



VNU Journal of Foreign Studies

Journal homepage: <https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/>

## POVERTY AS A CONCERN FOR HUMAN SECURITY: VIETNAM'S POLICIES ON MULTI-DIMENSIONAL POVERTY

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Received 14 July 2024

Revised 13 August 2024; Accepted 27 August 2024

**Abstract:** Although different countries may set various strategies for economic development, the problem of poverty continues to be a serious concern in both the developed and developing economies. In fact, many policy makers, administrators, academics, politicians, also see poverty as a fundamental threat to humanity. Some even consider it to be the root of practically all global issues. This is established due to the intimate relationship between poverty and human security- a paradigm that attaches security to human focus, rather than to the traditional understanding of security. This relationship is illustrated more thoroughly as attention is paid to multidimensional poverty. This approach to poverty is used more widely nowadays by governments due to its encompassing effects, and the Vietnamese government is not an exception. This study, via qualitative and secondary method, investigates different perspectives of poverty to reveal an intellectual history of how poverty has been defined and how poverty reduction orientation may have been influenced. A case study of Vietnam also examines how its government views multidimensional poverty and develops their poverty reduction policies accordingly. A constructivist approach is also sought to explain the link between poverty and human security.

*Keywords:* human security, poverty, multidimensional poverty

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# NGHÈO ĐỐI LÀ MỐI QUAN TÂM ĐỐI VỚI AN NINH CON NGƯỜI: CHÍNH SÁCH CỦA VIỆT NAM VỀ NGHÈO ĐA CHIỀU

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Nhận bài ngày 14 tháng 07 năm 2024

Chỉnh sửa ngày 13 tháng 08 năm 2024; Chấp nhận đăng ngày 27 tháng 08 năm 2024

**Tóm tắt:** Mặc dù mỗi quốc gia có thể đặt ra các chiến lược khác nhau cho việc phát triển kinh tế, vấn đề đói nghèo vẫn là mối quan tâm cấp bách ở cả các nước phát triển và đang phát triển. Trên thực tế, nhiều nhà hoạch định chính sách, học giả, chính trị gia cũng coi đói nghèo là mối đe dọa cơ bản đối với nhân loại. Một số người thậm chí còn coi đói nghèo là gốc rễ của hầu hết mọi vấn đề toàn cầu. Điều này được nhận định từ mối quan hệ mật thiết giữa đói nghèo và an ninh con người - một mô hình gắn liền an ninh với trọng tâm là con người, thay vì với cách hiểu truyền thống về an ninh. Mối quan hệ này được minh họa triệt để hơn khi trong bài viết này, sự chú ý đặc biệt được dành cho nghèo đa chiều. Cách tiếp cận này đối với đói nghèo được các chính phủ sử dụng rộng rãi hơn hiện nay do tác động bao trùm của nó, và Chính phủ Việt Nam cũng không phải là ngoại lệ. Thông qua phương pháp định tính và thứ cấp, nghiên cứu này sẽ xem xét các góc nhìn khác nhau về đói nghèo nhằm tiết lộ sự thay đổi trong cách đói nghèo được định nghĩa và ảnh hưởng của điều này tới định hướng xóa đói giảm nghèo. Một nghiên cứu điển hình cũng xem xét cách Chính phủ Việt Nam nhìn nhận về đói nghèo đa chiều và cách họ phát triển các chính sách xóa đói giảm nghèo tương ứng. Cách tiếp cận theo chủ nghĩa kiến tạo cũng được sử dụng để giải thích mối liên hệ giữa đói nghèo và an ninh con người.

*Từ khóa:* an ninh con người, nghèo đói, nghèo đa chiều

## 1. Introduction

Although there have been countless policies and programs schemed to tackle poverty, approximately no less than 700 million people are still living in extreme poverty all over the world (World Bank, 2022). “Poverty” is a concept that has been too familiar yet complex, since there are many types and dimensions to measure it. In the past, most countries would use the monetary approach to measure poverty, identifying it with a shortfall in income or consumption from a poverty line. However, broader approaches would understand poverty as the lack of opportunities to enjoy the lives valued by people, as well as every element contributing to that; or to be understood as a person is being excluded by other members of society.

People suffering poverty often live in fear, abuse, forced eviction, and to live completely insecure lives, deprived of voice, basic needs, work, and opportunity. As a result, an intimate relationship between poverty reduction and human security is inevitable. The two concepts of “human security” and “poverty” will be considered in terms of their interrelationship from a constructivist perspective. Constructivism puts humans at the center and believes that the world is socially constructed, which creates the possibility of change for the idea of security to expand from the traditional meaning to the idea of human security, which in turn, includes poverty as a factor contributing to the deterioration of human security. In another word, human security will not only be defined as a state in which citizens are protected from physical harm, but also

from other different social risks including poverty.

