



# **THE ROLE OF RADIO AND TV IN THE LIFE OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN VIETNAM**

*CASE STUDY: THE H'MONG PEOPLE IN LAO CAI AND LAI CHAU PROVINCE*



**Thuy Thi Thu Nguyen**

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Thuy Thi Thu Nguyen

**ABSTRACT:** The role of radio and TV in the life of ethnic minorities in Vietnam

In this thesis, we will follow the discourse on the role of radio and TV in the life of minorities in Vietnam. Before going in depth to answer the research questions, I am going to give an introduction to the situation of ethnic minorities and media for ethnic minorities in Vietnam. My research focused on the roles of radio and TV regarding the fields of education and identity preservation for ethnic minorities. The research questions will be answered by looking at the H'mong minority, who are the case study of the thesis, who are located in the northern part of Vietnam who are one of the poorest and most undeveloped minorities in the country.

Nowadays, ethnic minorities in Vietnam are still coping with serious difficulties in life such as poverty and illiteracy. Meanwhile, media for ethnic minorities, including radio and TV for ethnic minorities in Vietnam, are at a low level of development. In fact, both VTV5 (the TV division for ethnic minorities, belonging to the national TV station VTV) and VOV4 (the radio division for ethnic minorities, belonging to the national radio station VOV) have made a lot of effort to produce suitable programs for minorities but there remain limitations in both content and the ways used to express the content of those programs. The reasons come from difficulties in both radio and TV stations and minorities. However, roles of radio and TV in the life of ethnic minorities in Vietnam are obviously increasing quickly and are displayed more and more effectively. I focused on the two main roles of radio and TV as educational instruments and as instruments for assisting minorities in preserving their identity, highlighting their effects in preserving minority languages and cultures.

In addition, looking at influences that radio and TV have made in the life of minorities, we see that radio and TV are playing more and more important roles in their lives.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I am going to give an introduction of the situation of ethnic minorities in Vietnam and how media work to serve Vietnamese ethnic minorities. Combining the two parts, we will understand more how important radio and TV as two main media are playing roles to the life of ethnic minorities of Vietnam.

## 1.1. BACKGROUND FOR THE TOPIC



Lao Cai and Lai Chau province, where the H'mong minority people, the case study of my thesis, are mainly living.

Media has become an inseparable part of our modern society. With the dominant advantages it has, “media bring the world to us and help to shape that world.”<sup>1</sup> Nowadays, the development of science and technology has given media incredible breakthroughs that enable us to have more choices in regards to information as well as for entertainment. The appearance of the internet has profoundly affected people’s media routines, but TV and radio still prove their important roles and influences in human beings’ lives. Radio and TV and are instruments of corporations and of public or state agencies, but still their consequences are unpredictable because sometimes the information provided by radio and TV is objective yet understood differently by individuals, which leads to different impacts. Media as radio can serve as an important way of knowing the world and on occasion, it provides us with insights that were unobtainable anywhere else. Arthur Asa Berger, said about TV and radio that they

<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Grossberg, 1998: 4

“profoundly affect the way we make sense of the world.”<sup>2</sup> From radio and TV we learn more about the world and even find the satisfied for our interests that are out of our reach for various reasons, such as traveling all over the world, watching our favorite movies, and discovering diverse cultures of different regions. Also through radio and TV, people, and communities, businesses can get people to understand more about them and their services and increase their profits and/or improve their reputations. For example, with a commercial on radio or TV, a company can make customers not only know about their products but believe in the quality so that they can raise the quantity of products purchased and increase interest in them. On the other hand, radio and TV also bring negative influences when such media makes people deny their identity or give up traditional values to change into people they saw on TV or heard about on the radio. For example, teenagers are normally easily attracted by new styles of the stars they see on TV or listen to on the radio. As a result, those teenagers want to change their normal styles or make their styles the same as their idols. Also because of having been impacted by radio and TV, some young minority people prefer wearing majority clothes and acting like majority people they saw on TV.

TV and radio are also sometimes used as instruments for unfair politics or business purposes. For example, some years ago I saw a warning message on TV that said that if people drank too much of a certain kind of drink they could get addicted to it because there was too much caffeine in it. But actually, it was not true information, and was blown by the competitors of a big brewery company that have such a “dangerous drink” and the TV televised it without checking the facts carefully. After that, the TV had to broadcast the amended message about the drink the loss it caused to the company was huge. In that case, TV was used as an instrument for unfair businesses to fight their competitors. The politics of radio as well as television (Abu-Lughod 2004, Vokes 2007) can be geared towards unpredictable uses; they even become dangerous tools, as in the case of the Rwanda rebellion in 1994 when radio listeners were induced by a group of charismatic radio presenters (on the station Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines, RTLM) to participate in genocidal killings<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Arthur Asa Berger, 1995: 56

<sup>3</sup> Richard Vokes, 2007



Accessibility to radio and TV, however, is still a challenge. In many rural and mountainous areas, TV and radio are still not available. For many ethnic minority people, these two media are quite new, even unknown to their lives. Further, in remote areas of my country, many ethnic minorities are still living in a social and economic condition where these communication technologies are still not affordable. In some of these villages people are still living a hard life, which burdens them with many worries. Many are in a life situation where earning money for daily existence is a priority that makes access to TV- and radio programs seem unimportant.

The situation can be explained by two reasons, including difficulties of the geographical conditions and the living conditions. Minority people are living in areas where terrains are uneven with many high slopes and small paths, which are inconvenient for both building facilities and transportation. This makes TV and radio stations face difficulties to install transceivers and produce specific programs for ethnic minorities. In addition, a hard life requires minority people to care more about earning a living than their demands for entertainment or other benefits that TV and radio may bring to them. The H'mong ethnic minority, the case study of my thesis, is among the poorest ethnic minorities in Vietnam of which the people are mainly living far away in mountainous areas. Some groups of this minority seem to live separately from modern life. Long-standing, traditional customs prevent them from changing their daily routines to accept free public services, such as health care and education provided by the government. This makes illiteracy, poverty and premature death from illness remain serious problems in their lives. All these difficulties have limited minority peoples' access to media and to enjoy the advantages provided by "the fourth estate."<sup>4</sup> Instead of getting news and information through exciting media, many only know about the world outside of their communities through storytelling or by word of mouth, which are basically based on their previous generations' experience or imagination.

To increase the roles of media in the life of the citizens, a lot of efforts have been made by the Vietnamese government and authorities to increase the accessibility of media including constructing facilities for radio and TV stations, investing in personnel to work in the field

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<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Archer, an American novelist called press as "the fourth estate" after legislation, executive and judicial power.

and so on. Ten years after the foundation of the national radio station, which is called Voice of Vietnam (VOV), programs for minorities have been produced and broadcast on radio since 1955. Later in 1976, the national Vietnam television (VTV) station was founded. However, it was not until twenty-six years after that a television division for ethnic minorities could be established and it launched its first program in 2002. Up till now, all radio and television stations and media in the country were state-owned, but those stations use private media companies as their outsourcing units. This can help the national stations to improve the quantity and quality of programs but still reduce the personnel and facility mobilization. Due to the specialty of minority radio and TV programs, most staves working for those programs are ethnic minority people so that radio and TV programs can come closer to minorities when they speak in minority languages. Bilingual minority correspondents also easily understand and express content of the programs for minorities. However, the national radio station contracts those minority correspondents to work in the head-quarter in the city, while the national television prefers using local collaborators who are still living in minority areas. Radio and TV programs for minorities have been making great efforts to shorten the gap between the majority and minorities, especially to improve understanding between the two.

Since I was a child I was told funny stories about minorities by people from the majority group. These stories made me have a very strong impression of the “long-lasting traditionalness” and “underdevelopment” of minorities, which were assigned by majority people as typical features of minorities. I brought this impression with me when I first went to minorities’ living areas during my work trips. But the facts are not only those things; I was touched and more impressed by their success in preserving traditional culture than with what is called “long-lasting traditionalness” or “underdevelopment.” It is true that Vietnamese minorities are still facing many difficulties in life, such as low living standards, and high rates of illiteracy, but discrimination towards them by the majority does not help them, it only pushes them to stay isolated. It is obvious that radio and TV can be used as instruments of introducing minorities’ culture and traditional values to the world outside of their communities and bring knowledge to help improve the situation of minorities. With the same purposes of other media, radio and TV can work more effectively to help

minorities understand more about the world and make the world outside know more about minorities because of their unsurpassed advantages of presenting lively sounds and images so as to comprehensively express content.

However, media as well as radio and TV for minorities in Vietnam are not yet playing as significant a role in the life of minorities as they could because there are lots of difficulties, both coming from minorities and from media stations. It is not easy to make people who are used to oral stories, which have been handed over by their ancestors feel immediately comfortable in accepting stories brought by “small boxes” that are strange to their daily lives. Meanwhile it is hard for radio and TV stations to produce programs in special languages with specific content while lacking the personnel resources and because they are working in destitute conditions. However, I will argue that mass media, with a profile relating to the concerns and challenges that minority communities are facing, can work productively in relation on improving the lives of people. As parts of media, TV and radio are especially useful for people who are illiterate. Minorities are communities where the rate of illiteracy is quite high. In Vietnam, approximately 80% of the minority population<sup>5</sup> is unable to read or write. This means that those who belong to this part will have limited opportunities to get the information they need from newspapers and other text types of media. Radio and television are therefore very useful media that help people easily collect information even when they can not read.

Of the two media, radio is the cheaper medium that can be easier to access for poor people. “The radio news item declares a direct connection with the listeners; it establishes a sense of proximity to the ‘world out there’ with a degree of vividness impossible to capture in a printed news text.”<sup>6</sup> With only a small radio, people only have to turn it on and then they get information while they are still doing other things. According to Stuard<sup>7</sup>, radio news is at its best when it is relaying “breaking stories,” that is news which is “happening now.” This capacity to “scoop” other news media is one of its primary advantages. Despite its advantages, it only requires that people spend a small amount of money to buy a radio.

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Plan and Investment, 2006:24

<sup>6</sup> Allan, Stuard, 1999: 95.

<sup>7</sup> Allan Stuard 1999: 96



A H'mong family is watching TV  
after a hard working day

That is why radio can be popular in areas where audiences are poor and can not afford a TV. When going into minority areas in Vietnam, you can see that the appearance of radio in households is much more often than other media. It is understandable because the way radio telling stories and providing news is quite close to the way minority people have

gotten news through storytelling, which has lasted for a long time as a tradition in their lives. Radio programs produced for minorities are even more accessible when the content of programs are expressed in very easy-to-understand and easy-to-apply ways and spoken in minority languages by people who come from minorities. So radio can easily come close to minorities. It means that radio has many advantages to create a link with the local minority communities. However, the brevity of its ephemeral report is a main limitation. With the same content, radio cannot lengthen its programs as long as the TV can, because without lively images to illustrate like with TV, radio programs can cause boredom for audiences.

Television, however, has fussier requirements for its viewers to gain all the advantages it brings with it. With lively and attractive images, television is an even more effective means of transporting news. For many people, “watching television served as their primary form of relaxation and enjoyment during the time they spent away from work.”<sup>8</sup>.The combination of images, text and sound makes TV excite all the senses of people and helps viewers to more comprehensively understand messages. TV can respond to all requirements of images and sounds of an event, which audiences want to have. Television enables viewers to receive information as if they are a part of stories or directly witness the

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<sup>8</sup> Ron Lembo, 2000: 01

events they are watching; therefore people can get a comprehensive understanding of the messages. Providing up-to-minute news is also an advantage of this medium. Only staying in your house and watching TV, as you know can be the situation in all corners of the world, such as with the elections in the United States, the earthquake in China, and other such events are updated by TV to the minute. Watching television for many people became an important way for them to share their lives together when they can stay together to see movies or programs they all like and discuss interesting details of those programs before or during or after the programs start. Listening to other people's ideas about programs and discussing them with each other is a way to understand people more and even discover new things that you had not known about your friends and relatives. In his book, Ron Lembo told of his warm memory about his stepfather when he could watch some TV together with him in which he said "because little else was shared between us, watching these kinds of shows together became a way for me to learn about his life."<sup>9</sup>

However, higher expenses limit the quantity of minority users who still have a low standard of living. At present, there are still not many minority people in Vietnam who can afford a television in their house. On the other hand, TV centers are experiencing certain difficulties to produce programs for minorities, such as lack of budgets and workers and troubles related to the difficult terrains of places where they have to go to film people.

One of the purposes of this thesis is that I hope my research can partly show the potential that media can provide in helping demonstrate minority peoples' cultures as well as how it can help to improve minority peoples' lives. The research will focus on the case study the H'mong minority, which is located mainly in the northern part of Vietnam. The radio and TV stations mentioned in the thesis are the state-owned units which are Radio Voice of Vietnam and Vietnam Television stations and some other provincial TV and radio centers.

## **1.2. EARLIER RESEARCH EVALUATIONS**

It is surely hard for me to find a book or any other sort of research that worked on the matter of media for minorities in Vietnam. This thesis is one of the first studies about the

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid*: 3

role of television and radio in the life of Vietnam's ethnic minorities. Actually there are a few books and articles mentioning certain parts of the issues. For example, I found some basic information about ethnic minorities in tour guide books. It is not difficult to possess a penguin book regarding diverse cultures of some specific ethnic minorities such as Tay, Muong, Thai, and H'mong. While searching for books about Sapa and Lao Cai, in the guide books in bookshops I found basic information about The H'mong people in those areas, which also showed a summary of their culture and daily lives. Such documents partly provide people some background about the daily lives, customs and traditional rituals of ethnic minorities in Vietnam. I will mention some of those in the section which follows.

In the study titled "*The Cultural life of the Vietnamese ethnic minorities under the impacts of the process of Industrialization and Modernization*" by Binh Tran Van (2006), it is argued that differences in relation to the survival of the culture of minorities have to be seen in the context of industrialization and modernization. Because during the process of gaining knowledge and elements to improve their lives, minorities also import foreign cultural elements which lead to a decline of their traditional culture. Although Binh does not mention in detail the impacts of media as a factor in this process, but rather framed these changes more in relation to processes on the macro level of industrialization and modernization. Industrialization and modernization are too specific to the important roles of high technology and science in which the media is an important part which has made a strong impact on the life of the Vietnamese people, including minorities.

Generally speaking, there are hardly any documents directly addressing the issue I am researching, but the project by Mr. Hao Vu Quang titled "*Getting to know the communication rules of ethnic minorities in the northern part of Vietnam*" however, is one among very few of those. To do this research, Hao spent several years doing research on eleven ethnic minorities in the northern part of Vietnam to find the rules of minorities using communication means. However, this document provides some data that are considered "sensitive" and have not been admitted by the scientific examining council to be published yet. So this project cannot be used as a reference for this thesis.

Although not many published books that have been devoted to the relation between media and minorities in Vietnam can be found, among those few documents that exist, I collected some very useful data and information about the issue. One such document was, “*Solutions to better manage the radio system for ethnic minorities*” by Dau Uong Ngoc (2006), by the head of the radio division for ethnic minorities in Radio Voice of Vietnam (VOV4). Besides providing the readers with an overview of the structure of the national radio center and the division for ethnic minorities, the document compares the differences and similarities of the two systems that can help the radio draw weak and strong points to effectively produce programs for ethnic minorities. Seeing data and reading the analyses that Dau had pointed out, I learn that the way the national TV (VTV) use to produce their programs has brought considerable efforts to bring programs closer to and to better respond to minority peoples’ demands. It is because VTV5, which is the TV division for minorities, a part of the national TV center, uses their correspondents and collaborators who are local and still living right inside the minority communities to track down news and to produce programs. Therefore, the TV center does not have to transport technical devices from the headquarters, but can rent those from local stations. Moreover, minority correspondents, understand deeply the lives of their own minority cultures and better express the content of the programs, thus the outputs of those programs are more persuasive and more economical.

Using local people as the main correspondents of TV programs for minorities, which is mentioned in Dau’s book, is a reasonable solution because investigating in ethnic minority journalism generally requires that a researcher be bilingual and many journalism scholars are not fluent in two languages. This leads to restrictions in conversations between the journalism scholars and minorities during the work process. It is obvious that if the program makers do not understand the language of the minorities they want to work with, they will have trouble going in depth into the matter, even when they have translators along. The fence of languages not only restricts the mutual understanding, but limits the effects of programs as well. On the other hand, studies of ethnic minority literature, which are considerable in number, typically exclude popular journalism and only cover the topic

superficially<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, journalism meets even more difficulties to explore ethnic minorities with a sense of the autonomy of the people.

Despite the limited references that are directly involved in the issue I am concerned with here, I can refer to an abundance of documents written about the general media, which really helped me indeed. Going along with the history of media, research about the field include many quality works written by well-known journalism scholars all over the world. Going to any corner of the world, you can easily find books about medium theories, about roles or impacts of mass media on human beings' lives. Among those books, I found quite a lot of relevant works which can be used as the main references for the theoretical background for the thesis or materials for comparisons such as "Media making- mass media in popular culture" by Laurence Grossberg (1998), "Essentials of mass communication theory" by Arthur Asa Berger (1995), "News Culture" By Alan Stud (1999), "Thinking through television" By Ron Lembo (2000), "Ethnic minority media" by Stephen Harold Riggins (1992) and so on. Of those, Laurence's book gave me basic theories of media and the influences of media, including radio and TV as parts of those means in the lives of people. Going in-depth about media theories, Arthur's book provided concepts about media in many aspects and will be used as a main reference concerning media definitions brought up in the thesis. Meanwhile, Ron Lembo's work gave me a comprehensive view about roles and influences of TV in people's lives which can be referred to in the analyses of the role of TV toward the development of ethnic minorities in Vietnam. "Ethnic minority media" in another way, provided me with examples about the ethnic minority development in many places of the world, in Asia, Australia, Europe and America which can be used in comparison with the development of ethnic minority media in Vietnam.

Beside such books and documents that I mentioned above, I collected considerable data and information from articles and reports on Vietnamese and foreign media, both in text and audio or video mediums; surveys and presentations which more or less say something about Vietnamese minorities or/and media in Vietnam. Those data and information helped

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen, Harold Riggins 1992: 16



me somewhat in my analyses about the development of minorities and media for minorities in Vietnam.

In short, doing the research on “the role of radio and television for ethnic minorities in Vietnam”, despite the limitation of references which directly address my topic, I am heir to a large fortune of research about general media, which has a short but rapidly developing history. This gave me a chance to do totally new research that can be used as a useful reference source for upcoming research concerning an aspect of media, which has not been properly cared for: media for ethnic minorities.

### **1.3. THESIS RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

During the thesis, I am going to relate to the question of which roles radio and television have played in the life of ethnic minorities in Vietnam. However, this question needs to be operationalized in order to work as an empirical research question. This is due to that media, such as radio and TV, plays many roles, and from greater or lesser degrees of importance to human being’s lives, and the same is the case for ethnic minorities’. My research, therefore, will focus on the roles of radio and TV regarding the fields of education and identity preservation for ethnic minorities, especially in the case of the H’mong people. Questions posed for this issue will be:

- How do programs on radio and TV express educational content for minorities? To answer this question, there will be smaller questions needing answers such as: Which programs on radio and TV are expressing educational content? Which are the most important parts of knowledge that those radio and TV programs are focusing on? The objectives of those programs?

When answering this question, I am going to discuss the main educational content of radio and TV programs which have been broadcasting for minorities. One of the most important functions of radio and television is to orient public opinion. Due to their advantages of lively expression, radio and TV can easily persuade audiences to believe in information they provide to orient people to the true, the good and beautiful. As concluded by Ron

Lembo<sup>11</sup>, based on effects of a combination between images and text and voice, television makes such strong impacts on the thoughts of the viewers that “what we saw on television almost automatically became what we talked and argued and agreed with another about.” Affects on many human scenes, at the same time, allows television to make a stronger impression on the viewers, therefore, its orientations are faster and more effectively delivered. It is obvious that radio and television can be used as an educational instrument. For ethnic media, specific orientations given by radio and television are concretely expressed through knowledge of cultivation, husbandry and methods to help minority people control birthrate and lead a healthy life. The content of programs has to be displayed in a way that is clear and simple so that it is easy for minorities to understand and apply in their daily lives.

- How could radio and TV help preserve the identity of ethnic minorities?

Most of the minorities in my country are still living quite separately from the majority. This feature may lead then to limit importing foreign cultural elements, thus the traditional elements are strongly preserved. However modernization and industrialization are entering the lives of minorities quickly and there are trends to replace traditional elements with modern models. Radio and TV in some ways can help to popularize the minorities’ languages and cultures so that the ethnic values and history of the previous generations can be preserved to hand over to the next generations. Through programs displaying cultural performances, traditional customs, minority languages, radio and television hence support minorities to preserve their identity. Besides, through radio and television, minorities have the chance to speak their demands and proposals to the government so that their sovereignty and self-determination are strongly supported.

- How do radio and TV enter the life of minority people? Or to frame it more specific; how do radio and TV works to best serve their objectives? And even more, what are the difficulties and advantages they face with in order to produce programs that frame the concerns of the minority people?

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<sup>11</sup> Ron Lembo 2000: 02

The challenges of ethnic media are due to the difficulties they are coping with during the production process. Whether the roles of media are expressed well or not depends on how far they come into the lives of minorities. The manners and the processes that radio and television stations access for minorities to produce their programs will be described and analyzed in order to highlight the effects, significances and the persuasiveness of programs. Minorities are now mainly living in remote and mountainous areas where impediments from the terrain are among the most difficult obstacles for radio and television stations to transport equipment to their workplaces to produce programs or to build wave transceivers.

- Which changes have radio and television brought to minorities so far?

This question will focus on influences of radio and TV on the lives of minorities as seen through changes minorities have experienced due to radio and TV instructions. Changes I mentions in the thesis are most visible in the local knowledge systems, the possibility for minority-language to enter a public arena, recognition of minority culture and ways of life, education and self-determination. It is a way to evaluate how far radio and television enters the lives of ethnic minorities and how important a role they play in those peoples' lives. Hence, it helps to sort out potentials that radio and television can exploit and promote to better serve minorities. Changes mentioned in the project can be considered not only positive aspects but the negative as well. The research has been conducted with the H'mong minority. The findings will be used as materials to answer the research questions.

- Which strategies and policies have been made by the government on purpose to use radio and television as instruments to help minorities?

The answer will give an outline of policies and practical activities that the government and authorities at different levels have targeted to develop ethnic media in general, as well as radio and television for minorities. All media in Vietnam belong to state-owned units. They are acting under the control of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, which used to be called the Ministry of Culture and Information before 2007, and was funded by the government. So all policies and strategies made by the government will show how much

ethnic media is cared for and how far radio and television stations can afford to serve minorities.

- What should radio and television do to improve the quality of the programs?

Radio and television stations themselves admitted the poor quality of the content of programs for ethnic minorities. There are many reasons for that problem, but the main one is due to the lack of funding and workers in the field. Another reason is that the demand of minorities for radio and television is not high enough for radio and television stations to invest in making higher sphere programs than the existing ones. However, the higher education and standard of living minorities are getting, the more requirements about the quality and quantity they will have for programs shown on TV or radio. Therefore, resolutions to enrich programs to respond to increasing requirements from minorities are necessary so that the national radio and TV centers can compete with other overseas or foreign radio and TV stations that are being viewed by many minority people as well.

