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**SPONTANEOUS RURAL TO URBAN MIGRATION AND  
ITS LINK TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
IN VIETNAM**

**By**

**Ha Thi Kim Anh**

**International Development Studies**

**Saint Mary's University**

**Halifax – Canada**

**1998**

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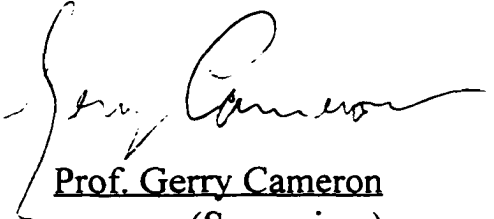
# **SPONTANEOUS RURAL TO URBAN MIGRATION AND ITS LINK TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM**

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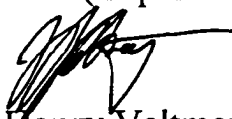
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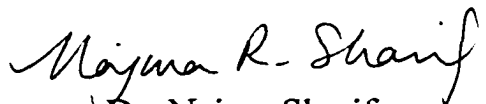
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **SPONTANEOUS RURAL TO URBAN MIGRATION AND ITS LINK TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM**

Spontaneous rural to urban migration has increased greatly since Vietnam decided to switch from a centrally-planned to a market-oriented economy in December 1986. Prior to this economic renovation, internal migration in Vietnam was organized and sponsored by the government. In addition, the government adopted policies concerning migration to urban areas, especially Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, aimed at restricting as much as possible the volume of spontaneous migration. The increased volume of spontaneous rural to urban migration is a new phenomenon in Vietnam and there have not been many studies on it. This thesis is written to the purpose of providing an understanding of this phenomenon with an emphasis on rural development - the source of this migration - rather than urban development. In this connection, the thesis gives an overview of rural development in Vietnam in the period 1976 to the present, with the objective of providing readers with an understanding of some causes of this increased migration. This increase has both positive and negative impacts on individual migrants, their households, and on rural and urban development as well. It is argued that for the sustainable development of the whole country, the positive and negative impacts of this migration should be weighed against each other and the government should formulate appropriate spontaneous migration-related policies, although the right of free rural to urban movement is accepted. On the basis of views on rural to urban migration stated in the literature and on the concrete conditions given in Vietnam, recommendations are made with a hope that they might be considered for policies concerning this migration.

HA THI KIM ANH  
23 April 1998

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	i
Acknowledgments	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Posing the Problem	1
1.2. Objectives of the Study	5
1.3. Thesis Statement	5
1.4. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study	6
1.5. Definitions	7
1.6. Methodology	8
1.7. Structure of the Argument	8
<b>CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1. Definitions	11
2.2. Theoretical Perspectives on Migration	12
2.3. Approaches to Migration Studies	14
2.4. Some Specific Theories of Migration	14
2.4.1. Ravenstein's Laws of Migration	14
2.4.2. Lewis-Fei-Ranis' Model of Rural to Urban Migration	16
2.4.3. Sjaastad's Theory of The Costs and Returns of Human Migration	18
2.4.4. Lee's Theory of Migration	20
2.4.5. Todaro's Model of Rural to Urban Migration	25



2.5. Toward a Better Theory of Internal Migration	27
2.6. Spontaneous Rural to Urban Migration Studies in Vietnam	29
2.7. Theoretical Framework of the Thesis	31

### **CHAPTER 3: AN OVERVIEW OF VIETNAM'S RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RURAL TO URBAN MIGRATION FROM 1976 UP TO THE PRESENT 35**

3.1. Initial Economic and Development Conditions	36
3.2. The Period 1976 - 1986	37
3.2.1. Rural Economy	37
3.2.1.a. The Agricultural Cooperative Model	37
3.2.1.b. The Initiation of Agricultural Reform	41
3.2.2. Rural Poverty	44
3.2.3. Rural Infrastructure	46
3.2.4. Rural Social Services	47
3.2.5. Rural Underemployment	48
3.2.6. Internal Migration	49
3.3. The Period 1987 - Present	51
3.3.1. New Economic Policies	51
3.3.2. Rural Economy	53
3.3.3. Rural Poverty	56
3.3.4. Rural Infrastructure	57
3.3.5. Rural Social Services	58
3.3.6. Rural Underemployment	59
3.3.7. Spontaneous Rural to Urban Migration	59

