



Original Article

# The Right to Access Information in Sustainable Poverty Reduction Policy in Vietnam

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Received 01<sup>st</sup> August 2025

Revised 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025; Accepted 08<sup>th</sup> December 2025

**Abstract:** The right to access information is one of the basic rights of citizens as stipulated in the Constitution and legal documents in Vietnam. Ensuring these rights requires guaranteeing equal access for all social groups, including the poor. In the sustainable poverty reduction policy in Vietnam, the multidimensional poverty line is determined using income and access to basic social services, in which basic services are determined to include: employment, health, education, housing, water and sanitation, and information. In particular, the criteria to determine information deficiency are telecommunications services and other means of accessing information. Based on these criteria, the State is currently promulgating measures to compensate for the shortage of those two indicators. Using text analysis, comparative research of international experiences, and secondary data, the study reveals certain shortcomings in the scope of access to information and information poverty reduction in Vietnam. Additionally, the study offers recommendations with policy implications to address these shortcomings. From there, it is proposed to amend the criteria for determining the information poverty line, and supplement documents regulating information poverty reduction in the sustainable poverty reduction policy system in Vietnam.

**Keywords:** Access to Information Rights; Sustainable Poverty Reduction Policies; Multidimensional poverty reduction; Information Poverty Reduction; Information Poverty Reduction Policy.

## 1. Introduction

The right to access information has increasingly been recognized as an essential component of social welfare and a foundational condition enabling disadvantaged groups to

participate in, benefit from, and monitor development programs. Within the context of Viet Nam's multidimensional poverty reduction policy, information constitutes a crucial factor shaping poor households' ability to access basic social services, make informed livelihood

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<https://doi.org/10.25073/2588-1116/vnupam.4565>

decisions, and exercise agency in their interactions with the policy system. However, the current approach to identifying and measuring “information deprivation” in the multidimensional poverty framework remains predominantly focused on the ownership of information and telecommunication devices, and therefore does not adequately capture the substantive dimensions of the right to access information.

This article aims to examine how the poverty reduction policy system in Viet Nam identifies and addresses information deprivation among the poor, while proposing a more comprehensive analytical approach based on three interconnected components of the right to access information: the capacity to search for and obtain information; the ability to transmit and exchange information; and the effective use of information products and services in everyday life. The study addresses two central research questions: how the right to access information is currently integrated into poverty reduction policies, and what limitations of the existing approach result in the omission of important aspects of information poverty.

By analysing relevant policy documents, the article establishes an analytical framework that conceptualizes the right to access information as a critical dimension in measuring deprivation among poor households. This contributes to the broader discussion on sustainable poverty reduction by offering a more empirically grounded understanding of information as a determinant of poverty and as a public resource that shapes households’ capacity for development.

Methodologically, this article relies primarily on i) policy text analysis; ii) comparative analysis of international experiences; and iii) the utilization of secondary data to illustrate prevailing practices regarding information deprivation in selected localities. We acknowledge the absence of primary quantitative surveys and in-depth field interviews in this article and propose a subsequent program of household surveys, interviews with grassroots officials, and case

studies as the necessary next steps to verify and enrich the empirical evidence. Ultimately, this research offers novel contributions by establishing a comprehensive analytical framework, while openly acknowledging the limitations of the present approach and calling for further empirical research, household surveys, and in-depth case studies in ethnic minority and mountainous regions to validate and supplement the evidence base for current policy recommendations.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. *The Right to Access Information*

Research on the right to access information generally follows two approaches: a civil and political rights perspective emphasizing democratic freedoms and public oversight, and a development-oriented perspective that considers information access a driver of economic and social progress.

In the civil and political rights approach, the right to access information is regarded as a fundamental condition for building a democratic state committed to accountability, transparency, and openness. Studies examining the relationship between legal documents on the right of access and constitutional provisions emphasize governmental and judicial accountability in responding to public information requests [2, 3]. Within this approach, government information is recognized as having direct effects on access to essential social services, including healthcare [4]. Research also demonstrates how information access interacts with broader social factors, particularly in relation to social welfare outcomes such as food security [5].

In India, the Right to Information Act (RTI) of 2005 illustrates how access legislation can serve as a tool to reduce corruption in public authority operations by reinforcing transparency and accountability, although constraints remain regarding public disclosure practices and information management systems [6]. The right

of access may also extend to information held by private organizations when such information is of community value, as reflected in debates surrounding the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004 in England and Wales.

The second research approach views access to information as a foundation for economic development. Studies emphasize the need to optimize the value of information activities by ensuring the widest possible accessibility for users and preventing monopolies in information provision and dissemination [7]. High-value information resources essential for learning, research, and innovation—such as datasets, statistics, and procedural knowledge held by international organizations—are considered public goods that must be openly available for community benefit [8]. This orientation has become a significant movement within information science [9], influencing national information development policies in many developed countries [10].

A strong trend toward fully open access to government information has emerged, based on the expectation that openness can generate positive social transformation [11]. Government information creates substantial public value through bidirectional benefits for both users and the public sector, contributing to the accumulation of intangible public assets [12]. However, efforts to expand access may fall short if information provision does not correspond to user needs. In Vietnam, commitments to transparency and digital transformation have facilitated the development of foundational digital databases and publicly accessible government information portals.