As one of the first research projects devoted to media for ethnic minority peoples in Vietnam, this research will bring significant contributions to the development of ethnic media with both outlines and some in-depth analyses about ethnic media, particularly in terms of television and radio for Vietnamese ethnic minorities.

#### **1.4. THESIS RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

It is a fact that until now, the situation in Vietnam is still very new to non-Vietnamese people. After many conversations with non-Vietnamese people I was surprised when people told me that they know Vietnam, but not more than information about the war with America or France. The situation of the minorities or media for minorities is, therefore, unknown to the world beyond the borders of the country. One of the purposes of this thesis is to give an overview to non-Vietnamese people of the common situations of ethnic minorities, as well as the ethnic media in Vietnam; especially in terms of radio and television for minorities. This research also enabled me to get to know and learn more about the situation of the minorities in Vietnam, which there have not been many documents written about in Vietnam. Doing research on media for minorities was the plan

that came to my mind long time ago, but I did not have the conditions to do serious research as I had wished until I chose the topic of my thesis. This research is expected to figure out problems that ethnic media are facing and potentials to develop media as tools to promote the development of minorities in Vietnam. By collecting ideas and requirements of minorities for radio and TV programs, I want to suggest solutions for radio and TV stations to refer to so they can improve the quality of programs so minorities will have more interesting broadcasts with abundant content and vivid expressions.

With this research, I hope to help The H'mong people in Vietnam to express their views and requests to radio and TV stations which aims to have more enjoyable and more suitable radio and TV programs. It is also to encourage them to keep preserving their culture against invasion from foreign cultures. Writing this thesis is also an opportunity for me to be a translator, bringing their concerns into the public debate.

This research is also supposed to be used as a useful reference for later research about ethnic media and minorities in Vietnam. Or it at least paves the way or suggests ideas for later research on the issue.

#### **1.4. THESIS STRUCTURE**

This thesis is structured into 5 chapters in which I gradually go into discussions on theoretical and empirical matters of the research and then give analyses based on those theories and experiences in order to answer the research questions. An outline of the whole thesis structure is as follows:

##### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

##### **1.1. Background to the topic**

##### **1.2. Earlier research evaluations**

##### **1.3. Thesis research question**

##### **1.4. Thesis objectives**

## **1.5. Thesis structure**

### **Chapter 2: Theoretical framework and methodologies**

#### **2.1. Key concepts**

2.1.1. Media

2.1.2. Ethnic minority

2.1.3. Ethnicity minority media

#### **2.2. Methodologies**

2.2.1. Interviews

2.2.2. Participant Observation

2.2.3. Collecting data and information from earlier researches

### **Chapter 3: Situation of minorities and radio and TV in Vietnam**

#### **3.1. Situations of minorities in Vietnam**

3.1.1. General situations

3.1.2. Current challenges

3.1.3. The H'mong minority

#### **3.2. Media for minorities in Vietnam**

3.2.1. The common situation of media in Vietnam

3.2.2. Media for ethnic minorities in Vietnam

3.2.3. Radio and TV for minorities in Vietnam

3.2.4. Radio and TV for the H'mong people

#### **3.3. A glance at policies of the government for developing ethnic media in Vietnam**

## **Chapter 4: Analyses, bringing empirical material and the theoretical framework together**

### **4.1. Role of radio and TV in the life of minorities**

4.1.1. Role of radio and TV as education instruments

4.1.2. Radio and TV as playing role as identity-preserving instruments

4.1.3. Limitations of radio and TV for ethnic minorities in Vietnam

### **4.2. Influences of radio and TV programs in the life of ethnic minorities**

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **5.3. Summary**

### **5.4. Concluding remarks and Suggestions for development of TV and radio in minority areas in Vietnam**

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In conclusion, in this chapter I tried to give an outline of the issues which are going to be discussed in the following chapters of this thesis. I expect to have introduced a background of the thesis with a general introduction of the research issues, earlier research relating to the topic and an overview of what I am going to deploy through the structure of the thesis. Because of the scope of limitations in a master's thesis, I will not go into discussing and analyzing all roles that radio and TV play in the life of minorities in Vietnam, but will focus on the two important roles including the role of radio and TV as instruments to educate minorities and the role of instruments to help preserve minorities' identities. Before that, I will provide information about the minorities in Vietnam and the situation of media and radio and TV development in the country as well. All of that content will be detailed in the next three chapters of the thesis.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGIES**

### **2.1. KEY CONCEPTS**

In this part I am going to present some definitions of the most mentioned concepts in the thesis. Those concepts are used as key theoretical frames of reference for all the research in this thesis. Concepts that are going to be discussed are media, ethnic minority, and ethnic minority media.

Radio and TV and the roles they play toward the Vietnamese minorities are understood in this thesis as being important parts of media. To understand the nature of radio and TV as media, their means and roles, it is necessary to understand general media. This term is also repeated many times, both when I mention the roles of general media and when I present it in relationship to radio and TV, because basically different means of the media have the same roles. However, depending on the situations and the subjects they are going to serve, their roles are expressed with more or less importance. That is why I chose “media” as an important concept to discuss in this chapter.

With the same significance, ethnic minority media is more concrete but not less important to mention as a key concept in this chapter since I am going to present research about radio and TV for ethnic minorities. So ethnic minority is also a concept that needs defining in this chapter, as it is the research subject of this thesis, of which the case study is the H'mong minority, which I have chosen as a representative of ethnic minorities in Vietnam. In this chapter, I will also elaborate on the methodology that has been used to gather the data needed in order to answer my research questions. Methodologies I used are interviews, participant observation, and collecting data and information from earlier research. All of this content is presented below.



### 2.1.1. MEDIA

Mass media has affected all aspects of human life, and from all objectives of which minorities are only a small part. By the general meaning, mass media is the means through which information is transmitted to a large audience. This includes newspapers, television, radio, and more recently, the internet.

There are many definitions given for the term “media” which is amongst the most mentioned term in our society today. When saying “media,” a lot of people refer to the term as the various means of communication, such as television, radio, newspaper and other technological tools brought into the process of mediating information and knowledge on a large scale. “Media are even understood as “technologies that can be described as the term of hardware of production, transmission, and reception.”<sup>12</sup> For example, in the computer world, the term media can even also be used to refer to different types of data storage options which are hard drives, removable drives, USB, CD-Rom, CD-R and discs. But I agree with Grossberg that “although technology is obviously crucial to contemporary communication media, they cannot be understood simply as hardware, as if they existed independently of the concepts people have of them, the uses people make of them, and the social relations that produce them and that organized around them everyday”<sup>13</sup>. In my opinion, media are things which should be defined based on the content they contain and the manner by which they are used to express the content, more than by what we can see. For example, newspaper is different from TV because it is text displayed in paper, which is different from information displayed with voices and text and images on TV. An article in a newspaper can be arranged in two or three pages maximum, which we only spend 30 minutes to read, but with TV, we can spend more than one hour for one program which has more detailed information.

From the view of etymology, a medium (plural media) is a carrier of something. If the newspaper industry is called “the press”, equivalently the industries which produce news

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<sup>12</sup> Grossberg 1998: 8

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*

and entertainment content for the mass media are often called "the media". Nowadays, it becomes common to use "media" as singular noun rather than as the traditional plural.

In his book, Gauntlett mentioned "the media" as "cultural industry"<sup>14</sup> which is understood as "a well-oiled machine producing entertainment products in order to make profit." However, Grossberg<sup>15</sup> gave out three ways of categorizing media that seem to figure in a comprehensive understanding of media. They are categorizing media according to geography or type of social relationships media are designed to construct or used to support; categorizing media under modalities and categorizing media by institutes that produce and disseminate media or sort media based on media content.

If categorizing media according to the geography or type of social relationships media are designed to construct or used to support, they would include interpersonal media and mass media. Interpersonal media are primarily used for point to point, person to person communication. Mass media are primarily used for communication from a single point to a large number of points, or from a single source to an audience that includes many people. Interpersonal media includes telephones and telegraphs. The mass media includes newspapers, magazines, books, radio, broadcasts, satellite and cable television, film, records, and tapes.

If categorizing media under modalities<sup>16</sup>, we can differentiate media according to the following modalities. One modality is the channel used in communicating, including print (books), electronic (television), and chemical (films). Another modality is the sense experience on which particular media operate: visual culture (books), aural (radio), tactile (Braille), mixed (television). Economic modalities are considered to be important as well, including directly purchased media (books, records, magazines and tapes); media that can be delivered to an audience without direct cost (network, television, radio); media that is charged for general access (cable television, Internet providers), media that is charged for the right to view specific content (pay television, films) and also media provided free of

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<sup>14</sup> Gauntlett, 2002: 20

<sup>15</sup> Grossberg 1998: 9

<sup>16</sup> Modality: a mode or point of view under which an object presents itself to the mind. According to Kant, it is the quality of propositions, as assertory, problematical, or apodeictic (Webster's dictionary, 1913)

charge. In Vietnam, media such as radio and TV programs broadcasted on VTV channels and VOV channels are provided free of charge for all people. There are some special newspapers, magazines, and books that are also provided free for minorities who are poor and lack information from media in their own languages.

Media are also categorized under the institutes that produce and disseminate media or sort media based on media content. In general, understanding the media requires acknowledging and accounting for the complexity of the media: every medium comprises and is shaped by technologies, social relationships (institutions), and cultural forms. “Each of these ways of thinking about the media is important, for each contributes something unique to how we understand the media and their relationship to society and social reality.”<sup>17</sup> From that point, we will also take advantage of media to the utmost in order to best serve our lives.

Known to be the means of communication that has a huge effect on people’s lives, radio and television are very important constituters of mass media. Despite that many new media have been invented; radio and television are still showing their necessity in our modern life thanks to their specific advantages. One advantage of radio is that users have to spend a small amount of money to possess a radio. Besides, users can get information from this means even when they are illiterate or doing other things at the same time. Meanwhile, TV has its advantages of comprehensiveness in content and expressions thanks to lively images, and sounds combined with text. Both the two means provide updated news from all corners of the world. They are also easily shared by a family or community. In order to investigate how media, like radio and television, work in peoples’ lives, this thesis addresses this question by investigating the roles of radio and television in the lives of one of the ethnic minorities groups in Vietnam.

### **2.1.2. ETHNIC MINORITY**

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid: 10

According to the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs<sup>18</sup>, the term ethnic minority in Vietnam is “a complex concept in a country that has been subject to a range of migrations over a long period of time.” To understand the concept of “ethnic minority,” I am going to analyze two concepts that constitute the term: “*Ethnicity*” and “*Minority*”.

It is written in the book by Stephen Spencer (2006)<sup>19</sup> that *ethnicity* is derived from *ethnikos*, the Greek word for “heathen.” It was widely used in the sense of heathen, pagan, Gentile, until C19, when this was generally superseded by the sense of racial characteristics. In the modern era, ethnicity has come to be generally used as a term for collective cultural identity, highlighting that a community or ethnic group are created in relation to others. The others become a mirror from where awareness of us as different and as a distinct group arises. In my own language– the Vietnamese language–both “race” and “ethnicity” have the same meaning when translated, which is to identify people in different groups which have different cultures, histories, customs and even languages or dialects. However, according to Spencer (2006), in comparison with the term “race,” ethnicity is generally taken to be a more inclusive and less objectifying concept; indicating the constantly negotiated nature of boundaries between ethnic groups rather than the essentialism implicit in divisions of “race.”<sup>20</sup>

Normally, “ethnicity” is considered an unalterable fact of life determined at birth, but modern research shows “ethnicity” in a way that can be understood as a social construction, a matter of negotiated self-identity and “imagined communities.”<sup>21</sup> Defined by Staino<sup>22</sup>, ethnicity is consequently a dynamic process, requiring at least two groups in interaction, because social isolation tends to hinder people from perceiving their commonality.

Ethnicity is also understood in a way that it involves an individual’s choice to identify with a group and the reaction to that group by outsiders. “Ethnicity is not a constant or

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<sup>18</sup> IWGIA 2004: 262

<sup>19</sup> Steven Spencer 2006: 45

<sup>20</sup> Steven Spencer 2006: 45

<sup>21</sup> Anderson 1983

<sup>22</sup> Staino 1980: 3

uniform social experience either for individuals or for groups. Rather, it is a variant, processual, and emergent phenomenon and will therefore reveal itself in different forms and with varying degrees of intensity in different social settings.”<sup>23</sup> Ethnicity is partly considered an achievement at both an individual and group level. And one important thing is “far from being an unproblematic primordial given, ethnicity can be ‘rediscovered’ or ‘reclaimed’”<sup>24</sup>. It means that ethnicity can be discovered with new or other features, or it can change after time spent with other new characteristics. There is also a fact that besides groups which disappear through assimilation and acculturation, new ethnic groups are forming. In short, the concept “ethnicity” has been defined in many ways, but the most popularly known definition is what refers to ethnicity as a group of people who perceive themselves to constitute a community because of common culture, ancestry, language, history, religion, or customs<sup>25</sup>.

It is seemingly more difficult to find a comprehensive definition for the term “minority.” According to the fact sheet no. 18 issued by the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “no definite answers have been found and no satisfactory universal definition of the term “minority” has proved acceptable. The absence of a definition has, however, neither precluded standard-setting or promotional activities nor hindered the establishment and work of the Working Group on Minorities.” In his book, Stephen<sup>26</sup> also makes wondered: “should it be assumed that only minority identity is fragile?” And further, he confirms that “Ethnic group is not a synonym for minority. It’s obvious that an ethnic group can be a majority or a minority.”

The U.N. Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities<sup>27</sup> has defined minority as below:

1) The term “minority” includes only those non-documented groups of the population which possess and wish to preserve stable ethnic, religious or linguistic traditions or characteristics markedly different from those of the rest of the population;

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<sup>23</sup> Marger and Obermiller 1987: 2

<sup>24</sup> Steven Harold Riggins 1992: 2

<sup>25</sup> Stephen Harold Riggins 1992: 1

<sup>26</sup> Stephen Harold Riggins 1992: 2

<sup>27</sup> U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1993/45 1993

- 2) Such minorities should properly include the number of persons sufficient by themselves to preserve such traditions or characteristics; and
- 3) Such minorities should be loyal to the state of which they are nationals.

Almost every definition of “minority” refers to groups of individual who are particularly smaller than the majority in a defined area; however, an acceptable definition of the term has not been found. The difficulty to reach an acceptable definition lies in the variety of situations where minorities exist. Some live together in well-defined areas, separated from the dominant part of the population, while others are scattered throughout the national community. Some minorities base a strong sense of collective identity on a well-remembered or recorded history; others retain only a fragmented notion of their common heritage. In certain cases, minorities enjoy—or have known—a considerable degree of autonomy. In others, there is no past history of autonomy or self-government. Some minority groups may require greater protection than others, because they have resided for a longer period of time in a country, or they have a stronger will to maintain and develop their own characteristics. Despite difficulties in identifying minorities, in the fact sheet no. 18 issued by the office of High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>28</sup>, a description of the term that is considered to cover almost all situations is “The most commonly used description of a minority in a given State can be summed up as a non-dominant group of individuals who share certain national, ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics which are different from those of the majority population.” In addition, it has been argued that the use of self-definition, which has been identified as "a will on the part of the members of the groups in question to preserve their own characteristics" and to be accepted as part of that group by the other members, combined with certain specific objective requirements could provide a viable option<sup>29</sup>. Moreover, the fact sheet also expands the description of minority to some groups of individuals that may find themselves in situations similar to those of minorities. These groups include migrant workers, refugees, stateless persons and other non-nationals, who do not necessarily share certain ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics common to persons belonging to minorities. These particular groups are, however, protected against discrimination by the general provisions

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<sup>28</sup> OHCHR, Fact sheet no.18: Defining a minority

<sup>29</sup> OHCHR, 2006: 96

of international law, and have additional rights guaranteed in, for example, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families; the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons; the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees; and the Declaration on the Human Rights of Individuals who are not Nationals of the Country in which they live.

However “minority” in the context of my research is limited to just small groups of people who are different, especially in race, religion, or ethnic background, from the majority population. They can be called *ethnic minorities*. Most of the ethnic minorities in Vietnam live in rural, highland or mountainous areas where they earn their living mainly by cultivation or husbandry. Living far from the urban areas, where the modern lifestyles and foreign cultures are quickly imported, those minorities tend to live close to their traditions and keep preserving their traditional customs. In my country, ethnic minorities are those who have Vietnamese nationality and reside in Vietnam, but do not share the identity, language and other cultural characteristics of the Kinh people (the majority)<sup>30</sup>.

The group I chose as the case study of this thesis is the H’mong people who are living mainly in the northern mountains of Vietnam and who still preserve many characteristics which were part of their primordial origins.

### **2.1.3. ETHNIC MINORITY MEDIA**

It is obvious that mass media has had more and more roles in the life of the majority and are affecting minorities as well. For some areas in the world, mass media plays a key role in a dynamic process that helps to define, preserve or weaken ethnic identity. “All mass media could be analyzed from the perspective of what is revealed about ethnicity”<sup>31</sup>. According to David Morley<sup>32</sup>, the media products have direct and necessary cultural effects on those who consume them. If indigenous people can transmit their indigenous knowledge using the media, then the effects on them should have been significantly

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<sup>30</sup> Poverty Task Force/ UNDP, 2002

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Harold Riggins, 1992: 03

<sup>32</sup> David Morley, 1993: 126

found. Moreover, the government can also use media as effective tools to spread their policies and help ethnic minorities in remote areas to integrate into the general development of the country. On the other hand, media could also be a weapon which the majority sometimes uses to assimilate the minority. Therefore, media has both positive and negative effects on the development of minority society.

There is a fact that in very few countries in the world ethnic minority media is cared for properly. Canada is one of a few countries where research on the Indigenous/ Aboriginal Canadians media for the Indigenous/ Aboriginal has been successfully developed. Canada even has a television station NPTN<sup>33</sup> devoted entirely to Indigenous/Aboriginal Canadians, with continuous programming. Sami people in Norway also have their own news programs on NRK, broadcasted nationwide in Norway, Sweden, Finland which is presented in Sami language with subtitles in Swedish (in Sweden), Norwegian (in Norway) and Finnish (Finland).

However, there have not been many countries where minorities have had such an achievement. Generally-speaking, ethnic minority media in many countries has not been valued enough to develop properly for years. The social influence of ethnic minority media is not well understood, because the topic has been relatively neglected. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, investigating in the field generally requires that researchers be bilingual, and many journalism scholars are not fluent in two languages. Secondly, studies of ethnic minority literature, which are considerable in number, typically exclude popular journalism or cover the topic superficially. Moreover, “sociologists share some of the blame for the paucity of research, because their preference for quantifiable information has resulted in their ignoring most literacy or journalistic sources.”<sup>34</sup>

Due to the development of technology, globalization as well as the higher levels of living standards and more knowledge gained, minorities nowadays have begun paying attention to developing their own media. Governments in many countries, including Vietnam also

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.aptn.ca/>

<sup>34</sup>Ibid: 3



started to care about their policies of ethnic minority media in order to boost national solidarity.

The sphere of media in the thesis study is limited to television and radio, which are media that affects minorities the most in my country. With their advantages of images and sounds, radio and television are bringing rapid changes to ethnic minorities where there have been many illiterate people. That is one of the most important findings in this research, after analyzing the three months of my fieldwork trip in the northern part of Vietnam where the H'mong people mainly live. Other findings will be presented in the following chapter.

## **2.2. METHODOLOGIES**

The three month fieldwork trip last summer enabled me to collect most of the necessary materials for the thesis. During the trip I carried out interviews with minority people, researchers and journalists to get the most important information for the research. Beside that, I collected many useful documents, books from libraries, museums, statistics offices etc. Living for a short time with them in order to observe their activities and other daily routines was also a way for me to discover many new things that helped to better serve the research.

### **2.2.1. INTERVIEWS**

I conducted interviews in two provinces in the north of Vietnam, where the H'mong people are mostly living. Interviews were carried out with more than 100 people who lived within 20 households and also with peddlers I met on the way to different villages in Lao Cai province and Lai Chau province. The significant points of difference between the groups interviewed in the two provinces are that the H'mong people in Lao Cai have higher a living standard, thanks to the development of tourism services, but they often have less access to radio and television. Earning money outside by running after tourists costs the H'mong people more time in Lao Cai, so that their time for entertainment is limited.

***Children never have access to TV or radio***

I took a week to go around Sapa where tourism has brought the H'mong people more chances to earn a living and has changed their lives. I first met a group of children who were selling postcards for tourists and they could even speak a little of the foreign languages, like French and English, to negotiate with foreigners. Besides the time they spent going to school, those children had to work to support their parents who were also working around the area as well. They worked so much of the time that they went home just to sleep and eat. When I was addressing their access to media, they reported having no time available for TV or radio. All the children responded that they had never accessed a TV or radio at home. Once or twice in their life they saw those means somewhere, they did not remember where, but had never touched them. They sometimes heard about them at school, but did not know exactly how those means were used and for what purpose. When I explained to them about the functions of those means, they said they wished they had one, but that they might have no time for it.

***More and more the H'mong people are enjoying the advantages of radio and television.***

I came to families of farmers I met by chance on the way to Catcat hamlet where most of the H'mong people in Lao Cai live. The first family I came to was a quite "rich" compared with the others, as I saw two radios, one for playing music tapes, and one just for the channels of the radio, and there was also a TV on the table. The man of the house was in a haste to go work in the field, but he spent time talking with me about what radio and TV mean to his life. He enjoyed the news and every entertainment show he saw and listened to everyday. He felt short of something without TV or radio. The TV programs he liked the most were the ones training farming skills and one showing H'mong folksong performances. He had learned a lot, which he could apply in his farming, especially the ways to increase the productivity of rice growing and anti-insect methods.

Seven of twenty families I asked, told me that they had a radio in their house and around 1/5 of those had both TV and radio in their house. Two families felt it would be difficult

now to go through life if they had to live without TV or radio because they brought so much knowledge to them. Both of those families have better living conditions than others.

It was shown that women and men have different routines when watching TV and listening to the radio. For example, most of the women prefer programs that show them the ways to control giving birth. It is because the H'mong people consider children to be gifts from God. They want to have as many children as possible as it is believed that children bring luck and richness. On the other hand, there is a lasting discrimination among men, who prefer boy children over girls, since they still keep thinking that only boys can maintain the continuity of the family line. Therefore, if their wife has not given birth to a boy, she will be pressured to get pregnant until the family has a boy. These old customs have burdened women with responsibilities and pressures which also affect their health. Even for some couples who have awareness about the issue, they do not know how to control birth as experiences handed from their previous generations have not guided them in such methods. Therefore, giving birth is one of the main challenges for a woman and she puts herself, as well as the life of the child at risk, if something goes wrong during the procedure. Television and radio programs guide people with methods which are simple and effective means of controlling birth thus attracting the attention of minority women. They want to have as much knowledge as possible in order to control the situation better for themselves and the baby—as well as being capable of helping other women out.

Meanwhile, men prefer news and ways to farm and traditional music shows. Men have the main responsibility for farming and harvesting, so they need to get more knowledge on how to improve their skills as landowners and farmers. Men also, to a higher extent than women, used radio and television for the purposes of entertainment.