### **CHAPTER 4: THE IMPACT OF SPONTANEOUS MIGRATION FROM RURAL TO URBAN AREAS IN VIETNAM 63**

4.1. The Impact of Spontaneous Rural to Urban Migration on Migrants and Their Households	63
4.1.1. Impacts on Individual Migrants	63
4.1.1.a. Impacts on Types of Employment	65
4.1.1.b. Impacts on Levels of Income	66
4.1.1.c. Impacts on Types of Accommodation	67
4.1.1.d. Impacts on Social Status	68
4.1.2. Impacts on Migrant Households	68
4.1.2.a. Impacts on the Household Consumption per Capita and/or Production per Capita	69
4.1.2.b. Impacts on Household Labor Supply	70
4.1.2.c. Impacts on the Household Income	70
4.1.2.d. Other Impacts	72
4.2. Impacts on Rural Development	73
4.2.1. Positive Impacts	73
4.2.1.a. Impacts on Rural Employment and Incomes	73
4.2.1.b. Impacts on Rural Technological Change	74
4.2.1.c. Impacts on Rural Population Growth	75
4.2.2. Negative Impacts	75
4.2.2.a. Impacts on Rural Human Capital	75
4.2.2.b. Impacts on Rural Sex Ratio	76
4.3. Impacts on Urban Development	77
4.3.1. Positive Impacts	77
4.3.1.a. Impacts on Urban Wages and Employment	77
4.3.1.b. Impacts on the Urban Labor Force	78
4.3.2. Negative Impacts	78
4.3.2.a. Impacts on Urban Underemployment and Unemployment	78
4.3.2.b. Impacts on Urban Population Growth	79
4.3.2.c. Impacts on Availability of Urban Amenities	79

4.3.2.d. Impacts on Urban Environment and Beauty	81
4.3.2.e. Impacts on Urban Social Fabric	82
<b>CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>85</b>
5.1. The Government's Point of View on the Increase of Spontaneous Rural to Urban Migration	85
5.2. Recommendations	87
5.2.1. Reconsidering the Role of Spontaneous Rural to Urban Migration in National Development	87
5.2.2. Rural Development	90
5.2.2.a. Rural Development Strategies	90
5.2.2.b. Agricultural Tax Collection	93
5.2.2.c. Increasing Access to Affordable Rural Credit	93
5.2.2.d. Market Information	95
5.2.2.e. Rural Education	95
5.2.2.f. Information about Rural Migrants in Urban Areas	97
5.2.3. Other Recommendations	99
5.2.3.a. Prohibition of Child Domestic Servants	99
5.2.3.b. Keeping the Residence Registration System and Paying More Attention to Migrants	100
5.2.3.c. Promoting Moral Values	101
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>117</b>
Appendix 1. Questionnaires	117
Appendix 2. Maps	

## **LIST OF TABLES**

	<b>Page</b>
Table 1. Main Agrarian Indicators in the Period 1976 - 1980	41
Table 2. Main Agrarian Indicators in the Period 1981 - 1986	43
Table 3. Irrigation Works and Electricity for Agriculture in 1976, 1980, 1985 and 1986	47
Table 4.a. Main Agrarian Indicators in the Period 1987 - 1991	54
Table 4.b. Main Agrarian Indicators in the Period 1992 - 1995	54
Table 5.a. Distribution of the Value of Money/Goods Sent by Migrants in 1995 by Receiver of Remittances	71
Table 5.b. Distribution of the Value of Money/Goods Sent by Migrants in 1995 by Main Purposes of Sending	71
Table 6. Proportion of Adolescent Criminals	83

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 1. Origin and Destination Factors and Intervening Obstacles in Migration	21
Figure 2. The Rural Average Food Consumption/Capita, 1976 - 1980	45

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. POSING THE PROBLEM**

Vietnam is situated in the South East Asia. It has a total area of approximately 331,700 square kilometers, and a population of about 75 million (Vietnam's General Statistical Office, 1997). Vietnam is a predominantly rural society. The rural population represents 80 percent of the total population (Ibid.). The dominant economic activity in rural areas is agricultural production and the agricultural labor force accounts for 70 percent of the total labor force and nearly 82 percent of the rural labor force (Center for Scientific Information on Labor and Social Affairs, 1997). Agriculture represents 28 percent of GDP in 1995 (Vietnam's Ministry of Planning and Investment, 1997). As agriculture plays such an important role in Vietnam's economy and the rural population is so overwhelming, it is obvious that rural development is an important part of national development and needs adequate consideration.

