

## **Situation of Policies Accessing Basic Social Services in Ethnic Minority Area in Lai Chau Province**

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### **Abstract:**

Lai Chau is a border province, which is a large beneficiary of social security policies compared to others in Vietnam. There are 20 ethnic groups living together, including four ethnic groups with very few people (Gong, Mang, La Hu, Si La) and ethnic minorities account for over 85% population. Besides that, their life has been facing many difficulties such as harsh natural conditions, rugged terrain, underdeveloped socio-economic conditions. It can be admitted that the poverty rate is high, and the implementation of the ethnic minority policy is limited. Moreover, the situation of free migration and the activities of criminals in ethnic minority areas, especially the Hmong ethnic minority areas are still complicated...For these reasons, the implementation of support policies for accessing basic social services(BSS) on health, education, housing, clean water have received attention, direction, and active implementation from Party committees and local authorities at all levels. Hence, many ethnic minority households can have opportunities to access these BSS, even though the implementation process has certain limitations.

### **Keywords:**

Policy, social services, BSS, ethnic minority, Lai Chau

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 2011, the report on social services for human development (United Nations Development Program in Viet Nam (UNDP)) provided an evidence-based analysis of progress in human development in Vietnam at the local level. It mainly focuses on health and education issues. Besides that, it points out the challenges that Vietnam in general and Lai Chau province in particular faced in accessing BSS. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure universal and equitable access to health and education services, if Vietnam wants to achieve a higher level of human development.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The 1946 Constitution stipulates: *"Ethnic minorities have the right to equality, solidarity, respect, mutual assistance, and inclusive development"*. Besides that, the 2013 Constitution affirms: *"The State gives priority to education development in mountainous areas, islands, ethnic minority areas and areas with exceptional socio-economic difficulties"*.

In addition, the report on social services for human development (United Nations Development Program in Viet Nam (UNDP)) provides an evidence-based analysis of

progress in human development focusing on health and education aspects. The report also points out the challenges that many Vietnamese faced in accessing BSS. If Vietnam is to continue to achieve higher levels of human development, it is essential to ensure universal and equitable access to health and education services.

Accordingly, the Central Committee of the Party XI promulgated Resolution 15-NQ/TW on some main issues on social policies for the period 2012-2020. It identified some BSS for people, including minimum education, minimum health care, minimum housing, clean water, and access to information.

To cut long story short, the above studies have mentioned and clarified a number of issues related to people's access to social services. Moreover, they provide many practical, accurate and valid scientific arguments. Hence, they are considered as official and important references for us to fulfill purposes of this thesis.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

**Quantitative research method:** this method is carried out to collect information from the survey by using a questionnaire. Then these answers are carefully converted into appropriate variables which serve the analysis and assessment of the current implementation of support policies for ethnic minorities to access BSS in Lai Chau province. Hence, solutions are proposed to improve and implement these policies in practice.

In addition, this method also allows researchers to collect and use secondary data from published scientific works, and statistics issued by competent authorities to highlight the implementation of support policies for ethnic minorities to access BSS in Lai Chau province.

The qualitative research method is applied when the researchers use information obtained from in-depth interviews, group discussions, field observations, as well as interpretive, analytical, and comparative information obtained from the research papers on SI and UI policies. Then, they will be analyzed and compared with the implementation of support policies for ethnic minorities to access BSS in Lai Chau province.

Methods of data collection, processing, and analysis aim to diversify sources of information for the research. Similarly, the researchers collect secondary data as well as do surveys to collect primary information in the field.

Collecting data related to the Party and the state's guidelines and policies as well as researches on BSS policies, reporting systems, data, and statistical yearbooks at central and local levels related to the research purpose.

Collecting primary information by survey method using questionnaires, combining in-depth interviews, group discussion, and direct observation.

Finally, the research team used the case study method to collect specific information to clearly analyze the implementation of support policies for ethnic minorities accessing BSS in Lai Chau province.

### **Research approach**

This study uses the following approaches:

- The research upholds and creatively applies Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's ideology; thoroughly grasp and concretize guidelines and policies of the Party and State

on supporting access to BSS in the conditions of socialist-oriented market economy and international integration. This approach focuses on theoretical research with practical summaries to generalize renewal implementation of support policies for ethnic minorities accessing BSS.

- Research is based on an interdisciplinary approach: this approach is a combination of perspectives, theories, and research methods of many different scientific disciplines such as economics, philosophy, sociology, psychology, jurisprudence, politics, public policy, and social work to analyze and evaluate the current social situation, the implementation of support policy system to access to BSS.
- Research is based on a complex, multidimensional approach to examine the implementation of policies to support access to BSS according to many criteria such as economy, culture, region. ..
- Research on the basis of a systematic approach to have an overview of BSS aspects to analyze and evaluate the situation of implementing support policies for ethnic minorities to accessing BSS.
- Research bases on the rights-based approach to explaining by law the regimes and support policies for accessing BSS; Besides, it explains and evaluates the legal dimension of the implementation of these policies.
- Therefore, the above approaches are implemented throughout the research process according to strict logic, starting from theoretical research on BSS to analyzing and evaluating the actual implementation of support policies for ethnic minorities to accessing BSS, thereby recommendations are given to improve the effectiveness of the implementation of these policies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Overview of the situation and implementation of BSS in Lai Chau Province

#### 1. Overview of the situation in Lai Chau Province

Lai Chau is a mountainous province, located in the northwest of the country, with an important strategic position in terms of politics, economy - society, security, defense, foreign affairs, and ecological environment protection. In addition, Lai Chau's natural area is 9,068,788 km<sup>2</sup>, and its population of 460,196 people of which ethnic minorities account for 84.6%. Moreover, the province has 61/106 communes, wards, and townships with special difficulties and 22 communes bordering China with a total border length of 265,165 km. Hence, Lai Chau province still faces many difficulties in socio-economic development compared to others in the region.