In the context of globalization, digital transformation, and the rapid growth of social networks, users face an environment where high-quality and low-quality information coexist. Thus, individuals increasingly require the ability to evaluate, select, receive, and process information effectively. Information literacy becomes essential for meeting information needs and using information efficiently within the knowledge economy.

Although originating alongside the concept of information access, information literacy is now recognized as central to national information policy discussions for building an information society [13]. It is a core component of lifelong learning and a fundamental right in the digital age, contributing to social inclusion [14]. Some scholars propose the development of an applied scientific field dedicated to information literacy, emphasizing the need for specialized policies suited to national or regional variations [15]. Information literacy development is also linked to computer literacy or information technology literacy [16] and, within digital transformation, to information and communication networks [16-18]. In developed countries, it has become a new standard in national information policies [19], implemented through community learning programs and formal courses [19, 20]. Fundamentally, access to information must accompany information literacy, enabling users not only to collect but also to evaluate and process information appropriately for decision-making aligned with individual objectives.

## *2.2. Multidimensional Poverty Reduction and Information Poverty Reduction*

Research on multidimensional poverty reduction has gained significant scholarly attention. To describe poverty conditions across countries, studies commonly apply multidimensional poverty measurements based on survey data capturing diverse deprivations. Typical examples include educational and housing deficiencies in several Middle Eastern and North African countries [21], multidimensional indicators relating to health, fertility, and household conditions in Mozambique [22], and income, health, and education deprivations in Indonesia [23]. In China, multidimensional poverty has been assessed using both monetary and non-monetary indicators under the Alkire-Foster method [24]. Additional studies measure deprivations in education, employment, and health through individual-level indices such as G-CSPI and G-

M0 [25]. These findings affirm that multidimensional poverty extends beyond income, although the specific dimensions vary.

To demonstrate its developmental implications, research has examined the relationship between multidimensional poverty and major national outcomes. Evidence includes the influence of different poverty dimensions on migration [26]; the growth effects of poverty reduction in India, where a ten percent decline in multidimensional poverty increases per-capita income by approximately three to four percent, particularly through improving education and nutrition [27]; and the moderating role of the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in shaping the relationship between governance indicators across OECD countries [28]. Cross-country analyses also estimate that a ten percent rise in GDP reduces multidimensional poverty by four to five percent, while income-poverty elasticity remains substantially higher [25]. Research in southwest China further demonstrates a positive correlation between tourism development and multidimensional poverty reduction across economic, educational, health, and social welfare dimensions [29].

Although this body of literature confirms the multidimensional nature of poverty, it primarily emphasizes deficiencies in health, education, and living conditions. Notably, no international studies include information deprivation as a dimension. In Vietnam, however, information has been formally recognized since 2015 as one of six basic social services and incorporated into multidimensional poverty measurement. This provides the conceptual basis for emerging studies on information poverty reduction within the broader sustainable poverty reduction framework.

Vietnamese studies frequently use information poverty as an indicator in regional multidimensional poverty assessments. Examples include analyses of suburban Hanoi using indicators such as ownership of televisions, radios, mobile phones, and internet access [30], and assessments in Binh Duong province using asset- and connectivity-based

indicators [31]. Other research proposes expanding information channels to influence the knowledge and production conditions of poor households [32], improving information access in mountainous areas [33], or developing comprehensive labor market information systems to expand overseas employment opportunities for the poor [34]. Studies in Ha Giang province and on the Dong Van rock plateau highlight persistent limitations in communication infrastructure and locally relevant information content, including the scarcity of Hmong-language programs [35, 36].

Research focusing specifically on information poverty remains limited but offers important insights. For example, studies in Ho Chi Minh City show that temporary residence status is strongly associated with greater information deprivation, particularly among individuals lacking household registration documents [37]. Other research underscores the role of social workers in facilitating access to poverty reduction policies [38].

Overall, Vietnamese research approaches information poverty reduction as part of the larger sustainable poverty reduction system, with a small number of studies examining information poverty as an independent dimension and proposing targeted solutions, especially in relation to labor market or policy information.

### *2.3. Novelty of the Research*

Through the research overview, it can be observed that studies on the right to access information follow two trends: viewing access as one of the civil and political rights, and considering this right as a factor driving the development of various aspects of citizens' socio-economic life. However, until now, no major evidence-based research has been conducted addressing the right to access information in relation to national social security policies (in this study, the sustainable poverty reduction policy). This is considered a theoretical and practical gap in the

implementation of the right to access information in policy execution in Vietnam.

As analyzed, multidimensional poverty is an open approach with various dimensions of deficiency to assess the state of poverty and poverty reduction policies in countries. However, no influential studies outside of Vietnam have considered information deficiency as a dimension of multidimensional poverty. Pioneering in incorporating information as one of the six deficiency dimensions in the multidimensional poverty approach, Vietnam positions information poverty reduction as a policy within the overall multidimensional poverty reduction policy system approved under the National Target Program for Sustainable Poverty Reduction. However, the index for determining information poverty is still quite simple, and the policies for reducing information poverty are not yet comprehensive. Existing studies on information poverty among the poor are primarily conducted in Vietnam, mainly describing the current implementation of information poverty reduction policies in localities, with no studies addressing the content of information poverty and analyzing the information poverty reduction policies. Thus, there exists a research gap regarding the content of information poverty reduction policies as a component of the multidimensional poverty reduction policy system. This study addresses this gap by using the right to access information to evaluate and propose solutions to improve information poverty reduction policies for the poor in Vietnam.