With the full economic renovation introduced by the Sixth National Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party in 1986, Vietnam switched from a centrally-planned to a market-oriented economy. As a result, Vietnam has made some spectacular achievements in the economic field. From 1989 onward, Vietnam has become the

third largest rice-exporter in the world (Tran, Thanh, 1996)<sup>1</sup>. Statistically in 1996, Vietnam's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate was 9.3 percent (Vietnam's General Statistical Office, 1997). In the period 1991-1995, the average annual growth rate was 8.2 percent for the GDP, 13.3 percent for industrial output, 4.5 percent for agricultural output and 20 percent for exports. The economic structure experienced a change: the ratio of industry and construction to GDP increased from 22.6 percent in 1990 to 29.1 percent in 1995; and that of services from 38.6 percent to 41.9 percent. The economy's investment rate jumped from 15.8 percent of GDP in 1990 to 27.4 percent in 1995. A substantial part of this increase was financed from external resources since in 1995 the domestic saving rate was only 16.7 percent. The inflation rate decreased dramatically from 67.1 percent in 1991 to 12.7 percent in 1995 (Communist Party of Vietnam, 1996).

According to the statistics, the face of Vietnam and rural areas has improved. Many restrictive economic policies have been removed, so productivity has increased greatly. The market mechanism creates more incentives for people to generate income from secondary occupations. In addition, due to the open door policy, the development of foreign trade has been stimulated, leading to the acquisition of more productive technologies. People's living standards, in general, have been improving.

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<sup>1</sup> There is more than one person with the family name as "Tran", so the first name is provided.

In rural areas, the introduction of better technology, the increase in agricultural productivity, combined with a high population growth rate and limited land resources, have resulted in surplus rural labor. This surplus rural labor force has either shifted into non-agricultural areas of production or migrated to urban areas. The rural migration to urban areas has been increasing since the economic renovation started in December 1986. This has occurred for several reasons.

Prior to 1987, this migration was controlled rather effectively through the residence registration system and the distribution of food tickets. Since the introduction of economic renovation, state subsidies have been removed and the residence registration system has been relaxed. It is now much easier for rural people to go to urban areas to live and work. The presence of surplus rural labor alongwith greater farmer autonomy has created an incentive for farmers to be engaged in non-agricultural activities or to migrate in order to increase their income. However, in rural areas the development of non-agricultural activities has been slow. On the other hand, the large difference in rural-urban wages and the fact that amenities, health care, educational and recreational facilities are better in urban than in rural areas explain why there has been an increase in rural migration to urban areas in Vietnam at present. It is noted that this migration is more spontaneous than the organized one (the definition of spontaneous migration will be given later in this chapter).



Rural spontaneous migration to urban areas is a phenomenon experienced in other developing countries as well. This migration has good and bad sides. However, this movement of labor needs to be well studied, calculated and predicted in order to have a policy suitable for concrete conditions of each country.

In Vietnam, despite the fact that spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas has several positive impacts on national development, it has negative impacts as well. An example of positive impacts is that it has contributed to bringing about a balance between the rural and the urban sectors in the allocation of labor. An example of negative impacts is that it has contributed to urban congestion and other social problems. However, the “[g]overnment has yet to fully understand the implication of this phenomenon unleashed by the reform forces of ‘doi moi’<sup>2</sup>. Neither has it formulated policies that address its causes and consequences” (The Vietnam National Institute for Urban and Rural Planning, et. al., 1995: 36). It is essential to determine a suitable solution for the increase of the spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas to avoid the negative consequences of this phenomenon and to bring into play more positive consequences. This thesis is written for the purpose of providing an understanding of these issues, as well as to give some recommendations for the formation of appropriate policies concerning this migration.

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Doi moi’ is the Vietnamese term for ‘renovation’.

## **1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Firstly, the thesis examines factors affecting spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas in Vietnam by tracing the background of the Vietnamese rural development in different periods since 1976 up to the present. Secondly, it tries to identify the link between rural development and spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas. Thirdly, the study investigates the impact of the increase of this migration on individual migrants and their family and on both rural and urban areas. Fourthly, it examines the government's present point of view on spontaneous rural to urban migration. Finally, the thesis gives some recommendations that could be considered for policies related to spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas in Vietnam.

## **1.3. THESIS STATEMENT**

These objectives are formulated for the purpose of understanding the dynamics of spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas in Vietnam and its impacts and costs. In this connection, and to ground the recommendations made for government policy and action, it is argued that the right of free movement from rural to urban areas is needed for efficient labor allocation, but it is necessary that the government formulate spontaneous migration-related policies. These policies should be developed in the context of rural surplus labor and poverty, inequitable

development between rural and urban areas and problems occurring in both rural and urban areas due to this migration. This argument constitutes the thesis of this study.