In Lai Chau Province, I made a short film about a family and their routines of watching TV and listening to the radio. I had some difficulties in talking with them as girls, and the mother in the house could not speak Vietnamese and the others did not speak very well while I could not speak the H'mong language. Therefore, speaking through a translator partly limited the understanding between us, this led to reducing the effectiveness of the

trip. However, through the interviews I came to know the H'mong people's points of views about radio and TV for minorities and their demands for radio and TV programs, and which shows for the H'mong people partly respond to their demands. However there remain many limitations in the content and content of expressions that need to be invested in more to better serve the H'mong audiences.

***Researcher Vu Van Dau and journalists working for TV and radio centers***

Interviews with these people gave me information about the history of radio and television for ethnic minorities that could hardly be found in any text documents, because there is little research done on ethnic groups and media in Vietnam. Achievements that radio and TV have gained also proved that radio and TV are playing more and more important roles in the life of minorities.

Journalists and speakers told me about feedback they had gotten from ethnic minorities through a lot of letters and phone calls they had received. Most of the feedback thanked the journalists, had questions about programs and ideas for contributions to the programs minority audiences watched. Not few letters sent by audiences are stories the audiences want to share with the speakers about many things in life. It shows that minority people care more and more about programs on radio and TV and rely on journalists/ speakers who "talk" with them via radio and TV wave everyday. Despite there not being many shows and the simple content, TV and radio actually have made meaningful contributions to minorities.

Not only TV and radio are coming to minorities, journalists also take part in strategies carried out separately or in collaboration with other units in order to come to minorities' areas and talk with the people there. In this way, journalists can directly answer questions they were sent from audiences and viewers. This access makes radio and TV become closer and its influences are more effective. Activities that they have done in such strategies are to guide minority people in methods of birth control change customs that force harmful routines (such as using drugs, superstition etc) upon people as well as provide ways to earn living so that they can live a more healthy and prosperous life.

Such exchanges between journalists and minority people make the relationship between the journalists, speakers of radio and TV stations and minority audiences closer. This also consolidates the minorities' belief in programs they listen to or watch on radio and TV.

### **2.2.2. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION**

During the trip to the two provinces Lao Cai and Lai Chau, I had time to stay right inside the H'mong villages to carry out interviews and observe their life routines. That was a way to discover roles of radio and TV and their influence in the life of the H'mong people. In Lao Cai province, many of the H'mong people earn a living by working as peddlers in tourism areas in Sapa where many foreign tourists come who are fond of handicrafts made by minority people. These peddlers do not have spend much time at home to listen to radio and TV so the popular time they spend with those means of media is usually late in evenings. Time for watching TV and listening to radio for H'mong farmers who do not work extra jobs seems to be much more flexible since these people do not have to care much about the time they work per day. But many of those farmers choose to do one or two extra jobs to increase their income so they do not have time to be entertained with radio and TV everyday. Meanwhile, time for enjoying radio and TV for students and national officers seems to be much more, thanks to their fixed working schedules.

Below I made some tables with statistics to demonstrate the situation of the popularity of radio and television in the two provinces.

There were 116 interviewees chosen by chance, of which there are 27 students, 49 farmers, 16 peddlers, 9 national officers, and 15 others which are old people and children that are not able to work, and some others that are doing some other jobs. 35% of the total interviewees were illiterate.

#### **Table 1: Observing radio listeners and TV watchers according to age groups.**

Participants' Age	Quantity of interviewees	Quantity of ones who NEVER listen to radio or watch TV		percentage of listeners and viewers (%)*	
		Radio	TV	Radio listeners	TV viewers
6-15	18	14	8	22%	55%
16-25	25	8	5	68%	80%
26-35	29	11	7	62%	76%
36-50	24	8	10	67%	58%
50-70	20	7	12	65%	40%

\*That is the percentage counted on the basis of the quantity of people who have listened to radio or watched TV at least once.

**Table 2: Observing 68 radio listeners**

Participants	Quantity	Times/ week Listening to radio on average
Students	19	2
Farmers	31	3
Peddlers	5	1
National officers	8	6
Others	5	0.6

**Table 3: Observing 75 TV viewers:**

Participants	Quantity	Times/ week Watching TV on average
Students	27	4
Farmers	29	5
Peddlers	7	1
National officers	9	6
Others	5	2

Due to the time limits, statistics carried out within 116 people cannot be confirmed as an exact basis to make a stable conclusion of the ethnic minority media situation in Vietnam, but it is a source to demonstrate partly the increasing effectiveness of media on ethnic minority society in Vietnam. From the statistics above, we see each means of media, radio or television has its own groups of people to serve. Depending on the occupations and levels of their living standard, educated knowledge, the demands for using radio and television are different. Students and higher educated people tend to use the two means of media more often and have more chances to access radio and television as well. It shows that farmers are having more interests in the advantages of radio and television on their life, therefore, the rate of people in this group is quite high compared to other groups. It seems that the useful knowledge for harvests and crops provided on radio and TV helps them more and more in reality.

Moreover, the rate of listeners and viewers is still low, although TV and radio programs are provided without charge. It is due to the still-low living standards, which makes people unable to afford such expensive as electronic devices. The statistics above will also be used in the fourth chapter, where I will go into detail with analyses of the situation of ethnic minority and ethnic minority media in Vietnam.

### **2.2.3. COLLECTING DATA AND INFORMATION FROM EARLIER RESEARCH.**

As I mentioned in the first chapter, there are hardly any documents that were written about the topic I researched. However, I collected quite a lot of information and even some useful data relating somewhat to my research. A huge store of books and research about general media, as well as radio and TV, both in Vietnamese languages and in English are important reference sources, which suggested to me tracks to go in-depth for my research. It was easy to find such references in every library or book shop, but some of the important reference sources for my thesis were provided by the national museum for ethnic groups, while some surveys used in the following chapters were carried out by the national statistics office before my fieldwork trip. Those data and documents helped me a lot in the process as I analyzed and figured out the general situations of ethnic minorities and ethnic minority media in Vietnam. These materials are also bases and supporting details for me to analyze, compare and generalize then draw conclusions. These materials make the points of view presented in the thesis more logical and convincing despite the paucity of people participating in interviews which affects the preciseness of my surveys.

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Thus in this chapter, I have presented the key concepts which are considered as theoretical frames of reference for the thesis and the methodologies I used to collect the materials.

The theoretical frames of reference for the thesis are academic bases about media and ethnic minorities drawn and admitted by well-known scholars and researchers in the world, which gives me an orientations and a profound understanding about the field so that I can look at the research problems from a more comprehensive background.

On the other hand, methodologies I used to get the data and information for the research are empirical bases, which will be mainly based to answer the research questions.

Under the theoretical frames of reference combined with empirical materials, I am going to answer the research questions in the chapters to follow.



## CHAPTER 3: SITUATIONS OF MINORITIES AND RADIO AND TV IN VIETNAM

### 3.1. SITUATIONS OF MINORITIES IN VIETNAM

#### 3.1.1. GENERAL SITUATIONS

In Vietnam, the term “minority” is routinely used rather than the term “Indigenous People” as the latter is a complex concept in a country that has been subject to a range of migrations over a long period of time. In addition, the more than 1000 years of being a colony under Chinese rule makes the majority of the population mixed between the Vietnamese originals and Chinese ancestors.



Ethnic people are planting rice in a swamped paddy field

Vietnam is a multi-national country with 54 ethnic groups. The Viet (Kinh) people account for 86.2%<sup>35</sup> of the country's population and mainly inhabit the Red River delta, the central coastal delta, the Mekong delta and major cities. The other 53 ethnic minority groups account for around 10 million people<sup>36</sup> (13.8%). Ethnic minorities reside in 53 out of 64 provinces of the country<sup>37</sup>. 75% of them live in mountainous areas—mainly in the north and the central highlands, which cover three quarter of Vietnam's territory<sup>38</sup>. 30 out of 53 ethnic minorities have their own languages and more than 20

<sup>35</sup> EMWG Report 2005: 1

<sup>36</sup> IWGIA 2004: 262

<sup>37</sup> Information on the website of the committee of Nationalities issued in 2006

<sup>38</sup> IWGIA 2004: 262

minorities have their own literacy languages<sup>39</sup>. In some of these areas, the ethnic minorities together outnumber the Kinh. However, there has been an increase in Kinh migration into some areas over the last 25 years. This has, in some cases, disestablished the local livelihood systems, especially in areas where agricultural land is in short supply, or where new economic zones have been established and cash cropping has been encouraged (e.g. coffee in the Central Highlands).

Ethnic minorities in Vietnam are uneven in terms of population. Among ethnic minorities, the most populated are Tày, Thai, Muong, Hoa, Khmer, Nung, Cham with a population of around 1 million each, while the least populated are Brau, Roman, Odu with several hundred people each. The Viet people succeeded in establishing a centralized monarchy right in the 10th century. The Cham people once boasted a flourishing culture early in the history. The Tay, Nung, and Khmer peoples had reached high levels of development with the presence of various social strata. The Muong, H'mong, Dao, and Thai peoples gathered under the rule of local tribal heads. Many ethnic groups divided their population into social echelons, especially those who lived in mountainous areas<sup>40</sup>. Under some ethnic groups, there are different subgroups with varieties in languages and cultures that make the picture of ethnic minorities in Vietnam very diverse. The most distinct characteristic of the population of ethnic minorities is that they disperse and intermingle in all levels, from village to provinces and into the whole country. In one village, it is possible to see 2 or 3 ethnic groups living together.

Different ethnic groups, even living in the same areas, see each other as different; with distinct and diverse cultures and specificities. Beliefs and religions of the Vietnamese ethnic minority groups were also disparate. The official language in the country is Vietnamese, which is the Viet ethnic group's language, but almost every ethnic minority has their own language and nearly half of those have their own literacy language. However, minorities have to speak and study the official language from lower secondary school.

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<sup>39</sup> Dau, Uong 2006: 12

<sup>40</sup> The Committee of Nationalities 2006

These different minorities mostly live on agriculture and husbandry. They grow rice plants in swamped paddy fields and carry out irrigation. Others go hunting, fishing, collecting and live a semi-nomadic life.

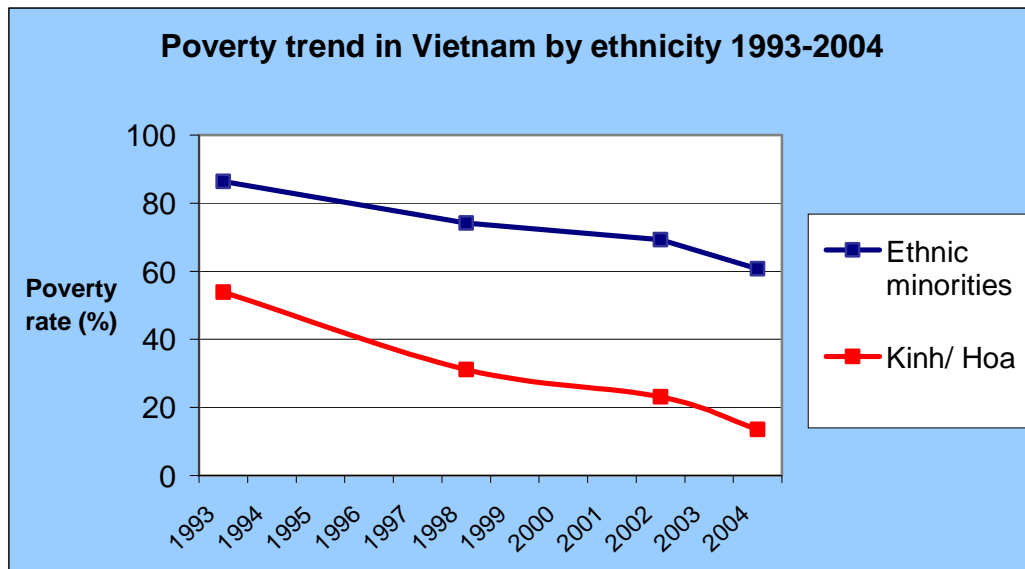
Ethnic minorities in Vietnam, like indigenous people in other countries, tend to be the “poorest of the poor” because of their distance, remoteness, lack of information, etc.

### 3.1.2. CURRENT CHALLENGES

#### *Low living conditions*

Despite the improvement of the whole economy Vietnam has attained the past decades, the poverty situation of ethnic minorities is still a serious problem. According to surveys made by the General Statistics Office, we see that there has been much change in the poverty alleviation process in minority areas, but not very quickly.

Figure 1: Poverty trend in Vietnam by Ethnicity 1993-2004.



Source: Vietnam Living Standard Survey (VLSS) 1993 and 1998, Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey (VHLSS) 2002 and 2004 conducted by the General Statistics Office (GSO)

While 58 % of the population was living in poverty in 1993, only 20% of the population were still poor in 2004. Figure 1 demonstrates that the improvements have been much more rapid for the Kinh and Hoa<sup>41</sup> populations than for the ethnic minorities. Despite the attention and efforts made by the Government, 61% of ethnic minority people were still poor in 2004, while only 14% of Kinh and Hoa people were still living in poverty. The graph shows that the gap in welfare between the majority and minority groups had grown over the decade, resulting in a situation where ethnic minorities are 39% of all poor people, despite representing only 14% of the total population of Vietnam. This represents a near-doubling of the proportion of ethnic minorities in the poor population in eleven years. If these trends remain unchanged, this graph suggests that poverty in five years' time will be overwhelmingly an issue of ethnicity.

This picture of rapid poverty reduction for the Kinh and Hoa combined with much more modest progress for ethnic minority populations holds true in every region of the country. In most regions, the poverty rate for the Kinh and Hoa in 2004 was around the national average of 13.5%. Even in regions considered more remote, the Kinh population has seen remarkable improvements in living standards. In the central Highlands, for example, 13.6% of the Kinh and Hoa population were poor in 2004. And in the North West, the poorest region in the country by a significant margin, still only 17% of the Kinh and Hoa were poor. Ethnic minorities, by contrast, have experienced far fewer gains in every region of the country except the Mekong Delta. With the exception of the Mekong Delta, ethnic minority poverty rates were above 50% in every region and are well above 70% in several regions. In one region – the South Central Coast – data show that more than 90% of ethnic minorities were living in poverty in 2004 while only 15% of Kinh and Hoa people within the same region were poor.

More worrying still are the trends in hunger (Figure 2). It is possible, using the VLSS and VHLSS data to determine the proportion of the population whose consumption is so inadequate that it is unlikely to be meeting even basic nutritional needs. In 2004, 4% of the Kinh and Hoa population were experiencing this form of very severe poverty. By

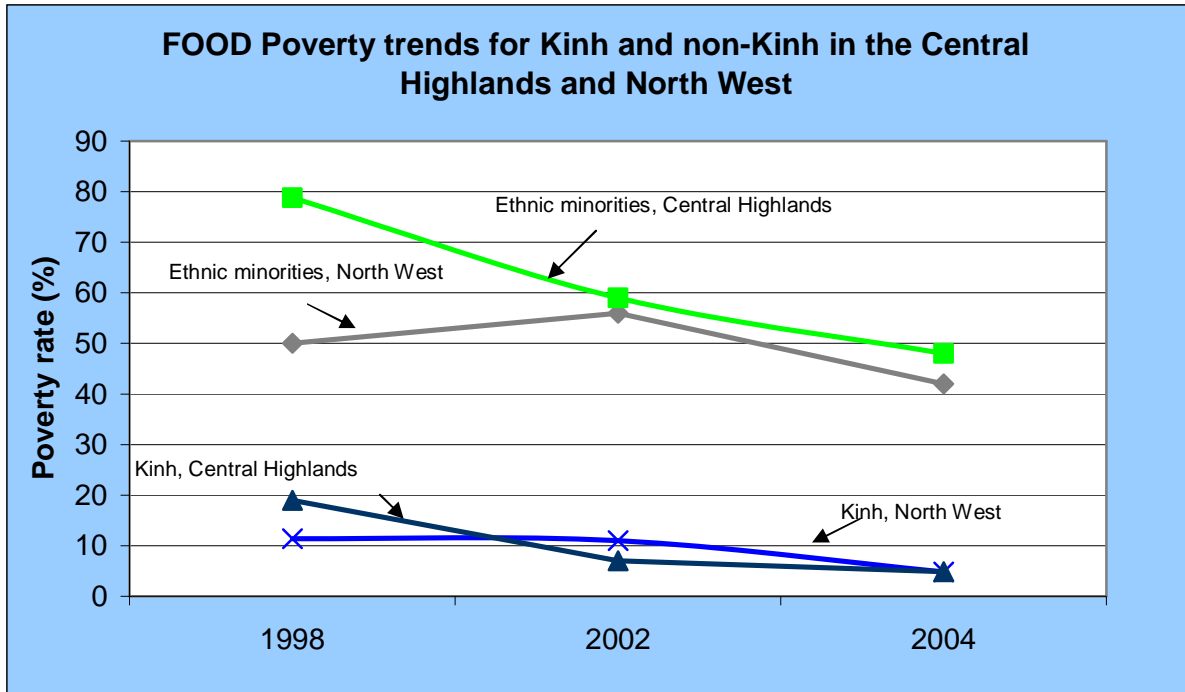
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<sup>41</sup> Hoa ethnic people are ones that originate from China but immigrated to Vietnam and have been residing in Vietnam for hundred years

contrast, more than one third of all ethnic minorities in Vietnam were living in hunger at this time. Data from some regions show particularly severe poverty. Nearly half of the ethnic minorities living in the North West and in the Central Highlands are living in hunger. And in the South Central Coast, 72% of all ethnic minorities are food poor. By contrast, less than 5% of Kinh people living in these same regions were food poor in 2004.

Research conducted in 2005 in six provinces by the Institute of Ethnic Minorities (IEM) also showed that large numbers of ethnic minorities are short of food for at least 2 months of the year. According to this study, 94% of the Thai interviewed in Nghe An and 87% of the Muong studied in Thanh Hoa do not have enough to eat for at least 2 months or longer. This figure was 54% among the Gia Rai in Gia Lai and 20% among the H'mong in Cao Bang (IEMA/WB, 2006).

Figure 2: Food poverty trends for Kinh and Non-Kinh in the Central Highlands and North West.



Source: Vietnam Living Standard Survey 1993 and 1998, Vietnam Household Living Standard Survey 2002 and 2004 conducted by the General Statistics Office (GSO)

The severity of ethnic minority poverty is confirmed by other poverty measures. The poverty gap, which represents the extent to which the consumption of the poor falls short of consumption necessary to move out of poverty, shows that these poor ethnic minorities are even poorer than the poor people of the Kinh and Hoa ethnic groups. With a poverty gap of 2.6%, the Kinh and Hoa people who remained poor in 2004 were close to the poverty line, the likelihood being that they will exit poverty with sustained, high aggregate growth rates. Poor ethnic minorities, however, with an average poverty gap of 19.2%, are much further from the poverty line. It is unlikely that high growth alone will be able to lift this group out of poverty.

The minorities in Vietnam do face some challenges when it comes to keeping up with the economic development in the country and the Vietnamese government has worked out specific policies and special treatment in order to help mountainous people to catch up with lowland people, at the same time making efforts to develop and preserve traditional cultural identities of each ethnic minority group.

Although the living condition of ethnic minorities was reported to be improved and poverty to be reduced, in 2005, poverty in disadvantaged regions was still higher than the national average. According to the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), ethnic minorities accounted for 36% of the total poor households nationwide in 2005. In the Northeast, the Northwest, the Central Highlands and the North Central Coast, where the majority of ethnic people inhabit, the poverty rate was 4-5 times higher than the average level of the whole country. Lives of ethnic minorities in remote, isolated and disaster prone areas was still very difficult. Many households had fallen back into poverty (Vietnam Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, 2005). (See table 1.).

**Table 1: Estimated poor households according to new poverty line in 2005**

Source: MOLISA

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2005</b>
Minorities	21.0	29.0	36.0
Kinh	79.0	71.0	64.0
Total	100	100	100

***Illiteracy situation***

In addition to poverty, illiteracy is one of the most serious problem Vietnamese ethnic minorities are facing which is both the reason for and the result of their poverty.

Because of poverty, many people have to help their family to earn money by doing different paid work since they were children. Most children in ethnic minority areas have to help their parents to work in fields as soon as they are able. In Sapa, Lao Cai and many

places where tourism is helping people to quickly make money, children have to work as peddlers to sell tourist hand-made products and other souvenirs, such as bamboo instruments and brocade clothes etc. Working all day in tourist points makes them have no time for studying. For all their lives, many ethnic minority people live close to rice plants and fields, so many think that learning in schools does not help them to have enough food; to the contrary it takes precious time from their food production. On my fieldwork trips, still 1/3 of peddlers asked, still believe this as well.

As a result, the rate of children that are illiterate is still high. However, illiteracy results in limiting minority peoples from gaining advanced knowledge in media such as books and newspapers that can effectively help them improve their living standards.

**Table 2: Young adult literacy rate by ethnicity in 2004<sup>42</sup>**

Factor	minimum	maximum	Young adult literacy rate		
			< 85%	85% to 92%	>= 92%
Kinh	87.4%	99.5%		5	56
Ethnic minorities	41.3%	100.0%	34	3	24

Looking at table 2, we learn that there are still ethnic minority groups which have very low ratios of literacy at 41.3%. This number mainly belongs to groups that are still “hiding” in high mountains and remote areas. Actually, Vietnam has gained significant achievements in the fight against illiteracy in the past decades, but the ratio of illiterate people in minority areas is still high, especially the rate of illiterate women and girls. According to Son Ngo<sup>43</sup>, in 1998 Vietnam had 5,393,000 illiterate people, of whom

<sup>42</sup> Tram Phan 2004: 9

<sup>43</sup> Son Ngo 2000:01



3,969,000 were young women and girls (accounting for above 70.6%). Illiterate women and girls are mainly living in highland and midland rural areas, especially remote areas. According to a survey conducted by the National Organization for Community Education<sup>44</sup>, among illiterate young women and girls, 88.7% of them are living in highland and midland rural areas. The survey also shows that among every 5 young women and girls from the age of 10 upward, there is one illiterate. Meanwhile the rate in urban areas is only 6%. However the rates among minority groups are not the same. Of the whole number of illiterate women and girls in the country, 93.2% of H'mong young women and girls, 91.6% of Ha Nhi young women and girls, 86.7% of Dao young women and girls, 82.6% of Gia Rai young women and girls, 82.3% of Ba Na young women and girls can not read and write.

The illiteracy situation of ethnic minorities is now experiencing considerable improvement after campaigns by the government for education such as *Education for all* (1990-2000), Vietnamese Education Development Strategy to year 2010. According to Tram Phan<sup>45</sup>, in 2004, the average rate of literacy<sup>46</sup> of ethnic minorities all over the country was 72.2%. However, the gap between provinces and regions is still high. The minimum rate of literacy belongs to places far away from the cities in mountains and remote areas with only 43.3% of literate people. Especially in Lai Chau where the H'mong people inhabit the most, the situation is still serious.

“For men, the minimum rate is 63.1%, in Lai Chau province, and this is the only province with male rate less than 70%. For women, the minimum is 39.8%, in Lai Chau province, and there are 6 provinces with female rates below 70%.”<sup>46</sup>

Although a lot of efforts have been made, both by the government and authorities at lower levels to improve the literacy situation, there still remain many obstacles. One of those is due to the long-lasting belief of minorities about self-education at home and education at school. Many of them still consider knowledge handed over by their previous generations within their own communication to be more reliable. The

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid:2

<sup>45</sup> Tram Phan 2004: 9

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

difficulties of traffic, which makes them cross the high mountains on lateritic roads to go to school, also lower the quantity of people going to school. Besides, unsuitable training methods in schools contribute to reducing students' inspiration to study at school.