### **3. Some Theoretical Aspects on the Right to Access Information and Information Poverty Reduction in Sustainable Poverty Reduction Policy**

#### *3.1. Right to Access Information*

Theoretical perspectives on the “right of access to information” have been examined globally through multiple lenses. From the standpoint that locates this right within political

rights, John Stuart Mill (1859) emphasized freedom of expression as the philosophical foundation for conceptualizing access to information as an extension of freedom of speech [39]. Building on this tradition, Jurgen Habermas highlighted the role of transparent information and public deliberation as essential components of political legitimacy. His works provide a theoretical basis for modern debates on mass communication and political culture, linked to legislative rights such as freedom of speech, assembly, the press, and participation in policymaking [40, 41]. In a similar vein, Robert Dahl conceptualized access to information as a necessary condition for democracy, formulating it in terms of “Enlightened Understanding” [42]. From the perspective of fundamental human rights, scholars argue that access to information is part of the core rights ensuring personal autonomy and serves as a critical tool for monitoring the state, preventing abuses of power, and ensuring transparency [43, 44].

A second viewpoint associates the right to access information with civil rights by emphasizing informational capacity as a foundation for development. This approach centers on informational equity and the ability of individuals to access and use information. In 1974, P. G. Zurkowski introduced the concept of Information Literacy, defining the competencies required to identify, access, and use information within a comprehensive information environment [45]. Accessing and sharing information thus became central to innovation and development, and access to information emerged as a determining factor for citizens’ development opportunities [46]. By 1999, Amartya Sen expanded this view by framing access to information as a key dimension of freedom, enhancing individual and societal capabilities and contributing to the reduction of social inequality [47, 48]. Within this framework, the right to access information is understood as a right that strengthens citizens’ abilities to access and use information effectively.

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has intensified discussions on the digital divide, understood through multiple layers including devices, connectivity, skills, and effective use. These inequalities increasingly constitute major obstacles to sustainable development [49]. Since 2005, UNESCO has advanced frameworks on the right to knowledge and informational equality, structured around four pillars: freedom of expression, universal access to knowledge, cultural and linguistic diversity, and quality education [50]. In a context characterized by information abundance, information policy has become a decisive factor in shaping inequalities in accessing information-related social services such as education, healthcare, and employment. As technological capabilities expand, the right to access information has become intertwined with digital rights, including the right to participate, the right to exercise technological agency in accessing public services, and the imperative of data transparency for development [51-53].

In this study, we adopt theoretical perspectives on the right to access information from the standpoint of civil rights, emphasizing its significance for sustainable development. Accordingly, the right to access information is conceptualized not merely as passive reception but as an active capacity encompassing the right to seek and collect information to overcome asymmetry, disseminate and exchange information to participate in social dialogue, and effectively use information products and services to enhance livelihoods.

### 3.2. Sustainable Poverty Reduction

From the perspective that poverty represents a state of deficiency, poverty reduction is understood as the process of compensating for those deficiencies. In this study, poverty reduction policy is conceptualized as a system of measures designed to offset the specific deprivations experienced by the poor. The comprehensiveness of this policy system depends on how fully compensatory measures cover the deficiencies identified by policymakers. For individuals facing income

deficiency, policies aim to support production and enhance income-generating capacity. For those lacking access to basic social services, welfare policies seek to expand opportunities for service access. For individuals deprived of opportunities to participate in community decision-making, policies target improvements in knowledge, communication skills, confidence, and information processing ability to ensure effective engagement in community decision-making.

Poverty reduction policy constitutes a component of the broader social security system, developed to mitigate risks and achieve inclusive, multi-layered, and comprehensive social protection. In Vietnam, before 1998, poverty reduction policies existed independently, exemplified by the Preferential Loan Fund for Poor Households (1995) and the Legal Aid Organization for the Poor (1997). A major shift occurred in 1998 with the introduction of the first comprehensive framework, the “National Target Program for Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction, 1998-2000,” which aimed to reduce the national poverty rate to 10 percent by 2000 [54]. The dual concept of “hunger and poverty” continued in the “National Target Program for Hunger Eradication, Poverty Reduction, and Employment, 2001-2005”. After the elimination of hunger, the “National Target Program for Poverty Reduction, 2006-2010” focused solely on poverty reduction, aiming to halve the number of poor households within five years [55].

The term “sustainable poverty reduction” has been officially used since 2012 [56], denoting a system of policies aimed at improving the living conditions of the poor, particularly ethnic minorities, residents of poor districts, border communes, safety zone communes, remote and disadvantaged areas, coastal regions, and islands. The term “sustainable” was introduced because, despite significant achievements, Vietnam’s poverty reduction outcomes were assessed as “not truly sustainable”, with many households near the poverty line, high rates of re-poverty, large

regional disparities, and persistently low living standards among ethnic minorities and mountainous communities [57]. This perspective has been further refined through the implementation of the National Target Programs for Sustainable Poverty Reduction during 2016-2020 and 2021-2025.