#### **1.4. LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Rural to urban migration relates to both rural and urban conditions of development. However, due to time constraints and the limited scope of a Master of Arts thesis, we examine the process of spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas in Vietnam with a stronger (and primary) focus on rural development - the source of this migration - rather than urban development.

It should be noted that in Vietnam economic renovation and other macro-policies are nationally applied, so the increase in spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas occurs nation-wide. Although Vietnam's urban system currently consists of 503 urban centers, including three centrally-administered cities, 74 provincial cities and towns, and 426 district townlets (The Vietnam National Institute for Urban and Rural Planning, 1995: 56), the thesis will only provide statistical data relating to rural spontaneous migration to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, the two biggest cities in Vietnam and among the three centrally - administered cities, to which a huge number of rural migrants have been drawn.

Spontaneous rural to urban migration is a new phenomenon in Vietnam and there have not been many studies on this phenomenon. Therefore, not all data on spontaneous rural to urban migration and related issues are available.

## 1.5. DEFINITIONS

The study focuses on the spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas in Vietnam. Therefore, it is important to state here the meaning of the terms 'spontaneous migration', 'urban' and 'rural' in the context of Vietnam.

**Spontaneous Migration** A migration which is not organized by the government or under the auspices, investment of a certain social organization in the moving process. All decisions: migration behavior, migration organization and living organization are self-determined by the migrant.

(Center for Population and Human Resources Studies, Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, 1996:5)

**Urban** Areas which have at least 4,000 people with at least 60 per cent of the labor force engaging in non-agricultural activities, and a significant portion working in the industrial, financial, health, education, commerce, tourism, and other sectors. In urban places there must be adequate infrastructure such as transportation, water supply, electricity and other essential urban facilities to respond to the requirements of industrialization<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted from Vietnam Government, **Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 132/HDBT** issued on May 5, 1990, and **Circular of the Ministry of Construction and Government's Personnel Department No. 31-TT/LB** issued on November 20, 1990.

**Rural**

Areas which are not categorized as urban<sup>4</sup>.

**1.6. METHODOLOGY**

The study draws upon qualitative and quantitative data and information from both primary and secondary sources concerning the issues which have been raised. Primary data were collected through interviews with rural migrants to Hanoi and farmers in rural areas. Thirty-two non-randomized interviews with migrants to Hanoi and twenty-six interviews with rural people in rural areas were made through a set of prepared questions (Appendix 1) in order to have a better understanding of the impact of spontaneous rural to urban migration on migrants and their families. Secondary data are presented in government reports, decisions and circulars, official statistical data, books, journals and newspapers. The thesis also makes full use of the literature on rural-urban migration and that on rural development. Attention is also paid to the relevant studies on spontaneous rural-urban migration in other developing countries.

**1.7. STRUCTURE OF THE ARGUMENT**

The thesis consists of six chapters. The introductory chapter provides the rationale, the objectives, thesis statement, limitations and delimitations, the methodology and

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

the structure of the thesis. This chapter also gives the definitions of some concepts used in the thesis.

Chapter II provides the theoretical framework of the thesis. Here, the relevant theories, models and multidisciplinary studies on rural-urban migration are reviewed. As no single theory or model so far has depicted and explained the migration process thoroughly, the thesis is constituted partly on the basis of a combination of theories and models and multidisciplinary studies which are reviewed in this Chapter, and partly on the findings of literature on spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas in Vietnam and on related issues. In this connection, the thesis follows ideas suggested in previous multidisciplinary studies to examine the spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas in Vietnam. The thesis takes the migration stream approach to explain the volume and patterns of spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam.

Chapter III gives an overview of rural development in Vietnam in the periods 1976-1986 and 1987-the present. The objective of this chapter is to provide the backdrop against which spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas can be analyzed. It is seen from the chapter that the government of Vietnam has played an important part in rural development in the periods being studied.

Chapter IV investigates the impact of the increase of rural migration to urban areas in Vietnam. In this context, it is argued that this migration has both positive and negative impacts. The method of assessing these impacts is the determination of whether they are consistent or inconsistent with national, rural and urban development goals.

Chapter V points out the government's present point of view on the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration. This chapter also makes some recommendations based on the argument that the role of the government is needed in issuing suitable policies which influence this migration.

Chapter VI summarizes our findings and draws a number of conclusions in support of the thesis of the study.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Rural - urban migration is a phenomenon which has long existed and in the post second world war context has accelerated in many developing countries. The literature on this migration in developing countries is extensive. This chapter provides a review of perspectives, theories and approaches relating to internal migration, stressing a multidisciplinary approach to rural to urban migration research. It also reviews previous studies on spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam and establishes the theoretical framework for this thesis.