Illiteracy remains a serious problem in Vietnam in minority areas. It partly results in minorities' limited access to press and media, especially media with text, as with other institutions that are part of the tools improving welfare in the country. Therefore, there comes one more reason to explain the more important roles of TV and radio in the lives of ethnic minorities compared to the roles of other media.

### **3.1.2. THE H'MONG MINORITY**

The H'mong used to be called the Meo (or Mieu). Now the H'mong are still called the Mong in some places, but normally known as the H'mong in most parts<sup>47</sup>. According to research, the H'mong and the Dao originate from the same ancestors. From the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, the two groups separated from each other and established their own ethnic minority group. The H'mong first migrated to Vietnam from China about 200<sup>48</sup> years ago and chose the district Mu Cang Chai, Lao Cai province as their first settlement. The H'mong nowadays are the 8th largest ethnic group in Vietnam with over 700,000 people<sup>49</sup>. They have spread to several provinces around Lao Cai, but they still consider Mu Cang Chai to be their homeland. The most popular surnames of The H'mong people are Vang, Thao, Giang, Sung, Cu, Ho,... but Giang is still more common.

The H'mong language belongs to the H'mong-Mien group of the Austro-Thai language family. Because of their dispersion and geographical isolation, the various groups are separated from each other by language, dress and customs, which may vary greatly from region to region and even from village to village. Their language has been divided into four main groups, consisting of over 80 sub-dialects.

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<sup>47</sup> Viet Quan, Hoang 2004: 5

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*: 6

<sup>49</sup> Committee for Nationalities, the 10<sup>th</sup> term Vietnamese Parliament 2000

The H'mong people wear green, black, white and floral colored clothing with lots of silver jewelry. Each color shows which group they belong to. Many generations of the H'mong live together and the grandparents watch over the children when the parents are working in the fields. They use buffalo to plough the fields, and these animals are kept in an area that is attached to the house.

The H'mong usually live in hamlets which are made up of eight or more wooden houses, most of them have a small vegetable garden. When building their houses, the H'mong must follow certain rules. H'mong houses must face downhill and no two houses are directly in front of each other. They must also be built on ground their ancestors find acceptable. Most groups have a school, but traditionally the parents teach their children from a very young age.

Education is free and most of the young children go to school in the morning. The teachers at these schools are Vietnamese and the books are also written in Vietnamese, but very few H'mong understand or read this language. In the afternoon they help their parents in the house or the fields. Sometimes the children like to try to catch fish in the nearby streams.

In northern parts of Vietnam where the H'mong are living, the climate has specific periods of high humidity and dryness. The rainy season is from May to September with a maximum of 4,723 mm and minimum of 2,064 mm of rainfall. Because of the weather, the H'mong can only grow one crop of rice per year, which is enough to feed the people for six months. As the H'mong eat rice with every meal they then have to buy it from other areas. Every village grows rice, leafy vegetables, beans, herbs and potatoes. In the markets the H'mong can buy and sell fresh vegetables as well as live chickens and dogs. There are tiny food stalls where they sell bowls of steaming rice and noodles.

The H'mong people must grow their crops on the side of mountains on terraces. They have a tradition called "slash and burn" which is when they cut down the trees and set fire to the land before getting it ready to plant crops.

In the war time, the H'mong people contributed in supporting the national troops to obtain independence from foreign invaders. Nowadays, despite their changes, the H'mong minority is one of the groups which has the lowest standard of living and has the most difficulties in accessing entertainment as well as mass media. The H'mong give much respect to their traditions and tend to keep handing down to younger generations old customs as well as the old routines of living. They carefully avoid outside impact, and rarely accept giving up their habits to receive new things from the outside. This is why they have been able to preserve the status quo of their traditional society from the past. It is also the reason why they have more difficulties in reach higher standard of living than many others.

The H'mong have a unique and diversified culture and enjoy their folksongs very much. Their favorite TV or radio programs that they want to access are the folksong shows. For many reasons, radio and TV are still more like a means for entertainment, than a means for education and for other demands.

Radio in modern society is the cheapest medium, with easy access to information. With radio, people can get news about different issues from all over the world. Not having to stay next to the radio while listening allows people to work on other things and still get news or enjoy their favorite radio programs. For ethnic people, radio and television can also work as a means to help protect their own languages and identities.

Protecting the world's oral and intangible heritage and revitalizing the rich cultural diversity through its educational and cultural programs and promoting languages as a means of communication, interaction and understanding was UNESCO's goal on the eve of International Mother Language day 2004<sup>50</sup>. This is celebrated annually on February 21, and aims to promote the recognition and practice of the world's mother tongues, particularly minority ones. In promoting the recognition and use of mother tongues, media, such as radio and television, have important roles.

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<sup>50</sup> UNESCO 2004

The Indigenous language radio stations are very welcome contributions to the notion of promoting languages. Radio can be, to some extent, an instrument to promote traditional knowledge that has been preserved through generations. This knowledge consists of experience from working to secure subsistence from nature<sup>51</sup>.

## **3.2. MEDIA FOR MINORITIES IN VIETNAM**

### **3.2.1. THE COMMON SITUATION OF MEDIA IN VIETNAM**

In Vietnam, all means of media are now state-owned and under the management of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. In theory, there is no private media in Vietnam. However, in the past years there are more and more private media and communication companies being established. Those companies are not allowed to broadcast or issue their own products, but tend to act as outsource companies for newspapers and radio or television stations. In one way, those companies produce articles and programs as directed by the state-owned media companies and stations. On the other hand, those private companies also produce their own programs and articles then market and sell those products to state-owned companies. Concerning the state-owned companies, because of the lack of staff and technology in the production process they are going to use private companies as one of the important sources to have more programs broadcast or articles published.

Nowadays, Vietnam has more than 300 newspapers and magazines<sup>52</sup> of which every province and almost every ministry has its own newspaper. Some of the biggest newspapers such as Nhan Dan (the People), Lao Dong (Labour), Dai Doan Ket (National Solidarity) etc., are also considered to be effective propaganda for the government's policies and the Party's lines.

Television came to Vietnam in the 1960s and radio has had its journey in our country since the 1920s. Compared to newspapers, the number of television and radio stations is far fewer.

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<sup>51</sup> Nils Jernsletten: 86

<sup>52</sup> Huong, Dinh: 01

The Voice of Vietnam (VOV) is the biggest radio station in the country, which is also the national radio, directly run by the ministry of Culture, Information and Communications. VOV was established in 1945 after gaining independence from France. With a frequent coverage of more than 90% of the country and a regular number of listeners from 70 countries around the world, VOV continues to be one of the most effective means of media in Vietnam.

Currently, Vietnam Television, or VTV, the national TV station is the biggest TV station. Officially formed in 2003, after moving its management responsibility from Vietnam Television to the Vietnam Ministry of Post and Telematics, Vietnam Television Corporation (VTC) now is a competitor of VTV. Similar to the case of provincial newspapers, all 61 provincial television stations are directly under the management of the national television station.

Established on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1970, Vietnam Television, the national broadcaster of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was the only nation-wide TV station in Vietnam. At that time, it was still an editorial department of Radio "Voice of Vietnam". In 1976, it was separated from Radio "Voice of Vietnam" and moved to its current location in Giang Vo. Vietnam Television became an official name on April 30<sup>th</sup> 1987 and since then, it has also become the national television.

Since then, both these media have influenced minorities by causing changes in the lives of the people, especially by changing their access to information.

### **3.2.2. MEDIA FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES IN VIETNAM**

Ethnic minorities not only have access to the general media, but also have their own media or media especially produced for them. From 2001 to 2005, nearly 24 million volumes of free of charge newspapers and magazines had been delivered to ethnic minorities<sup>53</sup>. Media products delivered to ethnic minorities every year are produced for all people and some are for more specifically produced for ethnic minorities. The

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<sup>53</sup> Ha Hung 2005: 3

Committee of Nationalities, which is responsible for all affairs in the government concerning ethnic minorities, has deployed strategies and activities to cooperate with other offices to produce publications and press to best serve ethnic minorities. In one way, this office ordered press units all over the country to produce programs, magazines or parts of newspapers and magazines which have content about ethnic minorities. On the other hand the office produces its own publications, of which the newspaper and the magazine with the same name *Ethnic minorities and Development* and the magazine *Nationalities* are the main publications. All those newspaper and magazines have specific content reflecting the news, culture, and traditions of different ethnic minorities in the country.

However, media means that aim to specifically serve ethnic minorities in Vietnam are still poor, both in the quantity of publications and in the content. There are two main reasons for the problem. The first is the lack of journalists and workers who are interested in developing ethnic media. The hardest challenges for journalists and for those who are working for ethnic media are ethnic minorities' languages and difficulties in transportation. Working in the field requires them to not only be bilinguals, but to have enough courage overcome obstacles on the way to remote or mountainous areas, such as, inconvenient roads and poor living and travel conditions during the work trip. The second reason is that most of the ethnic minority people are not well educated; therefore, the sphere of content is also limited. The simpler and easier to understand the content, the more useful the media is for ethnic minorities.

In recent years, media for ethnic minorities has increasingly served minorities positively because of higher investments and positive changes, both in content display and the quantity of programs and publications. Currently, there is only one newspaper named "*Ethnic minorities and Development*" and three other magazines for ethnic minorities including: *Ethnic minorities and Development*; *Cultures of Nationalities*; and the *Nationalities*. All of them are displayed in both official languages and in ethnic minorities' languages. The newspaper and the magazine with the same name *Ethnic minorities and Development* are the most important press publications for ethnic minorities. Besides the newspaper *Children and the Teenagers*, the two biggest

newspapers for children and teenagers, also have special volumes every month for ethnic minority children and teenagers. Those newspapers enable children and teenagers in mountainous and remote areas to understand more about traditions, and cultures of different ethnic groups in the country and to relate to the issues of other youths in other ethnic groups and to be able to make more friends from the same age in other ethnic groups. They can help them to relate to the world outside their ethnic group, besides seeing themselves better in the face of others.

Radio and television programs for ethnic minorities in Vietnam began to enter their lives around the 1950s-1960s<sup>54</sup>. Besides VOV4, which is the ethnic radio channel belonging to the national Radio Station, there are also radio divisions for ethnic minorities in every province where they live. It is also the same situation for TV for ethnic minorities. VTV5 is the main TV channel broadcast nation-wide for ethnic minorities in different ethnic dialects, but there are yet more provincial TV programs, which are part of the provincial TV channels, which are especially broadcast for ethnic minority people in the province and in some nearby neighboring areas. In spite of there still being poor content and a shortage of journalists who are really interested in the matter, programs for ethnic minorities on TV and radio have increasing influence in changing the lives of ethnic minority people. Those programs bring updated news, farming experiences, knowledge and training and music shows in specific ethnic languages that are suitable and useful for specific ethnic peoples.

Besides those means of media, the committee of Nationalities has a bilingual website providing basic to detailed information about ethnic minorities, policies issued by the government for the ethnic minorities and content summaries of newspapers and magazines and programs produced by the committee about ethnic minorities. However, the content in English is still limited. In addition, some scholars and researchers have established websites to publicize and introduce their research.

### **3.2.3. RADIO AND TV FOR MINORITIES IN VIETNAM**

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<sup>54</sup> Dau, Uong 2006: 6



The national television channel for ethnic minorities (VTV5) was founded in 2002 especially programming for ethnic minority viewers in their dialects. After the broadcast trial, since February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2002, the channel was established and had its first official broadcast on 2004. Since there are over 50 ethnic minority groups mainly living in mountainous and remote areas, the channel has been evaluated as being the most effective way to connect with them and bring them information about Government policies and events in Vietnam. In this way, the aim is to narrow the gap in development between regions in the country. VTV5 is now still part of the national television station (VTV). Its purpose is to edit, exploit, and produce TV programs in different ethnic languages to serve ethnic minorities. Besides, the department is also responsible for producing some programs about ethnic minorities that are broadcast weekly on other channels of the station such as *Cultural colors of Vietnamese ethnic groups* broadcasted on VTV2; *Ethnic groups and Development* broadcasted on VTV1.

The content of the programs' focus on introducing cultures of ethnic groups in the country is providing news and knowledge about husbandry and agriculture and healthcare and ethnic music programs. Those programs are often televised about 30 minutes each time. The quantity of ethnic minority languages spoken in those TV programs has been increasing after the years. When it was set up in 2002, VTV5 was broadcasted four hours per day in five languages, but in 2004 the duration was doubled and the quantity of languages used was ten. Since 2005, there have been thirteen languages used for the broadcast which are twelve hours per day. The duration of news programs is also increasing after the years. In 2006, there were three hours per day of new programs produced, but since 2007 the number increased to three and a half hour per day<sup>55</sup>.

In addition, provincial television stations are also outsourcing units for VTV5 to have new programs. Provincial televisions also produce their own programs to serve the local ethnic minorities and ethnic minorities nearby. Both of the two systems are cooperating in tandem to best serve ethnic minorities.

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<sup>55</sup> History of VTV5 development 2007

Born before ethnic TV channels, the national radio channel for ethnic minorities (VOV4) has a long history.

More than ten years after the establishment, VOV set up the department of ethnic minority broadcasting (VOV4) in 1956 with six programs in six different ethnic minority languages including Jorai, Bana, Ede, H're, M'nong and Chau Ma. Since 1990, VOV4 has broadcast programs in eight ethnic minority languages, which are H'mong, Khme, Ede, Jorai, Xudang, K'ho, Thai and Cham. Cooperating with VOV4, provincial programs have improved over the years.

*In the north of the country*, after 1954 there were already audio broadcasts for ethnic minorities produced by radio stations in the autonomous Viet Bac (East-North) since 1961, and the autonomous Tay Bac (West-North) since 1964 in four languages including Tay-Nung, H'mong, Thai, Dao. After the dissolution of those autonomous areas, audio broadcasts for ethnic minorities were transferred to provincial television stations. Up till now, nine ethnic minorities have had audio programs in their own languages.

*In the South of the country*, audio broadcasts for ethnic minorities were born after the national reunification in 1975, but the speed of development was quick, especially in the last years of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some provinces even have two or three programs for ethnic minorities per day, such as Gia Lai, Daklak, Kontum, Lam Dong, and Binh Phuoc.<sup>56</sup>

If before the year 2004 in the whole country there were 26 radio and television stations producing audio broadcasts in 18 ethnic minorities' languages, since the middle of 2005, there have been 33 radio and television stations producing more than 40 radio programs in more than 20 languages<sup>57</sup>. In many provinces, radio for ethnic minorities has been produced at all levels of administrative units, ranging from the province's radio programs, to the districts' and to the villages'. Currently, the radio waves of the national radio station also reach 95% of the entire population in the country.

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<sup>56</sup> Dau, Uong 2006: 14

<sup>57</sup> *ibid*

Despite facing the same difficulties as TV stations, both the two radio systems at the local and national level are cooperating to come closer to ethnic minorities and better serve them.

### 3.2.3. RADIO AND TV FOR THE H'MONG PEOPLE

Television and radio programs for The H'mong people were created at the same time as when TV and radio for ethnic groups came on the scene. They become some of the most important programs for ethnic



VTV5 journalists are interviewing a H'mong woman for a documentary

minorities because the H'mong community is considered to be one of the poorest and most undereducated ethnic groups. They need help and consideration in order to raise their standard of living and have more comfortable living conditions, which TV and radio have brought to them as important tools from the government offices.

The national radio channel VOV4 had its first programs in the H'mong language in 1990. Those H'mong programs were first produced in Lao Cai, but were moved to the capital Ha Noi in 1993. VOV4 programs for the H'mong people are received and issued by local radio stations in the Phadin Mountains of Son La province, the Sinh Ho district in Lai Chau province and Quan Ba district in Ha Giang. Information provided by Mr. Dau, the head of VOV4, was that all VOV4 programs for the H'mong are now spoken by the H'mong people themselves. Out of 7 journalists and speakers working for the H'mong programs, there are 5 from the H'mong people and only 2 Kinh correspondents. On average, one person working at the H'mong radio division is responsible for creating two programs. At present, the radio programs for the H'mong people are divided into two parts including:

- *H'mong 1* broadcasting news, articles about H'mong groups and other ethnic minorities in the country, as well as all over the world, and music.

- *H'mong 2* broadcasting scientific knowledge, health care, daily life tips and popularizing knowledge about agriculture and husbandry.

The two parts are broadcasting daily and have the longest duration of VOV4 waves with 120 minutes per day while programs for other languages are only 60 to 100 minutes per day. This means that the H'mong people are especially cared for and are receiving a higher priority to develop their communities due to their lower standard of living compared to other ethnic minorities.



A VTV5 journalist is recording two H'mong men playing their traditional music instruments.

With the same content focus as the radio programs, TV programs for the H'mong people are televised about one hour per day serving mainly people in the 4 provinces where the H'mong are mainly residing: Lao Cai, Lai Chau, Ha Giang, Son La. Because of the greater complexity of producing TV programs, VTV 5 has more flexible ways to produce programs for

the H'mong people and other ethnic minorities. Instead of only dispatching journalists to the local areas where the H'mong people are living to collect information and make programs, the channel uses more outsourcing units in Lai Chau, Lao Cai and Ha Giang, Son La province to produce their programs. The local TV stations are used as effective collaborators for the channel to produce practical but economical programs. It means that VTV5 can not only produce programs updating the situation of the H'mong people everyday but can also reduce expenses for producing the programs from having the transportation expenses and having to pay a special salary for correspondents. Therefore, with the same quantity of workers as VOV4's, VTV5 still responds to requirements for everyday broadcasting, despite having more technological requirements and more personnel. In an interview in August 2007, Mrs Vua Thi Khua and Mr Sung A Lu– who have worked for more than 30 years for the H'mong division of Lao Cai province's Television– told me that every year they produce about 20% of the programs for VTV5. Most of those programs are about the H'mong culture and daily life and music programs performed by the H'mong people. Moreover, all provinces where there are H'mong

people living have their own programs with different content, but about 50% of those are music programs. The reason for the popularity of music shows can be explained based on two problems facing both the H'mong and the producers. Because of their low levels of education, the greatest need for H'mong viewers is entertainment. The H'mong account for the lowest rate of literate people. However, music shows are also easy to produce for TV centers.

Normally in all provinces where the H'mong people are living, there is only a common provincial station responsible for producing both radio and TV programs. However, there are also a number of small radio stations built inside the H'mong people's hamlets to broadcast domestic news and the desired music. Those programs are only broadcast for people within the hamlet aimed to consolidate the hamlet's coherence.

In general, both radio and TV are gaining more and experiencing more improvement in serving the H'mong people as well as other ethnic minorities. This is because of more investment and activities implemented by the government through policies which will be discussed in the section to follow.

#### **3.4. A GLANCE AT POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENT FOR DEVELOPING ETHNIC MEDIA IN VIETNAM.**

In Vietnam, the government has issued many policies that prioritize development in minority communities. Minority children are charged no fee when they go to specific schools for ethnic minorities and all of them pay a lower charge in any popular schools at all grade levels. When those children go to university, they will have to meet lower requirements in the entrance exams and will be get exempted or pay a lower fee at the university as well. In all other public services, such as health care, electricity, water supply services, etc, minorities are also given certain priorities. They either do not have to pay for the services or pay lower charges. Minority students in schools for minorities are also provided newspapers and books for free in order to better serve them in their studies. Policies by the government were concretely expressed in the papers as follows.

Since the resolution 22 of 1989 for enhancing the development of ethnic minorities, which was issued by the Politburo of the Party Central Committee (the highest office of the Communist party), the government started campaigns to work towards the development of media for ethnic minorities. The resolution emphasized that “it’s necessary to invest in developing ethnic media and increase the quality of programs for ethnic minorities.”

In 1990, the government also issued Decision No. 72 to target boosting investment in building transceiver stations in provinces to transmit programs produced by the national radio and TV stations. The Decision also asked provincial radio-TV stations to increase short daily broadcasts.

The resolution about *Affairs concerning Ethnic minorities* issued in the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of the party central implementing office, the 9<sup>th</sup> term also emphasized the importance of conducting research and in the preservation of traditions and cultures of ethnic minorities. Under the Decision 122 issued by the Prime Minister in 2003, all TV and radio stations were asked to increase the duration of programs and broadcasting time per day.

The Decision 1637 issued by the prime Minister on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2001 about annual free provision of all media for ethnic minorities especially enabled the Committee of nationalities cooperating with all media-producing units to better respond to the needs of ethnic minorities.

On the basis of those policies, all TV and radio stations and the committee for Nationalities, which is the office mainly responsible for ethnicity affairs, have assisted ethnic minorities in the country to partly come towards the common development of the country through the means of media. Those policies enable minorities to access public services and enjoy facilities, which are new and still strange in their daily routines, so it takes time for such policies to really be implemented in minority communities. In addition, because the living conditions of minorities’ people living in remote and mountainous areas are much lower compared with the majority people who live in the plains with the convenience of infrastructure, it is difficult for those policies to be carried

out in reality or have 100% expected effectiveness after the implementation. For example, distributing newspapers to people in high mountains will take deliverers more time than doing the same task in the plains, therefore, deliverers will wait to collect several numbers of newspapers for each delivery. The gap between each time there is a delivery thus is longer. As a result, minorities cannot get updated information and news from such newspapers.

In fact, policies issued by the government to help minorities develop their communities have not yet been enough to fulfill the requirements of real situations. However, those policies have helped minorities in the past few years to somewhat approach considerable improvements.

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In short, in this chapter I have provided the most basic information about the situation of minorities in Vietnam and an outline of media in Vietnam including the development of radio and TV for ethnic minorities and a glance at the government's policies aimed at enabling minorities to shorten the gap between them and the majority. Through this chapter we saw that minorities in Vietnam still have many remaining difficulties, especially their serious poverty situation, and the low development in health care education. The reasons for this are both the lack of proper investment from the government and from their traditional customs that make them hesitant to accept using public services provided by the government free of charge. However, radio and TV for minorities which are from the welfare the government has provided for minorities are working quite effectively as important tools to help minorities erase the barriers to getting a higher standard of living through useful and practical programs. Television and radio are proving to be a have greater necessary contributions in minorities' lives. These contributions will be detailed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4: ANALYSES BRINGING EMPIRICAL MATERIALS AND THEORETICAL FRAME TOGETHER**

### **4.1. ROLES OF RADIO AND TV IN VIETNAM TO THE LIFE OF ETHNIC MINORITIES**

As defined by Stephen Harold Riggins<sup>58</sup>, ethnic minority radio aims to “promote the development of the cultural identity and expression of a country or area, to be an instrument of participation for the population in the development of local life, to increase the flow of information between the population and its institutions” and “to facilitate learning techniques and methods of communication”. The purpose of ethnic minority radio and TV in Vietnam also does not go beyond that definition, and partly fulfills a beneficial role for ethnic minorities. Both radio and TV have introduced new ideas to minorities in many spheres and given them a more comprehensive introduction to many new fields that were enigmas to them before.

