



Original Article

Occupational Mobility in the Context of Climate Change in the Mekong River Delta

Hoang Thi Quyen*

Regional Academy of Politics 4, Nguyen Van Cu, Ninh Kieu, Can Tho City

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Abstract: This study aims to describe the scale and trends of occupational mobility in the context of climate and environmental changes in the Mekong River Delta and describe the factors that affect the flow of labor changes. The findings of the study show that: i) Changes in science and technology, as well as those in the environment and climate in recent years, have led to major changes in the structure of labor and employment, which causes more people in the Mekong River Delta to change their jobs and occupations; and ii) The scale and trends of occupational mobility depend heavily on factors such as the type of employment, level of income, age, number of years at high school, professional qualifications, and the extent of damage caused by unusual weather and climate phenomena, etc.

Keywords: Climate change, occupational mobility, Mekong River Delta.

1. Introduction

The Mekong River Delta ranks among the geographical areas that are most affected by natural disasters and ranks top in terms of the risks of flooding, saltwater intrusion, storms, riverbank erosion, and fire. The existing and potential impact of environmental and climate changes on labor and employment is a topic of being more concerned to scholars and policymakers than the general public. There

have been several studies by authors such as The United Nation in Vietnam (2014) [1], Dang Nguyen Anh (2016) [2], Han Entzinger and Peter Scholten (2016) [3], and Le Anh Tuan (2014) [4] pointing out the impacts of climate change on employment and labor. However, out of these, just a few could present a general description of the process of redistribution of human resources and job prospects when employees move to new jobs. To provide in-

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: hoangquyenhv4@gmail.com

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depth analyses of this topic, this study describes the models of occupational transformation, concurrently analyzes factors that influence the scale and trends of occupational mobility. The findings of this study are of crucial importance to policy designs that enable employees to enhance their capabilities in adapting themselves to occupational changes in the new context.

2. Theoretical Frameworks, Data Sources

2.1. Theoretical Frameworks

The concept of occupational mobility in the study is used to refer to the change of job/change of positions in the occupational stratification of individuals at different times (intra-generational occupational mobility). Accordingly, the change of job or job sectors which are “not related to a change of class”/ and do not cause a change of status, as specified in the occupational stratification system, is defined as horizontal mobility” [5]. In contrast, "vertical mobility" is used to refer to a change of the occupational status of an individual, being it higher or lower in terms of social advancement or regression, as compared with their previous occupational status.

In this study, occupational groups are classified in accordance with the classification of occupations by the General Statistics Office of Vietnam. Based on the ten occupational groups are named in Vietnam’s Occupational List of 2009, the author classified into 4 main occupational groups: i) Leadership, managerial positions, and highly skilled positions; ii) Medium-level technical positions and staff; iii) Workers and skilled laborers; and iv) Farmers and other simple laborers.

To determine factors affecting occupational mobility, the author adopts the theories of Karl Marx and Max Weber on social stratification and social mobility, the viewpoints of Pierre Bourdieu on social space, social behavior and reproduction. According to Marx, “the regime of private property creates a fundamental division between those who have economic resources and those who do not. The inequality of property in

a capitalist society is directly based on the means of production such as land, machinery, and factories [6]. Besides the issue of ownership, Marx also mentioned a psychological factor which he called “class enlightenment” or factors that were related to the capacity and technical qualifications of laborers. Marx once wrote “besides these caste ladders are the simple division of workers into skilled and unskilled ones” and “the development of a ladder of labor accompanied with a corresponding wage ladder” [7]. Thus, Karl Max's theory shows that the ownership of the means of production is an important factor determining the occupational status of each individual. Expanding Marx's view, the author does not just stop at investigating the impact of ownership on the means of production but examines the impact of the right to use and decide the means of production on the individual’s process of occupational mobility. Specifically, the author explores how the reduction in the area of agricultural land and the change of the means of production are related to an individual's transition to other occupations.

The theory of Pierre Bourdieu shows us that there are three basic factors that determine an individual's social position in social space: i) The quantity of capital held by the individual; ii) The type of capital held by the individual; and iii) The path of mobility in social space”. Bourdieu’s theory has inspired me to explain occupational mobility in terms of the quantity and type of resources that an individual possesses as well as uses and transfers these resources. The theories of Weber point me to consider the impact of individual factors on the process of occupational mobility such as age, gender, educational level, health, efforts, talents, personality, and occupationally innate orientation of each individual.