Today, sustainable poverty reduction policy is understood as a comprehensive system of measures addressing the deficiencies of the poor in a “multidimensional, inclusive, and sustainable manner, limiting both re-poverty and the emergence of new poverty” [1].

### 3.3. Information Poverty

Although information poverty is commonly associated with the lack of technological devices, theoretical approaches reveal a more complex condition. Britz (2004) conceptualizes information poverty as a state in which individuals or communities lack the skills, abilities, or material means necessary to access, interpret, and apply information effectively [58]. This highlights that hardware provision alone cannot overcome deeper forms of “intellectual poverty” that limit the capacity of disadvantaged groups to use information for development.

Understanding user behavior is equally essential. Chatman’s “Small Worlds” theory (1996) argues that information poverty is shaped by social and psychological boundaries, where poor individuals rely heavily on trusted insiders and may view formal or external information sources with skepticism or indifference. Under this perspective, reducing information poverty requires addressing issues of trust, relevance, and cultural fit in information channels, not merely expanding information availability [59].

To identify structural gaps in Vietnam’s current approach, this study applies van Dijk’s Digital Divide framework (2005), which distinguishes four sequential levels of access: motivational access, physical or material access, skills access, and usage access. Present sustainable poverty reduction policies concentrate primarily on physical access, such as providing smartphones or expanding internet

coverage [60], while paying insufficient attention to higher-level dimensions that determine whether information can be processed and used for meaningful socio-economic outcomes.

Synthesizing these foundational theories, the study argues that information deprivation among the poor should be conceptualized as multidimensional exclusion. It encompasses not only infrastructural limitations but also restricted opportunities to develop the information literacy necessary for exercising the right to access information. Building on this, the analytical framework assesses the extent to which current policies address three essential components: the capacity to seek and collect information, the capacity to disseminate and exchange information, and the capacity to use information products and services. These components are understood as interconnected capabilities that allow individuals to approach, interpret, and apply information within specific socio-economic contexts.

#### **Ensuring the Right to Seek and Collect Information for the Poor**

Ensuring the right of the poor to seek and collect information requires that information be available, accessible, and presented in forms suited to their cultural, educational, and language levels. Policies must therefore promote an appropriate information resource system oriented toward scientific and technological information serving production, business, and socio-economic development. These resources should exist in multiple formats and be organized into searchable systems accessible through local facilities such as commune radio stations, community internet access points, or cultural post offices, alongside a professional information supply model aligned with digital transformation and suitable in terms of distance, schedule, and access cost.

A trained professional workforce is required to operate these systems, assist users in searching, and provide information in appropriate formats, complementing grassroots actors responsible for policy dissemination. At the same time, the poor must be equipped with

essential skills to identify information needs, use diverse search tools and platforms, evaluate information content, and organize collected information. These skills should be strengthened through training integrated with broader communication measures.

#### **Ensuring the Right to Disseminate and Exchange Information for the Poor**

Ensuring the right of the poor to disseminate and exchange information requires equipping them with essential capacities to create, present, and communicate information through appropriate tools and multimedia technologies. These skills enable disadvantaged groups not only to receive information but also to share and apply it in everyday life, thereby improving their participation in social, economic, and political processes.

Policy should further support the development of information channels that contribute to poverty reduction, including those initiated by the poor or by households that have escaped poverty to share practical experiences. Such channels must be designed to be accessible, usable, and responsive to the needs and conditions of the poor.

In addition, the poor should be encouraged and supported to access and operate information distribution channels and platforms. This requires providing devices, technology infrastructure, and support services, alongside trained personnel who can assist users in exploiting and applying information effectively.

#### **Ensuring the Right to Use Information Products and Services for the Poor**

Ensuring the right of the poor to use information products and services requires

policies that expand beyond basic propaganda or public postal services to develop a catalog of essential information products and services integrated into a professional information supply system. Given the heterogeneity of information needs, such products and services must be designed to support production, livelihoods, and socio-economic participation.

Effective use of these products and services also depends on equipping the poor with core skills to exploit information content, including reading, listening, summarizing, synthesizing, and applying information to daily life and productive activities. These capacities complement the skills needed for searching, collecting, and communicating information.

However, mastering information systems and transforming information into usable knowledge remains a significant challenge for disadvantaged groups. Therefore, information poverty reduction policies should incorporate measures that support this transformation process, including the application of information and communication technology, the establishment of specialized support teams composed of consultants, experts, and volunteers, and the implementation of policies that encourage research, innovation, and pilot initiatives aimed at identifying more effective methods of information use for poverty reduction.

Based on the three aforementioned aspects, the authors propose four criteria to evaluate the content of information poverty reduction policies in Vietnam. The criteria are grouped as follows:

Table 1. Four criteria to evaluate the content of information poverty reduction policies in Vietnam

No.	Criteria	Aspect		
		Right to Seek and Collect Information	Right to Disseminate and Exchange Information	Right to Use Information Products and Services
1.	Building information resources and information products/services suitable for the poor.	Building information resources suitable for the poor.		Building information products and services suitable for the poor.



