

# *Some Issues Regarding the New Rural Development Program in Vietnam*

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**Abstract—** The research focuses on presenting and analyzing several key concepts related to the New Rural Development Program in Vietnam. The presentation begins by defining crucial terms such as rural and new rural in Vietnam. Additionally, the article outlines the legal foundations and the government's target programs for building new rural areas, while discussing the necessity of constructing new rural areas in the current developmental context. This is a detailed and comprehensive article, offering readers an overview of the history and content of this program in enhancing the quality of life in rural Vietnam.

**Keywords—** Rural Areas, New Rural Areas, New Rural Development Program, National Target Program, Urban Areas.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In Vietnam, the program for constructing new rural areas represents a well-thought-out strategy by the Vietnamese government. The New rural development program is a comprehensive initiative for economic, social, political, and national security development, devised and implemented by the Vietnamese government across the entire rural landscape. Amidst vigorous efforts directed towards the goal of constructing new rural areas, Vietnam is grappling with a myriad of complex and multifaceted challenges. This program, while bringing forth various opportunities and challenges, is actively reshaping the face of rural communities. This article focuses on elucidating several concepts and issues directly related to the new rural development program in Vietnam, aiming to recognize and evaluate the array of challenges it confronts to better understand its impact on the daily lives and sustainable development of rural communities.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Let's explore some concepts related to the new rural development program in Vietnam.

The concept of 'Rural':

Until now, the concept of 'rural' in Vietnam has been defined in various ways. According to the Vietnamese Dictionary, 'rural' is defined as 'an area where residents primarily engage in agriculture, distinguished from urban areas and cities' [1]. This definition uses the criterion of the population composition to identify rural areas, in contrast to urban areas.

The Encyclopedia of Vietnam also defines rural areas in comparison to urban areas, stating that rural areas are 'the territory of a country or administrative unit outside the urban territory, with a natural environment, socio-economic conditions, and living conditions different from urban areas, where the population is primarily engaged in agriculture' [2]. Meanwhile, urban or city areas are regions with a dense population living and primarily engaged in non-agricultural economic activities, serving as the economic, political, cultural, social, tourism, and service centers of the country or a territorial region, including towns,

townships, and cities (provincial cities and central cities). Therefore, in contrast to urban areas, rural areas are administrative regions outside urban territories; in terms of the natural environment, rural areas constitute extensive territories surrounding urban areas; socio-economic conditions and living conditions tend to develop more slowly than in urban areas, with the population primarily engaged in agriculture.

Legally, in some central regulatory documents, the concept of rural areas is mentioned. In Circular No. 54/2009/TT-BNNPTNT dated August 21, 2009, by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development guiding the implementation of the National Criteria for NEW RURAL AREAS, the definition is provided: 'Rural areas are the territory outside the inner city, town, and township managed by the local administrative level, which is the Commune People's Committee (UBND)' [3]. According to Decree No. 55/2015/NĐ-CP dated June 9, 2015, by the Government on credit policies serving the development of agriculture and rural areas: 'Rural areas are administrative territorial regions excluding the areas of wards and districts under towns and cities' [4]. However, these documents do not provide distinctive features but rather define rural areas through exclusion, stating that rural areas are territories outside the jurisdiction of wards and districts under towns and cities (meaning urban areas).

The definitions above illustrate that rural areas are always part of the overall relationship of 'agriculture - farmers - rural areas,' as defined in Resolution No. 26-NQ/TW dated August 5, 2008, the seventh plenum of the Central Executive Committee, the tenth term, on agriculture, farmers, and rural areas.

The concept of the 'new rural area' does not emerge independently but is closely tied to the concept of 'building new rural areas.' One can understand the 'new rural area' as the goal, the destination, while 'building new rural areas' is the necessary action to achieve these goals.

Government Resolution No. 24/2008/NQ-CP dated October 28, 2008, on the issuance of the government's action plan to implement the resolution of the seventh plenum of the Central Executive Committee, the tenth term, on agriculture, farmers, and rural areas, summarizes the contents of building new rural areas as follows: 'Building and organizing the life of the rural population in a civilized, modern direction, preserving the cultural identity and ecological environment associated with the development of urban areas, towns, and districts. Developing a synchronized system of economic and social infrastructure in rural areas in line with the spatial planning of village construction (hamlets, villages, and communes) and the planning of economic and social development of sectors and localities. Combining state support with the mobilization of the internal resources of the rural community. Enhancing intellectual capacity, training human resources, and organizing a good cultural life at the grassroots level. Establishing suitable forms of production organization to meet the requirements of modern agriculture, producing goods including both agriculture and non-agriculture, implementing the 'one village, one craft' policy.[3]