Based on the theories of the sociological predecessors, this study adopts multivariable regression models to test the impact of individual factors such as age, gender, educational level, skills, individual efforts, interests, and the degree of influence of environmental and climate changes on the frequency and trend of

occupational mobility. To determine the cause of occupational flow in the context of climate change in the Mekong River Delta, the author calculates and compares the percentage of net mobility/transformational mobility to that of the structural mobility. Accordingly, the entire study focuses on answering two main research questions as follows:

i) How is occupational mobility (mobility within the generation) happening in the context of climate change in the Mekong River Delta through empirical research in Can Tho city?

ii) How do distinctive features (such as an individual's efforts and resources) affect the acquisition, development, and change of occupational status and skills?

2.2. Data Sources

The data used in the study is drawn from the author's previous study, namely, "Occupational Mobility in the Context of Climate Change in the Mekong River Delta - A Case Study of Can Tho City". The data was collected in 2020 with a sample of 784 participants under the age group of 15-60 years (the working-age range).

The method of sample selection was conducted as follows. For the first step, we conducted cluster sampling. The whole area of Can Tho City with 9 administrative units was divided into two clusters. Cluster 1 included 5 districts (Ninh Kieu, Binh Thuy, Cai Rang, O Mon, Thot Not) with a higher level of

urbanization, and cluster 2 included 4 districts (Vinh Thanh, Co Do, Thoi Lai, Phong Dien) with a low level of urbanization, mainly in rural areas. From these two clusters, we selected 2 urban districts and 1 suburban district with the method of purposeful sampling to select the urban districts and suburban ones that had been most affected by climate change. After having selected the districts, we continued to use the method of purposeful sampling to select the wards and communes of the above-mentioned districts. All wards and communes that had been heavily impacted by climate change were selected for the survey. From the selected wards and communes, we continued to use the method of normative sampling to identify the units of investigation.

3. Main Findings

3.1. The Scale and Extent of Job Changes in the Mekong River Delta

Occupational mobility refers to the process of employees transitioning from one occupational sector to another to find jobs with income or meet labor needs. When conditions allow, an increase in the extent of occupational mobility helps maintain the extent of increasing productivity and employment. In an economy where employees can easily switch jobs from one sector to another, it means that the economy has a rapid transition [8].

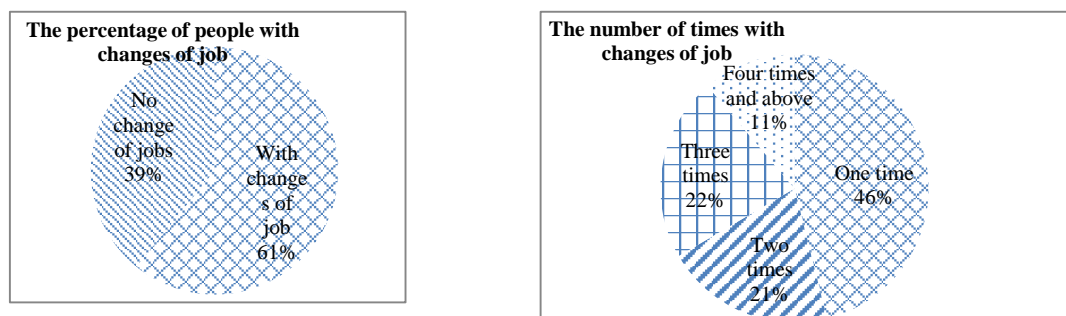


Chart 1. The percentage of people and the number of times with a change of job in the Can Tho city in 2020.
Source: "Occupational Mobility in the Context of Climate Change - A Case Study of Can Tho City", a research conducted by the author in 2020.

Over the past years, with the rapid change of the scientific and technological revolution, climate and environmental changes are affecting all occupational sectors and affecting all employees. In this new context, many people have had to change their jobs and occupation, and consequently, change the very job skills that they have acquired previously. Please consult the data in Chart 1.

The number of times people changed their jobs were subject to multiple factors such as the type of employment, level of income, age, number of years at high school, professional qualifications; the extent of damage to production and lives caused by unusual weather and climate phenomena. (Consult the data in Table 1).

