

The leadership of the communist party of Vietnam in social welfare in Vietnam from 2020 to present

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Abstract

This article analyzes the leadership role of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) in social welfare (SW) in Vietnam from 2020 to the present, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, digital transformation, and international integration. The CPV has guided and implemented effective SW policies, including emergency support packages (Resolutions 68/NQ-CP and 116/NQ-CP), expanded coverage of social insurance (SI) and health insurance (HI) to 91.74 million participants, and reduced the poverty rate to 7.52% (Vietnam Social Security, 2024; Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs [MOLISA], 2023). The role of grassroots Party members in advocacy and oversight is emphasized. However, challenges such as low SI coverage in the informal sector and lack of policy coordination persist. The article proposes developing a multi-tiered SW system, advancing digital transformation, and enhancing Party members' capacity to ensure sustainable development.

Keywords: *Communist Party of Vietnam, social welfare, social insurance, poverty reduction, digital transformation.*

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I. Introduction

Social welfare (SW), also known as social security, is a critical pillar in any nation's sustainable development strategy, aimed at ensuring citizens' basic rights, reducing inequality, and promoting social justice (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2017). In Vietnam, SW is not only an economic-social policy but also carries profound political significance, reflecting the leadership role of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) in achieving the goal of "a prosperous people, a strong nation, and a democratic, just, and civilized society" (CPV, 2021). The period from 2020 to the present has been marked by significant challenges for Vietnam, including the COVID-19 pandemic, global economic volatility, and a rapid transition to a digital economy. In this context, SW has become a focal point of national policies, with the CPV's comprehensive leadership aimed at stabilizing people's livelihoods and reinforcing trust in the political system.

Since its establishment in 1930, the CPV has identified caring for the people's well-being as a core mission, aligning with Hồ Chí Minh's ideology of building a state "of the people, by the people, and for the people" (Hồ Chí Minh, 2000). From 2020 onward, the CPV has directed the implementation of groundbreaking SW policies, ranging from emergency support packages during the COVID-19 pandemic (Resolution 68/NQ-CP, 2021) to expanding social insurance (SI) and health insurance (HI) coverage through digital transformation (Decision 06/QĐ-TTg, 2022). These efforts have not only helped Vietnam navigate crises but also affirmed the Party's role in ensuring human security and social justice. However, significant challenges remain, including low SI coverage in the informal sector, lack of coordination among SW policies, and pressures from global economic fluctuations (Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs [MOLISA], 2023).

Studying the CPV's leadership in SW from 2020 to the present holds both academic and practical significance, shedding light on how a ruling party shapes and implements social policies in times of crisis. This article focuses on analyzing SW policies implemented under the CPV's leadership, the role of Party organizations and members, as well as future challenges and directions.

Vietnam's SW efforts from 2020 onward have been heavily influenced by internal and external factors. The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented impacts, increasing unemployment rates, temporary poverty, and pressure on the healthcare system (World Bank, 2021). Simultaneously, digital transformation and international economic integration have demanded more flexible, modern, and comprehensive SW policies. In this context, the CPV has played a central role in guiding, directing, and overseeing the implementation of SW policies, from emergency support to reforms in the SI/HI system and multidimensional poverty reduction.

However, existing studies on SW in Vietnam often focus on economic or technical analyses (e.g., the efficiency of SI and HI) while paying less attention to the political and leadership role of the CPV in shaping these

policies. Several key questions remain insufficiently addressed: What SW policies has the CPV implemented from 2020 to the present, and how do they reflect the Party's leadership role? How have Party members and grassroots Party organizations contributed to policy implementation? What challenges hinder the development of a sustainable SW system, and what are viable solutions?

The article aims to analyze the CPV's leadership role in guiding and implementing SW policies from 2020 to the present, evaluate key achievements, challenges, and limitations in SW under the Party's leadership, and propose solutions to enhance the CPV's effectiveness in building a multi-tiered, sustainable SW system.

