic growth, development of various service types, further improvement of the social welfare system, and fostering the spirit of solidarity and mutual support within the community.

Additionally, at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam), there are several theses researching poverty alleviation in various localities, such as: "Poverty Reduction in the Indigenous Ethnic Minority Community in Kon Tum Province Today" by Bui Thi Thao Nguyen, 2015. "The Communist Party of Binh Chanh District - Ho Chi Minh City with Poverty Alleviation Efforts" by Tran Thi Ngoc Mai, 2022. "The Communist Party of Quang Binh Province Leading Poverty Alleviation Efforts (1989-2010)" by Nguyen Van Tuan, 2017. "Poverty Alleviation in Binh Duong Province Today" by Phan Thi Kim Thuy, 2013. "The Relationship Between Economic Growth and Poverty Alleviation in Gia Lai Province Today" by Duong Trung Kien, 2012. "The Communist Party of Phu Yen Province Leading the Implementation of Poverty Alleviation from 2006 to 2015" by To Quoc Thai, 2018. "The Communist Party of Dong Nai Province Leading Poverty Alleviation Efforts (2010-2018)" by Nguyen Thi An, 2020...

However, to date, there has been no research on poverty alleviation efforts specifically in Kien Giang province.

What is the current situation of poor households in Kien Giang province? What are the causes of poverty in Kien Giang province? How has poverty impacted the socio-economic development of Kien Giang

province? What solutions does Kien Giang province need to implement to achieve sustainable poverty reduction? The research on poverty reduction in Kien Giang province is of great significance, contributing to clarifying poverty reduction efforts in a province of the Mekong Delta region and providing arguments for assessing the poverty reduction issue in Vietnam. On this basis, more practical solutions for poverty reduction in Vietnam can be proposed.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

I employed an approach of Marxism-Leninism, in dialectical materialist method. I considered poverty as a process influenced by objective principles, while also acknowledging a subjectivity of individualistic awareness greatly impacting the poverty situation. Hence, this article focuses on the interrelation and degree of impact of both subjective and objective factors on the poverty situation of the locality.

Besides, the author combines both qualitative and quantitative methods in this article, such as descriptive statistical method, logical method, textual analysis, and comparative method.

First, the author used the descriptive statistical method to collect and calculate data, summarizing the number of poor households in Kien Giang province to create accurate data tables that reflect the current situation of poor households in the province.

Meanwhile, a logical method is also employed to identify the reliability of outcome and give an insightful implication for this program of Kien Giang and to what extent a solution can be addressed.

Furthermore, I utilized synthesis and analysis of documents that assisted me to give a demonstration on this provincial circumstance and help navigate local policies for socio-economic development.

Last but not least, a comparative method is used to compare the poverty situation in Kien Giang province across different periods which identify the authority results and their next chapter of policy making process and implementation to serve as a basis for proposing appropriate poverty reduction solutions.

III. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Current status

The publication of Communist Party on Vietnamese industrialization and modernization created a huge impetus for Kien Giang rapid economic growth. In fact, a continued effort of the Kien Giang committee has been paid off with striking achievements in local socio-economic development.

Dated back 1997, the total number of poor households in Kien Giang province was 38,034, accounting for 14.49% of the total number of households of this research site. The poverty rate among different localities showed significant disparity. Statistically, the An Minh district suffered from the highest poverty rate in 1997 with (25.73%), followed by An Bien district (20.99%), Vinh Thuan district (19%), Kien Hai district (18.26%), and Go Quao district (17.16%). The lowest poverty rates were in Ha Tien town (6.661%) and Rach Gia town (7.13%). By 2022, the total quantity of poor households in this site decreased to 8,854, accounting for 1.90%. Among them, ethnic minority poor households numbered 2,552, accounting for 3.68%. Near-poor households totaled 14,787, accounting for 3.18%, with ethnic minority near-poor households numbering 3,871, accounting for 5.59%. The poor households in Kien Giang province in 2022 were mainly concentrated in U Minh Thuong, Go Quao, Hon Dat, and Giang Thanh districts, where there is a high concentration of the Khmer, remote areas, and difficult living conditions.