Like many northern mountainous provinces in Vietnam, Lai Chau has a high birth rate, especially among ethnic minority families. Having many children and giving birth continuously cause negative effects on the quality of life and the quality of human resources in the province. According to statistics, by the end of 2020, Lai Chau's natural population growth rate is 1.86%, the average birth rate decreases 0.5%, which reaches the plan.

According to statistics in 2019, the socio-economic condition of Lai Chau province is still very difficult. People's per capita income has only reached 36.3 million people/year. Although it has increased by 3.3 million VND compared to 2018, and the lives of ethnic

minorities have improved, it is still lower than many other provinces.

## 2. BSS are implemented for people in Lai Chau province

The 1946 Constitution stipulates: "*Ethnic minorities have the right to equality, solidarity, respect, mutual assistance, and inclusive development*". Besides that, the 2013 Constitution affirms: "*The State gives priority to education development in mountainous areas, islands, ethnic minority areas and areas with exceptional socio-economic difficulties*".

Accordingly, Resolution No. 15-NQ/TW dated 2012 of the Central Committee has specifically identified a number of BSS for the people, including minimum education, minimum health, minimum housing, clean water, and accessing communication.

The resolution states:

***In term of ensuring the minimum education:*** Continuing to implement strategies, programs, and projects on education. Expanding and strengthening support regimes, especially for the young generation from poor households and ethnic minorities in poor districts, communes, and villages with special difficulties to ensure sustainable education universalization. Increasing the number of pupils in boarding ethnic schools, expand the model of semi-boarding schools. Building and consolidating preschools in industrial parks and rural areas. Developing a project on universalizing preschool for children under 5 years old. Improving the quality of lower secondary education universalization, especially for children in ethnic minority areas and disadvantaged areas. By 2020, 99% of children going to primary school at the right age, 95% at the secondary level; 98% of people aged 15 and over are literate; over 70% of employees are trained.

***Regarding ensuring minimum health:*** Continuing to implement strategies, programs, and projects on health, especially project to overcome overload in hospitals. Enhancing people's health care services at grassroots levels, especially poor districts, poor communes, remote and ethnic minority areas. Completing the assignment of management of local health units. Improving the quality of maternal and child health care. By 2020, over 90% of children under one-year old will be fully immunized; the rate of malnutrition in children under 5 years of age is 10%. Stepping up the implementation of the national tuberculosis prevention and control program to decrease the number of people infected with tuberculosis and die from Tuberculosis. It aims to bring Vietnam out of the list of 20 countries with the highest Tuberculosis rate in the world.

In addition, improving the efficiency of using health insurance for ethnic minorities, mountainous areas and poor households. Amending and supplementing the health insurance law, renewing the state health insurance management, adopting policies to encourage people to participate in health insurance, especially those with below average income. By 2020, over 80% of the population will have health insurance coverage.

***Regarding ensuring minimum housing:*** improving housing conditions for the poor and low-income people in urban areas to step by step solve the housing needs for workers in industrial zones and students.

Moreover, accelerating the implementation of the National Housing Development Strategy to 2020 and a vision to 2030. Continuing to implement the policies remove temporary houses in 2013 – 2020 period. Innovating the housing support mechanism for low-income people in urban areas. Solving problems inland, planning, capital, and procedures to create

opportunities for business organizations to invest in implementing social housing development projects as well as housing construction in industrial zones.

**Regarding ensuring clean water:** Continuing to implement the National Target Program on rural clean water sanitation in 2012 – 2015 period, and the following years, giving priority to ethnic minorities, people in the rural areas, mountains, islands, flood affected areas, saline-affected areas. Improving the domestic water use of the population, especially in rural areas, ethnic minority areas, and mountainous areas with water shortage. By 2020, 100% of the rural population will have access to hygienic domestic water, of which 70% will use clean water meeting national standards.

**Regarding information security:** Strengthening information and communication to the poor, poor, and disadvantaged areas. Accelerating the implementation of the National Target Program on providing information on grassroots, mountainous, remote, border, and island areas in the period 2012 - 2015 and the following years. Consolidating and developing the grassroots information network, especially in mountainous, remote areas, coastal areas, and islands. By 2015, 100% of communes in the mountainous, remote, border, and island areas will receive the terrestrial radio and television signal, and 100% of communes with special difficulties, border communes and safe zones, coastal communes, and islands have commune radio stations.

Accordingly, Lai Chau province issued resolutions to ensure the accession of BSS suitable to the actual situation of the locality, including Resolution No. 30/2016/NQ-HDND dated July 28, 2016, on the sustainable poverty reduction program in the period of 2016–2020. It advocates the implementation of the goal of "*bring opportunity for poor households to access to BSS such as health, education, housing, water and sanitation, and accessing information*".

**Regarding health:** Over 70% of communes meet the national criteria for health; There are 12 doctors per ten thousand people; the natural population growth rate is 1.9%/year; Average fertility reduction rate is 0.5%/year; over 95% of children under one-year-old are fully vaccinated with 8 vaccines; the rate of malnourished children decreases below 20%; over 70% of commune health stations have doctors working; over 96% of villages have health workers working; Health insurance participation rate is over 96%.

**Regarding Education:** Improving the quality of preschool education universalization for five-year-old children, primary education universalization, secondary education universalization. The rate of national standard schools at all levels: Preschools 37%, primary school 44%, secondary school 33%, High school 39%.

**Regarding housing:** Completing over 90% of housing support for poor households according to Decision No. 33/2015/QD-TTG dated August 10, 2015, of the Prime Minister on housing support for poor households' policies according to the poverty line in the period 2011 - 2015.

**Regarding clean water:** Over 95% of the urban population has access to clean water, and over 85% of the rural population has access to hygienic domestic water.

**Regarding information and communication:** 100% of information and communication cadres at the commune level are trained to improve their profession in propaganda and promotion; 95% of households have access to information on policies and laws of the Party and State, production experience, socio-economic development situation of the country, and province through radio programs, television, books, media publications.