SW is defined as a set of policies and programs aimed at protecting individuals from economic-social risks such as poverty, unemployment, illness, and population aging (ILO, 2017). Internationally, SW models are typically classified into three types: (1) the universal welfare model (Nordic model), (2) the social insurance model (continental European model), and (3) the selective support model (Anglo-Saxon model) (Esping-Andersen, 1990). In developing countries, SW often focuses on poverty reduction and support for vulnerable groups but faces challenges related to resources and implementation mechanisms (Barrientos, 2013).

In Vietnam, SW reflects the characteristics of a developing nation under the CPV's political leadership. According to Nguyễn Tấn Dũng (2015), SW in Vietnam is not only an economic tool but also a means to strengthen public trust in the Party and the State. SW policies encompass SI, HI, social assistance, and poverty reduction programs, implemented based on the principle of "leaving no one behind" (CPV, 2021).

Numerous studies have affirmed the CPV's leadership role in shaping Vietnam's economic-social policies. According to Trần Đại Quang (2018), the CPV not only provides strategic directions but also oversees implementation through its organizational structure from the central to local levels. In the field of SW, key resolutions such as Resolution 28-NQ/TW (2018) on SI reform and Resolution 20-NQ/TW (2017) on HI have laid the foundation for building a comprehensive SW system, with a focus on expanding coverage and improving management efficiency.

From 2020 onward, studies have focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SW in Vietnam. According to a Vietnam Social Security report (2022), support packages under Resolutions 68/NQ-CP and 116/NQ-CP assisted millions of workers and businesses, mitigating the pandemic's impacts. However, some authors, such as Lê Thanh Hà (2021), note that SI coverage in the informal sector remains low due to a lack of incentive policies and effective advocacy mechanisms.

While numerous studies address SW in Vietnam, most focus on technical aspects (e.g., SI and HI management) or economic dimensions (poverty reduction, social assistance). The political role of the CPV in leading SW efforts, particularly during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, has not been comprehensively analyzed. Existing studies often lack connections between the roles of Party organizations, grassroots Party members, and policy implementation effectiveness. Additionally, the impact of digital transformation on SW management under the CPV's leadership has received insufficient attention. This article seeks to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of the CPV's role from 2020 to the present, based on official documents and empirical data.

The article employs document analysis, including CPV documents (Documents of the 13th National Congress, Resolution 28-NQ/TW, Resolution 20-NQ/TW), Vietnam Social Security reports (2020–2024), and MOLISA documents. Additionally, qualitative analysis is applied to assess the Party's leadership role and the impact of SW policies. Comparisons with the previous period (2015–2020) are also conducted to highlight progress during the study period.

II. Theoretical framework and historical context

Social welfare (SW) is defined as a system of policies and programs designed to protect individuals from economic-social risks such as poverty, unemployment, illness, and population aging (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2017). According to the ILO, SW not only ensures basic income but also promotes social justice and sustainable development. In the context of Vietnam, SW reflects the characteristics of a developing nation with a centralized political system, where social policies are closely tied to the political objectives of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). SW in Vietnam encompasses key pillars: social insurance (SI), health insurance (HI), social assistance, and multidimensional poverty reduction programs, designed to support vulnerable groups and uphold the principle of "leaving no one behind" (CPV, 2021). This concept not only addresses economic dimensions but also embodies the CPV's commitment to building a just society centered on human well-being.

The CPV's perspective on SW is rooted in Hồ Chí Minh's ideology, which emphasizes that "caring for the people's well-being is the foremost task of the Party and the State" (Hồ Chí Minh, 2000, p. 245). This ideology has shaped the CPV's social policies since its establishment in 1930, with the goal of building a state "of the people, by the people, and for the people." The Documents of the 13th National Congress (2021) affirm that SW is one of three pillars of the socio-economic development strategy, alongside economic growth and environmental protection. The CPV underscores that SW is not only a tool for poverty reduction but also a means to strengthen

public trust in the political system, thereby ensuring social stability and maintaining the Party's leadership role (CPV, 2021). Key resolutions, such as Resolution 28-NQ/TW (2018) on SI reform and Resolution 20-NQ/TW (2017) on HI, have laid the foundation for developing a multi-tiered SW system aimed at universal coverage and alignment with international integration trends.