No.	Criteria	Aspect		
		Right to Seek and Collect Information	Right to Disseminate and Exchange Information	Right to Use Information Products and Services
2.	Developing an information supply model suitable for the poor.	Organizing into a system that can be searched in various ways.	Ensuring channels and conditions for channel operations.	
3.	Developing human resources to help the poor access information.	Having operators: receiving requests, supporting searches, providing search results in suitable formats.		Supporting the poor in exploiting and applying information content.
4.	Training information literacy for the poor.	Equipping the poor with skills to search for information effectively.	Equipping the poor with skills to present and communicate information.	Equipping the poor with the ability to use information products and services.

#### 4. Current Status of Information Poverty Reduction Policies in Vietnam

The multidimensional poverty standard in Vietnam was first applied for the 2016-2020 period [60] and maintained for the 2021-2025 period [1] (Accordingly, poverty measurement is determined based on income criteria and the criteria of basic social service deficiencies, including: i) Income: Rural areas: 1,500,000 VND/person/month; Urban areas: 2,000,000 VND/person/month; ii) Basic Social Service Deficiencies: Basic social services (6 services): employment; healthcare; education; housing; clean water and sanitation; information. Indicators measuring the level of basic social service deficiencies (12 indicators): employment; dependents in the household; nutrition; health insurance; adults' educational level; children's schooling status; housing quality; average housing area per person; clean water source; sanitary latrine; use of telecommunications services; means of accessing information.

Thus, information is a dimension of deficiency used to identify poor households in sustainable poverty reduction policies. The indicator for assessing information deficiency is the use of telecommunications services (households with no members using internet

services) and means of accessing information (households with none of the following means of accessing information: communal means: TV, radio, desktop computer, phone; personal means: laptop, tablet, smartphone). Information poverty reduction is a part of sustainable poverty reduction, understood as a set of activities aimed at compensating for the information deficiencies of the poor, poor households, and poor localities. The target to be achieved by 2025 for the information deficiency dimension is that 90% of poor and near-poor households with the need to access telecommunications and internet services; 95% of households in poor districts, particularly difficult communes in coastal and island areas access information on sustainable poverty reduction through publications and communication products.

Based on the National Target Program for Sustainable Poverty Reduction for the 2021-2025 period, many documents have been issued to concretize information poverty reduction policies. These include: Project on Communication and Information Poverty Reduction (comprising 2 sub-projects: Sub-project 1: Information Poverty Reduction and Sub-project 2: Communication on Multidimensional Poverty Reduction), Circular 06/2022/TT-BTTTT, Decision 1590/QĐ-

BTTTT, Decision 1288/QĐ-BTTTT, Decision 2269/QĐ-TTg, Decision 1506/QĐ-BTTTT, among other documents. Examining these documents, the current status of information poverty reduction policies in Vietnam can be described according to the four groups of criteria to evaluate the degree of responsiveness to the aspects of the right to access information as follows:

#### *4.1. Building Information Resources and Information Products/Services Suitable for the Poor*

##### **Building Information Resources (Content and Format) Suitable for the Poor**

The policy stipulates the dissemination of the Party's guidelines, State laws, and the implementation status of sustainable poverty reduction; information on social security; and knowledge, skills, and models that support production, employment, sustainable livelihoods, and adaptation to climate change and epidemics. It also promotes exemplary poverty reduction initiatives, results of the "Nationwide Solidarity for the Poor" movement, and information on basic social services such as employment, vocational education, overseas work, healthcare, education, housing, clean water, sanitation, information, legal aid, social support, and gender equality.

In practice, localities disseminate not only the Party's policies and the State's laws but also knowledge, development models, and exemplary cases of poverty reduction [61-63]. These information activities have enabled people to become aware of and proactively register for support programs [64] and to adjust livelihood models suited to local conditions, thereby increasing income and improving housing [65]. Communication products increasingly highlight the link between information access, information poverty reduction, the Law on Access to Information, and policies promoting information technology applications, broadcasting services, and the role of commune cultural post offices [66]. To support the poor in using telecommunications services, many provinces have established community digital technology

teams that assist residents in accessing the digital environment and using digital platforms such as cashless payments, e-commerce, and online public services [67-69].

Despite progress, limitations remain. By 2023, Vietnam had 99.8 percent 4G coverage, 5G trials in 59 provinces, 84.4 percent smartphone usage, and 80 percent household fiber-optic coverage [70]. However, gaps persist among ethnic minority and mountainous communities, where linguistic barriers also exist because the main language of administrative activities and official information portals is Vietnamese [71].

##### **Building Information Products and Services Suitable for the Poor**

Policies include the development of digital platforms for electronic newspapers (Ministry of Information and Communications, 2022), the application of digital technologies [1], and the provision of free mandatory telecommunications services. Poor and near-poor households receive support for obtaining one terminal device-either a tablet or partial funding for a smartphone-and subsidies for using either mobile telecommunications or fixed broadband services. Funding is also provided for broadband access in preschools, general education institutions, commune health stations, and community internet access points [1]. Additional measures include establishing public electronic information clusters at border gates and providing public information services through postal service points in remote and disadvantaged areas.