In addition, Resolution No. 34/2019/NQ-HDND issued on December 11, 2019, on the plan for socio-economic development to ensure national defense and security in 2020 states: *“Determining to achieve and exceeded the goals of the Resolution of the 13th Provincial Party Congress and the 5-year socio-economic development plan for the 2016-2020 period. Improving the quality of comprehensive education and people's health care. Besides, economic development goes hand in hand with cultural and social development. Hence, the people's material and spiritual life is improved and poor and near-poor households have chance to access BSS”*.

Accordingly, the Resolution sets targets for Lai Chau province in 2020 such as 83.3% of communes meet national health standards, there are over 12 doctors per ten thousand people, the rate of malnourished children weight-for-age reduction decrease to 19.97%. Moreover, maintaining and improving the quality of preschool education universalization for five-year-old children, universalizing primary education at the right age, universalizing secondary education. Rate of national standard schools at all levels: Preschools: 51.3%, primary school: 60.2%, secondary school: 38.5%, High school: 43.5%. Furthermore, 95.5% of the urban population has access to clean water, and 85.2% of the rural population has access to hygienic water.

To cut a long story short, the above legal documents are a solid foundation and legal basis that allows Lai Chau to carried out policies to support accession to BSS for the people in general and ethnic minorities in particular.

## 2. Situation of implementing policies to access BSS for people in Lai Chau province

The implementation of policies of accessing BSS in terms of health, education, housing, and clean water has received the attention, and direction from Party committees and local authorities. As a result, it helps many ethnic minority households to access these BSS, even though there are certain limitations in the implementation process.

### 2.1. Deployment efficiency

#### *Regarding health*

The National Health Development Strategy for the period 2011 - 2020 and a vision to 2030 sets out the goal of ensuring that all people enjoy primary health care services and increase their access to high-quality ones. For this reason, the provincial Party Committee, People's Council, and People's Committee of Lai Chau province have issued many resolutions to carry out the above national strategy.

According to resolution XIII on socio-economic development to ensure social security and basic conditions for development in the period 2015 - 2020, Lai Chau province has invested in the development of the health system to make sure people access to health care services.

**Table 1. Health investment expenditure of Lai Chau province**

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	Prel. 2019	Average
Expenditure (billion VND)	686,77	598,47	661,00	693,13	638,84	655,84
Percentage of total Recurrentbudget expenditure (%)	9,0	7,3	7,4	6,9	9,3	7,9

(Source: Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019)

As can be seen, in the period 2015 - 2019, Lai Chau province invested an average of VND655.94 billion per year in the health system. This activity aims to improve the quality of care and protect people's health. Besides, this is a large number compared to the local budget revenue of 2,000 billion according to the norm set out in Resolution No. 136/2015/NQ-HDND on the socio-economic development plan for the period 2016-2020. Moreover, this level of expenditure is equivalent to 7.9% of the province's total recurrent budget expenditure with 0.6 percentage points higher than the proportion of state budget spending on health in the same period<sup>1</sup>. For the whole period, Lai Chau spent 3,278.21 billion VND which is the measure to evaluate the effectiveness of implementing policies to support accessing minimal health services for people.

To put it in nutshell, many of the above budget expenditures are devoted to the purpose of maintaining and developing the local health facilities. Hence, it creates favorable conditions for people to access minimal medical services.

**Table 2. Number of health facilities in Lai Chau province**

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Prel. 2019
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>168</b>
Hopitals	10	10	10	12	11
Regional polyclinic	15	16	16	6	6
Medical service units in communes, wards	108	108	108	105	105
The rest	-	-	42	46	46

(Source: *Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019*)

Table 2 shows that Lai Chau province invested in maintaining and developing the number of health facilities, increasing from 133 units in 2015 to 168 units in 2019. As can be seen, most of these health facilities are medical service units in communes, wards (105 units, accounting for 62.5%). It ensures that people can access minimal health care services whenever they sick. In some situations, these health facilities supported administrative procedures for people to access higher levels of health facilities.

**Table 3. Number of patient beds in Lai Chau province**

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Prel. 2019
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.130</b>	<b>1.130</b>	<b>1.234</b>	<b>1.410</b>	<b>1.450</b>
Hopitals	980	980	1.080	1.330	1.390
Regional polyclinic	150	150	154	80	60
Medical service units in communes, wards.	0	0	0	0	0
Average number of patient beds /10,000 people (Beds)	26,22	25,72	27,45	30,46	31,34

(Source: *Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019*)

With the level of investment in the past period, health facilities in Lai Chau province are able to receive 1,450 inpatients which is good result for mountainous areas with low level of

<sup>1</sup>The above information is extracted from the article "Health expenditure reaches 7.1% of total state budget expenditure", <https://www.sggp.org.vn/chi-cho-y-te-dat-71-tong-chi-ngan-sach-nha-nuoc-682733.html> (accessed May 26, 2021).

economic development.

As a result, Lai Chau ensures an average of 31.34 patient beds /10,000 people in 2019, increasing 5.12 more beds than in 2015 and higher than the national average of 25.6 patient beds/10,000 people in 2018<sup>2</sup>. Besides, it is higher than the target of 26 patient beds by 2020 set out by the National Strategy on Protection, Care and Improvement of People's Health for the 2011-2020 period, with a vision to 2030 in Decision No. 122/QD-TTG issued in 2013. As can be seen, Lai Chau province makes a priority on public health care.

To ensure that people have access to high-quality health services, and to reduce patient wait times, Lai Chau province put effort to develop the contingent of medical staff.

**Table 4. Percentage of communes/wards/towns with medical staff in Lai Chau province (%)**

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Prel. 2019
Midwife or obstetrician	88,0	84,3	78,7	92,6	92,6
Doctors	7,4	9,3	11,1	15,7	17,6

(Source: *Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019*)

Table 4 shows that, with the current number of hospitals, Lai Chau province ensures that the proportion of communes/wards/towns with doctors, midwives, or obstetricians working at 17.6% and 92.6% respectively in 2019. This result achieves the target that over 70% of medical service units in communes and over 96% of villages have doctors working according to Resolution No. 30/2016/ NQ-HDND issued on July 28, 2016, by Lai Chau province. This medical contingent contributes to providing minimal health services for the local population.