The period from 2020 to the present has been one of the most challenging for Vietnam. The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022) caused severe disruptions, interrupting supply chains, increasing temporary unemployment, and placing significant pressure on the healthcare system and SW programs (World Bank, 2021). According to a report by the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (2023), the multidimensional poverty rate temporarily rose in 2020 due to the pandemic's impact, particularly in rural areas and ethnic minority regions. However, under the CPV's leadership, Vietnam implemented unprecedented emergency support packages, such as Resolution 68/NQ-CP (2021) and Resolution 116/NQ-CP (2021), with a total value of hundreds of trillions of VND, to assist workers, businesses, and vulnerable groups.

Additionally, the processes of digital transformation and international economic integration have presented both opportunities and challenges for SW efforts. Decision 06/QĐ-TTg (2022), which approved the digital transformation plan for the SI sector, enabled the integration of SI/HI data with the national population database, enhancing management efficiency and public access. Concurrently, free trade agreements (such as CPTPP and EVFTA) require Vietnam to reform its SW system to meet international labor and welfare standards (ILO, 2017). In this context, the CPV has played a central role in strategic guidance, resource mobilization, and implementation oversight, ensuring that SW not only addresses immediate needs but also contributes to long-term sustainable development.

III. The Leadership Role of the Communist Party of Vietnam in Social Welfare (2020–Present)

The Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) plays a central role in guiding the strategic development of social welfare (SW), ensuring that policies align with socio-economic development goals and strengthen public trust. The Documents of the 13th National Congress (2021) designate SW as one of three key pillars, emphasizing the establishment of a multi-tiered, universal SW system (CPV, 2021). Thematic resolutions, such as Resolution 28-NQ/TW (2018) on social insurance (SI) reform and Resolution 20-NQ/TW (2017) on health insurance (HI), have laid the groundwork for long-term policies. From 2020 to the present, the CPV has continued to direct the government and relevant ministries to implement national target programs, particularly the sustainable poverty reduction program and the socio-economic development program for ethnic minority regions, to promote social justice and support vulnerable groups (Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs [MOLISA], 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022) posed unprecedented challenges to Vietnam's SW system. The CPV demonstrated decisive leadership by directing the government to issue emergency support packages, including Resolution 68/NQ-CP (2021) and Resolution 116/NQ-CP (2021), with a total value of hundreds of trillions of VND. These packages supported workers, businesses, and vulnerable groups (informal workers, the poor, and people with disabilities) through cash assistance, electricity bill reductions, and unemployment insurance benefits (Vietnam Social Security, 2022). According to reports, over 10.9 million individuals received sickness and maternity benefits, and more than 151 million HI-covered medical visits were reimbursed in 2022. The CPV also mobilized resources from Party organizations and mass organizations to oversee the distribution of aid, ensuring transparency and efficiency, thereby stabilizing people's livelihoods during the crisis (MOLISA, 2023).

Expanding SI and HI coverage has been a top priority for the CPV from 2020 onward. According to Vietnam Social Security (2024), as of 2024, over 91.74 million people are enrolled in SI and HI, with 94% of data synchronized with the national population database. The CPV directed the implementation of Decision 06/QĐ-TTg (2022), which approved the digital transformation plan for the SI sector, enabling electronic authentication via chip-embedded citizen ID cards, facilitating public access to services. Party organizations in all 63 provinces and cities have established steering committees to implement SI and HI policies down to the commune level, while 46 out of 63 provinces have incorporated SI coverage targets into their socio-economic development plans (Vietnam Social Security, 2024). The role of grassroots Party members is evident in their efforts to advocate and encourage public participation in voluntary SI, particularly in rural and remote areas.

The CPV has led efforts in multidimensional poverty reduction, with the poverty and near-poverty rate reduced to 7.52% (1.97 million households) during the 2022–2025 period (MOLISA, 2023). Policies supporting people with disabilities, the elderly, and orphans have been implemented through social assistance programs and community development projects. In localities such as Sơn La, Lai Châu, and Bạc Liêu, the role of Party branches has been recognized in mobilizing communities, overseeing policy implementation, and supporting sustainable poverty alleviation. The CPV also emphasizes the pioneering role of Party members in executing national target programs, ensuring that SW policies reach those in greatest need.