Policy implementation has produced notable results. In Lao Cai, 97 percent of poor and near-poor households used telecommunications and internet services, and over 90 percent of residents in poor districts accessed poverty reduction information through communication products [65]. In Bac Lieu, 100 percent of communes had mobile information infrastructure, full fiber-optic connectivity, and comprehensive 3G and 4G coverage [67]. In Yen Bai, 81 percent of households used broadband services, and more than 90 percent possessed

tablets or smartphones [68]. Meanwhile, 27.76 percent of households in Bac Kan still lacked telecommunications services, and 7.8 percent lacked means of accessing information [72]. In La Bang commune, public facilities were equipped with free Wi-Fi and digital devices, and 80 percent of working-age residents used smartphones proficiently [73].

#### *4.2. Developing an Information Supply Model Suitable for the Poor*

##### **Organizing into a System that can be Searched in Various Ways (Distance, Schedule, Access Cost)**

The policy framework stipulates the organization of policy dialogues on poverty reduction at various levels, especially at the grassroots; the production and broadcasting of radio programs on national and local radio systems; and the development of programs, events, specialized pages, reports, and communication publications on sustainable poverty reduction. It also mandates the production of new journalistic works and publications containing essential content, the selection of long-lasting journalistic materials for digital conversion and online distribution, and the selection of printed publications for electronic publication [1].

In practice, policy information is disseminated through grassroots officials and Party members [61, 74], community meetings [75, 76], and visual communication such as posters and banners [63]. Many localities now operate social media channels-including YouTube, Facebook pages, and Zalo OA-at village and residential-group levels to post updated information [75]. District, commune, and town radio stations regularly relay programs from VOV1 (News - Politics - General radio channel of Voice of Vietnam (VOV)) and provincial broadcasters to ensure widespread transmission of official information [63, 65, 75, 77].

##### **Ensuring Channels and Conditions for Channel Operations**

Policies also address the strengthening of facilities for commune radio stations in

socioeconomically disadvantaged and island areas, support for border posts, the development of digital platforms for publishing electronic newspapers, and the application of digital technologies [1]. In addition, poor and near-poor households receive free mandatory telecommunications services, support for one terminal device (a tablet or partial funding for a smartphone), and partial subsidies for either mobile telecommunications or fixed broadband access. Funding is also provided for broadband access in preschools, general education institutions, commune health stations, and public community access points, as well as for public electronic information clusters at border gates and public postal service points in remote areas [1].

Substantial practical efforts have been undertaken to develop information and communication infrastructure. Activities include supporting households in purchasing smartphones at preferential prices and subsidizing monthly service fees [65, 68], collaborating with service providers to expand broadband coverage and improve telecommunications quality with priority for 3G/4G in “white” and “shadow” areas and 5G development in key locations [64, 78-79], and investing in the installation and modernization of loudspeaker systems across hamlets and residential groups [62, 78]. Many localities have also inaugurated upgraded broadcasting systems and handed them over for community use [80, 81]. The provision of public information services through postal service points to support access among socioeconomically disadvantaged, island, and remote communities has been widely implemented nationwide [82-83].

#### *4.3. Developing Human Resources to Help the Poor Access Information*

##### **Having Operators: Receiving Requests, Supporting Searches, Providing Search Results in Suitable Formats**

The policy addresses the following: Capacity building programs for leaders, managers, journalists, and editors of press agencies, officials of press management agencies, and state management agencies on journalism; Capacity building programs for grassroots

information officers, prioritizing cultural-social officials at the commune level and those in charge of commune radio stations; Capacity building programs for information and communication officers of the Party and socio-political organizations; Capacity building programs for external information officers of central and local agencies and organizations [1]

In practice, training activities to improve the capacity, professional skills, and expertise of information and communication personnel at all levels are conducted annually in all provinces and cities [64, 75, 84-87].

#### **Supporting the Poor in Exploiting and Applying Information Content**

Currently, the policy does not address measures to support the poor in exploiting and applying information content.

#### *4.4. Training Information Literacy for the Poor*

Basically, sustainable poverty reduction policies in Vietnam have not considered the lack of information literacy as a basis for identifying poor households. The index for assessing information deficiency only includes the use of telecommunications services and means to access information (Prime Minister, 2022). The targets for compensating information deficiencies are: poor and near-poor households needing access to telecommunications and internet services; households in poor districts and particularly difficult communes in coastal and island areas accessing information on sustainable poverty reduction through various publications and communication products. Consequently, the current policy primarily focuses on the capacity of personnel involved in information and communication work at the grassroots level, but it covers a very broad audience (leaders, managers, journalists, editors of press agencies, personnel of press management agencies, officials conducting grassroots information work, especially commune-level socio-cultural civil servants in charge of commune radio stations; officials conducting information and propaganda work of Party agencies and socio-political organizations;

officials conducting external information work of central and local agencies) and is mainly about information and communication capacity related to poverty reduction (Minister of Information and Communications, 2023), without addressing the capacity of those directly providing information to help the poor escape poverty.