The ethnic minority mentioned in this chapter are referred to as the H’mong minority which is the case study of this thesis. With the development of media and the increasing standard of living, radio and TV are increasingly playing important roles in the life of the H’mong people. Radio and TV are not only devices that bring information and knowledge, and entertainment for the H’mong people, but also builds bridges that help the H’mong come closer to other ethnic groups and to allow the world to know more about them. Thanks to radio and TV, the H’mong are enjoying galore a more spiritual life and learning ways to enrich their daily lives. They also understand more about the world, and people outside their communities, which they used to only know through stories by word of mouth. Radio and TV are also mediums where the H’mong people tell their daily life stories and express the beauty of their culture and traditions.

Under the scope of this thesis I will focus on the roles of radio and TV as an educational tool and a tool for preserving culture for the H’mong ethnic group. Surveys I conducted

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<sup>58</sup> Stephen, Harold Riggins 1992: 175



with the H'mong people which are used in the thesis and mostly in this chapter were carried out in 2 provinces Lao Cai and Lai Chau. The 116 interviewees' responses cannot be considered to be a 100% exact representation of the entire H'mong communities thoughts., These will, however, be used as the main point of reference in combination with other sources from newspapers, books, movies, and researches in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the situation in H'mong areas, as well as the roles of TV and radio in the H'mong people's lives.

#### **4.1.1. ROLE OF RADIO AND TV AS EDUCATIONAL INSTRUMENTS**

Bringing knowledge to listeners and viewers is obviously a main function of TV and radio, but this function of broadcasting for ethnic minorities is more clearly expressed. It is partly because of the high rate of illiterate people in minority areas. In Vietnam, compared to the majority, the rate of illiterate people in minority communities is always higher. The rate of higher educated minority people is also lower than that of the majority. As mentioned in the chapter 3, there are three main reasons for that situation.

The first is the difficulties of travel. Almost every minority in Vietnam is residing in remote areas and mountains. The H'mong people persistently preserve their cultural custom to live far inside valleys surrounded by mountains or choose to live high in mountains. To go to school, H'mong children have to cross narrow lateritic roads or pathways on mountains which are very dangerous in the rainy season. In addition, many of the H'mong people, as well as other minority people, still believe that what they can learn through stories told by people of previous generations and by the patriarchs are more reliable than what they can get from books and teachers at school, who are strangers to them. Many students also quit studying at school after a short time because of unsuitable compendiums. Most of the books used to teach minority students are commonly used for all nationwide students which are written in Vietnamese and teachers are from the Kinh majority as well. When I went for fieldwork, I was told by a teacher that when she taught H'mong children, she always had to prepare paintings to illustrate the content of lessons because some of the things written in the books are quite popular for the majority people who live in the deltas, but they are really difficult to imagine for

mountain dwellers (for example mountain dwellers only see the sun set over the mountains but never know that in plains the sun also sets over the water; if there is no picture or painting, it is difficult for them to understand or imagine).

From those reasons, illiteracy prevents minority people from reading to gain knowledge and from reading news provided by newspapers and text materials. Radio is a cheap medium for them to get what they want, especially when they can listen in their own languages.

Profoundly understanding these surpassing advantages, TV and radio stations in Vietnam have made reforms in programs to respond to the needs of minority viewers and listeners.

According to the survey carried out by the general statistics office<sup>59</sup>, the rate of H'mong illiteracy is among the highest compared to other ethnic minorities. This means that the H'mong have less capability of gaining news and knowledge from newspapers and text documents. Therefore, radio and TV programs for the H'mong people have become one of the main sources for them to have access to news and necessary knowledge.

Reading scripts daily broadcasted on VOV4 and VTV5, I see the distribution of programs for the H'mong people as follows:

**Table 1: Content distribution of VOV4:**

News	35%
Education and trainings- Science	25%
Music	30%

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<sup>59</sup> Tram Phan 2004: 4

Other	10%
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**Table 2: Content distribution of VTV5:**

News	25%
Education and trainings- Science	37%
Music	23%
Other	15%

As seen on the above tables, education, training, and science account for a considerable amount of the whole broadcasting time of both radio and TV. VOV4 devotes 25% while TV uses 37% of its contents to guide the H'mong people in knowledge about health care, popular science and ways to have productive harvests. That information is very necessary and close to issues highlighted in the H'mong people's daily life

***Health care programs***

Some years ago, the majority of the H'mong people in mountainous areas still kept their old customs in health care. For example, when a H'mong gets sick they will go to "thay mo" (wizards) in their area to ask for a remedy instead of going to clinics or hospitals. They think that God hands over magical powers to "thay mo" so that those people can cure every disease by using their magical sorceries and sending their requests to God. "Thay mo," therefore, plays an important role in guiding the H'mong people to live a healthy and prosperous life. This belief has been passed down from one generation to the next for a long time and it is seemingly impossible to change.



A VTV5 journalist was recording scenes for a health care program

In addition, up till now the H'mong believed that the more children they give birth to the more prosperous they will be, thanks to the support by their ancestors and God. This means that giving birth to their children is also God's decision; it is not something that they can control as they want. So the increase in the H'mong population used to be much higher than any other minority for years, despite the high rate of poverty and low standards of healthcare. Uncontrolled birthrates have also resulted in more serious poverty in the H'mong community.

Scripts of VOV4 I collected showed that the radio broadcasts give considerable time to provide information about the benefits of healthcare in hospitals and clinics. Speakers bring out information about the threats of diseases in each season and basic knowledge about syndromes of popular illnesses. For some diseases that patients need timely cures before being delivered to the hospital, radio also helps the H'mong to have the necessary knowledge in simple and concrete instructions. To increase the effects of broadcasts, journalists carried out interviews with H'mong patients in hospitals who were rescued from diseases that the H'mong used to think was impossible to cure.

Information about methods for controlling the birthrate is also among the most focused in radio and TV broadcasts because having a lot of children in a family is an ingrained tradition of H'mong families. While the H'mong's living conditions are still at a low level, having many children will contrarily reduce their life quality and make the poverty situation more serious. There have been many children were sick to the death because of malnutrition and lack of proper health care. Meanwhile, many other children have to help their parents earn a living by working in the fields or becoming peddlers. In Sapa, Lao Cai where tourism is quickly developing and enables the H'mong people opportunities to earn money by selling souvenirs to tourists, I met many H'mong children who were working as peddlers during the week instead of going to school. Besides, when pregnant, the majority of H'mong women still work until some days before they give birth. Lack of information about healthcare for pregnant women, plus the old custom to give birth at home has caused the death of many expectant mothers. Therefore "reducing birth rate to improve the life quality" which is the government's orientation has been given more attention in radio and TV educational programs for the H'mong people. Broadcasted content for controlling the birthrate include methods of preventing pregnancy and guidance to use contraceptive devices. Guidance for healthcare for pregnant women is also provided to the H'mong people. All this content is expressed in easy-to-understand instructions. Looking at the Table 2, we see the H'mong broadcasting division of the national TV channel for ethnic minorities reserved 37% of its screening time for education, trainings and science. An important part of that screening is for reports, including reports about healthcare programs oriented by the government, propagandizing reports of knowledge about reproductive healthcare. With its advantages of lively images, TV programs have proven the power of being able to give the H'mong viewers more understandable and persuasive information. Nguyen Quoc Khanh of VTV5 told me that VTV5 reports about health issues were produced in an attempt to help the H'mong people, who absolutely believe in old remedies by wizards, to have truthful information about diseases and effective treatments by doctors in hospital and clinics. Lively images of patients who were denied by wizards but could be cured by doctors effectively showed that they misunderstood modern medical care and practice. Images are also an advantage of TV to be able to warn the H'mong people about the threat of common diseases for

mountain dwellers, which actually can lead to their death if they still do not get the proper care, such as malaria, pneumonia, etc.

Speakers from VOV4's H'mong division told me that they received many phone calls and hundreds of letters from the H'mong audiences every month which posed questions about issues that were broadcast or just to share the audience's emotions after listening to news and other programs. The questions sent by minorities that they are most interested in mail are about health care. For many of the H'mong people, the speakers who speak with them on radio and TV everyday have become very close to them as friends. To increase the effectiveness of those programs, speakers of VOV4 and VTV5 paid visits to minority areas. Many of those visits were part of the strategy conducted in collaboration with doctors to propagandize healthcare and methods of birth control. In this way, speakers also tell the H'mong people about healthcare as they would on radio or TV, but now they meet their "fans" face-to-face so they can speak directly with them, answer their questions and distribute condoms. Ms. Hoa, a speaker for VOV4 told me that she saw many of the H'mong people being moved to tears when they met and talked with her because they did not think they would meet their "special friend" one day. Thanks to the useful information speakers send to audiences and the efforts they have made to come close to the H'mong people, information speakers provide the H'mong becomes more reliable and convincing. The family which I made a film has 6 children, while their living standard was quite low. The father of the family highly expressed his gratitude to the radio journalists and doctors who came to his village to instruct people in methods of how to prevent pregnancy for women and teach people useful knowledge for taking care of pregnant mothers and preventing common diseases. He would have had more children if he had not been provided with such information, which might have led to the result that some of his beloved children would be illiterate or have to work to help their parents earn money.

It is obvious that by providing useful health care programs broadcasts on radio and TV those media have been contributing considerably in the attempt to help the H'mong minority to access necessary medical knowledge and proper healthcare services. The broadcast's information has drawn more and more attention from the audiences as the

H'mong people have become more aware that it does help them to improve their quality of life and that the old customs for healthcare are no longer suitable.

### ***Instructions for agricultural work and husbandry***

Most of the H'mong people still live on agriculture and household husbandry, which is a long-lasting tradition since they first came to Vietnam. Therefore, although VOV4 and VTV5 programs also guide people in new ways to earn a living such as trading their handicraft products, those programs mainly focus on instructing people on how to improve productiveness and quality of agricultural work and husbandry.

Everyday VOV4 broadcasts knowledge on agriculture in its news programs and the specific program titled *Agriculture development*. The content of the latter focuses on the ways to optimize harvests and introduction to new high-yield rice varieties. The H'mong used to have old routines in doing agricultural work which affect sustainable development. For example, they used to burn off mountainous land for cultivation. This routine can sweep away the fertility of the soil then lead to soil erosion when heavy rains come. The routine also causes the loss of plants in forests and mountains which provide a defense barrier for the plains; thus it will endanger people living in plains when the rain causes a flood falling from high above in the mountains. Therefore, guiding the H'mong people to effectively till the fields in the right way is one of purposes of “*Agriculture development*.” Real stories and plays and explanations by prestigious experts are broadcast on VOV4, partly help to raise the H'mong people's awareness of negative affects of the old cultivation routines. Taking its advantage, VTV5 co-works with provincial TV stations to produce “Agriculture development” programs broadcast both in VTV5 and VTV1- the general channel nationwide broadcast. All volumes of “Agriculture development” broadcast on VTV1 were also re-televised on VTV5 with subtitles or voice-overs in the H'mong language. VTV also organized discussions or talks with scientific agriculturists to respond to the audiences' questions and to consult with the H'mong people and other minorities on the right cultivation methods in terraced and flat fields. Many of those programs were broadcast live so that the H'mong farmers could directly ask experts questions via hotline telephones and quickly receive the answers or

even participate in discussions with scientists about cultivation and husbandry. VTV2- the nationwide broadcast channel devoted to Education and Sciences- produced a game show called “Competitions of skilled farmers” in which farmers of all provinces and ethnicities were qualified to take part in. The game show was re-televised in VTV5 and drew much attention from the audiences because it provided agriculture and husbandry knowledge in simple and lively expressions.

Beside agriculture, husbandry is also the main source of income for many of the H'mong people. Some of the most important radio programs focus upon how traditional husbandry models can be improved; and by this more profit can be made out of the productive rate of the land. Among the most popular models presented to the H'mong people, the Garden-Pond-Cage model was introduced to the H'mong living in plains with convincing images on TV. This model shows the combination of gardening and having fish in ponds and raising pigs in cages. Meanwhile, the husbandry of farms has been instructed to the H'mong living in high areas. This method instructs the H'mong in how to raise the animals in industrial ways which require them to clean the cages and feed the animals according to certain schedules.

In conclusion, TV and radio have played a very important role in mediating scientific and medical knowledge to the H'mong people. Taking advantage of lively sounds and images, both radio and TV have effectively brought the H'mong people easy-to-understand information and easy-to-apply experiences in helping to improve their living standards. Radio and TV are not only providing knowledge and information about healthcare and agriculture and husbandry but also considerable devoting to strategies to reduce poverty and eradicate illiteracy. However due to the scope of the thesis, in this section I focused on healthcare and agriculture-husbandry programs which showed clearly the role of TV and radio over the past few years.

#### **4.1.2. THE ROLE OF RADIO AND TV AS IDENTITY-PRESERVING INSTRUMENTS**



Assessing the role of radio in identity preservation for minorities, Marianne A. Stenbaek<sup>60</sup> said “it gave the feeling, ‘yes, we are the same people. We really are one people.’ It means much for the creation of a national identity. If there is a gathering force, the radio has been of immense importance in this respect”. This conclusion speaks to the community coherence that radio can help enhance for a nation. It did help the Greenlandic people, which were the case study of her article, come close to one another and enhance the national identity as well as encourage coherence within the Inuit community. In addition, both radio and TV as instruments can, at their best, help the minorities to show their own culture and their unique features. By this way, radio and TV bring to the world outside a clear understanding of what minorities are; besides becoming a mirror for ethnic groups self-identification.

#### **4.1.2.1. RADIO AND TV HELP PRESERVE MINORITIES’ LANGUAGES**

Language is often seen as the soul of an ethnic group. Basque and Occitan activists, who are members of the two minorities in Southern France, considered language as “the basis to a large extent of regional identities.”<sup>61</sup> For them, the defense of minority languages is their central demand. Radio and TV have proven their significance in the process towards preserving the minorities’ languages. In Vietnam, there have been many workshops organized to discuss the roles of media in preserving traditional cultures of minorities in Vietnam. One of the most noticeable ones, which took place in 2003, gathered many journalists and researchers from the whole country to discuss the important role of media in preserving cultural heritage. In the workshop, TV and radio were also admitted to be the most effective instruments to preserve minority identity, including language. At present, all radio and television programs produced by VOV4 and VTV5 for minorities are spoken in the minorities’ languages. The H’mong radio and TV divisions were also founded the earliest because the H’mong minority accounts for the highest ratio of illiterate people compared with other minorities and they also need more support from the government due to their ratio of poverty and low development.

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<sup>60</sup> Stephen Harold Riggins 2004:54

<sup>61</sup> *ibid*: 169

Nowadays, when minorities are integrating more deeply into the ethnically mixed society, the role of TV and radio as instruments to preserve minority language is increasingly important.

Although discrimination against minorities in Vietnam is not strong enough to cause conflicts between the majority and minorities like the situation in many countries, it still remains and sometimes causes negative reactions from minority people. I still remember that when I was a child, I was told by adults that minority people are very dirty, smelly, long-lasting traditional and even very stupid. About a decade ago, these beliefs were very popular. Even now, many Kinh people still keep thinking that minority people are not worth having a relationship with. This discrimination has made lots of minority people feel ashamed to admit their origins when they integrate into the society. Those people do not speak in their own language, but prefer to speak the Kinh language, even when they are talking with people from their own ethnic group. Before the appearance of TV and radio channels for minorities, only those who knew the official languages could understand what they were listening to or watching on radio and TV. But the fact is that at that time very few minority people could speak fluently in the Kinh language, so the demand for radio and TV was not very strong in their lives. Until now, the rate of illiterate people within minority communities is also much higher than that of the majority. So the broadcasts for minorities are actually very significant in preserving minorities' languages.

**Table 3: the ratio of H'mong listening to radio and watching TV**

Participants' Age	Quantity of interviewees	Quantity of ones who NEVER listen to radio or watch TV		percentage of listeners and viewers (%)*	
		Radio	TV	Radio listeners	TV viewers
6-15	18	14	8	22%	55%
16-25	25	8	5	68%	80%
26-35	29	11	7	62%	76%
36-50	24	8	10	67%	58%
50-70	20	7	12	65%	40%

\*That is the percentage counted on the basis of the quantity of people who used to listen to radio or watch TV at least once.

Looking at table 3, we learn that radio and TV audiences of programs for the H'mong people belong to different age groups. However the rate of audience members who are farmers is clearly higher (Table 4 and 5). It is easy to explain the situation, because the students and civil servants are mostly fluent in both languages so they have more choices. At present, besides the specific programs broadcast on VOV4 and VTV5 for H'mong group, those who understand the official language also listen and watch other popular radio and TV channels with more abundant content.

Thus, it demonstrates that those broadcasts are really needed to provide the H'mong people necessary information when they cannot get it through the popular media. Thanks to those programs, many H'mong people can watch their favorite shows, even when they do not know the official language.

With programs in the H'mong language, radio and TV reinforce the belief of the H'mong in their identity when they have equal the access as the majority to discover the world in their own language.

Nowadays more and more young H'mong people tend to deeply integrate into the society. They are attracted to the popular languages and popular cultures, which are not the

H'mong's own. The H'mong minority is thus facing the threat of language assimilation. Television and radio, therefore, help the H'mong maintain the life of their language and partly remind young people of their original language, even when they study and speak another language at popular schools.

#### **4.1.2.2. RADIO AND TV HELP PRESERVE MINORITIES' TRADITIONAL CULTURE**

As a student studying Indigenous studies, I have learned about ethnic conflicts, ethnic discrimination and the forced cultural assimilation of the majority on the minorities that still remains in different parts of the world. It shows that everywhere in the world indigenous people and minorities have coped with many difficulties to preserve their culture against cultural colonization. For example, the Native Americans (that are usually known as the Indians) were suffering from the land occupation and brutal rule by the Whites for years. When the white Americans killed the Native people and occupied their land, they also killed a culture of the people from the land. Many Native American people denied their identity to survive.

By reading “When ethnic identity is a social stigma” by Harald Eidheim, we also see that the Lapps in West Finnmark, part of the Norwegian Sami group— who are now among one of the most successful indigenous communities in the world in the fight for their indigenous rights—used to attempt to “qualify themselves as full participants in the Norwegian society.” In order to obtain this membership they had to develop techniques to avoid or tolerate sanctions from the Norwegian population<sup>62</sup>. Coping with the discrimination of arrogant Norwegians, those Sami even used to believe that their low standard of living and the weakness of industrial enterprises in the fjord, might derive from them being of an inferior race<sup>63</sup>.

Compared with the situation of other indigenous people in the world, the situation of ethnic conflicts in Vietnam has never been a serious problem. However, there remains discrimination against them by majority people that makes minority people afraid to

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<sup>62</sup> Eidheim 1971: 2

<sup>63</sup> *ibid*: 5



H'mong men are playing Khen (pan-pipe)  
for a VTV5 music show

admit their ethnicity or deny their original culture. As mentioned in the previous part, when studying at popular schools or living in ethnically mixed areas, many young minority people are now trying to integrate into the society by identifying themselves as the majority, for example by speaking the majority language and not wearing their traditional clothes which can

make them look the same as the majority and have the feeling that they are the same as the majority. Not but a few people I met at universities who come from minorities told me that they do not want people to notice people them when they wear their traditional clothes and speak with others in their own language. This was because it would be more difficult for them to be treated equally from other majority friends. They said if they do not do so, then it is not that they cannot integrate but it takes more effort and more time. Meanwhile, not but a few people felt that they were proud of being a minority person among other majority people and felt more proud when they could prove that they are even more excellent than majority students.

It means that preserving culture for minorities is challenging work in the modern life when many foreign tendencies are affecting minority youth. It also shows that radio and TV are instruments needed to help minorities maintain traditional values. It works when TV and radio displayed minorities' cultural activities and information raising minorities' awareness of the necessity of defending traditional values against cultural invasion by outside factors.

As a field worker, the first impression I got when I came to the H'mong areas was that the traditional culture had been well preserved. The H'mong people look distinct with their traditional clothes, which are worn daily and with the music instruments they play in their free time, and in community activities or festivals. Cultural activities such as festivals and religious rituals which have lasted for ages still play important roles in their lives. The H'mong people have many festivals which are usually organized in the spring,

and in the beginning of harvests or after a successful harvest. In those festivals they sing their own folk songs, play traditional musical instruments, such as leave-horns (ken la), Pan-pipes (khen) and implement rituals to express their hope for good things in the future. For example, in the beginning of every harvest, they organized a harvest festival to wish for a more successful harvest. This event is also to celebrate the previous productive harvest or to ask God to help them remove bad elements from the previous harvest if they had losses before. In this event, religious rituals are implemented by “thay mo” (wizards) in front of chapels or in marches around their areas. Before I went to the H’mong areas, I only knew about those cultural activities and the cultural preservation of the H’mong through radio, TV and newspapers.

Such stable cultural preservation of the H’mong people can be explained by the fact that today they are still living in remote areas far from the majority, which partly limits them from gaining progress in technology and science produced more in the central areas. It is also because now radio and TV can both bring the H’mong a lot of knowledge about science and technology and help them show their cultural specificities on the radio waves or on the TV screen. As seen in table 1 and 2, the music programs account for 30% of radio broadcasts and 23% of TV screening for Hmong people. The music that is broadcast on radio and TV is mostly H’mong traditional music played by the H’mong people themselves with their specific instruments like the Khèn (pan-pipe), Sáo (bamboo flute), Kèn Lá (Leave horn) etc. Lai Chau provincial radio and TV station even established a professional team which usually played music for their music programs televised on TV or broadcast on the radio for the H’mong people. Those music programs are also produced by Lai Chau radio and TV station for national radio and TV channels, VOV4 and VTV5, to serve the H’mong people. Besides music programs, traditional H’mong festivals are also broadcast on the radio and TV. In all those programs, the Hmong wear their traditional clothes and speak or sing in their own language. Those programs are also re-broadcast on normal nationwide channels with subtitles or voiceovers in the official language. VOV4 and VTV5 sometimes also produce documentaries discovering the H’mong culture which is broadcast both on the radio and TV channels for the H’mong people and on the nationwide channels.

### **4.1.3. LIMITATIONS OF RADIO AND TV PROGRAMS FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES IN VIETNAM**

Founded after radio and TV systems for majorities, radio and TV for ethnic minorities everywhere in the world have both advantages and disadvantages during their development process. For example, in the Grenoble area in the southern part of France, it was reported by Claude Collin (1986)<sup>64</sup> that “only a few of stations defined as local presently produce or have ever produced programs concerning regional history, memory and culture.” Also in Gironde (France) where the Gascons reside, “six stations are known to have broadcast in Gascon but none did so, on a regular basis. A seventh station was the only one that claimed that broadcasting in Gascon was one of its main priorities.”<sup>65</sup>. The reason is because there remain many difficulties for developing minority radio and TV to meet the requirements of this specific media and fulfill their beneficial roles toward minority viewers. The first obstacle is the linguistic barrier. On the one hand, not many of the majority people who work for the field understand or can work with minority languages, while the requirement is that all programs have to be broadcast in minority languages, or displayed either in direct voices or subtitles. On the other hand, even fewer minority people who are bilingual are qualified enough or are qualified but want to work for radio and TV for minorities. VOV4 used to go to minority areas to select the local people then send them to the capital for training on specific skills and professional knowledge before using them as speakers and correspondents of programs for minorities<sup>66</sup> because they did not have enough bilingual journalists. VTV5, otherwise, has been using provincial stations as outsourcing bases to have new programs partly because of the linguistic barrier.