Poverty is a widespread global phenomenon that brings negative impacts to every country in the world including Vietnam. Although a number of policies and programs have been implemented to assist the country's development, poverty is still among its greatest threats. Since gaining independence, one of Vietnam's main development planning goals has been to reduce poverty and improve the lives of people who are harmed by suffering and hardship. The Vietnamese government also showed its adaptability and flexibility while choosing to tackle this issue from the multidimensional point of view, which takes into account diverse indicators rather than merely financial aspect of poverty. The government's policies on multidimensional poverty for the 2016-2020 period will be analyzed in the case study section.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Human Security**

The UNDP first proposed the novel idea of human security in 1994. Since then, academics and state officials have used this idea as the foundation for numerous works of literature and speeches. Nevertheless, many intellectuals were inhibited from pushing the idea because it was far from becoming widely accepted in the field of development. Robert J. Hanlon and Kenneth Christie, however, were more successful in promoting the concept of human security with their work "Freedom from Fear, Freedom from Want: An Introduction to Human Security". (Christie & Hanlon, 2016). It covers a number of subjects related to human security, such as development, transnational crime, civil society, global governance, violence, and human rights. In addition to highlighting the connections and synergies between the ideas of "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want," the book also supported the bottom-up approach to human security. Humanitarian interventions brought attention to the top-down, state-centric strategy, which Hanlon and Christie criticized for failing to adequately address human crises and even for making them worse.

Scholars studying human security are deeply acquainted with the concepts of "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want," but their origins can be found in the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "The Four Freedom Speech" (1941), which was intended to justify the US's "isolationist policies" in the wake of World War I. He believed that the freedom of speech and expression, freedom of religion, and "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" are the four fundamental liberties that every person must possess. Many actors in the sector, including the UNDP and the UN Commission on Human Security, consider these two phrases as strong frameworks for human security. Subsequently, in an effort to expand the scope of human security, the phrase "freedom from indignity" is added. The three freedoms therefore act as the three strong pillars of the human security concept, which encompasses many aspects concerning the well-being of every citizen. "Freedom from fear" describes protecting individuals from threats to their physical integrity and safety, which includes a variety of violent crimes that may originate from abroad as well as those carried out by states against their own citizens, as well as crimes committed by individuals against other individuals and groups. To seek the root causes of human insecurity, "freedom from fear" argues that the list of dangers should be enlarged to include disease, famine, and natural disasters. It also proposes focusing on a complete plan for achieving human security. In contrast, the phrase "freedom from want" refers to the guarantee of an individual's economic, social, and environmental well-being as well as their protection in order to fulfill their basic needs. Finally, "freedom from indignity" relates to improving human welfare and quality of life, granting people the ability to make their own

choices and equipping them with the means to utilize opportunities in daily life.

The concept of human security is quite advanced, compared to that of traditional security in several ways. First of all, regarding the referent object, traditional security mechanism is meant to encourage demand for the state, where the state's interests come before all others. On the other hand, human security is focused on individuals and their basic needs. Secondly, the goal of conventional security is to protect governments from beyond-boundary threats, while human security would broaden the spectrum of protection to encompass a wider variety of risks, such as environmental pollution, epidemics, and economic distress, etc. Finally, the means for achieving these two types of security are different. While enhancing national capacity and military defense are essential for traditional security, transforming social welfare, including poverty reduction, is the main tool for human security achievement.

The literatures above although show merely different approaches to human security, they all agree to the idea that the well-being of citizens can be secured only if fundamental needs of citizens are met. These needs cover not only financial stability, but also other developmental aspects such as education, healthcare, living environment, etc. Having said that, not only citizens are entitled to be lifted from poverty – which exclusively focus on economic matters, but also from multidimensional poverty, a much more far-reaching access to human development.

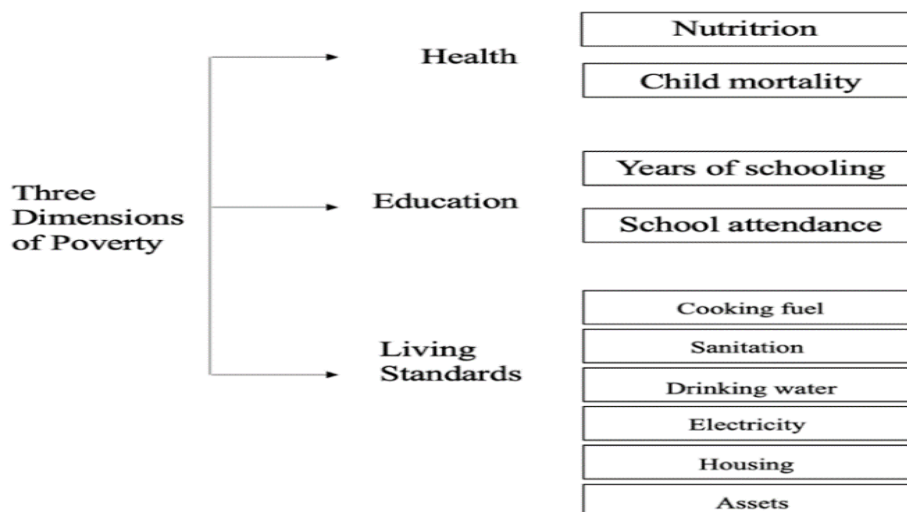
## **2.2. *Multidimensional Poverty and Poverty Reduction***

Before the multidimensional perspective of poverty becomes prominent, it used to be widely understood in monetary terms. Poverty is generally defined by income or consumption levels according to the World Bank. Based on the sum of money needed to meet necessities like clothing, food, and shelter, The WB established the international poverty line, which is calculated according to the variations in purchasing power throughout nations. This poverty line has been adjusted from \$1 per day per person in the 1980s to \$1.90 per day per person in the 1990s. It was not until fall 2022 that the researchers of the WB adjusted this poverty line to \$2.15 according to their data gathered from 28 of the world's poorest countries (WB, 2022).