Table 1. Regression Model that determines factors affecting the number of times that people changed their jobs

Independent variables		Marginal impact (B)
	(Constant)	4.810
X1	The level of income from the main occupation, job	-.270*
X2	The level of stability of the first job	-.401*
X3	Years of age when employees had their first job	-.080*
X4	Number of years at high school when employees had their first jobs	.081*
X5	Professional qualifications when employees had their jobs	-.082**
X6	The extent of damage to production and life to the family caused by unusual weather and climate changes	.253*
X7	Type of the first job (temporary labor and labor without contracts as reference group; Labor with contracts, or public employees under state payrolls)	-.411*
a. Dependent Variable: B9.2 The number of times with changes of job		
* p<0.01; ** p<0.05; ***p<0.1		

Source: "Occupational Mobility in the Context of Climate Change - A Case Study of Can Tho City", a research conducted by the author in 2020.

The data in Table 1 shows that those who worked under contracts or were civil servants and public employees were less likely to change jobs than those who worked without a contract. The higher the income was, the less likely it was that employees changed their jobs; the more stable the job was, the less number of times employees changed their jobs; the higher the years of age was when employees started their job, the less number of times employees changed their jobs; the higher the extent of damage caused by the environment and climate change was, the more number of times it was likely that employees changed their jobs. The Linear Regression Equation has the form:

The number of times that changes of job took place = $4.81 - 0.27 \cdot X_1 - 0.401 \cdot X_2 - 0.8 \cdot X_3 + 0.081 \cdot X_4 - 0.082 \cdot X_5 + 0.253 \cdot X_6 - 0.411 \cdot X_7$.

3.2. Scale and Trends of Occupational Mobility

3.2.1. The Shift of the Occupational Mobility Scale

In the preceding section, the author has described the scale and factors that influenced the number of times that a change of jobs/occupational positions took place. In the following section, the author is going to describe the scale and factors that affect the trends of mobility in the occupational stratification.

The data in Table 2 shows that out of a total of 784 participants in the study sample, there were 662 participants (84.4%) that did not have their occupational status changed at the time of the survey; there were 122 participants that experienced a change of occupational status. If it is compared with developed countries where the

occupational structure is relatively stable, then the level of occupational mobility in the Mekong River Delta is much higher. A study by Etienne Lalé revealed that for the period between 1982 and 2009, the average occupational mobility rate for France was 7.4%. It means that 7.4% of French employees were working in an occupational sector that was different from their previous one. Studies on labor and employment

in European countries indicated that an average 3% of European employees changed their occupations each year [9]. The high rate of occupational mobility reflects changes in the structure of labor and employment in Can Tho City, and concurrently points to occupational instability in the context of changes in science, technology, environment and climate.

Table 2. Model of occupational mobility (comparing the current occupation to Occupation prior to the current occupation)

		Current Occupations				Total
		Leadership, Managerial positions and highly skilled positions	Medium-level technical positions and staff	Skilled workers and laborers	Farmers and other simple laborers	
Occupation prior to the current occupation	Leadership, Managerial positions and highly skilled positions	174 98.3%	2 1.1%	1 0.6%	0 0.0%	177 100.0%
	Medium-level technical positions and staff	18 10.5%	147 85.5%	5 2.9%	2 1.2%	172 100.0%
	Skilled workers and laborers	10 6.4%	37 23.6%	105 66.9%	5 3.2%	157 100.0%
	Farmers and other simple laborers	0 0.0%	12 4.3%	3 1.1%	263 94.6%	278 100.0%
Total		202 25.8%	198 25.3%	114 14.5%	270 34.4%	784 100.0%
The percentage of participants, who did not shift status in the occupational stratification		662 (84.4%)				
The percentage of overall mobility		122 (15.6%)				
The percentage of structural mobility = $(\{ [177-202] + [172-198] + [157-114] + [278-270] \})/2 \times 784) \times 100 = 6.5\%$		6.5%				
The percentage of net mobility = $15.6 - 6.5 = 9\%$		9.0%				

Source: "Occupational Mobility in the Context of Climate Change - A Case Study of Can Tho City", a research conducted by the author in 2020.

Table 2 also suggests that the group of skilled workers and laborers had the highest rate of occupational mobility: 33.1% of them moving to other occupations, 23.6% of them moving to the group of medium-level technical

positions and staff, 6.4% of them moving up to the group of leadership, managerial positions and highly skilled positions, and 3.2% of them moving to the group of farmers and other simple laborers.