Table 1: Number of poor households in Kien Giang province by administrative unit in 1997 and 2022

Administrative Unit	1997*		2022**	
	Number of Households (households)	Poverty Rate (%)	Number of Households (households)	Poverty Rate (%)
Total	38,034	14.49	8,854	1.90
Rach Gia City	2,248	7.13	497	0.80
Ha Tien City	1,154	6.61	98	0.76
Kien Luong District	-	-	319	1.44
Hon Dat District	2,057	9.55	1,052	2.47
Tan Hiep District	3,429	13.44	424	1.27
Chau Thanh District	3,213	14.29	709	1.71
Giong Rieng District	5,169	14.55	983	1.81

*Criteria for poverty in 1997: In rural areas, households with an average income per person per month below 70,000 VND. In urban areas, households with an average income per person per month below 90,000 VND.

**Criteria for poverty in 2022: In urban areas, households with an average income per person per month of 2,000,000 VND or less and lacking in at least three indicators measuring the level of deprivation of basic social services. In rural areas, households with an average income per person per month of 1,500,000 VND or less and lacking in at least three indicators measuring the level of deprivation of basic social services.

Go Quao District	4,513	17.16	1,343	3.92
An Bien District	5,444	20.99	621	2.03
An Minh District	5,095	25.73	660	2.06
Vinh Thuan District	4,237	19.00	666	2.81
Phu Quoc City	733	7.30	111	0.25
Kien Hai District	742	18.26	0	0.00
U Minh Thuong District	-	-	1,144	6.37
Giang Thanh District	-	-	227	2.75

(Source: Statistical data on socio-economic indicators of Kien Giang province for 45 years (1975 – 2020) and Decision No. 3305 of the People's Committee of Kien Giang province dated December 28, 2022, p.4)

The poverty rate among different ethnic groups also shows a serious gap and alternations over time. The poverty rate of the Kinh within the total poor households of the province has also plummeted. Conversely, the poverty rate of the Khmer has soared. Meanwhile, the poverty rate of the Chinese and other ethnic groups has remained relatively unchanged. Specifically, in 2000, the proportion of poor households of the Kinh was 78.18%, which decreased to 70.88% by 2022. In contrast, the proportion of poor households among the Khmer was 21.14% in 2000, which increased to 28.07% by 2022.

Table 2: Number of poor households in Kien Giang province by ethnic group in 2000 and 2022

	2000		2022	
	Number of households (households)	Poverty rate (%)	Number of households (households)	Poverty rate (%)
Total	30,489	100.00	8,854	100.00
Kinh	23,836	78.18	6,276	70.88
Khmer	6,645	21.14	2,485	28.07
Hoa	189	0.62	65	0.73
Other Ethnic Groups	18	0.06	2	0.02

(Source: Statistical data on socio-economic indicators of Kien Giang province for 45 years (1975 – 2020) and Decision No. 3305 of the People's Committee of Kien Giang province dated December 28, 2022, p.29)

The poverty rate reduction can be attributed to a rapid growth of average income per capita of the residents. As a result, a huge allocation on education, healthcare, culture has also raised. Poor households received a significant governmental attention and aid, including exemptions or reductions in schooling and healthcare expenses, such as waiving school fees for schoolers of poor households and obtaining health insurance for the impoverished when seeking medical treatment.

Furthermore, there is a self-awareness of citizens on their income status so that they commenced their behavioral changes in economic activities and livelihood. Various effective economic production and business models operated by the poor have emerged, contributing to sustainable poverty relief.

However, this situation is still fraught with certain difficulties because of the deficiency of fundamental social services. In 2022, 70.60% of the impoverished failed to obtain health insurance plus 51.71% did not have access to hygienic toilets and 48.59% suffered from unemployment, and 42.82% lack accommodation.