Nevertheless, it is essential that we also take into account other multiple dimensions to poverty. People living in this situation may experience numerous negative factors at once, such as poor health or hunger, lacking access to drinkable water or power, low working environment conditions, or inadequate education. To understand the actual nature of poverty, one cannot only concentrate on one aspect, such as income. Therefore, larger metrics and data are required to evaluate discrepancies within the global community. These metrics must account for the socioeconomic disparities that underlie unequal development and their effects on the present and even the next generation. A variety of poverty measurements can be crucial in creating more accurate assessments of the poor and enable more precisely targeted actions. Numerous methods for assessing poverty exist, but a few stand out, notably the *Multidimensional Poverty Index* (Figure 1), which gauges a variety of impairment factors, including unhealthy life, insufficient livelihoods, an illiteracy, a low income, marginalization, low-quality work, and the risk of suffering physical harm. From a different perspective, the *Well-being Measure* bases their calculations of welfare across or within nations on factors deemed crucial for adequate living circumstances and a high standard of living. Shelter, assets and property owned, employment, education, environmental quality, civic involvement and governance, etc. are among the factors that the well-being metric considers. Many comparable wellbeing indexes have evolved globally such as the *OECD's Better Life Index* (Table 1), which prioritizes 11 distinct well-being criteria.

**Figure 1**

*Components of the Multidimensional Poverty Index (Alkire & Santos, 2010)*



**Table 1**

*Compendium of OECD Well-being Indicators (OECD, 2011)*

Your Better Life Index	Compendium of OECD Well-being Indicators
Housing	Housing
Income	Income and Wealth
Jobs	Jobs and Earnings
Community	Social Connections
Education	Education and Skills
Environment	Environmental Quality
Governance	Civic Engagement and Governance
Health	Health Status
Life Satisfaction	Subjective Well-being
Safety	Personal Security
Work-life Balance	Work and Life

Most of the dimensions mentioned in the measurements above are closely related to human security, as they are essential elements that contribute to the well-being of a person. Without these elements, humans would lack basic needs and fulfilments entitled to them. From this perspective, poverty is directly relevant to security studies, in fact, some people believe that poverty and human security are in many respects synonymous.

International scholars in the field also have different notions on the way poverty can be alleviated. In order to identify the most effective ways to address this worldwide problem, several viewpoints on the causes of poverty need to be considered.

Barnes Atkinson (1989) shares his idea on the spread of poverty in industrialized states and how social security policies might end it. In addition to addressing the issue of measuring

poverty, he discusses in depth how poverty should be defined, the development of new methods to address social disparities in the selection of the poverty threshold and gauges of poverty, with a focus on changes over the past half century and the impact of unemployment. Notably in his book "Measuring poverty around the world", Atkinson explored the definition of poverty from the perspective of political authorities, who apply different standards on which level of income should be considered poor, overtly or implicitly. In addition, he pays attention to the influence of social security, its efficacy, the function of unemployment insurance, the function of income pensions, and the evolution of retirement incomes over the next five decades. To increase the level of social security, he suggests a variety of tactics, including resource redistribution, agriculture and labor market reforms, food programs, and public projects. Such suggestions cover a considerably wider ground than the constellation of regulations that developed nations often group together under the name of "social security."

In 2003, Jean-Pierre Cling discussed the new worldwide strategies for alleviating poverty launched by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1999, claiming their goal was to place the battle against poverty in the center of the two organizations' development schemes. In accordance with this strategy, low-income nations must develop poverty reduction plans in order to seek financial help from either of the organizations or bailouts. The authors present a professional thorough examination of the necessary poverty reduction techniques and emphasize three major improvements offered by these tactics considering this new conditionality and the extreme necessity that comes along with it, including: priority placed on poverty alleviation; encouraged participation in policymaking; and improved collaboration of formal development aid. These techniques are designed specifically to treat poverty in financial terms. Nevertheless, Cling also claims that a significant gap still exists between the strategies' guiding concepts and their actual implementation.

On the other hand, Ted K. Bradshaw (2007) describes poverty theories that concentrate on the roots of the issue and its effects on people, society, culture, and the community. The author examines academic materials on poverty for a theoretical justification that aligns with the fundamental community development initiatives, from which he established four main theories. The first theory, according to Bradshaw, holds that poverty is sustained by personal or family irresponsibility, which has to be restrained by harsh punishments. The second hypothesis, however, focuses on subcultures of poverty and aims to ingrain mainstream ideals into disadvantaged children. The third views poverty as a societal issue that must be handled politically and structurally rather than as a personal one. The fourth theory uses geographically targeted advantages to alleviate the concentration of poverty in terms of location. The author contends that, in order to effectively direct anti-poverty initiatives and maximize their effectiveness, individuals who are responsible for their design and implementation must construct proper conceptions of poverty. It is safe to say that this work offers a general understanding of poverty alleviation in relation to the community development factor. As a result, students and academics can use this paper to better comprehend the numerous facets of programs to reduce poverty.