Secondly, difficulties related to infrastructure and transportation also prevent journalists from usually working in minorities’ areas. All roads leading to the H’mong minority areas and many other minorities’ settlement areas are mountainous paths which make it difficult to transport technological devices and it can be dangerous sometimes when the

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<sup>64</sup> Stephen Harold Riggins 2004: 177

<sup>65</sup> *ibid*: 175

<sup>66</sup> Dau, Uong Ngoc 2006: 32

weather does not support the transport. Because of these difficulties, producing those programs for minorities often cost more than normal programs. Therefore, the lack of funding to produce programs is also a problem for radio and TV centers, despite the fact that a higher priority and investment has been given to them by the government.

Those difficulties limit the number of people who want to work in the field and also do not enable radio and TV stations to dispatch their journalists to work often in minority areas. Possible interesting programs for minorities therefore are reduced.

It partly explains why up till now programs for minorities are still poor in content and expression. The content of VTV5 and VOV4 and other provincial radio and TV stations are now still focusing on music and simple information. Very few game shows and no talk shows, which attract more audiences, have been produced specifically for minorities. Up till now only “Competing farmers” is the most worthwhile game show for minorities to take part in under the status of minority teams. But the show was not just for minorities to join; the majority was also participating in the game to compete with the majorities. Otherwise minority people can also participate in game shows on nationwide broadcast channels, but very few did so.

The H'mong and many other minorities also do not have many opportunities to listen to or watch dramas on radio and TV spoken in their own languages. Watching movies in their own languages is seemingly very far in the future. The reason is that producing those dramas and movies is not a simple mission. It not only costs a lot of money but also requires a professional team in which everyone has to understand and fluently use the minority language. Every year the government has subsidized a considerable amount of ten billion Vietnam dong to support the whole productions of the radio, TV, and cinema industry, not only for productions serving minorities. But it is only a grain of salt in the ocean as the production of radio and TV programs and cinema products cost tons of money. One thing which is no less important than that is that very few minority people are educated or trained in the field,, but to produce such products needs a team of many qualified people.



In addition, dramas and movies spoken in non-minority languages are not translated for minorities on radio and TV as well. The problem also lies in difficulties of budgets and personnel in the field. Very few people are capable of translating from non-minority languages products such as dramas and movies into minority languages. Otherwise there has not been proper investment from both the government and radio and TV stations in this field. Meanwhile, cinema's private producers consider profits the first priority because they cannot afford to endanger their business in a non-profit production, such as producing movies for minorities.

The above difficulties make radio and TV programs for minorities have somewhat boring expressions with simple content and poor categories for news, music, reports and they have very few documentaries, dramas and game shows. Those programs are also repeated many times per day and per week causing boredom for audiences.

General speaking, there have been many limits that remain in TV and radio programs for minorities. Those limits come from both the lack of proper investment and lack of personnel in the field. This makes a sizeable gap between the radio and TV programs for the majority and minorities and filling this gap requires time.

## **4.2. INFLUENCES OF RADIO AND TV PROGRAMS IN THE LIFE OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN VIETNAM**

It is obvious that the birth of radio and TV for minorities have brought many changes to the lives of minorities in the world. Minorities in Vietnam have been gained certain influences, both positive and negative. But in my opinion, the positive aspects are more abundant.

### **4.2.1. POSITIVE INFLUENCES**

#### **Table 4: Observing 68 radio listeners of channels for the H'mong group**

Participants	Quantity	Times/ Week Listening to radio on average
Students	19	2
Farmers	31	3
Peddlers	5	1
National officers	8	6
Others	5	0.6

**Table 5: Observing 75 TV viewers of channels for the H'mong group:**

Participants	Quantity	Times/ week Watching TV on average
Students	27	4
Farmers	29	5
Peddlers	7	1
National officers	9	6
Others	5	2

For the past few years, radio and TV have been devoted to many changes in the life of minorities in Vietnam. Compared with the time some decades ago, the rate of illiterate people in the minority communities are improving considerably. If there were hardly minority people who could read and write before 1945, now about 80% of the entire population are literate and of those the rate of minorities are about 60%<sup>67</sup>. There remain a gap between the majority and minorities but it proves that a substantial improvement has been made with the assistance of propagandas on radio and TV. TV and radio also have made great contributions to changing old customs of minorities in healthcare and education which are no longer suitable in modern life. Thanks to efforts made by the government through many channels, including radio and TV, minorities accept public services provided with many priorities for minorities. Minority parents are now aware of the advantages of sending their children to learn at schools instead of learning at home or helping their parents to earn money by working in fields or selling handmade products. Propaganda on radio and TV have also proven their impact on minorities when that propagandas make minorities more conscious of the necessity of proper healthcare at hospitals and clinics instead of believing in magical remedies by wizards. Thanks to radio and TV programs that guide people towards new methods of cultivation and husbandry, minority people change their traditional farming ways to have greater productiveness for their harvests and husbandry. As a result, minority people have improved their income and living standards. Facing new trends from outside and threats of cultural erosion when they go to integrate into the ethnically mixed society, the traditional cultural preservation of minorities has been well supported by radio and TV as instruments to introduce and maintain their traditional values. Thanks to radio and TV more and more non-minority people know and understand better the situation of minorities. Radio and TV also help minorities come closer to people living outside their communities.

In many aspects, radio and TV have become prestigious reference sources that people believe in and follow the instructions given on the programs.

Looking at the above tables, we see that nowadays the rate the H'mong people access TV and radio on specific channels for minorities is quite high, though still many limits

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<sup>67</sup> Source: GSO survey in 2006

remain. The rate of minority audiences of radio and TV in total, including minority people who access minority and/or nationwide radio and TV, is even higher. It means that the scope of the impact of radio and TV on minorities is increasing.

#### **4.2.2. NEGATIVE INFLUENCES**

Actually, there are not many negative impacts that radio and TV for minorities have had on minority people. The negative influences of radio and TV only come to young people who are now studying at popular schools and who understand both the minority mother tongue and the majority language. In Vietnam, now there have not been special universities founded for minorities, so even minority people who have finished their studies at minority high schools it is compulsory for them to study with majority people if they want to study at upper levels. To make themselves quickly adapt to the new environment where the majority people are surpassing in many aspects, those minority young people prefer watching the non-minority radio and TV programs, which can help them to discover more things about the society they are approaching. The non-minority radio and TV programs are also more abundant in content and expression, thus easily attracting them. The negative side of those abundant programs is that many new life styles of the stars or just of non-minority young people are introduced on radio and TV which make young minority people compare themselves to the majority and it makes them eager to change their traditions and ways of life in order to look similar to the ones they saw on TV. Those new lifestyles partly erode the traditional values of the young people, as such; the good-looking stuff can provoke the minority young people into denying their traditional culture in order to make themselves more fashionable. They do not wear their traditional clothes and they change their accents to be more like majority people or characters of movies or TV shows they watch on TV. Due to advertisements, and news of the fame and richness of stars broadcast on radio and TV, many minority girls tend to leave their hometowns to seek opportunities to become models or actresses which does not require them to study much at schools but quickly make them change into “the upper class”. While there remain minority students who are working hard to earn money just to be able to wear expensive clothes, and use the latest models products which are thought to perhaps prove that they are outstanding or not less stylish than minority

people. Pursuing this trend, some young people asked for their parents to cover their luxurious expenses in spite of their family's difficult living standards. So if the family cannot afford such requests they will even give up studying to not reveal their secrets of what they said to other people about their richness.

One more negative impact comes from H'mong-speaking foreign radio and TV programs broadcast from outside the country. Vietnam has a very complicated history in which Vietnamese expatriates who worked for the colonies left the country after the victory of the Communists against the colonies. Those people are now mainly living in colonial countries that used to invade Vietnam and are still keeping grudges against the Communist Party and the government which they believe is the reason that forced them to leave the country. Some of those people form forces by using media to propagandize thoughts and ideologies against the Vietnamese contemporary government. Some journalists of Lao Cai radio and TV station let me know that in the region, the H'mong people can also receive strange radio waves that broadcast news and information disregarding the government aiming to provoke minorities to rebel against the government.

Therefore, radio and TV apparently can be devoted to the preservation of minority culture and traditional values but can also participate in the process of destroying the minority culture as well. This may occur not on purpose by programs producers. In fact, radio and TV are the only means of sending information and the ways people use those means will lead radio and TV to become either negative or positive. It means that minority people can use radio and TV as instruments to promote their cultural values, but otherwise they can erode such values with those means.

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In conclusion, this chapter aimed to provide short analyses of the roles of radio and TV toward minority people's lives, in which I am trying to show as much as possible how radio and TV are working for ethnic minorities, which shows such the roles. As a result of such great efforts, radio and TV programs for minorities have had strong influences on

minorities, which have caused many positive changes in their lives. These changes include making minority people changing their customary routines in healthcare, education, and earning a living... Through radio and TV minorities also make the world outside understand more about their lives and cultural values. Also through radio and TV, minorities find information to help them have comprehensive access to the world outside. On the other hand, radio and TV are the means of delivering threats to minorities. The clearest threat is eroding minorities' traditional culture when some minority people are using those means for negative purposes. Although there are many more roles that radio and TV are playing in the lives of minorities. Some considerable roles that radio and TV have implemented for minorities in Vietnam were not mentioned in this chapter because of the limited scope of this thesis. Some of such roles can be listed as being instruments to propagandize for the government and the party's policies; strengthen the solidarity of the whole nation and boost the mutual understanding between ethnic groups and nationalities. However, under the sphere of this thesis I focused on the roles of radio and TV as instruments for developing education for minorities and in preserving their identity. Such roles of radio and TV are increasingly important when minorities are facing difficulties to integrate into the ethnically mixed society. Taking advantage of radio and TV, minorities can both equip themselves with useful knowledge to help them improve their quality of life and consolidate and preserve their culture.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I am going to summarize the thesis and bring make concluding remarks as well as suggestions for radio and TV stations which I hope will be devoted to these stations' reforms to produce better programs for minorities. In this way, minorities can also enjoy more suitable and more interesting programs.

### **6.1. SUMMARY**

In this thesis, we have followed the discourse of the roles of radio and TV in the life of minorities in Vietnam. Because media such as radio and TV play many roles, of greater or lesser importance to human being's lives which is the same for ethnic minorities' lives, my research therefore focused on the roles of radio and TV regarding the fields of education and identity preservation for ethnic minorities. The research problems were solved by looking at the H'mong minority, the case study of the thesis, who are located in the northern part of Vietnam and are one of the poorest and most undeveloped minorities in the country.

Chapter 1 of the thesis gave an outline of the research problems and an evaluation of earlier research, which showed difficulties I had in the process of doing this research as there are hardly any documents written about media for ethnic minorities in Vietnam. It means I had to start from the beginning, without considerable references for such totally new research in Vietnam. But it was also a motivation for me to conduct the research as this thesis can be a useful reference for upcoming research. Since it is written in English and will be issued in a foreign country, the thesis could help the non-Vietnamese people to understand better the situation of minorities and media for minorities in Vietnam.

In chapter 2, I presented theoretical frames of reference, in which the key concepts such as "media", "ethnic minority", "ethnic minority media" were highlighted and analyzed in order to provide theoretical bases for my research detailed in the two chapters to follow. Also in this chapter, I presented the process by which I collected materials for the thesis

during the fieldwork trip. In the trip I carried out interviews, filmed people and lived right inside the H'mong villages of two provinces, Lao Cai and Lai Chau, in order to observe their daily life, their routines of watching TV and listening to radio. In this way, I could also conduct surveys which were implemented within different groups of the H'mong people.

In chapter 3, we saw the situation of ethnic minorities in Vietnam with serious difficulties in life such as poverty and illiteracy. In addition, traditional customs in healthcare and education handed over from previous generations also prevent minorities from accessing science and technology, which has contributed to their underdevelopment for a long time. Also in this chapter I addressed the situation of media for ethnic minorities in Vietnam in which the situations of radio and TV for minorities and for the H'mong people were also presented. In general, both VTV5 and VOV4 have made a lot of effort to produce suitable programs for minorities, but there remain limitations in both content and the manners to express the content of those programs. The reasons for that are lack of qualified journalists who are bilingual and interested in the field; lack of funding to reform programs and facilities for stations. The difficult terrain of minorities' living areas is also an important reason, which reduces the inspiration for journalists to create programs about minorities. In this chapter, I also took a glance at policies of the government and authorities at different levels which aim to boost the development of ethnic minorities and minority media. Those policies partly proved that the government has begun recognizing the advantages of media as effective instruments to support the development of minorities.

Chapter 4 goes in-depth into the thesis research questions with analyses combining theoretical bases and empirical materials to figure out the roles of radio and TV for ethnic minorities and the influences of those media in the life of the H'mong people. Due to the limitations in scope of a thesis, I focused on the two main roles of radio and TV as educational instruments and instruments assisting minorities to preserve their identity, highlighting their effects in preserving minority languages and cultures. However, influences of radio and TV sometimes go further than expected, as radio and TV can provoke young minority people to run after foreign cultural elements and then deny their



traditional cultures to make themselves seem similar to the ones they hear and see on radio and TV. So besides helping minorities to preserve their cultures, radio and TV also can decline minorities' culture. Another negative influence is that radio and TV can be used as a tool to carry out political schemes by forces outside the country which aim to provoke minorities to oppose the communist government which leads to insecurity and political instability in the country. Now there are some radio channels targeting minorities which are founded by Vietnamese expatriates, of which the headquarters are in foreign countries and they specialize in propagandizing oppositional ideas against the contemporary Vietnamese government. However, radio and TV have made more positive influences in the life of minorities when they can help minorities gradually give up old customs which are no longer suitable for their current life, such as healthcare derived from the experiences of the previous generations or from magical methods implemented by wizards, superstitions or customary points of view about giving birth. Radio and TV have contributed to increasing the quality of life of minorities by guiding minority people towards new ways of earning a living and effectively engaging in agriculture and husbandry. These changes to minorities' lives make minority audiences more interested in and believe more in programs that are broadcast on radio and TV. This means that radio and TV have been playing more roles increasingly in minorities' lives.

## **6.2. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TV AND RADIO IN MINORITY AREAS IN VIETNAM**

Through the previous chapters we see that minorities in Vietnam are still facing many problems in life such as poverty and low education and low medical care services. This can be explained by several reasons which have been discussed in previous parts. For example, old customs make them afraid of receiving new things that are different from their experiences, for example, to accept public services provided free of charge by the government. Living in inconvenient areas such as mountainous and remote areas, where infrastructure is at low level, all conditions for minorities to develop economy and society are much more difficult compared with the majorities'. This is why it takes more time for policies to be implemented in minorities' areas, but the results are usually less effective. For example, planting rice in plains is always much easier than doing so in mountainous

areas where people have more difficulty to irrigate their fields and the soil is less fertile than that in the plains. Thus, policies to develop agriculture meet with more obstacles in order to reach total success in these places.

All of those reasons partly explain why the situation of minorities is still serious in the country, despite priorities and encouragement minorities have gained from the government. However, policies to invest in the socio-economic development of minorities, especially in media for ethnic minorities, are not enough to respond to the real requirements. That is why developing media for minorities always lacks necessary funds and facilities to make profound reforms. It is due to the fact that the field requires a huge amount of money and a lot of attempts of individuals, however, not many are really interested in being involved in the field. This leads to the situation of the less developed ethnic minority media in Vietnam. Take radio and TV as examples, programs broadcast on those media specializing for minorities are poor in their content and offer few programs, which makes radio and TV channels have to repeat the same program many times per day. This reduces the attractiveness of programs and inspiration of audiences. Therefore it also decreases the influence of radio and TV, as well as their roles in the media in the life of minorities. All the people asked in my fieldwork trip expressed that they hope to see longer programs and more abundant content of VTV5 and VOV4 programs like what they saw on normal nationwide radio and TV channels. This means that radio and TV for minorities still far from meeting the real demands of minorities.

However, such demands minority people expressed also prove that radio and TV have been drawing their audiences' attention and their concerns. In fact, positive and even negative changes in minorities' communities', to which radio and TV contributed in the past few years, also express the increasing roles and influences of these media in the life of minorities. Fortunately, the positive influences of radio and TV to minorities are seen to be surpassing the negative.

Due to the sociality of media, exploiting potentials of media to serve the socio-economic development of minorities can have powerful effects.

To contribute to the development of media for ethnic minorities in Vietnam, I suggest some solutions as follows:

The first thing of concern is to build the qualified personnel resources working in the field. It is necessary to have prioritize this goal, such as by granting considerable scholarships and financial aid to minority students to encourage them to study media. There should be a commitment to grant them a job in media stations that produce press for ethnic minorities after their graduation from universities. By doing so, the country can build a strong team of qualified individuals working in ethnic media, which can help to produce quality programs for minorities in minority languages.

Moreover, in universities of journalism in Vietnam, there has not been a single subject that specializes in ethnic minority media, which is necessary in order to enable students who will work in ethnic minority media, to be able to study in-depth about the field. As a result, those students are equipped with a comprehensive and deep background to effectively work in the field.

In addition, media centers for ethnic minorities in Vietnam themselves also need to enhance exchanges with their counterparts all over the world, especially of countries where ethnic minority media are developed such as Norway, so that they can learn from those partners' experiences when developing their own models.

In my opinion, such solutions mentioned above should be the first concerns for developing ethnic media in Vietnam because media for ethnic minorities in the country is a concept which is still very new and all workers involved still lack practical experiences.

With proper investment that is suitable for the current context of the country, I believe that ethnic minority media will find its way to making considerable achievements and fulfill the demands of minorities.

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## **OTHERS:**

1. Scripts of programs having been broadcasted on VOV4 and VTV5 in several years.

# APPENDIX

## ***Appendix 1: Some legal and official documents issued by the government and authorities at different levels to promote the development of minorities in Vietnam***

*1. Important sections extracted from Socio-Economic Development Program for Extremely Difficult Communes in Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas in the Period 2006-2010 (Phrase of the Program 135)*

**COMMITTEE FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES**

**THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM**

**Independence - Freedom - Happiness**

***HANOI, SEPTEMBER 2005***

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR EXTREMELY DIFFICULT COMMUNES IN ETHNIC MINORITY AND MOUNTAINOUS AREAS IN THE PERIOD 2006 - 2010 (PHASE II OF THE PROGRAMME 135)**

#### **ABBREVIATIONS**

Committee for Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Area	CEMMA
General Statistical Office	GSO
Millennium Development Goals	MDGs
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	MARD
Ministry of Education and Training	MOET
Ministry of Finance	MOF
Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs	MOLISA
Ministry of Planning and Investment	MPI
Official Development Assistance	ODA
Vietnamese Dong	VND

#### **PART I**



**SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN EXTREMELY DISADVANTAGED COMMUNES IN  
ETHNIC MINORITY AND MOUNTAINOUS AREAS**  
**I. OVERVIEW OF OUTCOMES OF PROGRAMME 135 AND POLICIES IMPLEMENTED IN  
THESE AREAS FROM 1998 TO 2005**

**1. Overview of extremely disadvantaged communes**

**1.1 Classification of 3 categories according to level of development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas - rationale to formulate Program 135**

In the period 1990-1995, the starting point for the implementation of development policies and investments were the criteria used to classify mountainous and highland areas, which referred to geographical and natural features. Among administrative units (province, district, commune), those in which at least two thirds of the total area has a slope of 25 degrees or more or are located at an altitude of 200m above sea level or higher are classified as *mountainous*. Those in which at least two thirds of the total area is located at an altitude of 600m above the sea level or higher and in which ethnic minorities constitute a majority of the population are classified as *highland*.

These criteria were used to classify provinces, districts, and communes in mountainous areas and highlands for the purpose of applying appropriate socio-economic development policies. However, they reflected only natural features without taking economic and social factors into account. In fact, levels of socio-economic development varied among administrative units located at the same altitude. There was therefore a pressing need to *classify mountainous areas and highlands into three categories*, using criteria pertaining to levels of development.

The Committee for Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas (CEMMA) issued Circular No. 41/UB-TT of 8 January 1996 (Circular No.41) to *regulate and guide the classification of mountainous areas and highlands*, combining the following five types of criteria: natural conditions and residential location, infrastructure, social factors, production conditions, and living conditions. Mountainous areas and highlands were classified into three zones according to level of development as follows:

Zone I: Relatively better-off zone

Zone II: Temporarily stable zone

Zone III: Underprivileged or disadvantaged zone. Included in this category were 1,557 communes in mountainous, remote, border areas, and former revolutionary bases with a total population of 4,533,598 people in 799,034 households, accounting for 25.8% of the total population in mountainous and ethnic minority provinces. (Additional communes in delta areas having ethnic minority populations were later added to Zone III, bringing the total to 1,715 communes).

This classification into three zones according to level of development has significant implications for assessing socio-economic situation in each area, enabling the Party and the Government to formulate appropriate socio-economic development plans for each zone, with special attention given to Zone III, the most underprivileged zone.

These areas were characterized by under-developed physical and social infrastructure; lack of agricultural land; severe lack of clean water supply; predominantly subsistence production, depending heavily on natural conditions and shifting cultivation; low levels of education attainment with 60% or more of the population illiterate.. Poverty incidence at that time exceeded 60% in these areas. Average GDP per capita was only 31% of the national average. However, these areas tend to play a prominent role in national defense and security, as well as being critical for ecological protection. Besides, there were various

unstable factors and social issues in these areas. Policies to accelerate socio-economic development in these areas were not strong enough.

According to General Statistical Office (GSO) data for 1998, as many as 600 communes, accounting for 41% of Zone III communes, did not have all-weather road access to the commune center; 800 communes did not have a clinic; 47% of communes did not have a primary school or enough classrooms; 900 communes did not have a market; 70% of dwelling houses were temporary in construction; less than 40% of the population had access to clean water; and more than 50% of communes did not have access to the power grid.

The above situation required an *integrated socio-economic development programme with special policies to promote the sustainable development of these areas*.

Accordingly, the Prime Minister approved Programme 135 to implement a special policy to accelerate socio-economic development in Zone III communes which are the most disadvantaged areas in the country.

## ***1.2 Change in number of extremely disadvantaged communes over the years***

When Programme 135 was formulated and submitted to the Prime Minister for approval, Zone III included 1,715 communes, of which 1,000 communes in especially disadvantaged districts were selected as target beneficiary areas under this programme.

Through the seven years of programme implementation, the target communes under Programme 135 increased in number year by year, for the following reasons:

### *For extremely disadvantaged communes:*

In the categorization of the three zones within their jurisdiction, several provinces lacked public democracy, did not adhere to the formal process, made insufficiently objective assessments, and chose only a few communes in Zone III for formalistic outcome. In fact, a number of communes facing special difficulties were classified in Zone II, thus being excluded from the target group for essential investments. In the implementation of Programme 135, these local authorities also requested that certain Zone II communes be included in the target group.

### *For border communes:*

There are 403 communes located along the land border of Vietnam, of which 161 communes are close to the Vietnam-China border, 143 communes are close to the Vietnam-Laos border, and 99 communes are close to the Vietnam-Cambodia border. Of these 403 border communes, 247 communes were extremely disadvantaged; 12 communes had national border gates, and were not subject to investment under Programme 135; and 144 communes which did not face special difficulties receive investment from the central state budget.