The new rural area can be understood as a highly developed and comprehensive state of rural society, encompassing all aspects from economics, production to the development of culture, education, environment, economic and social infrastructure, and political systems. Accordingly, the new rural area is identified by characteristics such as having modern economic and social infrastructure; a reasonable economic structure and forms of production organization that integrate agriculture with rapid industrial, service, and urban development according to planning; stable rural society with rich ethnic cultural identity; improved intellectual capacity and protected ecological environment; and a political system in rural areas strengthened under the leadership of the party. Building the new rural area can be understood as constructing rural areas that meet the criteria of the national criteria for the new rural area.

Pham Di (2016) [5] defined building the new rural area as 'aiming to create new values, new things for rural Vietnam. It is a modern rural area with a new appearance.

In the current period, building new rural areas is a consistent policy from the central to local levels, aiming to create an increasingly vibrant and comprehensive rural landscape and continuously improve the material and spiritual lives of the people. Building new rural areas now means constructing rural areas that meet the 19 criteria of the national criteria for new rural areas, as per the decision 318/qđ-ttg dated March 8, 2022, of the Prime Minister on issuing the national criteria for new rural communes and the national criteria for upgrading new rural communes for the 2021-2025 period.

The necessity to build new rural areas in Vietnam has been affirmed in Resolution No. 26/nq-tw dated August 5, 2008, of the Party Central Committee, term X, on agriculture, farmers, rural areas. Subsequently, Resolution No. 19-nq/tw dated June 16, 2022, of the Fifth Plenum of the Party Central Committee, term XIII, on agriculture, farmers, rural areas until 2030, with a

vision to 2045, reiterated this importance. The necessity to build new rural areas can be summarized from two reasons:

Firstly, it stems from the particularly important strategic position and role of agriculture, farmers, and rural areas in the socio-economic life of the country. Resolution No. 26-nq/tw affirmed that "agriculture, farmers, and rural areas have a strategic position in the industrialization, modernization, construction, and defense of the country. They are the foundation and an important force for sustainable socio-economic development, maintaining political stability, ensuring security and defense, preserving and promoting the cultural identity of the nation, and protecting the ecological environment of the country" [5].

Secondly, it arises from the current development status of rural areas in Vietnam, where the achievements do not correspond to the potential and advantages, and there is uneven development among regions. Based on this, on April 16, 2009, the Prime Minister of Vietnam signed Decision No. 491/qd-ttg on issuing the national criteria for new rural areas.

### Viewpoints and Objectives of the Government of Vietnam on Building New Rural Areas

In developing countries, progressing from an agricultural production foundation and constructing and developing rural areas is an essential law. Vietnam cannot become an industrialized nation when agriculture and rural areas are still underdeveloped, rural residents are impoverished, cultural and spiritual life is low, and living conditions still lag behind urban areas. Recognizing this issue, the Party Central Committee, term X, issued Resolution No. 26/nq-tw on August 5, 2008, regarding agriculture, farmers, and rural areas. Subsequently, Resolution No. 19-nq/tw on June 16, 2022, from the Fifth Plenum of the Party Central Committee, term XIII, concerning agriculture, farmers, and rural areas until 2030, with a vision to 2045. The guiding viewpoints in these resolutions serve as a "compass" for the process of organizing the implementation of building new rural areas, ensuring that the process is organized uniformly, coherently, and effectively. Some guiding viewpoints on building new rural areas can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, it is established that constructing new rural areas is the task of the entire political system and society. In Resolution No. 26-nq/tw, it asserts: "Solving the issues of agriculture, farmers, and rural areas is the task of the entire political system and society; first and foremost, it is necessary to arouse the patriotic, self-reliant, and self-strengthening spirit of farmers. Building a stable, harmonious, democratic rural society with a rich cultural life, preserving the national cultural identity, creating motivation for the development of agriculture and the construction of new rural areas, improving the lives of farmers" [6]. Resolution No. 19-nq/tw on June 16, 2022, from the Fifth Plenum of the Party Central Committee, term XIII, on agriculture, farmers, and rural areas until 2030, with a vision to 2045 [7], continues to affirm this viewpoint and emphasizes the leadership role of the Party; highlights the role and responsibility of Party committees at all levels, especially the top leaders; the effectiveness of state agencies in building new rural areas. At the same time, it leverages the role of the Vietnam Fatherland Front, the Vietnam Farmers' Union, and political-societal organizations in monitoring, social criticism, mobilizing party members, union members, and the people to actively participate in the development of agriculture and rural areas.