**Table 5. Average number of doctors per 10,000 people in Lai Chau province from 2015 to 2019**

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Prel. 2019
The whole province	8,10	8,86	9,08	9,23	9,55

(Source: *Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019*)

Thanks to the above-mentioned investment in developing the medical contingent, Lai Chau achieve the target of an average number of 9.55 doctors per 10,000 people in 2019, increasing more than 1.45 people in 2015, and higher than the norm of 8 doctors per 10,000 people according to the goal of developing the medical contingent set out in Decision No. 2992/QD-BYT dated July 17, 2015, of the Ministry of Health on approving a national action plan of healthcare workforce development to cover the years 2015-2020. In addition, it is higher than the norm of 9 doctors per 10,000 people set out in the National Strategy on Protection, Care and Improvement of People's Health for the 2011-2020 period, with a vision to 2030. It is undeniable that policies to support people accessing minimum health services are carried out effectively in Lai Chau province.

<sup>2</sup> Information is extracted from the article published on Ho Chi Minh Department of Health website <http://www.medinet.hochiminhcity.gov.vn/chuyen-muc/so-giuong-benh-va-so-nhan-vien-y-te-cua-viet-nam-va-cac-nuoc-in-khuc-vuc-c1780-5511.aspx> (accessed May 26, 2021).

Therefore, there is an increase in the number of communes in Lai Chau province that meet the national criteria for commune health.

**Table 6. Percentage of communes/wards/towns meeting the national criteria for commune health (%)**

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Prel. 2019
The whole province	50,0	58,0	64,8	75,0	85,6

(Source: *Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019*)

According to data from table 6, the proportion of communes/wards/towns of Lai Chau meeting the national criteria for commune health has increased from 50.0% in 2015 to 85.6% in 2019. Similarly, it has 15.6 percentage points higher than the target of 70% of communes meeting the national health criteria set out in Resolution No. 30/2016/NQ-HDND dated July 28, 2016, issued by the People's Council of Lai Chau. Furthermore, it has 5.6 percentage points higher than the target of 80% of communes meeting the national health criteria set out in the National Strategy on protection, care, and improvement of people's health for the 2011-2020 period, with a vision to 2030. It can be admitted that Lai Chau gradually implements policies to ensure minimum health care for people in the coming period.

**Table 7. Coverage of the health insurance system in Lai Chau province**

Criteria	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Percentage (%) of people with health insurance cards.	92,3	93,9	94,8	95,0	95,8	96,8
Percentage (%) of under one year old children who are fully vaccinated.	93,4	93,2	93,8	91,8	94,2	-

(Source: *List of participants in health insurance in Lai Chau province*)

Table 7 shows that the coverage of the health insurance system achieved impressive results. The rate of under one year children who are fully vaccinated making up to 94.2%, having 4.2 percentage points higher than the national average standard of 90% by 2020 according to the XV Central Resolution promulgated in 2012 on social policies for the period 2012 - 2020. Similarly, the percentage of people using health insurance cards is up to 96.8%, having 16.8 percentage points higher compared with the target of 80% by 2020 according to the National Strategy on protection, care, and improvement of people's health for the 2011-2020 period, with a vision to 2030.

Moreover, the number of people going for medical examination and treatment with health insurance cards increased rapidly every year, reaching 669,843 people in 2018. The average frequency of medical examination and treatment of people having health insurance cards in the province in 2018 was 1.54 times/1 card/year. This fact is evidence of the effectiveness of the implementation of support policies to access minimal health services in Lai Chau province.

Accordingly, 2,232 respondents answered that they could buy health insurance and only 53 people could not buy health insurance, accounting for 97.7% and 2.3%, respectively. Those who could not buy health insurance answered that they did not have money to buy it and found it unnecessary. Among those who buy health insurance, 99.2% of respondents are

donated by the government. Having a health insurance card contributes to improving the quality and reducing the cost of medical examinations for the people, especially for ethnic minorities. As can be seen, implementing policies to support health care for the poor through health insurance card support achieve good results and ethnic people now have positive attitude towards health care.

**Table 8. Units buying health insurance for people**

Units buying health insurance for people	Number of people	Percentage (%)
Themself	9	0,4
Companies	11	0,5
Government	2.267	99,1
Total	2.285	100

(Source: Survey results)

### Regarding education

In addition, the education development strategy for the period 2011 - 2020 approved in Decision No. 711/QĐ-TTĐ issued in 2012 also sets out goals for the development of a nationwide network of educational institutions to create chances for everyone to access minimal education, especially ethnic minorities. Hence, Lai Chau strengthens and mobilizes resources to invest in education development.

**Table 9. Education investment expenditure of Lai Chau province**

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	Prel. 2019
Budget (billion VND)	1.928,70	1.984,73	2.139,37	2.282,62	2.059,15
Percentage (%) of total recurrent budget expenditure	25,3	24,2	23,9	22,8	29,9
Proportion (%) of total budget expenditure	5,09	6,97	9,71	9,23	8,73

(Source: Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019)

Table 9 demonstrates that the proportion of Lai Chau's education investment expenditure accounts for a large number. In 2019, education investment makes up nearly 30% of the total recurrent budget expenditure. Meanwhile, it reaches nearly 9% of the total budget expenditure of the province which is higher in comparison with the national average. Hence, Lai Chau carries out the policies to for people to access minimum education.

**Table 10. Number of preschools, preschools classes and classrooms in Lai Chau province**

	2015-2016	2016- 2017	2017- 2018	2018-2019	Prel. 2019-2020
Number of preschools	139	138	136	116	114
Number of classes	1.727	1.749	1.757	1.706	1.663
Number of classrooms	1.829	1.841	1.908	1.980	2.002

(Source: Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019)

As can be seen, Lai Chau currently has 114 preschools with 1,663 classes in 2019. It seems that the scale of Lai Chau's preschools' education tends to narrow which negatively affects the implementation of policies for preschools children to accessing minimum education.

However, when it comes to the number of classrooms, there is an increase gradually over the years, from 1,829 rooms in 2015 to 1,841 rooms in 2016, 1,908 rooms in 2017, 1,980 rooms in 2018, and 2,002 rooms in 2019 (preliminary statistics).