#### **2.1. DEFINITIONS**

What is migration? In migration literature, there are different definitions of migration which have crucial repercussions for the findings of particular studies. For any study of migration, it is important to provide a definition of this phenomenon before analyzing it. In addition to the concept of spontaneous migration given earlier in the Introduction to this thesis, this study adopts the definition of migration given by Weinberg (1961: 265 - 6):

“Migration is the changing of the place of abode permanently or, when temporarily, for an appreciable duration as e.g. in the case of seasonal workers. Migration is used symbolically in the transition from one surrounding to another in the course of human life”.



However, this definition does not differentiate between international migration and internal migration. An initial distinction is whether the migrant has crossed a national border. If so, it is international migration; if not, it is internal migration (Findley, 1977).

Within internal migration, there are four movements: rural-urban migration, rural-rural, urban-urban and urban-rural.

This study addresses only rural to urban migration. The definition of rural to urban migrants is that used by Wenbao (1996), namely that all the people who leave the countryside for the purpose of gaining better social-economic opportunities in the cities (including towns at the county level) can be considered to be rural-urban migrants.

## **2.2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION**

There are three main perspectives on migration, namely sociological, economic and geographic. Tracing the history of migration studies, it can be seen that the study of migration is traditionally more in the domain of sociologists than of other social scientists (Bilsborrow, Oberai and Standing, 1984). Sociologists have considered a wide range of factors which influence both individual and household migration decisions. These factors include demographic variables such as age, sex, education,

race, household size and composition; geographic variables such as distance; social-psychological variables such as desires for comfort, autonomy; cultural variables and economic factors such as income and occupation.

It has been noted that although the field of sociology deals with geographic factors in its recognition of the importance of distance and with economic factors in its recognition of the predominance of economic motives for migration, its very eclecticism has confounded attempts to develop a coherent theory of migration (Goldstein, 1976).

Economists have focused on economic factors which influence migration such as wage, income, unemployment and underemployment. They have attempted to quantify economic motives for migration in terms of income differentials.

Geographers have focused on spatial issues. Geographers do not focus so much on who migrates or why, or on the consequences of migration, but on identifying spatial patterns and directions of movement (Bilsborrow, Oberai and Standing, 1984).

### **2.3. APPROACHES TO MIGRATION STUDIES**

As far as approaches to migration studies are concerned, there are two basic approaches: migration stream and migration differentials. Based on an assumption that a group of migrants will have a common origin and destination in a given period, migration stream attempts to explain the volume and pattern of movement from one place to another, such as between rural and urban areas (Yadava, 1989).

Different from migration stream, “migration differentials (that is the selectivity of certain persons or the tendency of certain groups to be more mobile than others) are mainly characterized by age, sex, marital status, education and occupation” (Yadava, 1989: 30).

### **2.4. SOME SPECIFIC THEORIES OF MIGRATION**

#### **2.4.1. Ravenstein’s Laws of Migration**

E. G. Ravenstein was the first theorist of migration. In 1885 and 1889, he published two papers entitled “The Laws of Migration”. Ravenstein’s laws of migration consist of seven basic propositions. Firstly, there is an inverse relationship between migration and distance. The great body of migrants only proceed a short distance. But, “migrants proceeding long distances generally go by preference to one of the great centers of commerce and industry” (Ravenstein,

1885: 199). Secondly, migratory movements happen by stages. Migrants from rural areas tend to move first to nearby towns and then eventually to rapidly growing cities. Thirdly, “each main current of migration produces a compensating counter-current” (Ibid.). For example, each stream of rural-urban migration produces a counterstream of urban-rural migration. Fourthly, there are differences between urban and rural areas in propensity to migrate. “The natives of towns are less migratory than those of the rural parts of the country” (Ibid.). Fifthly, “females appear to predominate among short-journey migrants” (Ravenstein, 1889: 288). Sixthly, migration accelerates with improvements in the means of transport and communications and rapid expansion of commerce and industry. Finally, the economic motive is predominant among factors that influence the decision to migrate.

From Ravenstein’s laws of migration, it is seen that he focused his attention on geographical factors. Ravenstein’s work on migration has been tested over a century and it reveals both strengths and weaknesses. Data on the rate of rural-urban and urban-rural migration of developing countries all over the world where the process of industrialization and urbanization are taking place have shown that Ravenstein’s proposition that “the natives of towns are less migratory than those of the rural parts of the country” holds true. However, Ravenstein’s work also shows some overgeneralization and lopsidedness. His migration by stages says that the currents of migration in which a country’s inhabitants tend to move first to nearby

towns, and then eventually to rapidly growing cities. But the history of migration in many developing countries has indicated that migratory movement does not always happen by stages.