Training and enhancing information exploitation skills for the poor remain very limited. Specifically, it can be noted: enhancing information content to help people know and proactively register for support programs, transition economic models suitable to local terrain and soil conditions, thereby increasing income and building houses [65]; to support the poor in using telecommunications services, many localities have established community digital technology teams to help people access the digital environment, use digital platforms and technologies such as cashless payments, e-commerce, public administrative services [67-69]; Thus, current policies do not yet address training information skills for the poor.

### **5. Some Observations and Policy Implications**

#### *5.1. Building Information Resources and Information Products/Services Suitable for the Poor*

##### **Building Information Resources (Content and Format) Suitable for the Poor**

Information resources are essential inputs for providing information services to the poor. Therefore, to implement information poverty reduction, one of the initial requirements is to establish a robust system of input information resources. In other words, policies need to promote the search, selection, and supplementation of information that supports economic activities, production, and services linked with scientific and technological achievements to help the poor engage in productive labor and escape poverty. An analysis of current policies and their implementation reveals that, although there is an emphasis on developing content related to the dissemination

of Party guidelines, state laws, knowledge, skills, poverty reduction models, and support for production and business, there is a lack of strategic documents directing the development of information specifically for the poor. In other words, there is an absence of a comprehensive strategy or program for developing information to serve poverty reduction.

To address this gap, we propose the development of policies for building information resources to aid poverty reduction with the following core aspects:

- i) The types of information resources that need to be developed, with a focus on scientific and technological information serving production, business, and socio-economic development;
- ii) Methods of collecting information;
- iii) Forms of information to be collected;
- iv) Ensuring that the information is free;
- v) Criteria for evaluating the content of the information.

### **Building Information Products and Services Suitable for the Poor**

Along with the development of information resources, the development of information products and services is also a pressing issue. A review of policy content reveals that policies have mentioned the provision of public information services in difficult areas, but they have only focused on public communication, external relations, and public postal services. We believe that, for the poor, with their diverse information needs, there should be a focus on information products and services that address issues of production, business, and economic development.

The diversity in the information needs of the poor highlights the necessity of establishing a list of basic and essential information products and services for the poor. Based on this list, the government can direct investments and encourage the participation of organizations and individuals in developing information products and services for the poor. Consequently, there are urgent issues that need to be addressed in the promulgation of guidelines for the organization

and implementation of information provision for the poor.

Therefore, there needs to be a policy for developing information products and services for the poor in the following aspects:

- Issuing a list of specific information products and services for the poor and poverty reduction efforts;
- Standardizing the process of providing information products and services for the poor and poverty reduction efforts.

### *5.2. Developing an Information Supply Model Suitable for the Poor*

Organizing into a System that can be Searched in Various Ways (Distance, Schedule, Access Cost)

An analysis of current policies reveals that the information supply models for serving the poor include the establishment of information and communication infrastructure, village radio stations, and support for broadband internet access costs at preschools and primary schools. From this, it can be seen that the current policy has chosen local information institutions such as village radio stations, public internet access points at villages, or village cultural post offices as the main models for providing information to serve poverty reduction. However, the limitation of these models lies in their primary focus on information provision without the capability to offer information consultation, support for information retrieval, and other services for the poor. Moreover, as mentioned in section 5.1, it is evident that developing information content, products, and services for the poor requires specialized information organizations capable of developing information and supplying information products and services professionally, with information content tied to the application of scientific and technological achievements in economic development and production to support people in escaping poverty. This underscores the need to establish a professional information supply model that aligns with the digital transformation trend and

meets the information needs of the poor. To date, there are no specific regulations for this model.

Based on these factors, the study highlights the necessity of issuing policies to establish an information supply model suitable for the poor, focusing on the following aspects:

- Developing a supply model based on the connection between information provision institutions such as village radio stations, public internet access points at villages, or village cultural post offices in disseminating state poverty reduction policies;

- Strengthening the local public library system to provide information products and services suitable for the poor in line with digital transformation.

#### **Ensuring Channels and Conditions for Channel Operations**

To improve and ensure the effectiveness of poverty reduction through the creation and operation of information channels, the policy needs to include the following elements:

Firstly, it is necessary to focus on developing information channels created by the poor and those who have escaped poverty, where they can share practical experiences. The policy should support the establishment and maintenance of these information channels by providing financial, technical, and guidance assistance. The Youth Union can organize basic digital skills classes for the poor and near-poor, help build and maintain online information channels (e.g., blogs, forums, social media groups), act as advisors, and provide direct assistance to each household in using technological devices and accessing information channels. The Women's Union can organize group meetings and community events to enhance support and connectivity, enabling poor and near-poor women to share experiences in financial management, family care, and other life skills. These contents can be recorded and shared on online information channels.

Secondly, to ensure that these information channels are accessible and usable for the poor, it is necessary to set standards for developing

user-friendly interfaces, language appropriate to each ethnic community, and specific usage guidelines. Additionally, cultural and social factors need to be considered to ensure that the content and format of these information channels are suitable for the needs and living conditions of the poor.

Thirdly, the policy needs to include a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these information channels. This will allow for adjustments and improvements to the support measures, making them more aligned with the actual situation and needs of the poor.