In 2013, Ban Ki-moon, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations who was in office for almost 10 years, referred to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the most significant and effective anti-poverty initiative all over the world. He pointed out that eight specific goals were established in 2000 when an unprecedented number of world leaders gathered at the United Nations. These goals included halving global poverty and hunger, combating disease and climate change, enhancing water quality and sanitation, promoting education, and widening opportunities for girls and women. Since grandiose pledges from

politicians were not new, cynics predicted that the MDGs would be abandoned as being too unrealistic. Instead, the Millennium Development Goals have encouraged action, helped establish international and national objectives, and produced amazing achievements.

## ***2.2. Vietnam's poverty reduction literature***

In Vietnam, a nation that has seen several periods of colonization as well as catastrophic wars, poverty has long been a point of concern. Ho Chi Minh, the former president who was in office when Vietnam briefly achieved independence in 1945, declared that illiteracy and poverty were the nation's new adversaries. Although the country has made considerable improvement in recent years, poverty is still a significant issue that must be addressed. Thus, the following section discusses different approaches of scholars on poverty reduction in Vietnam.

Duong An Hoai attempts to find the relationship between poverty and microfinance and to evaluate its effectiveness as a tool for poverty reduction. In short, microfinance refers to the provision of a wide variety of financial services to low-income households and their microbusinesses, including deposits, loans, payment services, money transfers, insurance, and remittances. The phrase "low-income" as employed in this definition differs from nation to nation, or even within a single nation. Microfinance is seen as having the potential to be a successful instrument in the battle against poverty. The emergence of microfinance appears to be related to a dramatic decline in both global and Vietnam's poverty rates.

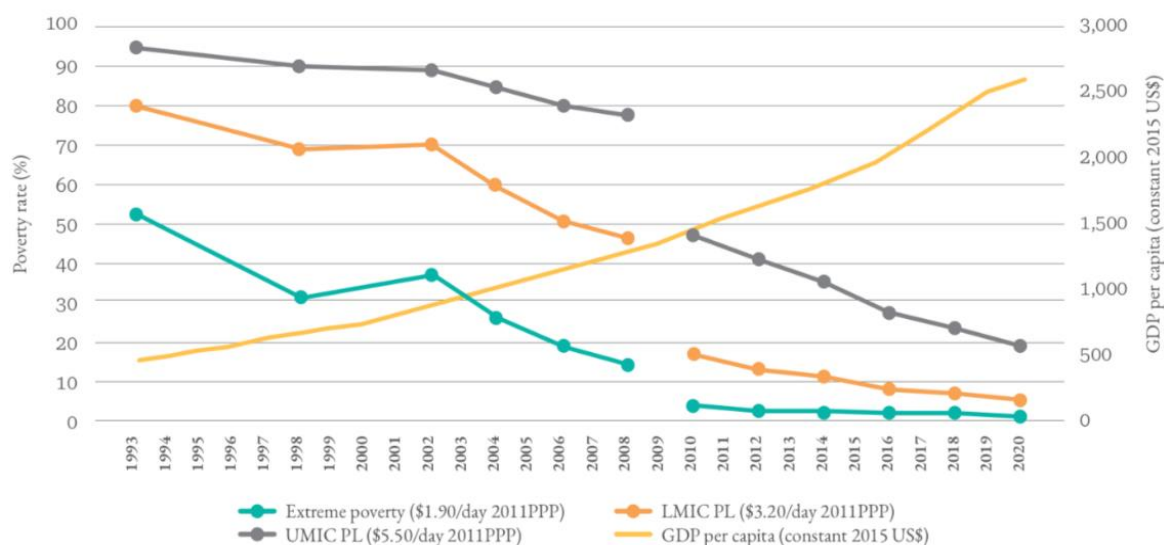
Barbara Coello, Madior Fall, and Akiko Suwa-Eisenmann (2011), on the other hand, study the effects of trade-related factors at the individual domestic level and trace the progression of poverty alleviation in Vietnam during the phase of trade liberalization. In addition to the anticipated benefits of employment in an export-related business or in agriculture, expansion in non-farm self-employment seems to be effective at reducing poverty for the poor. Additionally, the industries and agricultural sectors that compete with imports also contribute to the poverty reduction progress of Vietnam.

According to the World Bank in its report "From the last mile to the next mile" conducted in 2022, despite Vietnam's significant economic advancement, poverty was still a major issue within the society. In a study of the populace, poverty and hunger were determined to be the most pressing problems that the government must address.