In sum, although Ravenstein's papers came in the nineteenth century and not without any weaknesses, they still "remain the starting point for work in migration theory" (Lee, 1966: 47).

#### **2.4.2. Lewis - Fei - Ranis's Model of Rural-Urban Migration**

In 1954, W.A. Lewis wrote a paper entitled "Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labor" which was published in the Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies, Volume 22, 1954. Lewis' work was later formalized and extended by J. Fei and G. Ranis in their article "A Theory of Economic Development" published in the American Economic Review, Volume 51, Number 4. They assume that the economy consists of two sectors, that is, the traditional subsistence agricultural sector characterized by disguised employment, and the capitalist industrial sector. In the subsistence agricultural sector, where "the marginal productivity of labor is negligible, zero, or even negative" (Lewis, 1954: 141) and "the family holding is so small that if some members of the family obtained other employment the remaining members could cultivate the holding just as well", (Lewis, 1954: 141), the price of labor is a wage at the subsistence level. Therefore, the supply of labor is "unlimited" so long as the supply of labor at this

price exceeds the demand (Lewis, 1954). “In this situation, new industries can be created, or old industries expanded without limit at the existing wage” (Lewis, 1954: 142).

In the industrial sector, wages are higher than agricultural income. There is usually a gap of 30 percent or more between capitalist industrial wages and subsistence earning (Lewis, 1954). Migration helps to increase industrial production as well as the capitalist’s profit. As a result, industry is expanded, which further increases the demand for labor from the subsistence sector.

The Lewis - Fei - Ranis model considers migration as an equilibrating mechanism shifting labor from the agricultural sector to the industrial one. This model assumes that the process of migration from the subsistence to the capitalist sector continues as long as the reserve army of disguised unemployment exists in the subsistence sector. Moreover, it may continue indefinitely if the rate of population growth in the rural sector equals or exceeds the rate of labor out-migration. However, this process would come to an end if the rate of growth of demand for labor in the urban area is greater than the rate of rural population growth.

In sum, the Lewis - Fei - Ranis model considers that rural-urban migration would bring about a balance between the rural and urban sectors in the allocation of labor

but would also bring about an equalization of income and productivity in these two sectors (Bhatia, 1992).

Although the Lewis - Fei - Ranis model is appealing, it offers limited analytical and policy guidance for understanding Third World unemployment and migration problems (Todaro, 1976). First, despite the predominance of economic motives, there are different causes of rural-urban migration rather than low income and underemployment in rural areas. Second, the assumption of near-zero marginal productivity and surplus labor in agriculture has not been empirically tenable (Bilsborrow, Oberai and Standing, 1984). Third, the model assumes that a high rate of expansion of the capitalist industrial sector, given a not too high rate of population growth, would draw away the disguised unemployed from the subsistence sector (Bhatia, 1992). In fact, the rate of growth of employment in the modern industrial sector has generally not been sufficient in developing countries to absorb the increasing labor supply (Bilsborrow, Oberai and Standing, 1984). As a consequence, in many countries, the net effect of rural-urban migration has been to shift underemployment from the rural sector to the urban sector (Ibid.).

#### **2.4.3. Sjaastad's Theory of the Costs and Returns of Human Migration**

In an article entitled "The Costs and Returns of Human Migration" published in the *Journal of Political Economy* in 1962, L.A. Sjaastad places human migration in an

investment context to formulate hypotheses for migration behavior. He identifies some of the important costs of and returns to migration, both private and public.

The costs of migration consist of monetary and non-monetary costs. Monetary costs are the expenses incurred by migrants in the course of moving, such as the increase in expenditure for food, lodging, transportation (for both migrants and their belongings), etc. involved in the migration process (Sjaastad, 1962). The non-monetary considerations involved in migration are more significant than the monetary ones (Ibid.). The first non-monetary costs consist of opportunity costs - the earnings foregone while traveling, searching for and learning a new job. The second form of non-monetary costs are psychic, such as leaving familiar surroundings, family, and friends.

Similarly, the returns to migration includes both the monetary and non-monetary returns. The monetary returns to migration consist of a positive or negative increment to any individual's real earnings stream to be obtained by moving to another place. The monetary returns encompass not only those returns stemming from earnings differentials between places, but also the returns accruing to the migrants in their capacity as consumers (Sjasstad, 1962). In addition , there are the non-monetary returns which reflect their preference for the present place in comparison with their former place (Ibid.). Moreover there is the pure consumption



return which is the satisfaction or dissatisfaction migrants receive in the course of their actual travel (Ibid.).