### *For ex-revolutionary base communes (or 'ATK' communes):*

Ex-revolutionary base communes were former revolutionary and resistance bases during the French and American wars. Most of these communes are located in mountainous, remote, and border areas, in which ethnic minority groups made considerable contributions to and nourished the revolutionary movement. Although communes in these areas are not classified as Zone III, most are disadvantaged. In recognition of and compensation for ethnic minority people's sacrifices and contributions, these communes were added to the target group under Programme 135.

Table 1: Number of Programme 135 communes in the period 1999 – 2005

No.	Category	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
1	Extremely disadvantaged communes	1,012	1,490	1,884	1,907	1,907	1,919	1,938
2	Border communes	188	388	388	388	388	388	389
3	Ex-revolutionary base communes	0	0	53	67	67	67	83
4	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,200</b>	<b>1,878</b>	<b>2,325</b>	<b>2,362</b>	<b>2,374</b>	<b>2,374</b>	<b>2,410</b>
5	Central state budget	1,200	1,753	2,200	2,233	2,240	2,240	2,275
6	Local budget	0	124	125	129	134	134	135

## 2. Summary of Programme 135 outputs (1998 – 2005)

### 2.1. Infrastructure development (communal infrastructure and commune-cluster infrastructure projects)

#### 2.1.1 Planning

In general, infrastructure projects links closely with socio-development plans in communes, facilitating production and living conditions more effectively. Infrastructure projects are integrated with local planning, enabling people to access social services and improving people's living standards. Nevertheless, some local authorities have not paid enough attention to the importance of planning, resulting in inadequate participation of local people, slow in reviewing and adjusting in case of insufficient plans. Consequently, some commune cluster infrastructure and infrastructure projects have not been performed effectively, which resulted in wastefulness.

#### 2.1.2 Outputs of communal infrastructure and Commune cluster infrastructure projects

##### a) Communal infrastructure projects in extremely difficult communes

Project's investment targets comprises 8 main items, including transportation, small scheme irrigation works, schools, clinics, clean water supply, electricity, markets, and reclamation. Communal infrastructure facilities are normally small scale projects, whose target beneficiaries and location are identified within one commune.

##### b) Commune cluster infrastructure construction projects

Investment targets consist of 7 types of infrastructure facility, namely: (1) transportation system, (2) semi-boarding and lower secondary schools, (3) general practice clinics, (4) water supply and sewage, (5) electricity for production and domestic use; (6) agriculture and forestry extension stations, and (7) markets and small department stores.

c) *Investment capital*: Two above-mentioned projects are financed by different funding sources, in which provision of funds from central state budget is quite stable and public every year. From 1999 to 2002, an average of 400 million VND per year was provided for infrastructure projects in each commune. From 2003 to 2005, this amount increased to VND 500 million per year. Total central state

budget for projects was VND 6,331.6 billions (excluding of DFID budget support of about VND 280 billions supplemented in 2005). Investment funds for commune cluster infrastructure projects have been increased every year, making total state budget of 2,103/2,500 billion VND by 2005, which accounts for 84.12% of total allocated fund for this component. Total investment capital from central state budget for two projects in the period 1999-2005 is VND 8,434.6 billion (see Annex). Nearly 400 billion VND and VND 127 billion were mobilized locally for communal infrastructure and commune cluster infrastructure co-funded projects respectively. Besides, large resources were provided by different ministries and agencies, who implement other national target programmes in these areas, for infrastructure development in extremely difficult communes.

*d) Outputs of communal infrastructure projects*

*Table 3: Outputs after 7 years of implementation (1999-2004)*

ITEMS	Number of facilities / works	Percentage of facilities / works (%)	Percentage of investment (%)
Total	<b>20,026</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Transportation	6,652	33.35	40.28
Irrigation	3,608	17.08	17.08
Schools	4,654	24.08	22.79
Water supply	2,346	12.02	5.84
Electricity	1,298	7.94	7.94
Clinics	487	1.72	1.72
Markets	237	0.97	1.2
Reclamation	426	2.44	0.5
Other	318	0.4	2.65

498 commune cluster infrastructure facilities were built, of which 300 was completed, handed over, and put into operation; and construction of other 200 were in progress.

**2.2. Support for production development linked with products processing and marketing**

After 7 years of implementation, agriculture production in the Program areas has been improved, gradually stabilized, and shifted towards diversified cash crop production, which links closely with processing and off-farm industries, as well as red vision of labor in these areas. In fact, the implementation of Programme 135 has been integrated with agriculture and forestry extension, afforestation, and forest products development and utilization programmes. Accelerated implementation of 5 million hectare afforestation for processing industry programmes has opened a new path for localities to explore advantages for socio-economic development.

**2.3 Settlement planning where necessary**

The project is combined with other programmes and projects in the area to relocate and resettle households, who are short of cultivation land in rocky mountains, landslide and flood probing areas. Based on actual budget allocation from central level, local authorities developed suitable planning.

In mountainous areas in the North of Vietnam, in some localities, where water and cultivation land are insufficient, “going down the mountain” plan is adopted to relocate population to a new site, where communal infrastructure facilities are built under Programme 135 and cultivation land is more available.

Programme 135 has made a great contribution to the relocation and settlement of population, which is about 120,000 households, where necessary.

By the year 2003, Ministry of National Defense has developed 17 economic and national defense combined zones, which basically cover 50,000 households in important areas, namely bordering communes in Quang Ninh, Lang Son, Lai Chau, Quang Tri, Dak Lak, and Kon Tum provinces.

#### **2.4 Training of grassroots officials**

One of the Programme's objectives is to train and strengthen public and social administration and project management capacity for grassroots officials to promote poverty reduction and sustainable development in extremely difficult communes. This fund was combined with other projects and programmes to train and develop local leaders, managers, and officials of commune Party, authorities, agencies, mass organizations; members of commune supervision boards; and village heads. By the end of 2004, as many as 1,080 training courses were conducted with a total number of 155,159 entries. Grassroots officials' capacity has been improved. Many communes are able to take the role of investment owners and implementing projects in the commune areas.

#### **2.5 Program's funding source**

##### *a) Central state budget*

*Table 4: Total investment fund for Programme 135 from central state budget in the period 1998- 2005*

Unit: billion VND

No	Projects	Before 1999	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
1	Communal Infrastructure development	0	483.2	701.2	880	893.2	1,116.5	1,120	1,417.5	<b>6,611.6</b>
2	Commune cluster infrastructure development	432	103	101	230	250	265	350	372	<b>2,103</b>
3	Training	0	7.2	7.2	7.2	10.0	11.0	11	30	<b>83.6</b>
4	Relocation and Settlement	0	0	0	0	10,0	10,0	15	25	<b>60</b>
5	Production development	0	0	0	50,0		100,0	64	70	284
	<b>Total</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>593,4</b>	<b>809,4</b>	<b>1,167,2</b>	<b>1,163,2</b>	<b>1,502,5</b>	<b>1,560</b>	<b>1,624,5</b>	<b>9,142.2</b>

*b) Local budget to fund communal infrastructure and commune cluster infrastructure projects are 527 billion VND.*

*c) Mobilized funds from corporations, other provinces, ministries, agencies, and 'Fund For The Poor' reached approximately 509 billion VND in 1999 - 2003.*

*Table 5: Summary on mobilized funds*

Donors	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
1. Central ministries and agencies	19.945	10.670	25.680	21.250	23.720	101.265
2. Central mass organizations	0.510	0.410	0.410	0.270	2.109	3.439

3. Other provinces and cities	19.853	5.547	13.000	10.000	10.650	59.050
4. Corporations 91	29.403	44.650	47.000	29.700	30.402	181.155
5. Pro poor fund	0	22.876	54.060	47.862	39.250	164.048
<b>Total</b>	69.711	84.153	139.880	109.082	106.131	508.957

*d) People contribution*

People in extremely difficult communes have contributed to projects in various ways, namely: labor, provision of available construction materials (e.g. sand, gravel, and timber), land clearance for construction, etc. People contribution, however, was exercised only in several mountainous provinces in the Northern and central regions in the first year of programme implementation. It was not carried on well in the following years and thus outcome was rather low. In general, local authorities have not mobilized well resources from the public, particularly for operation and maintenance activities.

**3. Implementation of combined programmes in the local areas**

To achieve set objectives and targets to address urgent ethnic minority's related issues and accelerate the development in the most difficult areas of the country, the Government has adopted significant policies as below.

a) *Regional development policies*: In 2001, the Government relised major polices by issuing three Decisions, namely Decision No. 168/2001/QD-TTg, Decision No.173/2001/QD-TTg, and Decision No.186/2001/QD-TTg on orientation of socio-economic development in the Central highland, Mekong River Delta, and 6 extremely difficult provinces in the Northern mountainous area.

- Decision No.120/2003/QD – TTg on special policies regarding socio-economic development in bordering communes along the Vietnam-Chinese border was issued in 2003

- Decision No.174/2004/ QD – TTg of 1 October 2004 on investment in socio-economic development in 19 provinces and 64 mountainous districts bordering Central highland, western former 4th Zone, and Northern mountainous areas according to mechanisms stipulated in Decision No.186 and Decision No.168 was issued in 2004.

*b) Implementation of several policies on ethnic minority and mountainous areas*

- *Price subsidies policy* is implemented pursuant to Decree No.20/1998/ND-CP of the Government. This policy focuses on provision of subsidies for transportation cost of 8 commodities for mountainous areas and price subsidies for several products, which are produced by people but difficult to find market outlets, assisting improvement in production and living conditions in ethnic minority and mountainous areas.

*- Education and training program*

Preferential education and training policies have been applied to ethnic groups for many years, including preferential policy on admission and enrollment in colleges and universities, policy on boarding schools for ethnic minority's pupils at all levels, school tuition fee waivers, provision of free text books and note books, etc...Currently, local authorities have made great efforts to eliminate temporary schools and third-shift classes according to Decision No.159/2002/QD - TTg.

- *Provision of free 18 newspapers and journals.* Pursuant to Decision No.1637/2001/QĐ - TTg on provision of free 18 newspapers and journals for people in ethnic minority and mountainous areas from 2002 to 2005.

- *5 million hectare forestation programme (1998-2005)* was implemented pursuant to Decision No.661/198/QĐ-TT of 29 July 1998.

- *National clean water and sanitation programme* was implemented pursuant to Decision No.237/1998/TTg of 3 December 1998.

- *Health care programme* aiming at goiter and malaria prevention, extensive immunization, elimination of health care bare communes, and improvement of health care for mountainous people. As far as poverty reduction is concerned, according to Decision No.139/2002/QĐ-TTg in 2002, the following programmes have been implemented:

- *Provision of radio coverage;*
- *Culture and information program; and*
- *Drug prevention program.*

Combination of available funding sources from various projects and programmes has provided large resources. Official Development Assistance (ODA) is used for infrastructure investment in 969 communes of 24 most difficult provinces under Programme 135, namely *Northern Mountain Poverty Reduction Project, Central Region Livelihoods Improvement Project, Community-based rural infrastructure project, Tuyen Quang IFAD funded project; and Ha Giang IFAD funded project.* ODA funds of these five projects provide an average of 250 million VND per commune per year.

Both ministries and local authorities focus on integration of fund and give priorities to investment in Programme 135 communes, therefore actual average investment capital is more than 1 billion VND per commune per year with some exceptions of more than 2 billion VND per commune.

#### **4. Evaluation of programme's results**

##### **4.1 Organization of program implementation**

A system of Programme Steering Boards has been established from central to local levels. The Central Steering Committee was established by the Government with one deputy prime minister as chairman and other key ministries as regular members. Committee for Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Area acted as the standing agency of the programme. A key leader of each local level (province and district) acted as chairman of local steering board with support from functional departments/divisions.

The Central Steering Committee regularly directed the programme implementation, conducted annual reviews and training courses on successful models of local management and decentralization. The committee also directed supervision and examination and cooperated with supervision bodies of People's Councils at local levels.

With their functions of consultation and issuance of management mechanisms and implementation guidance, line ministries have timely promulgated and revised programme mechanisms promoting the principles of transparency, public and decentralization with strong support from local people. The integration of the sedentarization project, the project on support of ethnic minority people with special difficulties, the program on building the centers of mountainous and highland commune clusters into the Program 135 according to the Decision No. 138/2000/QĐ - TTg dated 29 November 2000 have created unified mechanisms and increased the efficiency of integration; Mechanism of investment and

construction management has been adjusted. The Joint Circular No.666/TTLT dated 23 August 2001 on guiding the management of investment for infrastructure under the Program 135 has created a new mechanism which became a good example for other programmes and projects. A relatively consistent system of legal documents has been built up by line ministries to direct the implementation of programme at local levels.

Line ministries were assigned by the Government to participate in the programme implementation and issue relevant policies: the Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Finance were responsible for balancing capital resources; Other agencies such as ministries of Transportation, Post and Telecommunications, Industry, Culture and Information; Education and Training, etc. were responsible for development of infrastructures in their areas. The State Audit<sup>[1]</sup> and State Inspection Agency<sup>[2]</sup> have conducted timely supervision and examination to find weaknesses in the implementation process of the programme.

Central and local mass organizations have developed guidance and support to local poor households in doing business, developing household economy, and building effective HEPR models. Father Front has launched a movement of “Day for the poor”, which mobilized hundreds of billion VND for poor ethnic minorities. Many programmes has been launched by Youth Union: Programme of youth business establishment, Programme of youth voluntary support for poor communes and ethnic minorities, etc.

Local authorities are responsible for programme implementation through such activities as establishing the organizational structure at various levels, mobilizing and allocating local resources, carrying out all activities of programme cycle from investment preparation to operation and management of completed civil works. Local authorities considered implementation of this Programme as their key political task by assigning key leaders to be in charge of certain areas, and local agencies and enterprises were also assigned to support certain areas. Decision 42/1999/QĐ-TTg, dated March 10 1999 by Prime Minister sent more capable staff down to communes to strengthen the programme implementation.

The development of steering system from central to province and lower levels and the horizontal coordination among agencies has helped to ensure the unity in management. However, during the implementation process, there were certain constraints. Assigned ministries for development of guidelines of capacity building, production development and settlement planning were slow in their work. The current organization structure of the Programme 135 is relatively suitable, but not free of limitations: the two projects that were assigned to Minsitry of Agriculture and Rural Development for management, were less effective due to lack of clarity in objectives, activities and low allocated fund. There were many liaisons points at the standing agencies and at local levels. The communication was not so smooth and the function of supporting managing agencies in dealing with problems were not carried out effectively. The steering agencies at district level were usually working part-time for the programme, and lack of capable staff, resulting in many limitations. The communication between central and local levels were not so strongly linked, resulting in lack of communication, especially the reporting system running slow and irregularly, not fulfilling the tasks as identified in the Circular 666. In many provinces, reports were made only once a year which made the monitoring and evaluation difficult.

#### **4.2 Achievements**

##### *1) Improvements in rural mountainous areas*

Under the Programme, more than 25,000 communal infrastructure facilities and 498 commune cluster infrastructure facilities were built, of which more than 20,000 essential facilities and 200 commune



cluster infrastructure facilities were put into operation. After 7 years of implementation, facilities of 5 main categories, namely rural roads, power system, schools, small scale irrigation works, commune health clinics were constructed in 70% of communes, while facilities of all 8 categories were built in 56% of communes. Of all programme's communes, 86% of communes have primary schools; 73% of communes have IV grade permanent lower secondary schools; 96% of communes have clinics providing preliminary health care services for people; 74% of communes have post offices, 61% of communes have public speaker stations; and 44% of communes have markets. Another 500 communes have accessible road to commune center; 100% of communes in 28 programme's provinces have accessible road to commune center; 97.42% of communes have car road and foot path access to commune center, increasing by 62.42% compared to the period before 1998.

Under Programme 135, crucial infrastructure system has been established, which serves as great forces to change rural look, contributing to poverty reduction and creating preconditions to move towards industrialization and modernization in ethnic minority and mountainous areas.

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### *2) Contribution to rapid poverty reduction*

Investment in irrigation projects has resulted in improvement of irrigating capacity for more than 40,000 ha of cultivation land and about 2,000 ha of reclamation, enabling extremely difficult communes to obtain food stability and increase average self-sufficient food supply per capita from 286 kg in 1998 to 320 kg with some exceptions of 500 kg per capita in 2004. Cultivation and production skills of ethnic minority people have been improved remarkably. New cultivation practices together with high yield and good quality new crop varieties and livestock breeds have gradually replaced old-style production practices which were vulnerable to natural conditions. Production growth has led to formation of several commodity economic zones. Many households with good production practices and effective business models have been emerging. There have been no more chronic hungry households in programme's areas. The programme has achieved a relatively fast pace in poverty reduction, which is 4-5% per year on average (the average ratio of poor households in these areas before the Programme was nearly 60%, and it is only 20% in 2005). Some localities could even reduce the number of poor households by 7 - 8% per year.

### *3) Considerable improvement in living conditions of ethnic minority people in extremely difficult areas in many social aspects, e.g. culture, education, and public health care*

Programme 135 has a strong impact on education, health care, and culture in ethnic minorities and mountainous areas. The Government has adopted policies to strengthen education development through various investment resources. As a result, most of Programme 135 communes have permanent primary and secondary schools, attracting more than 90% of children in the school age. Many localities have completed universal primary education, while some localities have accomplished universalization of lower secondary education. Most of extremely difficult communes have medical clinics; a majority of villages has public health care, making great contribution to prevention of fatal epidemic diseases, improvement of people's health and living standards.

Relocation and settlement projects have contributed to stabilization of ethnic minority people's life, who used to inhabit in scattered pattern and difficult conditions, by enhancing their access to social services. People's access to information has also been improved, together with increasing quality of other services.

Economic improvement has led to strong development of cultural life in ethnic minority and mountainous areas. Traditional culture of ethnic groups has been preserved and promoted; many traditional cultural activities have been revived and developed. The implementation of subsidized radio and special

television coverage for concave areas policy has resulted in rapid increase in the number of communes benefiting from culture and information access, and local people could access new information and policies faster and greater in number.

*4) Contribution to political security, social order and safety, and national defense in strategically critical regions of the country*

Most of Programme 135 communes are located in remote and bordering areas with complicated and difficult conditions. Previously, people's life in these areas was very difficult; deforestation for cultivation was relatively common; social problems were complicated. It was where hostile forces took advantage of religion for illegal preaching and propagation, while malefactors incited people to migrate profusely, as well as committed other acts of sabotage. Meanwhile, Party's establishments, political system, and Government's administrative apparatus revealed many weaknesses, which resulted in poor support and low confidence of the people.

With the guiding principles of democracy and transparency, Programme 135 has attracted the active participation of mass organization, promoted local people's participation, improved capacity for local communities and local cadres at communes, and villages, contributing to strengthening and consolidating grassroots political system, assurance of national security and defense, prevention of social problems, and strengthening people's confidence.

*5) Consolidation and enhancement of national solidarity, increase in people's confidence in the Party and the Government*

Programme 135 has received great support and contribution of people nationwide; attracted attention from leaders and members of agencies, sectors, Fatherland Front, social and political organizations at all levels. Big progress has been made in socio-economic development in extremely difficult communes; development gaps among regions have been narrowed. This has contributed to achievement of social equity, acceleration of national solidarity, and enhancement of ethnic minority people's confidence in policies of the Party and the Government.

*6) The Programme 135 has been highly appreciated by the international organizations*

Various independent studies on the programme have been conducted by the international organizations. Basically, the Programme 135 is evaluated as the most successful programme on HEPR in Vietnam. The programme have a comprehensive approach, appropriate targeting methods, transparent allocation mechanism, and strong decentralization as well as simplified investment procedures. Consequently, some international organizations has supported financially and technically for the programme's implementation.

*7) General achievements of Programme 135*

After 7 years of implementation (1999 – 2005), Programme 135 has achieved significant targets in all political, social, and economic aspects. Rural mountain areas has changed significantly. Infrastructure system has been improved remarkably, accommodating primarily living needs, as well as articulating development of multi-sectoral economy. Poverty gaps have been narrowed among regions; poverty incidence has dropped dramatically; general education attainment among local people has been improved. It is estimated that as many as 800 communes has graduated from the status of extreme difficult communes and starting the pathway of growth. The programme has effectively implemented the principle of democracy and transparency, promoted the ownership of local people in supervision of works. Agencies at all levels paid due priorities and attention for its implementation. All those helped to ensure the programme

experienced least leakage and waste. The Programme has invested in the right place and right target groups in the most disadvantaged areas. It was also the programme that reflected the desires of local people with strong local people support across the country. Local people also understood of their responsibilities in implementing the programme to help themselves moving out of poverty. The process of implementation also built up capacity for local staff in managerial skills, and poverty reduction management. The programme possessed significant importance in socio-economic development, political and national security, with deep humanity, promoting the strong cultural identities of Vietnamese, and contributing to the sustainable development of the country. Programme 135 has shown the great attention from the Party and the Government to the local poor from ethnic minorities groups, in the border and former revolutionary base, and mountainous and remote areas.

### **4.3. Weakness of Programme 135**

#### **4.3.1 Structural Organization**

*a) Identification of target communes under the programme in some localities is not very objective and lack of incentives to for communes to successfully graduate from the program annually.*

Of 2,410 target communes under Programme 135 by the year 2005, only 1,715 communes classified into Zone III category. Apart from communes, which were added by the Government according to special preferential policy, *the rest 391 communes are not classified to Zone III category.* The reason is that the classifying criteria for the most difficult communes are very qualitative and difficult to classify and while classifying, some local authorities did not adopt democratic procedures or understood the underlying implication of classification, and thus either emphasized too much on achievements or expected and relied heavily on external supports. Consequently, the program has not covered all most difficult communes while many non-poor communes have benefited from the program.

During the implementation, additional resources from other projects and programmes, especially international aids, were available in many communes besides Programme 135 resources. Some communes, which are located along newly built highways, have experienced rapid socio-economic development and no longer in extremely difficult situation, but remain as target communes under the programme. After 7 years of implementation, only 20 communes in Lao Cai, Dong Nai and Thua Thien Hue provinces are voluntarily requested to graduate from the programme.

*b) Leadership activities were not very effective and supervision is not close*

Leadership in some local authorities were not very effective with too many liaisons, while lack of consistency and capacity. Monitoring and supervision in some localities are rather formalistic and recommendations often focus on increase in financial support and extension of programme, etc. without specifying weaknesses in implementation at grassroots level.

Several local authorities have not issued regulations on operation and maintenance, on activities of the commune supervision board; they are also slow in changing investment structure, reviewing planning; and allocation of resources are on equal basis, causing wastefulness in investment, etc.

Leadership and management have revealed following weaknesses:

- Decentralization has not been adopted strongly and decisively enough due to unwillingness to let go of fund allocation authority, reluctance to exercise decentralization and transparency. This has resulted in reduced power of commune people's committee and making commune authorities passive in implementing the programme.

- Inspection and examination activities have not been carried out effectively. Most of breaches were discovered by people or supervision bodies. Monitoring and supervision have not done well by central agencies, which results in slow assessment of situation at grassroots level, especially information on production development and capacity building projects. Proper criteria and indicators have not been set up for evaluation of the programme. Evaluation often focuses heavily on statistical numbers (number of the construction work, number people and classes, etc.) rather than qualitative aspects. Many reviews conducted were not able to clearly identify the programme's performance from those of the similar or integrated programmes.

[...]