As a result, the report by World Bank examines the poverty reduction progress of Vietnam in 2 stages called the "last mile" and the "next mile". The "last mile" part of the report addresses the tendency of poverty and inequality from 2010 to 2020. Strong growth, significant progress in reducing poverty, a positive trend in literacy shown by higher education, and an increase in the number of laborers working outside of the agriculture sectors, etc. were all features of the decade. A vast number of young people entering the labor market were given greater economic prospects in part due to higher earnings and the emergence of off-farm occupations. However, ethnic minority households and farming households still have a substantially higher poverty rate.

**Figure 2**

*Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction, 1993–2020 (World Bank, 2022)*



The “next mile” section of the report, however, focuses on the opportunities and obstacles to Vietnam in making greater prosperity for its citizens. In 2019, at the 13th National Congress, the board declared its objective to achieve high-income status for the country by 2045. This is a high-reaching goal that is appropriate for a nation with a track record of comprehensive progress, but it calls for fresh ideas and even bigger accomplishments.

Despite different approaches to poverty reduction, ranging from top-down measure at national scale, to bottom-up approach, curing poverty at the household scale or microfinance, we can see a corresponding pattern. It is essential that poverty reduction is now considered in a broader perspective rather than a traditional one, and government’s policy-making plays a considerable part in this matter. People’s daily necessities must be fulfilled, and opportunities to access different aspects of life like education or health care must also be put into consideration. This proved that the Multidimensional Poverty approach to Poverty Reduction is a much smarter move to go forward.

### 3. Poverty Reduction as a Concern for Human Security

In order to understand the relationship between the notion of human security and poverty Reduction, it is substantial to look at the conceptual aspects of human security and poverty, and indeed, the perspective of constructivists contributed significantly to the foundation for this connection.

First, constructivism holds that knowledge and social significances are built by social structures and human’s perception, and from that their actions are made. In terms of human security, this notion is built and constantly developed throughout discussions, reports, initiatives, programs, intellectual reports by a wide range of actors including government elites, social institutions, international organizations, NGOs, scholars within the field. Without the engagements of different parts of society, such a new concept cannot find its way to emerge. Indeed, after the end of the Cold War, to find a solution for world peace, all actors have come together to discuss on something that can bring about a comprehensive security that does not only concern the sake of state’s territorial boundary - which was deemed inadequate, but



concern also the elimination of insecurities at the root, the security of human beings. And that also was when the UNDP set out the notion of human security within its Human Development Report in 1994. The issue of poverty was also formed the same way. When people realize that poverty is the original cause of many world problems, which constitute many different aspects, only then do they acknowledge the importance of coming together and acting. Poverty reduction now is not only a domestic issue that needs to be dealt with by each government, but it must be of universal concern by the entire international community.

Constructivism also holds that identity and interest are not fixed, but they change with the present of new issues and concepts. New issues and threats to the safety of human beings such as terrorism or plague break-out stimulate the formation of human security to deal with these problems. New challenges also emerge, which require academics to broaden the definition of poverty to tackle the issue more thoroughly. These new threats also make nations start considering changing their interests. For example, in the past, nations only need to care about the safety of their physical territories, but now when the climate change starts to pose negative impacts on the lives of human in general, regardless of which country do the people come from, governments begin to alter their interest to the protection of the global human security and to the alleviation of the impact posed on the people's quality of life, which is also an aspect concerned by poverty reductions.

Since human security considers the numerous non-military dangers to peace and people's dignity, it goes beyond fundamental notions of security. It entails defending individuals against all-encompassing dangers, building on their capabilities and desires, and enabling them to achieve self-empowerment. Helping people escape poverty and providing them the opportunity to have a decent life are the initial actions to accomplishing both wealth and freedom. When humans live healthier, more optimistic, well-informed, and fulfilled lives, they are given the power to live without facing danger of any kind. It is safe to say that human insecurity is primarily the result of poverty. People must not experience poverty, poor health, discrimination, violent threat, illiteracy, or denial of political and social inclusion for rights and liberties to be fully utilized. In other words, ensuring human security is a prerequisite for human development.

Once security is viewed from a human perspective, the existing growth pattern is unable to address the demands of most human beings throughout the globe and, in some situations, it appears to be significantly worsening human quality of life. Poverty is a persistent situation for almost 700 million individuals currently living under the globally recognized poverty threshold of \$1.90/day (World Bank, 2022); in some cases, it may be only temporary, such as after yield loss, leading to food shortage. These statistics have already included certain vulnerable populations, such as the handicapped, young people, asylum seekers, people who are suffering chronic diseases, etc. Also concealed within these numbers are the impoverished population who are made even more destitute and more fragile due to instances such as natural disasters or financial crises.