Within 5 years, the number of preschools classrooms in Lai Chau increased by 161 units, an average of more than 32 rooms per year. Hence, children's opportunities to access preschool education increase. This is also considered as a criterion to evaluate the effectiveness of investment programs for minimum education in Lai Chau province.

**Table 11. Number of preschools' teachers and students in Lai Chau province**

	2015-2016	2016- 2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	Prel.2019-2020
Number of teachers	2.839	2.911	2.909	2.792	2.825
Number of students	39.120	40.980	42.180	40.920	40.420
Average number of students per class	22,6	23,4	24,0	23,9	24,3
Average number of students per teacher	13,8	14,1	14,5	14,7	14,3

(Source: *Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019*)

In the 2019-2020 school year, Lai Chau maintains the number of teachers up to 2,859 people, slightly higher than in 2018 - 2019, but lower than in previous years. The number of preschools students enrolled in the year 2019 - 2020 is up to 40,420 children. Accordingly, the average number of students per class is maintained at 24 children and an average teacher takes care of 14 children, reaching approximately the level specified in Joint Circular No. 06/2015/TTLT-BGDĐT- BNV of the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Home Affairs on the list of frameworks for the mediation of jobs and the norms for the number of people working in public preschools.

**Table 12. Number of schools in Lai Chau province**

	2015-2016	2016- 2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	Prel. 2019-2020
Primary school	144	143	140	110	97
Secondary school	113	113	112	99	93
High school	21	22	22	25	23

(Source: *Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019*)

According to table 12, Lai Chau currently maintains the operation of more than 300 schools. However, the number of these schools has increased on a pyramidal scale. In other words, it expands at the primary level but decreases at the secondary and high school levels.

**Table 13. Number of classes and teachers in Lai Chau province**

	2015-2016	2016- 2017	2017- 2018	2018-2019	Prel. 2019-2020
<b>Number of classes</b>					
Primary school	2.818	2.723	2.652	2.580	2.540
Secondary school	1.039	1.077	1.098	1.092	1.095
High school	274	284	291	295	296
<b>Number of teachers</b>					
Primary school	4.157		4.027	3.908	3.754

Secondary school	2.135	2.157	2.155	2.074	2.103
High school	660	704	683	688	648

(Source: Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019)

For this reason, the number of classes also gradually decreased from 2,540 classes at the primary level to 1,095 classes at the secondary level and 296 classes at the high school level.

Therefore, the investment programs to develop the education system to ensure people's opportunities to access minimal education now focuses more on the primary school level to achieve universalization results, but these programs are not effective enough at higher education levels. This fact is further evidenced by data from the following table.

**Table 14. Number of students enrolled, retained and dropped out of schools in Lai Chau province**

	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	Prel. 2019-2020
Number of enrolled students (unit: people)					
Primary school	53.110	54.380	55.259	57.030	58.076
Secondary school	31.430	32.930	35.182	36.910	37.984
High school	8.570	8.750	8.966	9.545	9.951
Number of retained students (unit: %)					
<b>Overall retention rate</b>	<b>0,69</b>	<b>1,10</b>	<b>0,43</b>	<b>0,34</b>	-
Primary school	0,58	1,59	0,37	0,37	-
Secondary school	0,49	0,28	0,46	0,21	-
High school	0,40	1,16	0,69	0,59	-
Number of dropped out students (unit:%)					
<b>Overall dropout rate</b>	<b>0,60</b>	<b>0,38</b>	<b>0,11</b>	<b>0,18</b>	-
Primary school	0,09	0,08	0,01	0,01	-
Secondary school	0,68	0,78	0,18	0,19	-
High school	3,53	1,77	0,40	0,38	-

(Source: Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019)

Overall, the number of students enrolling all levels has dropped sharply. The 2019-2020 preliminary statistics show that the number of secondary students decreased to 65.4% compared to the number of primary students. In addition, the number of high school students decreased to 26.2 % compared to the number of secondary students and 17.1% compared to the number of primary students.

As can be seen, the higher education levels are, the fewer students can attend, although investment programs to develop the education system continue to be implemented to create opportunities for everyone to access minimum education.

Therefore, the support programs to access minimum education in Lai Chau province need to focus more on universalizing education at higher education levels, especially secondary level to ensure the achievement of the goal set out in Decree No. 20/2014/ND-CP dated 24 March 2014, on educational universalization or illiteracy eradication.

In order to enhance the people's access to minimal education, Lai Chau also carried out strategies to support people to attend illiteracy eradication and cultural enrichment classes

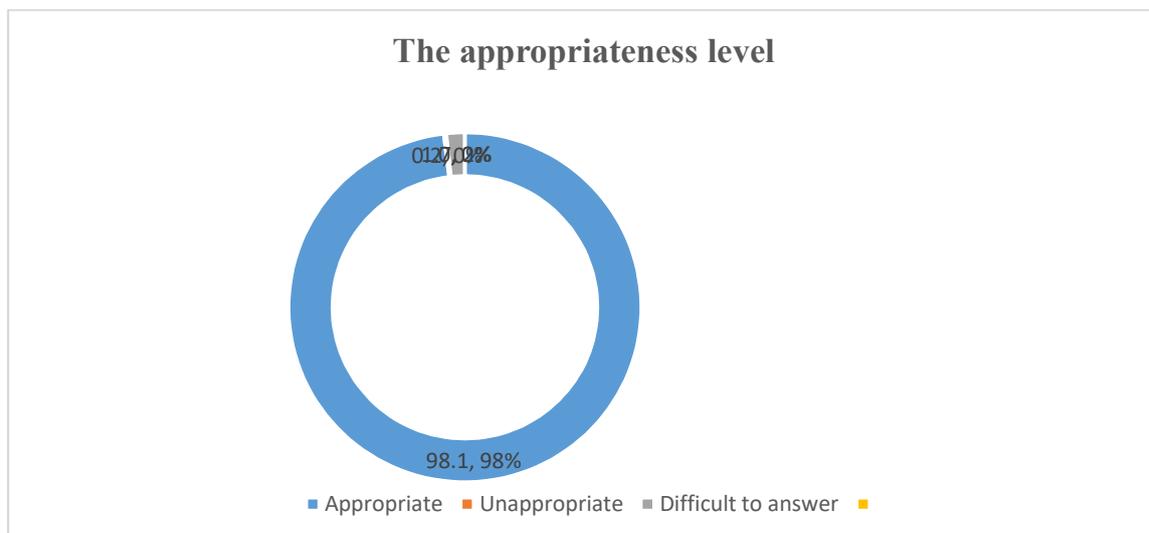
**Table 15. Number of students attending illiteracy eradication and cultural enrichment classes in Lai Chau province**