Table 3: Basic social service deficiencies of poor households in Kien Giang province

Service deficiency	Quantity (households)	Percentage (%)
Total	8,854	100%
Employment	4,302	48.59
Dependents in the household	3,415	38.57
Nutrition	153	1.73
Health insurance	6,251	70.60
Adult education level	1,315	14.85
Children's schooling	602	6.80
Housing quality	3,791	42.82
Average housing area per person	2,079	23.48
Household water source	1,988	22.45
Hygienic toilets	4,578	51.71
Telecommunication services	3,652	41.25
Access to information services	1,649	18.62

(Source: Statistical data on socio-economic indicators of Kien Giang province for 45 years (1975 – 2020) and Decision No. 3305 of the People's Committee of Kien Giang province dated December 28, 2022, p.18)

In general, poverty reduction of Kien Giang has two sides of a coin. While promising outcome alleged to make a huge encouragement of local economic growth and rescue the poor from the edge of grief, those efforts seem inadequate in the realm of ethnic minorities and underprivileged areas. The living conditions of poor

households still suffer from many deficiencies in terms of housing conditions, access to electricity and water, and sanitation facilities.

Situational causes

There are a handful of reasons to discern what kinds of limitation and how local authority dealt with their own challenges, but a series of natural, economic, and social factors in both subjective and objective should be indicated.

First and foremost, subjectively, there are primarily elements, such as lack of cultivation land, the absence of productive areas, insufficient business capital, understaffing, the limited pursuit of wisdom, skills, production means, illness, and accidents. Among these factors, I argue that a deficiency of cultivation territories play a critical role in hindering a huge capacity of poverty relief, accounting for 40% of the poverty rate, followed by the other factors such as absence of labor, illness, and aging, which account for more than 20%.

Table 4: Number of poor households in Kien Giang province in 2022 divided by causes

Cause	Total (households)	Ratio (%)
Total poor households	8,854	100.00
Lack of land, no productive land	3,542	40.00
Lack of capital for production, business	966	10.91
Lack of labor	1,825	20.61
Lack of knowledge about production	176	1.99
Lack of labor skills, production skills	230	2.60
Illness, severe illness, accidents	1,824	20.60
Lack of tools, mean of production	210	2.37
Other causes	141	1.59

(Source: Decision No. 3305 of the People's Committee of Kien Giang province dated December 28, 2022, p.32)

Nonetheless, objectively, unfavorable nature, economic recession, and other social factors should be mentioned. Specifically, Kien Giang located in the Mekong Delta region with vast plains, a rich network of rivers, and a long coastline. However, a climate instability with long droughts, and rising sea levels as culprits, which stranglehold agricultural development and led to negative effects to the native. Moreover, an inward-looking agricultural economy but poor economic infrastructure aggravated its difficulties to expand local markets to a larger extent and transplant technological advancements into reality, resulting in poor productivity and relatively low incomes. In many rural areas of Kien Giang, an inadequacy of fundamental infrastructure and services, such as transportation, electricity, clean water, healthcare, and education. These disadvantages made the onset of chief obstacles of essential services access and impedes community development and income supplement. Albeit various poverty reduction policies from the Communist state, these policies faced an impediment of general implementation and enforcement at the local level so that the native failed to grasp opportunities of poverty reduction.

In summary, situational causes of Kien Giang concerning a mission of poverty relief stems from various subjective and objective, natural, and social factors. These causes lingered in Kien Giang and no insightful policies are expected to adopt for its solution.

Consequences

A false sense of security and social disorder. Poverty acts as both a barrier and a challenge to Kien Giang socio-economic growth. Fundamental cause of social evils, such as gambling and theft, triggered negative consequences that directly stirred social fatigue and people safety. A strong correlation between abject poverty and poor education pushed several individuals to the risk of exploitation, bribery, coercion, and enticement by malicious individuals or subversive elements. The security complexity in border areas and political sensitivity of ethnic group approach pose a serious question for Communists policy in this province.