Secondly, the goal of building new rural areas is to develop them comprehensively. Resolution No. 26/nq-tw sets the objective of constructing new rural areas with modern economic and social infrastructure; rational economic structure and forms of production organization, linking agriculture with rapid development in industry, services, and urban areas according to planning; stable rural society with rich cultural diversity; enhanced intellectual levels; protected ecological environment; and strengthened political system in rural areas under the leadership of the Party. Resolution No. 19/nq-tw takes a step further, aiming for the construction of modern, prosperous, happy, democratic, and civilized rural areas; having a coherent economic and social infrastructure; a green, clean, and beautiful environment; healthy and diverse cultural life; and ensuring political security, order, and social safety. The rural economic and social development plan needs to focus on balanced and coordinated development in agriculture, industry, and services, along with restructuring labor, creating livelihoods, and improving incomes for farmers and rural residents, ensuring national defense and security, consolidating grassroots political systems, especially in strategic, remote, border, island, and ethnic minority areas.

Thirdly, it recognizes farmers as the subject of the development process, concurrently as beneficiaries of the achievements of the new rural areas. Resolution No. 26/nq-tw affirmed that farmers are the subjects of the development process and the construction of new rural areas. Resolution No. 19/nq-tw continues to affirm that farmers are the subjects and the center of the process of developing agriculture, rural economy, and building new rural areas while further elevating the goal of comprehensive development for farmers in the new period. The resolution identifies the highest goal in agricultural and rural development as the comprehensive improvement of the material and spiritual life of farmers and rural residents. Emphasis is

placed on building Vietnamese farmers who are comprehensively developed, cultured, patriotic, united, self-reliant, self-sufficient, innovative, with the will and desire to build a prosperous and happy homeland; with education, knowledge, and the capacity to organize advanced production, civilized living, social responsibility, respect for the law, and environmental protection. Moreover, farmers should also benefit from the achievements of socio-economic development and gradually access urban services.

Fourthly, the implementation of the new rural development program needs to incorporate criteria that are suitable for the socio-economic characteristics of each region and locality.

For the effective and feasible construction of new rural areas, the criteria must be developed based on practical conditions and appropriate timelines. Resolution No. 26/nq-tw specifies the implementation of the new rural development program with specific criteria tailored to the characteristics of each region, paying attention to areas with difficulties such as mountainous regions, border areas, remote areas, and islands. In the deployment of the "new rural development" program, there is an emphasis on advancing infrastructure development. Resolution No. 19/nq-tw also sets the goal for new rural development to be deep, practical, effective, and sustainable. It ensures balanced development between rural and urban areas, among different regions and localities, and tight integration between industrial and service development with agriculture. Sustainable rural development aligns with the urbanization process towards "ecological agriculture, modern rural areas, and cultured farmers."

Based on this guiding principle, the national criteria for new rural development, in addition to general indicators, are categorized according to regions to align with the socio-economic conditions of each area (7 regions: northern midlands and mountainous region, Red River Delta, northern central region, south-central coastal region, Central Highlands, southeastern region, Mekong Delta). Some indicators are delegated to provincial People's Committees or specific ministries to regulate according to the characteristics of each sector and locality.

Regarding the goal of building new rural areas, specific objectives have been outlined in the resolutions. Accordingly, the general goal is to elevate the education, material, and spiritual lives of farmers and rural residents. They should take charge of the development processes in agriculture and rural areas. Agriculture should develop rapidly, sustainably, and efficiently, ensuring the robust national food security, with an increasing scale of agricultural product production, environmental sustainability, and adaptation to climate change. The comprehensive development of rural areas should include a well-coordinated, modern economic and social infrastructure, rational economic structures, and appropriate forms of production organization. The living environment should be safe, healthy, and rich in the cultural identity of ethnic groups. Political security, order, and social safety should be maintained, and the party organization and the political system at the grassroots level should be clean and strong.

Based on these general objectives, the resolutions also provide specific targets for each stage. The target for building new rural areas by 2030 is defined as follows: over 90% of communes should meet the new rural standards, with the ambition to improve over 50% of these communes; over 70% of district-level units should meet the new rural standards, with the aim to enhance 35% of these district-level units.