	2015-2016	2016- 2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Number of students attending illiteracy eradication classes	282	524	817	1.508	2.000
Number of students attending cultural enrichment classes	1.442	1.146	1.915	984	903
Total	1.724	1.670	2.732	2.492	2.903

(Source: Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019)

Table 15 shows that the number of people enrolled in the two programs mentioned above has increased rapidly from 1,724 people in 2015 - 2016 to 2,903 people in 2019 - 2020. This result contributes to the success of the implementation of support policies for people to access minimum education in Lai Chau province.

With the above results, it can be seen that the education policies are carried out quite effectively, have the consensus of the people. Besides, 98.1% of respondents think that the province's education policies are appropriate.

**Figure 1: People's assessment of the appropriateness of education policies**

(Source: Survey results)

### **Regarding housing**

According to the National Housing Development Strategy to 2020 and a vision to 2030 approved in Decision No. 2127/QĐ-TTĐ in 2011, having a safe and suitable accommodation is one of the basic rights of people. Accordingly, local authorities need to set out housing development targets in the socio-economic development tasks. Hence, by 2020, the average housing area will be about 25m<sup>2</sup> of floor/person, of which in urban areas is 29 m<sup>2</sup> floor/person and in rural areas is 22m<sup>2</sup> floor/person, striving to achieve the target of minimum housing area of 8m<sup>2</sup> floor/person.

The above strategy has received full attention from the Party Committee, People's Council, and People's Committee at all levels. Accordingly, Lai Chau province advocates continuing to implement policies to attract investment from businesses. Continuing to monitor and urge investors and construction units to accelerate the implementation and disbursement of projects. Besides, Lai Chau quickly solves administrative procedures, promptly deploy monetary mechanisms and policies, deposit and loan interest rates to create favorable conditions for businesses and people to borrow for construction.

According to Decision No. 34/2016/QĐ-UBND dated September 16, 2016, on approving the housing development program in Lai Chau province until 2020, with a vision to 2030, by the end of 2015, the province has 90,809 houses with 72,807 in rural areas and 18,003 in urban areas. In addition, the number of permanent houses and semi-permanent houses is 33,415 units and 29,547 units, accounting for 36.8%, and 32.5% respectively. Followed by 16,502 non-permanent houses, making up 18.2% and simple houses are 11,345 units, equaling 12.5%.

Also according to Decision No. 34/2016/QĐ-UBND, the total housing area of the province was 6,707,280m<sup>2</sup>. On average, each house has an area of 73.9m<sup>2</sup>, but urban houses have an area of up to 89.5m<sup>2</sup>/unit, 19.5m<sup>2</sup>/unit more than the 70m<sup>2</sup>/unit of rural houses. Thus, the average housing area per capita in the province was 15.8m<sup>2</sup>. The gap between urban and rural areas is nearly 8m<sup>2</sup> (22.3m<sup>2</sup> compared to 14.5m<sup>2</sup>).

Based on the minimum housing area criteria in the National Housing Development Strategy to 2020 and a vision to 2030, Lai Chau needs to develop an additional 1,449,877m<sup>2</sup> floors in the 2016-2020 period to achieve the target reached 17m<sup>2</sup> per capita housing. Accordingly, the residential land area is up to 302 hectares.

**Table 16. Development planning of houses and residential land up to 2020 of Lai Chau province**

Housing type	Residential area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Residential land area (ha)
Commercial housing	7.249	1,5
Official housing	6.967	1,5
Social housing	11.496	2,4
Resettlement housing	8.844	1,9
Household housing	1.415.321	249,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.449.877</b>	<b>302</b>

(Source: Decision No. 34/2016/QĐ-UBND, 2016)

The content of the housing development planning is consistent with the housing strategy of Lai Chau province. In other words, it ensures that all people have stable accommodation, gradually improve the quality of life, in line with the local socio-economic development master plan. On that basis, Lai Chau encourages organizations, individuals, and investors to invest in housing development, in order to achieve the goal of minimum housing for households.

**Table 17. Estimated housing construction investment expenditure by 2020 of Lai Chau province**

No	Estimated capital expenditure	Billion VND
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1	State budget capital	34,8
2	Social capital	4.440,6
3	<b>Total</b>	<b>4.475,4</b>

(Source: Decision No. 34/2016/QĐ-UBND, 2016)

According to table 17, Lai Chau estimates that by 2020, investment expenditure on housing construction will reach 4,475.7 billion VND, of which, expenditure from the state budget will only reach 34.8 billion VND, equivalent to 0.78%. The rest will come from investors, individuals, and households.

**Table 18. Gross floor area of Lai Chau province (thousand m2)**

	2016	2017	2018	Prel. 2019
Permanent house	109.005	139.171	157.123	161.837
Semi-permanent house	161.334	285.830	292.259	306.872
Durable wooden frame house	89.572	27.149	32.695	34.003
The rest	12.057	809	6.562	6.759
<b>Total</b>	<b>371.968</b>	<b>452.959</b>	<b>488.639</b>	<b>509.471</b>

(Source: Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019)

Obviously, in the period 2016 - 2019, Lai Chau achieved construction completion of 1,823,037m<sup>2</sup> floors, with 373,160m<sup>2</sup> more than the planned target of 1,449,877m<sup>2</sup> in 2020. As a result, Lai Chau continues to implement this policy in the next phase, in line with the socio-economic development strategy, as well as with the housing plan to 2030.