#### *5.3. Developing Human Resources to Support the Poor in Accessing Information*

Having Operators: Receiving Requests, Supporting Searches, Providing Search Results in Suitable Formats

The policy needs to specify in detail that there should be individuals responsible for receiving requests, assisting in information searches, and providing search results in formats suitable for the poor. These individuals need to be thoroughly trained in methods and techniques to support the poor in accessing and using information effectively. Specifically, there should be specialized training programs aimed at enhancing the ability to search, analyze, and provide information flexibly and appropriately to the diverse needs of the poor. These programs should focus not only on professional knowledge but also on communication skills and psychological support to ensure that the poor receive the most comprehensive and effective assistance.

Additionally, the policy should clearly address the development and implementation of specific regulations regarding the roles and responsibilities of each individual within the information and communication system. This includes establishing standards for competency, work procedures, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating their job performance. Detailed regulations will help ensure that all involved parties clearly understand their responsibilities and can

effectively coordinate to achieve the common goal of supporting the poor in overcoming poverty.

#### *Supporting the Poor in Exploiting and Applying Information Content*

To transform information products and services into the knowledge of the poor and to enable them to utilize that knowledge to alleviate poverty, the poor require continuous, high-quality, and effective support from specialists. Support measures should include the application of information and communication technology in disseminating information and assisting the poor. Mobile applications, interactive websites, and online platforms can provide timely and accessible information, while also creating opportunities for the poor to engage in online communities where they can learn, share experiences, and receive support from peers or experts.

There should also be a dedicated support team consisting of consultants, experts, and volunteers who are experienced and knowledgeable in information services for the poor. This team needs to be well-trained and continually updated with knowledge and skills to meet the needs of the poor.

Additionally, policies should encourage and support research, initiatives, and pilot projects aimed at discovering new and more effective methods for leveraging and utilizing information to reduce poverty. These initiatives should be implemented on a trial basis, evaluated, and scaled up for successful models, while being adjusted to suit the specific conditions of each locality and beneficiary group.

#### *5.4. Training Information Literacy for the Poor*

It is necessary to develop an information literacy framework for the poor, along with training programs to support their information literacy development.

The information literacy framework should include the ability to access information, the ability to evaluate and use information, and the ability to communicate information. Accessing information requires the poor to know how to use search tools and access diverse information

sources such as the internet, libraries, and public services. Evaluating and using information involves the poor knowing how to determine the reliability of information sources, and how to synthesize and effectively use that information. Communicating information requires the poor to have writing, presentation, and media tool skills to convey information clearly and persuasively.

Firstly, specialized training programs should be developed to help the poor master the use of online search tools. These courses should include specific instructions on how to use search tools, evaluate the reliability of information sources, and identify necessary information for different purposes. Additionally, equipping the poor with presentation and communication skills will help them articulate ideas and present information clearly and effectively. These training programs should include basic skills in both spoken and written expression, using presentation tools, or online platforms to describe and share their experiences in overcoming poverty. Simultaneously, the poor should be encouraged to participate in group activities and discussions to enhance their communication and teamwork skills. Support should also be provided to guide the use of information devices and services, offering simple and easy-to-understand instructional materials.

Stakeholders who can participate in this endeavor include functional agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities, and vocational training centers. Functional agencies can provide policy and financial support, non-governmental organizations can offer training programs and support for developing information literacy, universities can engage in researching and developing training programs, and vocational training centers can offer practical courses and technical support for the poor.

Developing an information literacy framework for the poor and creating training programs to support information literacy development is a crucial step toward sustainable poverty reduction. This not only helps the poor improve their ability to access, evaluate, and use

information but also enables them to develop themselves and improve their quality of life.

## 6. Conclusion

Since 2009, the United Nations Development Programme has been implementing the Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI), which measures eight dimensions. One of the very important dimensions is the transparency of information so that all citizens can be informed. This includes transparency of information about poverty reduction policies, land, commune-level budget revenues and expenditures, and, most recently, access to information for all people.

The right to access information is one of the fundamental rights of citizens enshrined in the Vietnamese Constitution. Ensuring this right requires ensuring equality among social groups, including the poor. In the sustainable poverty reduction policy in Vietnam, information poverty is identified mainly through deficiencies in telecommunications services and means of accessing information. Combining document research methods with comparative research methods, the research team has pointed out that the scope of the right to access information and information poverty reduction as currently outlined in poverty reduction policies is incomplete and lacks comprehensiveness. To address this inconsistency, it is necessary to supplement specific criteria and policies to ensure the right to access information for all citizens, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of sustainable poverty reduction programs and contributing to the comprehensive and sustainable development of the country. The findings of this article, primarily derived from an analysis of policy documents and a comparison with international experiences, serve to establish an analytical framework and highlight existing policy gaps, thus paving the way for future empirical investigations, including field surveys and in-depth case studies, to validate the proposed recommendations.

## Acknowledgement

The research is part of the National-Level Scientific and Technological Project titled: "Research and Promotion of the Value and Humanistic Resources of the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region for National Development in the New Period" (Code: KX03.17/21-30).

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