Country Report

The 2nd ASEAN & Japan High Level Officials Meeting on Caring Societies: "***Development of Human Resources and Implications of Aging Societies"***

By delegation of Vietnam

Over the past few years, with the sweeping socio-economic development, there have seen remarkable transformations in the structure and function of Vietnamese families to go in line with new economic, political and social conditions. The paradigm of a small-sized family has been universally accepted as a norm. All types of families are co-existing and living in a secure and progressive society. Along with social and economic progresses, family relations have become more democratic and open, and rights and interest of each individual have been respected and protected by laws. However, Vietnamese families are facing newly-arising difficulties and challenges resulting from social transformations and adversities of market economy. In fact, the rate of divorce, separation is increasing rapidly; prejudicial attitude against the elderly, the handicapped etc. Moreover, the trend of aging society is exerting multiple impacts on social life.

I. Current situation of targeted groups

1. People with disability

At present, Vietnam has over 5.1 millions of people with disability, accounting for 6.34% of the population. Households with disabled members account for 7.93%; 87.27% of people with disabilities live in rural areas, only 12.73% of which live in urban areas. The rate of men with disabilities account for 7.54%, much higher than 5.19% of women . People with disability are categorized into three age groups: 16-55 (61%); over 55 (nearly 24%); and under 16 (nearly 16%).

Causes of disability:

- Inborn: 35.87%
- Disease: 32.34%
- Work injury: 3.49%

- Traffic accident: 1.16%
- War legacy: 25.56%
- Others: 1.57%

Types of disability:

- Impaired Visibility: 13.84%
- Impaired Hearing: 9.33%
- Language: 7.08%
- Mobility impairment: 29.41%
- Mental impairment: 16.82%
- Nervous system impairment: 16.82%
- Others: 17%

Of the percentage of people with disability, 20% have multiple disability, who are both mute and deaf, blind and deaf, both impaired mobility and visibility or mental impairment. A relatively high rate of people with disability resulting from war consequences suffer at the same time 2-3 types of disability, thus meeting numerous difficulties and obstacles in daily life.

Educational background

Nearly 35.83% of people with disability are illiterate. 12.58% are literate. 24.13% finish primary education. 20.74% finish secondary education. 5.71% finish upper secondary education. Almost 97.64% have not experienced vocational training, with just a small percentage in urban areas having vocational training.

Employment:

58.18% of people with disability are working. 30.4% are unemployed and desperate for stable jobs, with the highest rate of 41.86% in Red River Delta and 35.77% in South East of Vietnam.

2. The elderly

According to the 1999 census, the elderly in Vietnam account for 8.7% of the population, of which 58% is female and lives mainly in rural areas. Also, according to reports from localities in Vietnam, there are currently 8.2 million old

-aged people. Most of them are living with their spouse. A remarkable number of them are widows/widowers. 92% have private shelters. The rest are living rented lodgings or supported by authorities.

II. Policies and solutions

Vietnamese social protection system pays particular attention to assisting social groups: Homeless lonely elderly, disadvantaged children (orphaned, street children, children with disability, child drug addicts, sexually abused children) people with disability…The State of Vietnam has issued Ordinance on People with disability, Ordinance on the Elderly, Law on Child Protection and Care and policies, social protection measures. A synchronized body of policies and social protection facilities has been formulated in order to provide them with better healthcare and welfare, including:

1. Care policy

The homeless lonely elderly, people with serious disability without income, the elderly with disability living on the monthly social allowance or on care at social protection centers will be awarded funeral allowance. The elderly aged 90 or over who enjoy no pension and other social benefits will be awarded monthly social allowance from local budget. Families with more than 2 persons who are unable to self-serve due to chemical agent exposure will receive subsidized care and rearing. Old people with disability who are devotees will enjoy devotee benefits. Families, individual guardians who are rearing orphaned children will be supported financially.

2. Healthcare policies

All old people, ethnic people with disability living in communes with extreme difficulties, and beneficiaries of social protection benefits will be awarded with health insurance certificates or provided with free medical examinations and prioritized at state health centers. People of over 90 will be provided free of charge health insurance certificates. Child with disability and poor people with disability

who undertake orthopedics operations will be supported and provided with free of charge orthopedic facilities.

3. Subsidized educational policies

The State regulates that people with disability who are school children, students at public schools on regular and long-term basis will enjoy social allowance averaging 100.000 VND/month on whole year basis. Those who are exempted from tuition fee and other school fees comprise pupils, students with disability and economic difficulties, and with parents who are invalids or seriously disabled. Pupils, students from poor families by state regulations and with parents who are invalids will enjoy reduced tuition fee and school fees. Children with disability are also provided with education through mixed, specialized, compassion classes and vocational training courses to find appropriate jobs.