*Source: Committee of Nationalities*

## **2. Decision No.135/1998/QĐ-TTg of July 31,1998 to approve the program on socio-economic development in mountainous, deep-lying and remote communes with special difficulties**

### **THE PRIME MINISTER**

- Pursuant to the Law on Organization of the Government of September 30, 1992;
- Pursuant to Resolution No. 4/1998/NQ-CP of the Government at its March 1998 regular meeting;
- At the proposals of the Minister-Chairman of the Committee for Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Areas, the Minister of Planning and Investment, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs and the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development;

### **DECIDES:**

**Article I.-** To approve the program on the socio- economic development in mountainous. deep-lying and remote communes, with special difficulties, with the Committee for Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous - Areas acting as its standing body, to assist, the Government in directing tile program implementation, which includes the following contents:

#### **I. OBJECTIVES**

##### **1. General objective:**

To quickly improve the material and spiritual life of the ethnic minority people in mountainous, deep-lying and remote communes with special difficulties: create conditions for these areas to overcome poverty, backwardness and under-development and integrate themselves into the overall national development, thus contributing to the maintenance of social order and safety, national security and defense.

##### **2. Specific objectives:**

a/ For the 1998-2000 period:

- There will be basically no households suffering from chronic hunger, with the number of poor households to be reduced by 4-5% annually.
- To initially supply the inhabitants with water for their daily life, attract the majority of school-age children into schools; to be able to control a number of dangerous diseases, to build roads to the centers of commune dusters in service of the people's life and economic activities: to help the majority of people to enjoy cultural performances and communication services.

b/ For the 2000-2005 period

- To reduce the percentage of poor households in communes with special difficulties to 25% by year 2005.
- To ensure the supply of sufficient water for the inhabitants daily life; attract over 70% of school-age children into schools to provide a great majority, of inhabitants with production experiences, scientific, cultural and social knowledge so that they can take initiative in applying such experiences and knowledge

to their production and life; to be able to control most of dangerous social diseases: to build roads to the centers of commune clusters for motorized vehicles and in service of the people's daily life and economic activities; to boost the development of rural markets.

## II- DIRECTING PRINCIPLES

1. The socio-economic development in mountainous, deep-lying and remote communes with special difficulties must be, first of all, based on the promotion of the internal resources of every household and the community-based assistance and at the same time with the active support of the State in order to tap local land and labor resources as well as the natural, and socio-economic conditions in the areas, create new changes in the people 's production as well as material and spiritual life.
2. The State shall create a legal environment and adopt socio-economic development policies, give priority to the allocation of the State budget, funding of the programs and projects located in the areas and capital sources donated by foreign countries and international organizations to communes with special difficulties.
3. There should be comprehensive measures for implementing the program, first of all concentrating on the agricultural and forestial development building rural infrastructure and at the same time boosting the educational, medical, cultural and social development in the areas.
4. The provinces and cities directly under the Central Government, the ministries and branches shall have to assist the communes covered by the program; socio - economic organizations, people's armed forces, socio-professional organizations, enterprises and the people of all strata throughout the country as well as overseas Vietnamese... are encouraged to make active contributions to and support the program implementation.

## III. SCOPE OF THE PROGRAM

1. The Central Government shall select 1,000 out of 1,715 communes facing difficulties (the list of these communes is enclosed herewith) of the districts with special difficulties so as to concentrate investment under this program. The remaining communes shall receive priority investment through various national target programs and other development projects and programs.
2. The program shall be implemented from 1998 to 2005.

## IV. TASKS OF THE PROGRAM

1. To make a planning on the population re-distribution in places where it is so necessary, step by step rationally organize the daily life of the inhabitants in mountainous and rural villages and hamlets in areas where conditions permit, particularly in border and island communes, create conditions for the inhabitants to quickly, stabilize their production and life.
2. To boost agricultural production and forestry in association with products processing and marketing so as to tap local natural resources and utilize the local labor force, create more opportunities of employment and income generation, stabilize the inhabitants' life and gradually, develop goods production.
3. To develop the rural infrastructure in line with the production planning and the population re-distribution planning, first of all, the communications system; the drinking water supply systems; and the power-supply systems in areas where conditions permit, including mini hydro-electric power stations.
4. To plan and build centers of commune clusters, focusing on the investment in building medical and educational establishments, commercial centers, handicraft and cottage-industrial establishments, production and service establishments, radio and television networks.
5. To train cadres for mountainous and rural communes and villages, help grassroots cadres to raise their administrative and economic management abilities in order to meet the local socio-economic development requirements.

**Article 2** - Some major policies

**1. Land policy:**

The presidents of the provincial people's Committees shall direct the assignment of land and forests and the granting of land tenure certificates in association with the sedentarization and development of new economic zones, creating conditions for the people to have access to land for production and stabilize their life.

a/ Farmers' households in mountainous areas where there areas forest protection and planting projects shall be contracted to protect and zone off areas for forest regeneration in combination with additional plantings, be assigned land for planting protection and/or production forests under Decision NO. 661/1998/QĐ-TTg of July 29, 1998 of the Prime Minister on the "objectives, tasks, policies and organization of the implementation of the Project to plant five million hectares of new forests". The land area quotas to be assigned under contracts shall depend on the specific conditions of each locality, and be decided by the provincial People 's Committees.

b/ In areas where farmers have no land or too little land for agricultural and/or forestall production, the following solutions may, be applied;

- In provinces where land is still left waste and can be reclaimed for the development of agricultural and/or forestall production, the State shall support the investment in the land reclamation and the assignment of such land to inhabitants for production.

- To assign State-run and military agricultural farms and/or afforestation/logging camps based in the localities to receive landless people nomadic people and assign land to them under contracts for production.

- The provincial People's Committees shall adopt policies to encourage non-State agricultural and forestall organizations to receive and offer jobs to poor farmers' households.

The State shall earmark some investment capital for the expansion of several new economic zones, chiefly for receiving poor farmers' households who come to carry out production therein, including those in the Long Xuyen Quadrangle, the Central Highlands, Binh Thuan and other areas with conditions. To assign the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to assume the prime responsibility together with the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Ministry of Defense for coordinating with the concerned provincial People's Committees in expeditiously performing this task.

**2. Investment and credit policies:**

a/ To give priority to investment in building infrastructure in service of agricultural and forestall production. In places where irrigation works can help develop wet rice cultivation, the State shall allocate the budget capital to support the investment in building irrigation works. In a number of highland areas with special difficulties where there is no wet rice field, the State shall provide funding for developing terraced fields; helping the inhabitants to have conditions for on-the-spot food production.

b/ The State shall subsidize prices and transport freights of goods essential for the production and life of farmers' households living in communes with special difficulties according to Decree NO.20/1998/ND-CP of March 31, 1998 of the Government.

c/ Households which are assigned land and/or forests for growing industrial plants, fruit trees, specialty trees, herbal plants and forestall production shall enjoy the policy- stipulated by the Prime Minister in his Decision No. 661/1998/QĐ-TTg of July 29, 1998 on the "objectives, tasks, policy and organization of the implementation of the Project to plant five million hectares of new forests".

d/ The national target programs and relevant programs within the areas should give priority to investment in this program. The households covered by this program shall be given priority to borrow capital from the bank for the poor and other preferential credit sources for production development.

e/ The presidents of the People's Committees of the provinces covered by this program shall concentrate on directing and mobilizing various local resources for the program implementation. Apart from the source of investment capital for the overall development of the whole region, the State shall also give financial support for performing the following tasks.

- Building of the centers of commune clusters which shall be financed by the capital source of the national program on hunger elimination and poverty alleviation.
- Development of the traffic network: each district shall be provide explosives, cement, steel and iron for building subterranean passage, bridges, culverts as well as food for the construction of ruml roads.
- Construction of power projects: in areas where conditions permit, the State shall support the investment in building the electric transmission lines to the centers of commune clusters according to the planning and the investment capability in each period. In areas where conditions permit the construction of mini-hydro-electric projects, the State shall support the inhabitants part of the expenditures and lend credits for development investment.
- In places where exit difficulties in the drinking water supply: the State shall support part of expenditures for building a number of water supply points suitable to the population distribution planning.

g/ The State encourages the establishment of inter-family terms or groups for mutual assistance in production and daily life, and efficient use of rural credit sources.

h/ The people in communes with special difficulties shall enjoy, free health-care and medical treatment at State medical establishments under Decree No. 95-CP of August 27, 1994 of the Government.

### **3. Human resource development policies:**

a/ The State shall allocate funding for the training and fostering of cadres for mountainous and rural communes, villages and hamlets so as to raise their capability of organization and direction production management, administrative management and the capability of managing and using rural credit sources to meet the local socio-economic development requirements.

b/ Pupils in communes with special difficulties who go to school shall be provided with textbooks stationery and exempt from school fees.

c/ In each of communes with special difficulties under the program, several farmers' households which achieve good production results shall be selected for training in skills to conduct the agricultural and forestall production promotion work in the localities and enjoy allowances from the funding for agricultural and forestall promotion work.

d/ The State shall allocate funding for opening job training courses for ethnic minority children so as to tap local potentials, develop non-agricultural production and business lines for the purpose of income generation and improvement of the living standards.

**4. Tasks of various levels and branches and support and contributions of individuals and organizations inside and outside the country for the program implementation.**

- The steering committee for the program implementation shall discuss in detail with the provinces and cities directly under the Central Government where conditions permit, which, in the intimidate future are Ha Noi, Hai Phong, Quang Ninh, Ho Chi Minh City, Dong Nai, Ba ria - Vung Tau, Da Nang and Khanh Hoa, and assign them to directly assist a number of communes targeted by the program. focusing on such

contents as giving financial support for the infrastructure construction, mobilizing their local cadres to visit and assist these communes...

- To assign each ministry or branch at the central level to assist a number of communes and at the same time assign each of State enterprises in the branch to assist a number of communes. The ministries, branches and enterprises shall work out plans to save their expenditures and mobilize voluntary contributions from their employees and workers so as to have funding to support these communes.
- To assign the Ministry of Defense to build new economic zones in areas where condition permit. sponsor and receive about 100,000 households to settle down in waste land areas, border and island areas.
- The State shall encourage socio-political organizations, socio-professional organizations and people of all strata throughout the country as well as overseas Vietnamese to support and assist the implementation of this program.

### **5. Tax policies**

Trading in agricultural and forestall products and goods catering for production and life of the inhabitants in communes with special difficulties shall be entitled to preferential tax policies as stipulated in Decree No. 20/1998/ND-CP of March 31, 1998 of the Government and other tax policies which promote investment in accordance with current regulations.

### **Article 3.- Capital sources and their use**

1. The investment capital for implementing the program shall be mobilized from the following sources;

- The State budget capital (including the capital donated by foreign governments and international organizations).
- Credit loans.
- Capital mobilized from organizations and population communities,

2. To assign the Ministry of Planning and Investment to assume the prime responsibility and coordinate with the Ministry of Finance, the State Bank of Vietnam, the Committee for Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Areas and concerned ministries and branches in working out solutions to balance various capital sources in annual plans before submitting them to the Government for decision and making investment in different projects to implement the program.

### **Article 4- Organization of implementation**

1. The Central Steering Committee for the "Program on the socio-economic Development in mountainous, deep-lying and remote communes with special difficulties" shall direct the ministries and functional branches to implement the program according to their respective functions and tasks and direct the provincial boards for the program implementation and management to formulate specific projects then submit them to the competent branches and levels for evaluation and approval according to current regulations, and make annual plans and organize the effective implementation of these projects in the provinces.

2. The annual fins on the program implementation shall be drawn up by the program implementation shall be drawn up by the provincial People's Committees as a separate part of the socio-economic development plans of the provinces and submitted to the Government, the Ministry of Finance, the concerned ministries and branches and the Central Steering Committee for the Program on the socio-economic development in mountainous, deep-lying and remote communes with special difficulties shall base themselves on their respective functions and tasks to submit to the Prime Minister for decision the investment capital allocated



for the program, which shall be included separately in the annual plans of the localities and managed and used by the localities for the right purpose and target beneficiaries and in conformity with the plans so as to ensure the effective implementation of the program.

**Article 5.** - This Decision takes effect 15 days after its signing. The head of the Steering Committee for the Program on the socio-economic development in mountainous, deep-lying and remote communes with special difficulties, the ministers, the heads of the ministerial-level agencies, the heads of the agencies attached to the Government and the presidents of the People's Committees of the provinces and cities directly under the Government shall have to implement this Decision.

**Prime Minister**

Phan Van Khai

*Source: Committee of Nationalities*

**Appendix 2: Common information of 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam**

Order number	Group	Primary names	Other names	Local groups	Population	
					Total investigation (1.4.1999)	Estimation (1.7.2003)
1	<a href="#">Băh nar</a>	Ba Na	Bơ Nâm, Roh, Kon Kđe, Ala Kông, Kpang Kông	Rơ Ngao, Rơ Lơng (Y Lăng), Tơ Lô, Gơ Lar, Krem	174.456	190.259
2	<a href="#">Bố y</a>	Bố Y	Chũng Chá, Trọng Gia...	Bố Y và Tu Dí	1.864	2059
3	<a href="#">Brâu</a>		Brao		313	350
4	<a href="#">Bru-Vân Kiều</a>	Bru	Bru, Vân Kiều	Vân Kiều, Trì, Khùa, Ma Coong	55.559	62.954
5	<a href="#">Chăm (chàm)</a>		Chàm, Chiêm, Chiêm thành, Chăm Pa, Hời...	Chăm Hroi, Chăm Pông, Chà Và Ku, Chăm Châu Đốc	132.873	148.021
6	<a href="#">Chơ ro</a>		Châu Ro, Dơ Ro, Chro, Thượng		22.567	26.455
7	<a href="#">Chu ru</a>		Chơ Ru, Kru, Thượng		14.978	16.972
8	<a href="#">Chứt</a>	Chứt	Rục, Arem, Sách.	Mày, Rục, Sách, Arem, Mã Liềng	3.829	3.787
9	<a href="#">Co</a>	Cor, Col	Cua, Trầu		27.766	29.771

10	<a href="#">Cống</a>	Xám Khổng, Phuy A			1.676	1.859
11	<a href="#">Cơ ho</a>	Cơ Ho		Xrê, Nộp (Tu Nộp), Cơ Dòn, Chil, Lát (Lách), Tơ Ring.	128.723	145.857
12	<a href="#">Cơ lao</a>	Cờ Lao	Tứ Đư, Ho Kí, Voa Đê.	Cờ Lao Xanh, Cờ Lao Trắng, Cờ Lao Đỏ	1.865	2.034
13	<a href="#">Cơ tu</a>	Cơ Tu	Ca Tu, Ka Tu		50.458	56.690
14	<a href="#">Dao</a>	Kim Miền, Kim Mùn	Mán	Dao Đỏ, Dao Quần Chẹt, Dao Lô Gang, Dao Tiền, Dao Quần trắng, Dao Thanh Y, Dao Làn Tên	620.538	685.432
15	<a href="#">Ê đê</a>	Anăk Ê Đê	Anăk Ê Đê, Ra Đê, Ê Đê-Êgar, Đê	Kpă, Adham, Krung, Mđhu, Ktul, Dliê, Hruê, Bih, Blô, Kah, Kdrao, Dong Kay, Dong Mak, Ening, arul, Hwing, Ktlê, Êpan	270.348	306.333
16	<a href="#">Giáy</a>	Giáy	Nhắng, Giàng		49.098	54.002
17	<a href="#">Gia Lai</a>	Gia Rai	Giơ Ray, Chơ Ray	Chor, Hđrung (gồm cả Hbau, Chor), Aráp, Mthur, Tơbuân	317.557	350.766
18	<a href="#">Giê-Triêng</a>	Gié, Triêng, Ve, Bnoong	Cà Tang, Giang Rẫy	Gié (Giê), Triêng, Ve, Bnoong (Mnoong)	30.243	31.343
19	<a href="#">Hà Nhì</a>	Hà Nhì Già	U Ní, Xá U Ní	Hà Nhì Cồ Chồ, Hà Nhì La Mí, Hà Nhì Đen	17.535	19.954
20	<a href="#">Hoa (Hán)</a>		Khách, Hán, Tàu	Quảng Đông, Quảng Tây, Hải Nam, Triều Châu, Phúc Kiến, Sang Phang, Xì Phổng, Thảng Nhảm, Minh Hương, Hẹ...	862.371	913.248
21	<a href="#">H'rê</a>	Hrê	Chăm Rê, Chom, Thượng Ba Tơ, Luy, Sơn Phông, Đá Vách, Chăm Quảng Ngãi, Chòm, Rê,		113.111	120.251

			Man Thạch Bích.			
22	<a href="#">HMông (Mèo)</a>	Hmông, Na mièo	Mèo, Mèo, Miếu Ha, Mán Trắng	Hmông Trắng, Hmông Hoa, Hmông Đỏ, Hmông Đen, Hmông Xanh, Na mièo	787.604	896.239
23	<a href="#">Kinh (Việt)</a>		Kinh		65.795.718	69.356.969
24	<a href="#">Kháng</a>	Mơ Kháng	Háng, Breen, Xá	Kháng Dắng, Kháng Hoạc, Kháng Dón, Kháng Súa, Ma Háng, Bủ Háng, Ma Háng Bén, Bủ Háng Cọi	10.272	15.213
25	<a href="#">Khmer</a>	Khmer	Cư, Cui, Cu, Thổ, Việt gốc Miên, Khmer K'rôm		1.055.174	1.112.286
26	<a href="#">Khor mú</a>	Kmự, Kưm Mụ	Xá Cầu, Khạ Klẩu, Măng Cầu, Tày Hạy, Mứn Xen, Pu Thềnh, Tềh		56.542	62.721
27	<a href="#">La Chí</a>	Cù Tê	Thổ Đen, Mán, Xá		10.765	12.095
28	<a href="#">La Ha</a>	La Ha, Klá Plạo	Xá Cha, Xá Bung, Xá Khao, Xá Táu Nhạ, Xá Poọng, Xá Uống, Bủ Hả, Pạ	La Ha cạn (Khlá Phlao), La Ha nước (La Ha ửng)	5.686	6.388
29	<a href="#">La Hủ</a>	La Hủ	Xá lá vàng, Cò Xung, Khu Sung, Kha Quy, Cọ Sọ, Nê Thú	La hủ na (đen), La-hủ sư (vàng) và La-hủ phung (trắng)	6.874	7.561
30	<a href="#">Lào</a>	Thay, Thay Duồn, Thay Nhuồn	Phu Thay, Phu Lào	Lào Bốc (Lào Cạn), Lào Nội (Lào Nhỏ)	11.611	12.379
31	<a href="#">Lô Lô</a>	Lô Lô	Mùn Di, Di, Mản Di, La Ha, Qua La, Ô man, Lu Lộc Mản	Lô Lô hoa, Lô Lô đen	3.307	3.327
32	<a href="#">Lự</a>	Lừ, Thay, Thay Lừ.	Phù Lừ, Nhuồn, Duồn	Lự Đen (Lự Đăm), Lự Trắng (ở Trung	4.964	5.553

				Quốc)		
33	<a href="#">Ma</a>	Mạ	Châu Mạ, Chô Mạ, Chê Mạ	Mạ Ngăn, Mạ Xốp, Mạ Tô, Mạ Krung	33.338	36.824
34	<a href="#">Mảng</a>	Mảng	Mảng Ừ, Xá Mảng, Niểng O, Xá Bá O	Mảng Gứng, Mảng Lệ	2.663	2.634
35	<a href="#">Mường</a>	Mol (Mon, Moan, Mual)		Ao Tá (Âu Tá), Bi	1.137.515	1.230.054
36	<a href="#">Mnông</a>	Mnông		Mnông Gar, Mnông Nông, Mnông Chil, Mnông Kuênh, Mnông Riâm, Mnông Preh, Mnông Prâng, Mnông Đíp, Mnông Bu Nor, Mnông Bu Đâng, Mnông Bu Đêh...	92.451	104.312
37	<a href="#">Ngái</a>	Sán Ngái	Ngái Hắc Cá, Ngái Lầu Mần, Hẹ, Sín, Đản, Lê, Xuyên		4.841	7.386
38	<a href="#">Nùng</a>	Nồng		Nùng Giang, Nùng Xuông, Nùng An, Nùng Inh, Nùng Lôi, Nùng Cháo, Nùng Phàn Slinh, Nùng Quy Rịn, Nùng Dín	856.412	914.350
39	<a href="#">Ơ đư</a>	Ơ Đư, I Đư	Tày Hạt		301	370
40	<a href="#">Pà Thên</a>	Pà Hưng	Mèo Lài, Mèo Hoa, Mèo Đỏ, Bát tiên tộc...		5.569	6.529
41	<a href="#">Phù Lá</a>	Lao Va Xơ, BỒ Khô Pạ, Phù Lá	Xá Phó, Cản Thìn	Phù Lá Lão-BỒ Khô Pạ, Phù Lá Đen, Phù Lá Hán.	9.046	8.947
42	<a href="#">Pu Péo</a>	Kabeo	La Quả, Penti Lô Lô		705	900
43	<a href="#">Răglai</a>			Rai, Hoang, La Oang	96.931	108.442
44	<a href="#">Rơ-măm</a>				352	418
45	<a href="#">Sán Chay (Cao lan-Sán chỉ)</a>	Sán Chay	Hờn Bán, Chùng, Trại...	Cao Lan, Sán Chỉ	147.315	162.031

46	<a href="#">Sán Dìu</a>	San Déo Nhín ( Sơn Dao Nhân)	Trại, Trại Đát, Mán Quần Cộc, Mán Váy xẻ		126.237	140.629
47	<a href="#">Si La</a>	Cù Dề Sừ	Kha Pẻ		840	1.006
48	<a href="#">Tày</a>		Thỏ	Thỏ, Ngạn, Phén, Thu Lao, Pa Dí.	1.477.514	1.597.712
49	<a href="#">Tà ôi</a>		Tôi Ôi, Pa Cô, Tà Uốt, Kan Tua, Pa Hi ...	Tà Ôi, Pa Cô, Pa Hi	34.960	38.946
50	<a href="#">Thái</a>	Tay, Thay	Tay Thanh, Man Thanh, Tay Mười, Tay Mừng, Hàng Tổng, Tay Dọ, Thỏ	Ngành Đen (Tay Đám). Ngành Trắng (Tay Đón hoặc Khao)	1.328.725	1.449.084
51	<a href="#">Thỏ</a>	Thỏ	Người Nhà làng. Mừng, Con Kha, Xá Lá Vàng	Kẹo, Mọn, Cuối, Họ, Đan Lai, Li Hà, Tày Poọng	68.394	76.191
52	<a href="#">Xinh mun</a>	Xinh Mun	Puộc, Xá, Pnạ	Xinh Mun Dạ, Xinh Mun Nghệt.	18.018	21.946
53	<a href="#">Xơ-đăng</a>	Xơ Teng, Tơ Đrá, Mnâm, Ca Dong, Ha Lãng, Tà Trĩ., Châu	Xê Đăng, Kmrâng, Con Lan, Brila.	Xơ Trng, Tơ Đrá, Mnâm. Ca Dong, Ha Lãng, Tà Trĩ, Châu.	127.148	140.445
54	<a href="#">Xtiêng</a>		Xa Điêng, Xa Chiêng	Bù Lơ, Bù Đek (Bù Đêh), Bù Biêk.	66.788	74.402