#### **4. Vietnam's approach to multidimensional poverty**

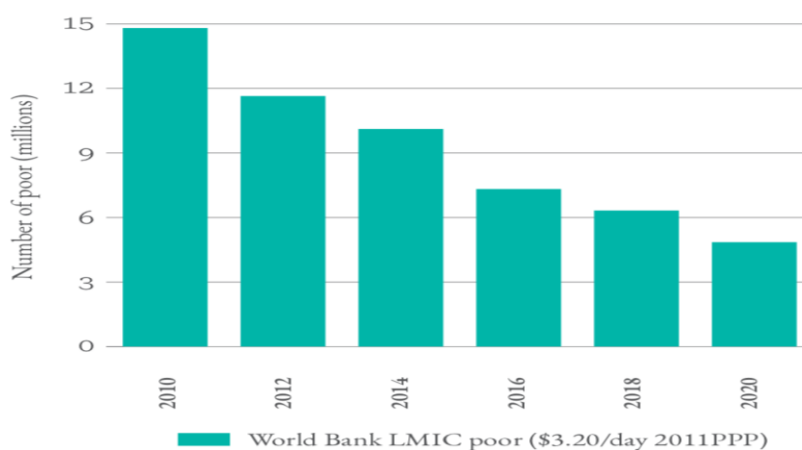
##### ***4.1. Vietnam's Poverty Scenario***

Vietnam's poverty reduction has been outstanding between 2010 and 2020, although there are significant discrepancies. This necessitates innovative strategies for Vietnam to take the following step towards transforming into a middle- and high-income country.

According to the World Bank's (WB) study on the evaluation of poverty and equality in Vietnam in 2022, which was published in April 2022, the decade 2010-2020 saw Vietnam's strong growth and poverty reduction accomplish excellent outcomes. The poverty rate has plummeted from 16.8% in 2010 to 5% in 2020, according to the Bank's low-middle-income country (LMIC) poverty standard (US\$3.20/day), which indicates 10 million people have been rescued from poverty. In 2020, the number of individuals who were impoverished were only 5 million.

### Figure 3

*The Number of Poor, 2010-2020 (World Bank, 2022)*



Vietnam's expansion over the past ten years has been mostly inclusive as family welfare has increased across the spectrum. As many families transitioned out of poverty after only one generation, there seems to be several routes to escape poverty for most populations. Some part of the population, who entirely abandoned agriculture or found formal occupation after only two years, had better odds of moving up to a more affluent socioeconomic group and less chances of tumbling down.

Inequality did, however, somewhat worsen in the last five years. The Gini index, which measures income disparity, reached its pinnacle at the start of the previous decade, during the period of the world financial crisis, but it quickly turned around in the subsequent years. However, expenditure by wealthy families rose more than that of low-income families in the second part of the 10-year period, creating inequities in common prosperity and escalating disparity. The most impoverished families have particularly concentrated on weak productivity agricultural work over the past ten years. As a result, they are facing the danger of slipping farther behind and cutting themselves off from the economy's resource development. Increases in wages and the creation of new jobs are two of the most important factors in alleviating poverty, but both channels have been barred by the Covid-19.

Impacted by the abruptness of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, the pace of income growth and the increase in employment quality were hindered. The job market was substantially influenced, which is shown by the shift to temporary employment. Many workers also lost their jobs or had to stop working. The World Bank estimated that by the end of the decade, there were around 830,000 individuals in Vietnam who lacked employment, particularly in the agriculture sector. The Covid-19 epidemic has decelerated the poverty alleviation progress due

to all these harmful effects it brought. In Vietnam, Covid-19 caused a decade of wage growth to stall, although the progress on PR is maintained in 2020. This is still, nevertheless, a greater achievement than the majority of developing nations in the area and throughout the world.

The Communist Party of Vietnam and the State always attach considerable importance to policies and social security, social justice, social equality, hunger eradication, and poverty alleviation, and further enforce these policies to ensure human security. Vietnam is delighted to be one of the 30 nations using the multidimensional poverty line, and its successes in reducing poverty have long been a source of pride and great admiration for the rest of the world. President Ho Chi Minh initially recognized PR as a national goal for the Vietnamese people in 1945. Following the emancipation in 1975, the government has made it a top priority. The Vietnamese Communist Party is primarily responsible for allocating and redistributing assets and establishing programs to combat poverty. Considering this view, Vietnam has carefully created a good number of PR strategies and programs with the goal of resolving the issues of starvation and poverty as soon as possible. In addition to impoverished individuals and families, these programs also target poor villages, municipalities, and cities on a broader scale. In order to guarantee stable growth, and a thriving, vigorous, fair, transparent, and civilized society, Vietnam views poverty reduction as a necessary prerequisite as well as a long-term objective. The substantial number of social resources particularly committed to PR projects may be perceived in the near future as a redirection of resources away from achieving economic progress. While from a broad view, poverty reduction is the basis for creating even more opportunities for economic development.

#### **4.2. Approaches and Poverty Reduction Policies**

As already mentioned, in order to uphold its commitment to the international community, the Vietnamese government has proactively modified its poverty measuring technique from one-dimensional to multi-dimensional, applicable for the period 2016–2020. On September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the Prime Minister approved the Master Project "Transforming the poverty measuring approach from one-dimensional to multi-dimensional application for the 2016-2020 term" in order to achieve the objective of effective and sustained poverty reduction. The poverty line in Vietnam is calculated by taking into account both the level of access to essential social services and the income poverty line. As a result, the criteria for measuring poverty are based on income, including the minimal level of living, the poverty line, the average standard of living, and the lack of access to essential social services. Ten factors make up the index used by the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs to gauge the severity of the lack of fundamental social services are illustrated in the Table 2 below:

**Table 2**

*Vietnam Multidimensional Poverty Indicators (MOLISA, 2015)*

<b>Poverty Dimensions</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Deficiency Indicator</b>	<b>Legal Basis</b>
<b>Education</b>	Adult education level	Household with at least 1 member who is full 15 years old, born in 1986 or later, has not graduated from secondary school and is not currently attending school.	Constitution 2013; Resolution 15/NQ-TW; Resolution No. 41/2000/QH (added by Decree No. 88/2001/ND-CP).