According to Sjaastad, people weigh the expected costs of migration against the expected returns to migration . If the returns outweigh the costs, they will migrate. This human investment theory explains why migrants are younger in the migration flow. Older people are less likely to move because they may have suffered a capital loss and their remaining lifetime is too short to justify large additional investments in themselves (Ibid.). Younger people often have made only a small investment in themselves through training for and experience in a specific occupation while their life span remains long (Ibid.).

In sum, Sjaastad has brought in the human investment theory of migration and his theory provides some understanding of the migration phenomenon. However, although he takes into account both monetary as well as non-monetary costs and benefits, in calculating net returns to migration, he ignores non-monetary costs. Moreover, Sjasstad does not include in the migrant's decision to migrate an assessment of his/her chances of getting an urban job.

#### **2.4.4. Lee's Theory of Migration**

With a paper entitled "A Theory of Migration" appeared in 1966, E. S. Lee has provided a general theory which explains the migration process. Lee uses the same

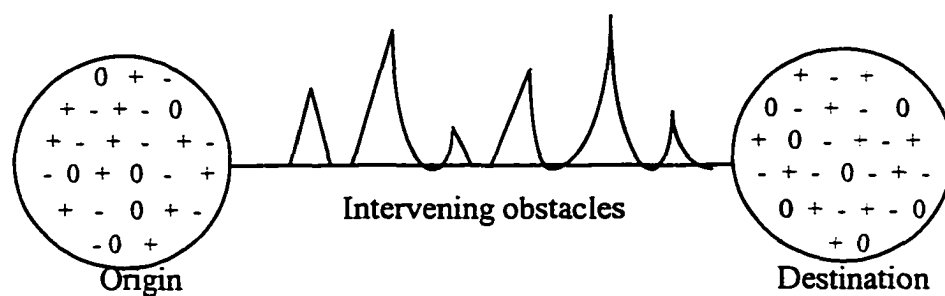
theoretical framework for analyzing both internal and international migration. Lee presents four factors which enter into the decision to migrate and the process of migration:

- “1. Factors associated with the area of origin.
2. Factors associated with the area of destination.
3. Intervening obstacles.
4. Personal factors”.

(Lee, 1966: 50)

In order to illustrate the first three of the factors, Lee has drawn the following schematic chart:

Figure 1. ORIGIN AND DESTINATION FACTORS AND INTERVENING OBSTACLES IN MIGRATION



Lee assumes that in both origin and destination areas there are countless factors which act to hold people within the area or pull other people to it (shown as +

symbols in the chart), there are other factors which tend to push people from the area (shown as - symbols in the chart) , and there are others to which people are essentially indifferent (the 0 symbols in the chart). Between the area of origin and the area of destination there are intervening obstacles. According to Lee, the sets of +’s , 0’s and -’s at both origin and destination are differently defined for every individual. A factor may be counted as a + by one person, but a - or just an 0 by another.

Lee also points out that there are important differences between the factors associated with the area of origin and those with the area of destination. People possess better knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of the origin area than they do of the destination area. Therefore, there is always an element of ignorance or mystery about the area of destination, and there must be some uncertainty in the migration process.

Between origin and destination areas, there are a set of intervening obstacles. Lee believes that “different people are, of course, affected in different ways by the same set of obstacles” (Lee, 1966: 54).

Concerning personal factors, Lee mentions that there are many personal factors affecting individual thresholds and facilitates or retard migration.

With his conceptualization of migration as involving a set of origin and destination factors, a set of intervening obstacles and a series of personal factors, Lee formulates a series of hypotheses in regard to the volume of migration, the establishment of streams and counter-streams, and the characteristics of migrants. Lee claims that the volume of migration is related to the difficulty of surmounting the intervening obstacles. He also claims that the volume of migration varies with the diversity of people, with fluctuations in the economy and with the state of progress in a country or area. On the question of stream and counter-stream, Lee argues that migration tends to take place largely within well-defined streams and for every major migration stream, a counter-stream develops. In addition, the efficiency of a migration stream varies with economic conditions, being high in prosperous time and low in times of depression. On the characteristics of migrants, Lee concludes that migrants responding to plus factors at the destination tend to be positively selected. On the other hand, migrants responding to minus factors in the origin tend to be negatively selected. As a result, migration selectivity tends to be bimodal.