The highest rate of maintaining an occupational status belongs to the group of leadership, managerial positions and highly skilled positions, and farmers and other simple laborers. Specifically, 98.3% of those in the group of leadership, managerial positions, or highly-skilled employees did not change their occupational status. Similarly, 94.6% of those in the group of farmers and other simple laborers also did not change occupational status, which means that there was almost no occupational mobility out of the agricultural sector. Such a trend points to the fact that the speed of economic structural transformation towards industrialization has taken place relatively slowly in Can Tho City.

3.2.2. Trend of Occupational Mobility in the Mekong River Delta

To indicate the trend of occupational mobility, we need to find out how many

participants, out of the total number of participants, experienced horizontal mobility (a change of job did not lead to a change of occupational status) and how many people experienced vertical mobility (a change of job led to a change of occupational status as specified in the occupational stratification).

In order to determine, out of 464 participants with a change of job, how many participants who had changed their job did not lead to a change of occupational status in occupational stratification (horizontal mobility) and how many participants who had changed their job, that led to a change of occupational status in the occupational stratification (vertical mobility), the author used an occupational mobility model that comparing the employee's current occupation (at the time of the survey) to their occupation prior to the current occupation. Details of the trends of occupational mobility are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Trends of occupational mobility (based on the number of people with changes their job)

		Current occupations				
		Leadership, managerial positions and highly skilled positions	Medium-level technical positions and staff	Skilled workers and laborers	Farmers and other simple laborers	Total
Occupation prior to the current occupation	Leadership, Managerial positions and highly skilled positions	163 98.2%	2 1.2%	1 0.6%	0 0.0%	166 100.0%
	Medium-level technical positions and staff	18 27.7%	42 64.6%	3 4.6%	2 3.1%	65 100.0%
	Skilled workers and laborers	10 22.2%	13 28.9%	17 37.8%	5 11.1%	45 100.0%
	Farmers and other simple laborers	0 0.0%	12 6.4%	3 1.6%	173 92.0%	188 100.0%
	Total	191 41.2%	69 14.9%	24 5.2%	180 38.8%	464 100.0%
Horizontal mobility		395 (85.12%)				
Vertical mobility - 69 (14.87%)		Upward mobility			56 (12.06%)	
		Downward mobility			13 (2.81%)	

Source: "Occupational Mobility in the Context of Climate Change - A Case Study of Can Tho City", a research conducted by the author in 2020.

The data in Table 3 shows that the main occupational mobility in Can Tho in recent years has mainly been horizontal mobility. Out of 464 participants with a change of job, 395 participants (accounting for 85.12%) were involved in horizontal mobility (a change of job did not lead to a change of occupational status) and only 69 participants (14.87%) were involved in vertical mobility (a change of job led to a change of occupational status in the occupational stratification). For those who were related to vertical mobility, upward mobility was more popular than downward one, with 12.06% and 2.81% respectively.

Horizontal mobility occurred predominantly among those who belonged to the group of leadership, managerial positions and highly skilled positions, and the group of farmers and

other simple laborers. The percentage of horizontal mobility of these two groups was 98.2% and 92% respectively. The percentage of vertical mobility, representing the outflow and inflow, of these two groups was very low, meaning that these groups are relatively closed. Vertical mobility occurred mainly in the group of skilled workers and laborers with the rate of 62.2% among which 51.1% was involved in the upward trend and 11.1% was involved in the downward one.

The trend of occupational mobility depends heavily on factors such as: age, gender, number of years at high school, professional qualifications, economic sector, and the extent of damage caused by the climate to the household. Details are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Regression Model that determines factors influencing the trend of occupational mobility (Model of mobility - comparing the current occupation to the occupation prior to the current occupation)

Occupational Mobility Comparing the current occupation to occupation prior to the current occupation	Horizontal mobility		Downward mobility	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Independent variables				
Intercept	9.967		5.279	
Years of age	.074*	1.077	.073	1.075
Number of years at high school	-.652*	.521	-.288	.750
Professional qualifications	.156	1.169	-.518***	.596
Extent of damage caused by unusual changes in the weather or climate	-.879*	.415	-1.526*	.217
Male	-.399	.671	-.120	.887
Gender (female - group of comparison)	0 ^b	.	0 ^b	.
Rural areas	1.217*	3.377	1.260	3.527
Urban areas (group of comparison)	0 ^b	.	0 ^b	.
Working in formal sector of the economy	-2.753*	.064	-2.747*	.064
Informal sector of the economy (group of comparison)	0 ^b	.	0 ^b	.
Intercept	5.279			
a. The reference category is upward mobility.				
b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.				