	School attendance status of children	Household with at least 1 school-age child (5-14 years old) who is not currently attending school.	Constitution 2013; Education Law 2005 Law on protection, care and education of children.
<b>Healthcare</b>	Access to healthcare services	Household in which someone is sick but does not seek medical care (illness is defined as an illness/injury so severe that he has to stay in one place and must have a caregiver at his or her bed, or is absent from work/school and unable to participate regular activities).	Constitution 2013; Law on Medical Examination and Treatment 2011.
	Health insurance	Household with at least 1 member aged 6 or older who currently does not have a health insurance.	Constitution 2013; Health insurance law 2014.
<b>Housing</b>	Housing quality	Household who is living in a plain or unstable house.	Housing Law 2014; Resolution 15/NQ-TW Some social policy issues for the period 2012-2020.
	Housing area per person	Household area per capita that is less than 8m <sup>2</sup>	Housing Law 2014; Decision 2127/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister approving the National Housing Development Strategy to 2020 with a Vision to 2030
<b>Living Quality</b>	Domestic water source	Households who do not have access to hygienic water sources.	Resolution 15/NQ-TW Some social policy issues for the period 2012-2020.
	Sanitary latrines	Households who do not use hygienic latrines.	Resolution 15/NQ-TW Some social policy issues for the period 2012-2020.
<b>Access to Information</b>	Access to information	Household with no members using phone and internet subscriptions.	Law on Telecommunications 2009 Resolution 15/NQ-TW Some social policy issues for the period 2012-2020.
	Assets for information access	The household has none of the following assets: TV, radio, computer; and do not have access to the commune/village radio speaker system	Law on Information and Communication 2015; Resolution 15/NQ-TW Some social policy issues for the period 2012-2020.

Based on the above indicators, the government can identify the subjects that need to be benefited from the assistance of poverty reduction policies, and therefore, it implements these policies accordingly. Some of these PR programs that have been under operation by the Vietnamese government would be discussed below. These programs concentrate on the underprivileged who are mostly living in rural, mountainous, remote areas, or belong to ethnic minorities. Different aspects of these citizens' wellbeing are also under the government's

concern, including their income, housing, or education, etc.

The first and foremost legal document that must be mentioned is the Program 135, one of the most important poverty reduction programs in Vietnam implemented by the State since 1998. Initially, the Program was set out to last for only 7 years from 1998 to 2005, which is divided into two stages. However, during the process, as the Vietnamese government became more ambitious about the goal that this program can achieve, it decided to prolong the Program 135 into another two stages, constituting in total four stages within the agenda of the Program, each of which contains different contents and objectives. The name of Program 135 originates from Decision No. 135/1998/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister of Vietnam. Its name according to this decision is "Socio-economic development program for extremely difficult communes in ethnic minority and mountainous areas". Later, although the program moved to the second phase and the legal basis was the decision number 07/2006/QĐ-TTg, the program was still called Program 135. From 2012, Program 135 is still used to refer to the National Target Program for Sustainable Poverty Reduction. The first stage concentrated on the underprivileged living in rural and remote areas. Its objective includes supporting production development and economic restructuring, raising the production skill of ethnic minorities; developing essential infrastructure in extremely difficult communes, hamlets and villages, building roads for people's livelihoods from villages to commune centers in accordance with their capital sources, publicize state support norms; supporting services, improving the quality of education, hygienic residential life, reducing environmental harm to people's health, etc. The second stage's objective (2006-2010) remains the same but expands its provision to reaching more hamlets, villages, communes throughout the country. The third stage (2012-2015) and the last stage (2016- 2020), however, became the National Target Program for Sustainable Poverty Reduction. Within this period, the Program 135 aims to encourage infrastructure investment in underdeveloped localities with peculiar difficulties in coastal areas and islands, and in extremely difficult communes, border communes, safe zone communes, and villages with special difficulties; to expansion of the poverty reduction model; to assist capacity building on PR, communication, supervision and assessment of the Program's operation.