**Table 19. Housing area per capita of Lai Chau province (m2)**

	Suburban	Urban	Rural
2016	14,69	23,29	13,03
2017	15,05	23,30	13,05
2018	17,50	29,60	15,00
Prel. 2019	18,00	29,80	15,50

(Source: Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019)

With the effective implementation of policy to access minimum housing, the floor area per capita of Lai Chau continuously increased from 14.69m<sup>2</sup> in 2016 to 18m<sup>2</sup> in 2019, with 1m<sup>2</sup> higher than the minimum housing target set out in Decision No. 34/2016/QĐ-UBND on approving housing development program in Lai Chau province until 2020, orientation to 2030.

According to the local assessment, the success thanks to "The Party and local authorities always thoroughly grasp and actively direct the synchronous implementation of housing development solutions in Lai Chau. These solutions are all set out in Decision No. 34 2016 including solutions on enhancing the apparatus, increasing the capacity of staff in charge of housing management, solutions on residential land, on architecture and planning, on mobilizing capitals to create favorable conditions for all social sectors, especially creating favorable conditions for households to build or repair home " – Excerpting from in-depth interviews with local officials.

***Regarding clean water***

Based on the National Program to ensure safe water supply for the period 2016 - 2025, with the goal of striving by 2025, the percentage of the population with clean and hygienic water supply will reach 95 - 100%, as well as Decision No. 87/2006/QĐ-TTĐ in 2006 approving the master plan for socio-economic development of Lai Chau province in the 2006 – 2020 period with the goal by 2020 to basically meet the demand for clean water, Lai Chau passed Resolution No. 30/2016/NQ-HĐND issued in 2016 on the sustainable poverty reduction program in the 2016-2020 period, in which the goal is to reach over 95% of the urban population and over 85% of the rural population use hygienic water.

According to the program "Expanding rural sanitation and clean water scale based on results of 2016-2020 period", Lai Chau aims to build 116 water supply constructions, connecting 9,400 water supply points in the whole province. Similarly, the number of sustainable water supply points is 3,872 with 35,200 people benefiting from the program. The total cost of implementation is up to 216.7 billion VND, of which 184 billion VND from the central budget, nearly 15.5 billion VND from the province borrows, and 17.1 billion VND from the counterpart budget.

In fact, right after receiving the first funding of the program "Expanding the scale of rural sanitation and clean water based on results of 2016-2020 period" in 2017, the Provincial People's Committee assigned specific tasks to related branches such as: provincial branch of the Bank for Social Policies, the Center for Preventive Medicine, the State Treasury of the province, the departments of Finance, Planning and Investment, Education and Training, Agriculture and Rural Development, Health, and People's Committees of beneficiary districts shall coordinate in implementation. In which, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development response to be the coordinating agency for the program at the provincial level. At the same time, establishing a Steering Committee for the implementation of the Provincial Program; approving the implementation plans of the Program for the period 2016 - 2020; enhancing capacity plan in 2016, 2017; Communication plan to change behavior in Hygiene and Sanitation in 2016, 2017...<sup>3</sup>

Lai Chau implemented the program to ensure access to minimum clean water in 7 districts with 25 communes by 1 billion VND from the corresponding capital in 2017, 15 billion VND from the World Bank's capital and the loan capital. Based on the implementation plan for 2017, Lai Chau appraises and submits 4 water supply constructions with 1,400 water supply points to increase the percentage of households using clean water and improve water sanitation in the province.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Information is extracted from the article published on Dan Van Newspaper on September 30, 2018 <http://danvan.vn/Home/Ve-sinh-ca-nhan-va-ve-sinh-moi-truong/8752/Lai-Chau-no-luc-thuc-hien-Chuong-trinh-mo-rong-quy-mo-ve-sinh-vanuoc-sach-nong-thon> (accessed May 22, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Information extracted from the article published in the Journal of the Environment, the mouthpiece of the Vietnam Environment Administration <http://vem.tapchimoitruong.vn/pages/article.aspx?item=Lai-Ch%C3%A2u-n%E1%BB%97-l%E1%BB%B1c-th%E1%BB%B1c-hi%E1%BB%87n-Ch%C6%B0%C6%A1ng-tr%C3%ACnh-m%E1%BB%9F-r%E1%BB%99ng-quy-m%C3%B4-v%E1%BB%87-birth-v%C3%A0-n%C6%B0%E1%BB%9Bc-s%E1%BA%A1ch-n%C3%B4ng-th%C3%B4n-47833> (accessed May 28, 2021).

**Table 20. Percentage of clean water use by households in Lai Chau province**

	2015	2016	2017	2018	Prel. 2019
Percentage of urban population supplied with clean water through a centralized water supply system (%)	96,7	97,3	98,0	86,7	91,9
Percentage of households using hygienic water source (%)	71,3	72,0	75,8	79,4	83,5

(Source: *Lai Chau Provincial Statistical Yearbook, 2019*)

As a result, the percentage of households using clean water for daily life in Lai Chau province increased gradually over the years, reaching 91.9% for urban residents and 83.5% for rural residents in 2019.

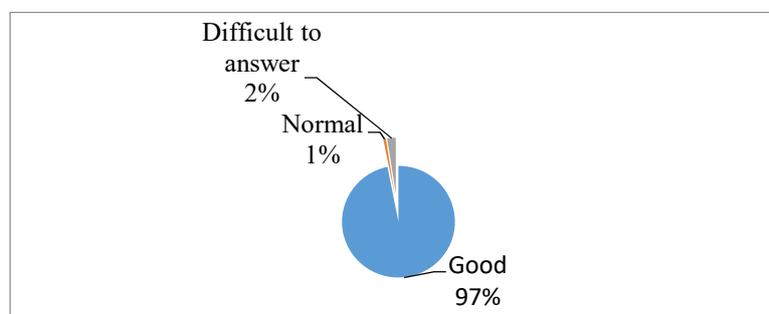
In fact, the above results were obtained thanks to the direction of the People's Council, People's Committee, local units in Lai Chau province to promote propaganda to change attitudes and behaviors of the people through training combined with propaganda in the mass media on accessing to minimum clean water. There is a variety in forms of propaganda which were held regularly, continuously ... and received consensus in society.