The quality of life. Poverty undoubtedly impacts living standard and quality of life. Poor households struggled a way to handle their low income. The native sometimes do not have adequate food so that a health risk of poor nutrition can cause dilapidation, reduced productivity, and diminished ability. Children failed to obtain universal education so that they will be able to rescue their families from poverty. Furthermore, a limited access to health facilities and recreational activities of local seniors also raised a burning question for the improvements of governmental policy.

A limited economic development. As possessing low labor productivity as a result of inadequate health and skillfulness, the native were incapable of giving a rapid process of local development. Simultaneously, poverty also diminishes the ability to saving and investment, limited exploitation of opportunities to accumulate physical and human capital. This, in turn, leads to undergrowth of income and provincial growth.

Persistent social issues: Poverty creates significant social pressures that need to be addressed, such as healthcare, education, employment, inequality, and other basic social indicators.

Political implications

Unsatisfactory outcome of poverty reduction pushes this affair into a constructive discussion of reviewing policy-making process and formulate alternative policies for a radical resolution. An insightful implication of people mobilization is called to enhance their universal awareness and whole determination.

A promotion of advantageous agriculture and rural industrialization

This method needs to put a strong emphasis on developing sectors that require significant labor forces to offer formal employment for potential local laborers to achieve a desirable outcome of efficient and sustainable agricultural development. This solution not only creates a dynamic market of labor and consumption, but also stabilize the native income and introduce new economic livelihoods . In addition, it is imperative that Kien Giang aim at a wide application of scientific and technological advancements in agricultural production to increase efficiency, labor productivity, and product values. Likewise, the industrialization and modernization of agriculture in rural areas by industrial clusters construction, export processing zones, and small and medium-sized industrial zones to create job opportunities are also incentivized.

infrastructure improvement in remote and rural areas

It is necessary that local authority shift its focus on a profitable investment in transportation, electricity, water, and telecommunications systems to connect rural areas with urban centers and consumer markets be important. That is also a construction and upgrade of transportation networks, especially rural, remote, border, and island routes, to deliver essential services to residents in these areas.

Improved formal education and vocational training/Emphasis on skills training and employment offers

The introduction of vocational training programs and a stimulation of employment , especially provincial citizens equipped with professional skills and productive abilities and meet the demands of employers still persist. Prioritization of vocational training and employment urged local laborers to seek an overseas course to horn their skills rather than working inbound. Kien Giang probably takes advantage of a network of agricultural and non-agricultural occupations to address this situation. Besides, this authority is expected to select industries with stable developmental potential and recruit a larger market of labor across different age groups, but also depend on the availability of natural resource.

The adoption of supportive policies in poor groups protection

It is anticipated that Kien Giang focus on a more effective policy to give a priority for local poor and near-poor groups by offering them with social credit , economic security, market development. A pattern of poverty reduction may be employed and replicated in Kien Giang local areas with political initiatives in this affair in order to create long-term employment and secure above-average incomes for poor and near-poor households. The poverty reduction strategies should be tailored and adapt to particular localities in tune with mobilizing all state and non-state financial investment for the impoverished and unimproved areas . A serious focus on socio-economic development in ethnic minority areas while empowering economic strength is political needed and this method should be regularly reviewed to create proper adjustment and protect sustainable livelihoods, and people safety in areas which are sensitive to natural disasters.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Despite some fruitful outcomes of poor reduction, Kien Giang still faces a relatively high rate of poverty, especially in rural and island areas. Poor households, in particular, do not have sufficient fundamental social services that pose a significant challenge to local sustainable development. The poverty originates from vast reasons, including both natural and social factors, subjective and objective. With the purpose of an efficient poverty relief down the road, it is necessary that the local authority secure food security and the availability of necessities, but also an implementation of a range of multidimensional solutions such as the expansion of agricultural development and rural industrialization, infrastructure improvements for remote areas, universal education and training plans, an attention to vocational training, employment opportunities, and policy making process. Only if are such efforts and solutions addressed, poverty reduction may be operated in a higher level of efficiency.

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