Another policy on PR initiative implemented by the Vietnamese Government is the Decision 33/2015/QĐ-TTg that focuses on housing support policy for poor households under the Poverty line. The main objective of this Decision is to provide housing support for about 311,000 poor households in rural areas, ensure safe and stable housing, gradually raise living standards, and contribute to hunger eradication, sustainable poverty reduction. The subjects under these PR policies are the families who do not have a house or are having a house, but the house is too temporary, damaged, dilapidated, in danger of collapse and are unable to self-improve. The implementation of this Decision is based on a couple of principles. The support to each household needs to ensure democracy, publicity, fairness and transparency based on laws and policies of the State; to be suitable to the customs and habits of each ethnic group, region or region, to preserve the cultural identity of each ethnic group. The assistance of the State should also be suitable to practical conditions and associated with socio-economic development master plans and plans of each locality, contributing to the implementation of the new rural construction program. Furthermore, in order to maximize the efficiency of the initiative, there is a need to mobilize from different sources of capital for implementation, and the work must be done in cooperation between the State and the people. Besides, the support should be carried out according to the principle: the State provides support in the form of loans to build new or repair houses with preferential interest rates, the community would provide assistance, and households would organize their own housing construction.

The last policy to be discussed in this part of the paper concerns the improvement in education for citizens with an overall objective of alleviating poverty in Vietnam. The Decree 86/2015/ND-CP outlines the framework for managing and collecting tuition fees at academic institutions that are part of the national education system, as well as the practice for waiver, lowering, and facilitation of tuition fees in the academic years from 2015 - 2016 to 2020 - 2021. The subjects that the Decree applies on are preschool children, secondary and high school students, bachelor students, doctoral students belonging to educational institutions of the Vietnamese national education system in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Education, the Law on Higher Education, the Law on vocational Education. In terms of the regulations for tuition fee collection, there are some principles that the government promises to oblige. For pre-school education and public general education, the tuition fee rate must be suitable to the economic status of each residential area, the actual contribution capability of the people and the annual growth rate of the consumer price index. On the other hand, for public higher education and vocational education, these institutions' tuition fee is self-financed for intermittent and investment expenditures in accordance with the Government's regulations, based on economic - technical norms. The Decree also establishes regulations for tuition waiving and support for citizen's study cost. In Article 6, it states that subjects not eligible to pay tuition fees at public educational institutions, include: primary school students; pedagogical students; students of particular professional disciplines meeting the requirements of socio-economic development, national defense and security in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Higher Education. Students also are not obliged to pay for tuition fees if they are: people with meritorious services to the Revolution or their relatives; kindergarten children and students with disabilities who are suffering economic difficulties; ethnic minorities enrolled in higher education and vocational programs who come from low-income and quasi-poor families.

Other than these mentioned programs, there are many others that are being implemented by the Vietnamese government, which serve with the aim to help alleviate Poverty within the country in terms of almost all dimensions that the State believes to be constituting the multidimensional Poverty. All things considered, it is inevitable to see that, not only do the multidimensional poverty reduction directly implies that although Human Security has not been officially institutionalized in Vietnam, its notion and objectives are still represented in different national laws and legal documents; the PR programs enacted also portray the Government's strong desire of to achieve different aspects of Human Security.

## **5. Conclusion**

Poverty has long been determined by how much people earn for their living, but its victims believe that their perceptions of poverty are much more diverse. People who live in poverty may deal with a variety of problems at once, including poor health or hunger, no access to power or clean water, unfavorable job conditions, and limited education. We cannot merely focus on the financial aspect of poverty to comprehend its true character. Multidimensional poverty emerges as the answer to this global issue at that point. Since they are crucial components considering a person's wellbeing, the majority of the dimensions of Multidimensional poverty are strongly tied to human security.

Although belonging to the South-East Asian region where human security's maximum potential is not fully utilized due to the region's norms and values, as well as their primary concern on economic security and, at best, non-military risks to the security of state members, Vietnam has always been prioritizing human issues and the protection of its citizen since the

day of its establishment. The 1930 Political Thesis which identified several issues relating to human beings, such as society, politics, and the economy, as well as the Independent Declaration of Vietnam, provides a very clear illustration of this. Vietnam recognizes the viewpoint that the global community have on the concept of human security, particularly the one established by the UNDP in their report in 1994.

The most vivid evidence for Vietnam's motto in securing its citizen's security is shown through the country's efforts in alleviating poverty, the issue that hinders the progress of achieving human security the most. Since the government perceives poverty in a multidimensional way, it does not take for granted aspects such as the citizen's living environment, healthcare, education, etc. Indeed, a lot of poverty reduction programs have been implemented since the end of the War for independence against the Americans, with special focus on the most vulnerable citizens living in remote areas or the more disadvantaged populations. The programs range from large projects which encompasses the whole country's progress in poverty reduction such as the Program 135, to specific Decrees, regulations that pay attention to clear-cut initiatives such as the universal provision of health insurance, or education tuition fee waiving and scholarships for poor students, etc.

Although it is still a long way to go for Vietnam to become a strong and developed country where the issue like poverty is no longer worth concerning, as long as the nation and its citizens are united and reach a consensus about maintaining the effort in achieving human security, that day is not going to be far away. President Ho Chi Minh once said:

*"Poverty eradication and alleviation are the responsibility of the entire society; the entire people must join to promote the spirit of kindness and traditional values of the nation 'good leaves cover torn leaves'. When the power now belongs to the people, it is vital to instill in them the value of true freedom and equality, which is the true meaning of independence and liberty. When the independence and liberty have been achieved, but the people are still poor and suffering; then independence and liberty are meaningless."* (Ho Chi Minh, 1945)

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