Source: "Occupational Mobility in the Context of Climate Change - A Case Study of Can Tho City", a research conducted by the author in 2020.

The data in Table 4 shows that age, number of years at high school, professional qualifications, gender, living area, etc. are factors that have impacts on the trend of

occupational mobility. For age, when an employee increased by one year of age, the possibility of horizontal mobility increased compared to the possibility of upward mobility,

and the possibility of downward mobility increased compared to the possibility of upward mobility.

For high school attendance, when an employee increased by one year of high school attendance, the possibility of horizontal mobility decreased compared to the possibility of upward mobility, and the possibility of downward mobility decreased compared to the possibility of upward mobility.

For professional qualifications, when an employee achieved one higher level of qualification, the possibility of horizontal mobility decreased compared to the possibility of upward mobility, and the possibility of downward mobility decreased compared to the possibility of upward mobility. As far as the extent of damage caused by the unusual weather and climate phenomena is concerned, if an

employee faced one higher level of damage, the possibility of horizontal mobility decreased compared to the possibility of upward mobility, and the possibility of downward mobility decreased compared to the possibility of upward mobility. Compared with those who worked in the urban areas, the possibility of horizontal mobility for people working in the rural areas increased compared to the possibility of upward mobility, and the possibility of downward mobility increased compared to the possibility of upward mobility. For the shift from the formal sector of the economy to the informal sector of the economy, the possibility of horizontal mobility of those working in the formal sector decreased compared to the possibility of upward mobility and the upward mobility for the people in this sector decreased compared to the possibility of upward mobility.

Table 5. Model of Shift in Occupational Status in Can Tho City in 2020
(the first occupation compare to the current one)

		Current occupations				Total
		Leadership, managerial positions and highly skilled positions	Medium-level technical positions and staff	Skilled workers and laborers	Farmers and other simple laborers	
First occupation	Leadership, managerial positions and highly skilled positions	78 98.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 1.3%	79 100.0%
	Medium-level technical positions and staff	93 72.1%	35 27.1%	1 0.8%	0 0.0%	129 100.0%
	Skilled workers and laborers	6 4.2%	20 14.0%	20 14.0%	97 67.8%	143 100.0%
	Farmers and other simple laborers	14 12.4%	14 12.4%	3 2.7%	82 72.6%	113 100.0%
Total		191 41.2%	69 14.9%	24 5.2%	180 38.8%	464 100.0%
Horizontal mobility		215 (46.4%)				
Vertical mobility		Upward mobility			150 (32.3%)	
249 (53.6%)		Downward mobility			99 (21.3%)	

Source: "Occupational Mobility in the Context of Climate Change - A Case Study of Can Tho City", a research conducted by the author in 2020.

3.2.3. Employees' Occupational Promotions in the Mekong River Delta in the Context of Climate Change

The models of occupational mobility in Table 2 and Table 3 have provided us with a general view of the scale and trend of occupational mobility which have occurred most recently in Can Tho city. However, in order to understand the mobility in the long run or more precisely, to point out the employee's occupational promotions and relegations, we need to consider the transition occupation compares the first occupation with the occupation at the time of the census. Please consult the data in Table 5.

The data in Table 5 reveals that the trend of vertical mobility was more popular than horizontal mobility. Out of 464 participants with a change of job, 215 participants (46.4%) belonged to horizontal mobility and 249 participants (53.6%) belonged to vertical

mobility. Out of those who were involved in vertical mobility, 150 people (32.3%) were related to upward mobility and 99 people (21.3%) were related to downward mobility.

Compared to the occupational mobility in recent years as shown in Table 3, the percentage of vertical mobility in Table 5 was relatively higher (53.6% versus 14.87%). The data points out the fact that the transformations of the economic structure thanks to advances in science and technology as well as changes resulting from urbanization for a long period have created many jobs in the upper part of the occupational stratification, bringing about opportunities for many people to shift their occupations.

