

**P**opulation and development are two interactive factors in the socio-economic life. On the one hand, people are the labor force producing goods for the society. On the other hand, they are consumers and beneficiaries of production and socio-economic development.

Population is both objective and dynamic of the process of development. Population has effects on every socio-economic activity such as culture, education, health care and environment. Small population will restrict the labor division, reducing the capability of specialization and cooperation in production.

tural and natural environment healthy and clean. To implement good strategies and policies on population is also one of measures to boost production and stabilize the social life.

As we know, the value of population depends upon its quality, not quantity, that is, the quality of life and manpower. It includes educational attainment, occupational skill, creativeness, working discipline and ethics in human relations. In a developed society, people will have higher demands. The women do not want many children. As a result, the population growth will be curbed.

issue but the results are still modest. The population growth rate had steadily plunged from 2.3% in 1980s to 1.8% in 1998. But if compared to the world's average (1.48% per year), this figure is still high, or 1.5 million people per year, equivalent to the number of a province's residents.

The pressure of fast population growth causes obstacles to the improvement of living standard, especially in rural, mountainous, remote areas. Demands for housing, food and transport boom, deforestation and environmental pollution, lack of clean water, all are thorny problems to the govern-

equality including female liberation, abolish the male chauvinism and create favorable conditions for women to improve their living.

(3) to speed up population dissemination, criticize and fight against bad customs and superstition, build new cultural values, strengthen cultural activities, sports, and provide consulting services of health, fertility, and sex.

(4) the environmental protection should be paid special attention. If the population growth rate and distribution are reasonable, they will help balance the ecology and natural resources. The Government should have suitable

# POPULATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

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But if population grows fast, per capita income will go down, and living and working conditions cannot be improved.

The rapid growth of population also generates bad impacts on the environment. This will result in fast exhaustion of natural resources: increasing bare hills; broken ecological balance and eroded soil. It will cause urbanization which places great pressure greatly of housing, electricity and water, food, communications and transport.

Population growth thus heavily affects socio-economic progress and vice versa. The harmonization between population and development will make the economy sustainable, cul-

Vietnamese population currently reaches 77 million, only behind Indonesia in Southeast Asian countries, ranking 13th in the world. While our country's average land area per capita is lowest (0.1 ha per capita), farm land only accounts for 21% of the total area of 330,000km<sup>2</sup>. The population is estimated at 105 million by 2020. This is a big challenge requiring urgent reduction of population growth. We must pay attention to three sides of population: scale, structure and distribution, underlining both quantity and quality of population.

In the past, the Party and the Government have taken into account this

ments at all levels.

Because of not fully mechanized production in rural areas, unskilled workers are still needed. As a result, many farm families want more children, that is, more labor. This is a vicious circle of poverty and backwardness.

Fast population growth generates unemployment although skilled workers are in short. To overcome the above paradoxes, the population policy should be as follows:

(1) to keep the growth rate at 1.5%-1.7% by 2000, create non-farm jobs in rural areas and build a network of services between urban and rural areas.

(2) to secure social

policies for immigration, expansion of new economic regions, and urbanization to protect the environment. In particular, the free migration should be halted to reduce unrest in transport, education, health care, social security, and environment.

In the national industrialization and modernization, the Party and the Government see the population task is an important part of their development strategies. We hope that that these above-mentioned measures will be taken uniformly so that the country reaches its planned targets of population and socio-economic development■