4. Subsidized vocational training and job creation policies

The State regulates the consideration of reduced or exempted tuition fee, social allowance for apprenticeship persons who are the handicapped, orphaned children, or street children. People with disability are prioritized in recruitment into undertakings if they meet all requirements as non-disabled ones. The State regulates incentives with regard to taxes, land, credits from the National Fund for Job Creation for vocational training establishments, business undertakings dedicated to the recruitment of people with disability or with the participation of the handicapped. The State requires by issuance of policies commercial undertakings to recruit people with disability (2-3%) or to pay into the Job Creation Fund for People with Disability.

III. Implementation

On implementing those policies, Vietnam highlights the responsibility of respective agencies and line ministries and inter-sector collaboration and cooperation with local authorities.

The Ministry of Labor-Invalids and Social Affairs exercises the state administration over old people policies, and people with disability; advises the Government on the issuance of policies to stabilize and improve the economic

conditions for the elderly and the handicapped. The Ministry of Health is responsible for providing healthcare for the elderly, people with disability and other persons. The Ministry of Construction take lead and cooperate with line Ministries to issue normative documents on designing, constructing, or upgrading public facilities to provide accessibility for the elderly and people with disability. The Ministry of Culture – Information takes the responsibility for cooperating with line Ministries to guide the establishment, development and operation of the Old People Care Fund, financing operations of the Old People Association, organizations of the disabled and for the disabled. The Ministry of Education and Training takes lead and cooperate with line Ministries to cater for organized guidance on education for the disabled, the elderly and other persons. People Committees at all levels takes responsibility for organized implementation of policies, benefits for the disabled, the elderly with a detailed account of the number of people with disability and families with disabled people and the elderly; advocate public care and support for people with disability; take care the elderly and promote their role; make financial plans and cost estimates for the operations within the administration of the locality. In addition, Vietnam also pays attention to socializing operations involving care, support for the elderly and people with disability through specific provisions and other locality-specific and timeline-specific models such as:

Community-based Care

The Ministry of Labor-Invalids and Social Affairs is working jointly with line ministries in developing an action program on the Elderly to 2010. At present, the Old People Care Fund is working effectively with regard to caring the elderly at communities. Community-based care, custody, functional rehabilitation for people with disability is working effectively and replicated. Orphaned children are still living in their communes and villages but receiving multi-dimensional support from the State and community.

Social integration education model for disabled children:

This model is used for children with minor and moderate disability. With this model, disabled children are sent to school to study with normal children. At present, this model are being run in 40 provinces all over the country, with 17 456 classes and 32 689 disabled children.

Model of health care, rehabilitation at localities for disabled children

- Homeless children are provided orthopedic tools such as: splints, orthopedic outfit and crutches etc.
- Disabled children including schizophrenic, epileptic, leprosy, tuberculosis are partially exempted from hospital fee at state-owned hospitals and clinics
- Build rehabilitation centers at districts/groups of districts for disabled children to train and rehabilitate with the guidance of technicians and their families.
- Disabled children are provided free health examination and medications

Despite limited budget, this model proves to be very successful and raise the community's awareness about caring for disabled children. It is also a cost-effective way to rehabilitate disabled children.

Elderly-caring organizations and services

RECAS (Research Center for Caring the Elderly – Vietnam Red Cross) and other provincial and cities' caring centers have conducted many training courses for volunteers on how to take care of the elderly at their homes. RECAS reaches out for the displaced and lonely elderly, especially those who suffer from severe and chronic diseases such as: cardiovascular disease, unstable blood pressure, memory loss, rheumatism, backbone degradation, brain accident, cancer, broken arms or legs, etc. So far, having been treated with great care, the elderly are happy with this service and their health improve considerably. Their families also highly appreciate this service.

Improve the elderly and the disabled 's integration into the society

Most of the elderly actively participate into activities organized by local Associations of the Elderly and the Outdoors Physical Training Clubs.

Vietnam Central Association for the Elderly was established on May 10, 1995 and have been successfully operated.

To date, the Association for the Elderly have been set up in all provinces and cities in Vietnam, 85% of districts and 97% of communes with more than 6 million members.

National Coordinating Council on Disability , Vietnam Association of Business Enterprise of Disabled Persons, Association of Support for Vietnamese Handicapped and Orphans were established to promote activities for people with disability.

The National Committee for the Elderly is to be established (the decision is already approved on August 5, 2004)

Further improve the social-assistance system

In order to better implement social policies for people with disability and the elderly, the competent authorities have been conducting these following activities:

- Formulate the Action plan for the Elderly to 2010
- Formulate and implement the long-term plan on 7 priority areas in the 2nd Decade for the Disable proposed by UNESCAP at the Inter-governmental Conference organized in Otsu, Shiga, Japan in October, 2002 with an aim to promote an integrative and non-obstructive for the disable in Asia-Pacific region.
- Monitor the implementation of the Ordinance and Government's guideline documents for the elderly, the disables and orphans.
- Promote the movement of disables and elderly doing good business, actively eradicate hunger and reduce poverty, create favourable conditions for pro-elderly and pro-disable activities.