IV. Achievements, challenges, and development directions

Under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), social welfare (SW) efforts from 2020 to the present have achieved significant milestones. First, emergency support packages during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as Resolutions 68/NQ-CP and 116/NQ-CP, assisted over 10.9 million workers and facilitated 151 million health insurance (HI)-covered medical visits, contributing to stabilizing people's livelihoods (Vietnam Social Security, 2022). Second, social insurance (SI) and HI coverage expanded significantly, reaching 91.74 million participants by 2024, with 94% of data synchronized with the national population database, driven by digital transformation under Decision 06/QĐ-TTg (Vietnam Social Security, 2024). Third, multidimensional poverty reduction programs reduced the poverty rate to 7.52% (1.97 million households) during 2022–2025, particularly in ethnic minority regions such as Sơn La and Lai Châu (Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs [MOLISA], 2023). Finally, the role of grassroots Party members in policy advocacy and oversight has enhanced implementation efficiency, reinforcing public trust in the Party (CPV, 2021). These achievements reflect the CPV's flexible and effective leadership in a crisis context.

Despite these accomplishments, SW efforts face several challenges. First, SI coverage in the informal sector remains low, with only about 2.5 million people enrolled in voluntary SI by 2024, due to limited incentive policies and low awareness (Vietnam Social Security, 2024). Second, the SW system lacks coordination among its pillars (SI, HI, and social assistance), leading to overlaps and inefficiencies in some localities (Lê Thanh Hà, 2021). Third, global economic volatility and technological transitions place pressure on financial resources for SW, particularly in the context of rapid population aging (World Bank, 2021). Finally, some Party members' lack of exemplary conduct or weak capacity has impacted policy implementation effectiveness at the grassroots level, as noted in Party inspection reports (CPV, 2021). These challenges require the CPV to innovate its approach to ensure the sustainability of the SW system.

The CPV has identified building a multi-tiered, flexible SW system aligned with international standards as a strategic priority for the coming period. The Documents of the 13th National Congress (2021) emphasize expanding SI/HI coverage, promoting sustainable poverty reduction, and improving the quality of life for vulnerable groups (CPV, 2021). The CPV also aims to integrate digital transformation into SW management, ensuring transparency and convenience for citizens. Additionally, the Party underscores the importance of oversight and developing a cadre of exemplary Party members to enhance policy implementation at the grassroots level.

To address challenges and achieve these directions, several solutions are proposed. First, the CPV should promote financial incentive policies, such as subsidies for voluntary SI contributions, to increase participation in the informal sector. Second, establish a mechanism for coordinating SW pillars through a unified national data platform, leveraging digital transformation achievements (Decision 06/QĐ-TTg, 2022). Third, enhance training and revolutionary ethics for Party members, particularly at the grassroots level, through programs implementing Resolution 35-NQ/TW (2018) on Party rectification. Finally, foster international cooperation with organizations like the ILO to learn from global experiences in building sustainable SW systems, especially in the context of population aging and economic shifts (ILO, 2017). These solutions will strengthen the CPV's leadership role and support the development of an effective, comprehensive SW system.

V. Conclusion

From 2020 to the present, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) has demonstrated comprehensive leadership in social welfare (SW), from policy guidance and COVID-19 response to expanding SI/HI coverage and reducing multidimensional poverty. Achievements such as supporting millions of workers, achieving 91.74 million SI participants, and reducing the poverty rate to 7.52% reflect the Party's effective leadership (Vietnam Social Security, 2024; MOLISA, 2023). However, challenges such as low coverage in the informal sector and lack of policy coordination require innovation. The CPV must continue to develop a multi-tiered SW system, leverage digital transformation, and enhance Party members' capacity. This study underscores the critical role of SW in Vietnam's national development strategy, contributing to reinforcing the CPV's leadership role.

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