In addition to the achievements that have been attained, agricultural production still heavily relies on small farming households. The quality, efficiency, and productivity are not yet high. The processing industry is developing slowly, and many input materials are dependent on imports. The construction of new rural areas tends to focus more on infrastructure investment, rather than placing adequate emphasis on production development, livelihood creation, and employment. Resource management and coping with climate change are limited, contributing to an increase in rural environmental pollution. In various regions, complex social issues have emerged, causing societal concerns. There are limitations in the capacity to respond to climate change, disaster prevention, and disease control.

Based on these circumstances, our Party and State have identified the construction of new rural areas as a long-term, continuous process. Therefore, after achieving the new rural standards, communes will continue to implement numerous solutions aimed at sustaining and improving the quality and efficiency of the criteria in a sustainable direction. The ultimate goal is to advance toward an upgraded new rural model.

To implement the construction of new rural areas in the next phase, on July 28, 2021, the National Assembly issued Resolution No. 25/2021/QH15 approving the investment policy for the national target program for new rural development for the period

2021-2025. On June 16, 2022, the fifth plenum of the Party Central Committee of the 13th term issued Resolution No. 19-NQ/TW regarding agriculture, farmers, and rural areas until 2030, with a vision to 2045. This resolution emphasizes the goal of continuing to build new rural areas in-depth, substantively, efficiently, and sustainably. On March 8, 2022, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 318/QĐ-TTg approving the national criteria for new rural communes and the enhanced national criteria for new rural communes for the period 2021-2025 (referred to as the criteria for new rural communes at the commune level for the period 2021-2025).

The criteria for building new rural areas according to the national criteria for the period 2021 - 2025

The national criteria for new rural areas serve as the basis for evaluating the implementation of the national target program for building new rural areas. It provides the legal framework for directing the construction of new rural areas, as well as the foundation for inspecting, evaluating, and recognizing communes, districts, and provinces that meet the standards for new rural areas. For localities, this is the document that regulates the criteria for building new rural areas, guiding, directing, implementing, and assessing the execution of new rural development. It serves as a set of standards, a "yardstick" for examining and evaluating the capability and extent of completion, progress, and results in building new rural areas in various localities.

The national criteria for new rural communes for the period 2021 - 2025 were issued alongside Decision No. 318/QĐ-TTg dated March 8, 2022[8], comprising 19 criteria divided into 5 groups as follows:

Group 01: Planning

Criterion 1: Planning

Group 2: Economic and social infrastructure, including the following criteria:

Criterion 2: Transportation

Criterion 3: Irrigation and disaster prevention

Criterion 4: Electricity

Criterion 5: Schools

Criterion 6: Material and cultural foundations

Criterion 7: Rural commercial infrastructure

Criterion 8: Information and communication

Criterion 9: Housing

Group 3: Economic and production organization, including criteria:

Criterion 10: Income

Criterion 11: Multidimensional poverty

Criterion 12: Labor

Criterion 13: Organization of production and rural economic development

Group 4: Culture - Society - Environment including criteria:

Criterion 14: Education and training

Criterion 15: Health

Criterion 16: Culture

Criterion 17: Environment and food safety

Group 5: Political system including criteria:

Criterion 18: Political system and legal access

Criterion 19: National defense and security.

### III. CONCLUSION

In the process of analyzing the concept of rural areas, new rural areas, as well as the necessity of building new rural areas and the criteria for building new rural areas in Vietnam, we have clearly seen the significant importance and high priority that this program brings. After 15 years, with the focused leadership and guidance from all levels of government, the concerted efforts and unity of the entire population, the program to build new rural areas in Vietnam has achieved significant and substantial achievements. Building new rural areas has become a widespread movement, with active participation from the entire political system and the population. Many regions have reached their goals earlier than the resolutions set, contributing to the acceleration of industrialization, modernization of agriculture and rural areas.

The economic structure of rural areas has positively shifted, with an increase in the proportion of industrial and service sectors. The income and material and spiritual lives of rural residents have continuously improved, the poverty rate has rapidly decreased, and the number of relatively affluent households has increased. The rural landscape of Vietnam has undergone a remarkable transformation, and the people's trust in the Party, the state, and our system has been consolidated and elevated.

In summary, the program to build new rural areas in Vietnam is not just an economic development project; it is also a journey taking rural areas into the future. The investment and improvements in various aspects of farmers' lives not only benefit rural communities but also play a crucial role in the prosperity and development of the country.

These are general summaries, and for a more in-depth understanding of specific aspects and details, extensive research and close support from experts and management agencies are necessary. With these efforts, it is hoped that the program to build new rural areas will continue to serve as the foundation for sustainable and equitable development across the country..

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