In addition, Lai Chau issued Plan No. 1016/KH-UBND in 2020 on "Strengthening capacity to implement the Program expanding the scale of rural sanitation and clean water based on results in 2020". Accordingly, the goal is to connect more than 1,900 water supply points to provide clean water for people.

However, according to the statistical results of Lai Chau Center for Clean Water and Sanitation, by the end of 2020, Lai Chau has only connected 7,000 units, reaching 74.5% of the plan, of which, the number of sustainable water supply points is 2,400 units, reaching 62% of the plan.

Although 100% of the assigned plan has not been completed, the statistics of Lai Chau province show that by the end of 2020, the proportion of rural and urban populations accessing hygienic water reached 85% and 95% respectively. In poor districts, the number of households using hygienic water will increase from 38,696 households (80.5% ) in 2018 to 42,704 (85%) in 2020.

Furthermore, the clean water program also received positive feedback from ethnic minorities through the surveys.



**Figure 2. Ethnic minorities assessment about the clean water program of Lai Chau province**

(Source: *Survey results*)

According to the survey results, 97% of ethnic minorities voted good for the province's clean water program and 1% thought the program was normal. This shows the effectiveness of the implementation of support policies for people to access minimum clean water in the 2016 - 2020 period at Lai Chau province.

## **2.2 Existence, limitation**

Besides the achievements, the implementation of policies for people to access BSS in Lai Chau province also has certain limitations:

Firstly, the work of direction and implementation is still subjective, not taking into account the specific geographical and cultural characteristics of the ethnic minorities. The system of policies to ensure people accessing BSS lacks synchronization, and connection in terms of content and tasks.

Secondly, the coordination between agencies in the development, issuance of documents, and implementation is not effective. There is no incentive mechanism for localities to successfully implementing policies and sanctions are not enough to handle cases of ineffective implementation.

Thirdly, budgets to ensure the implementation of these policies are still low due to limited local budgets. Besides, budgets from the central government and social organizations are often disbursed slowly which negatively affecting the implementation of policies.

Finally, the awareness of the majority of ethnic minorities is still limited, they do not understand clearly the rights and benefits to the policy of ensuring access to BSS. In some cases, people against to contingent of communication staff.

## **3. Solutions to improve the efficiency of implementing policies to access BSS in the coming period**

### **3.1 Thoroughly grasp the central direction and local resolutions in implementing policies to ensure access to BSS**

Party committees and local authorities at all levels need to continue to thoroughly grasp and strictly implement the central and government's direction on implementing policies for the people accessing BSS. Besides, it is necessary to self-evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of having useful lessons and experiences, suitable to the situation of the locality, as well as the customs and practices of the ethnic minorities.

It is necessary to strengthen the propaganda and dissemination of social security policies, especially BSS to people to raise awareness; widely disseminate guidelines and policies for socio-economic development in ethnic minority areas and mountainous areas for ethnic minorities.

### **3.2 Fostering administrative reform, improving the efficiency of state management and implementing policies to ensure access to BSS**

Continuing to streamline the organization of the government apparatus, agencies, and units in association with downsizing the payroll, renovating the organization and management system, improving the quality and effectiveness of policy implementation to ensure people accessing BSS. Accordingly, it is necessary to step up administrative reform, build a modern and professional administration, strengthen the application of information technology,

provide and solve online public services to ensure benefits and convenience for people in accessing BSS.

Focusing on drastically directing the key tasks in the policy to ensure people accessing BSS, promoting the role and improving the responsibilities of the heads of the authorities, agencies, and units, having well coordination, adjustment of the management, administration, decentralization mechanism, clearly assign collective and individual responsibilities to enhance the efficiency of cadres in supporting people to access BSS.

Continuing to train and foster the contingent of cadres at all levels, especially at the grassroots level, ensuring that they have sufficient qualifications and capacity to effectively organize the implementation of programs and projects related to social services.

### **3.3 Concentrating human resources, promoting propaganda to improve quality of cadres and people on policies to ensure access to BSS**

Mobilizing all resources for policy implementation to ensure access to BSS, promoting socialization in policy implementation, creating a far-reaching movement to attract and encourage the participation of stakeholders. In addition to capital from projects granted by the central government, the province needs to take advantage of support capital sources from organizations, individuals inside and outside the province as well as international funding sources. At the same time, the province allocates a part of the local reciprocal budget to promptly provide BSS.

Implementing the program of providing BSS with the new rural construction program, the national target programs, the socio-economic development programs, and projects in the locality in order to mobilize the maximum multi-resources, ensuring that people enjoy the BSS regimes and policies.

Continuing to invest in upgrading grassroots radio stations, develop telecommunications networks in rural, remote, and isolated areas. Moreover, mobilizing individuals and organizations, and implement a variety of propaganda forms and content to create opportunities for ethnic minorities to access information on BSS policies.

## **CONCLUSION**

With limited resources, but with the spirit of mastering the direction of the central government, the drastic direction from the Party Committee, authorities at all levels, Lai Chau province has effectively implemented many programs, projects, and activities to ensure people access BSS.

Many targets on providing BSS to the people have been achieved such as the number of hospital beds per ten thousand people, the percentage of communes/wards/towns with doctors and midwives or obstetricians working, the average number of doctors per 10,000 people, the percentage of communes/wards/towns of Lai Chau meeting the national criteria for commune health, the coverage of the health insurance system, on increasing enrollment opportunities for preschool children, secondary and high school students, on illiteracy eradication and cultural enrichment, on the per capita housing area, or on the percentage of people using clean water...

However, the implementation of this policy also has certain limitations related to the direction and implementation of the authorities at all levels, to the coordination of

stakeholders, to budget resources as well as to the consciousness of the people. These are challenges that Lai Chau needs to overcome to continue providing BSS for the people.

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