Opportunities for occupational promotions depend heavily on factors such as groups of occupation, number of years at high school, professional qualifications, gender, living area, demographic compositions, and age (Table 6).

Table 6. Regression model of factors influencing the trend of occupational mobility

First Occupation- Current Occupation	Horizontal mobility		Downward mobility	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Intercept	15.569		19.228	
Independent variables				
Years of age	.012	1.012	-.112*	.894
Number of years at high school	-1.221*	.295	-1.083*	.339
Professional qualifications	.092	1.097	-.631*	.532
Male	-1.770*	.170	-.594****	.552
Gender (female as group of comparison)	0 ^b		0 ^b	.
Living in rural areas	-.604	.547	-2.444*	.087
Living area (urban area as comparison group)	0 ^b	.	0 ^b	.
Immigrants	-.258	.773	-.836**	.433
Demographic composition (Local people as group of comparison)	0 ^b	.	0 ^b	.
With labor contracts, state's payroll	-.469	.625	.648***	1.912
Without labor contracts (as group of comparison)	0 ^b	.	0 ^b	.
a. The reference category is: upward mobility.				
b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.				
* p<0.01; ** p<0.05; ***p<0.1				

Source: "Occupational Mobility in the Context of Climate Change - A Case Study of Can Tho City", a research conducted by the author in 2020.

As revealed in Table 6, for the model of comparison between the first occupation and the current one, when an employee increased one year of age, the possibility of horizontal mobility increased by 1.012 times compared to the possibility of upward mobility, and the possibility of downward mobility decreased by 0.894 times compared to the possibility of upward mobility. When an employee increased one year at high school, the possibility of horizontal mobility decreased by 0.295 times compared to the possibility of upward mobility, and the possibility of downward mobility decreased by 0.532 times compared to the possibility of upward mobility. When an employee increased one level of professional qualifications (from college to university level), the possibility of horizontal mobility increased by 1.079 times compared to the possibility of upward mobility, and the possibility of downward mobility decreased by 0.532 times compared to the possibility of upward mobility.

Regarding gender, compared to the female group, the possibility of downward mobility for the male group decreased by 0.552 times compared to the possibility of upward mobility. Compared to the local people group, the possibility of downward mobility for the immigrant group decreased 0.433 times compared to the possibility of upward mobility. Compared to those employees without labor contracts, the possibility of downward mobility for those with labor contracts and the state's payroll increased 1.912 times compared to the possibility of upward mobility.

4. Conclusion and Policy Implications

The findings of the study show that changes in the environment, climate, and transformations of economic structure along with the process of industrialization have brought about challenges that cause many people to change the job that they have pursued previously. However, these challenges also result in many opportunities for people to change job skills so that they can move up to a higher position in the occupational

stratification. Overall, the transition in the economic structure over the years has created many job vacancies at the top of the occupational stratification. In general, changes in the economic structure in recent years which have generated multiple vacant positions in the upper part of the occupational stratification make the flows of upward mobility more popular. However, these flows have taken place with different scales and speeds when different groups of occupations and social distinctiveness are taken into account.

In addition to the contextual factor, factors related to individual characteristics such as occupational groups, number of years at high school, professional qualifications, gender, living areas, or demographic composition, the range of age can enormously affect the trend of occupational mobility. As a result, in the coming years, so as to support people in the process of occupational changes, the government should create a favorable working environment where people can take full advantage of occupational opportunities, minimize potential risks and enhance the capability of adapting to the next context. Specifically, the government needs to organize programs, implement policies that enable people to change occupations without facing the severe consequences of such changes. In other words, the government needs to: i) Implement programs and policies that help employees to better access training services, improve basic skills to create a prerequisite for the process of occupational transition; ii) Perform employment policies that should not be based on the stability of occupations, but instead on employees' adaptation to economic changes, to promote development and diversification of livelihood; iii) The government needs to invest appropriately for people through health care policies, an improvement in the quality of education, provision of occupational skills; accordingly, continue investments in basic educational programs, concurrently reform and enhance the quality of vocational education and training, and train high-quality human resources to meet the labor market demand; iv) The

government should pay attention to the promotion of labor market expansion through transformations of the economic structure; and v) Diversify forms of providing employment information for employees, especially for females and other disadvantaged groups.

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