It can be seen that Lee's theory is comprehensive precisely because of its simplicity. His hypotheses have been used extensively as a framework for examining social, temporal and causal factors affecting the act of migration. Lee

has shifted the emphasis in migration studies from being purely descriptive to being more analytical (Lewis, G. J., 1982)<sup>5</sup>.

It is also seen that Lee's theory is a sociological migration model. As Lee looks at migration mainly from a non-economic perspective, his theory has been considered by Todaro as a model offering little practical policy guidance for decision-makers in developing nations.

Although Todaro observes that Lee's theory is appealing because of its simplicity and persuasive because of the intuitive validity of many of its hypotheses, Todaro points out that "the apparent validity of many of the hypotheses does not lead us to determine which positive factors and which negative factors at both origin and destination are quantitatively the most important to different groups and classes of people" (Todaro, 1976: 19). Todaro also thinks that the existence of intervening obstacles presented by Lee does not show which are major and which are minor (Todaro, 1976). Todaro also criticizes Lee's theory of providing no insights into possible "tradeoffs" between positive and negative factors and no range of possible migration responses to alternatives in the magnitude and/or the sign of positive and negative factors (Ibid.).

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<sup>5</sup> There are two Lewises referred to in this thesis, therefore initials are needed to distinguish one from the other

Despite Todaro's critique of Lee's theory, many of Lee's hypotheses have opened new trains of thought for other migration researchers (Wenbao, 1996). Thus, Lee's theory has often been quoted in migration studies in general and sociological migration studies in particular.

#### **2.4.5. Todaro's Model of Rural-Urban Migration**

Subsequent developments in the theory of migration begins with M. P. Todaro's model which appeared in 1969 and developed further by him singly in 1971, 1972 and 1976, and in collaboration with Harris in 1970. Todaro has been a leader in highlighting specific economic motives for migration. Like Lewis, Todaro assumes that the economy consists of two sectors: the rural agricultural and the urban industrial. He considers that the propensity to migrate is responsive to urban-rural differences in expected rather than actual earnings. According to Todaro, migrants cannot expect to secure a high paying urban job immediately upon arrival due to the problem of urban surplus labor. Therefore, migrants will either become totally unemployed or will seek casual and part-time employment in the urban sector for some time (Todaro, 1976). Migrants who have a long time horizon balance the expected period of being unemployed or underemployed against the higher incomes they expect to receive when they do find a regular high paying urban job. Todaro assumes that the decision to migrate is based on a calculus of permanent or long-term income. If the present value of net stream expected urban incomes over the migrant's planning horizon is greater than that of expected rural income, it would

be rational for the migrant to migrate. And rationality is the shared assumption underlying all economic theories of migration.

Todaro argued that rural-urban migration itself must act as the ultimate equilibrating force and that rural-urban expected incomes can be equalized only by falling urban job probabilities resulting from rising urban employment (Ibid.). Todaro also argues that it is probable for migration to continue despite the existence of sizable rates of urban unemployment (Todaro, 1976).

From the Todaro model it is seen that a major step Todaro has taken is to incorporate the probability of getting an urban job in the migration decision making process. Specifically, migration proceeds in response to urban-rural differences in expected income rather than actual income. The Todaro model helps explain high rates of in-migration to areas of high unemployment. However, the model has a number of shortcomings. First, migrants are not homogenous in respect of skills and attitudes and do not have complete information for working on the probability of finding an urban sector job as the model has assumed (Oberai and Singh, 1983). Two other major shortcomings of the Todaro model are worth noting. First, it does not emphasize the role of non-economic factors in migration decisions (Ibid.). Second, urban-rural differences in income are not a cause in themselves, but a symptom of disparities between the urban and the rural areas resulting from inequitable allocation of resources, an inequalitarian land ownership system, and an

inappropriate technology (Ibid.). Furthermore, the assumption made by the Todaro model that the decision to migrate is based on a permanent income calculation cannot explain the phenomenon of seasonal rural-urban migration which is common in many countries. For example, in Vietnam the majority of spontaneous migrants from rural to urban areas are seasonal migrants. These migrants go to urban areas to seek jobs only during the time they are free from doing farm work. These migrants do not intend to move permanently to urban areas where housing and other costs of living are much higher than those in rural areas, and those with limited skills and education cannot afford to raise their families. Thus, the Todaro model should be seen as attempting to explain more permanent and non-seasonal movements of labor.

## **2.5. TOWARD A BETTER THEORY OF INTERNAL MIGRATION**

Each theory and model of migration mentioned in Section 2.4. can explain only part of the rural-urban migration phenomenon. In addition, all these theories just explain the causes of internal migration but not its consequences. It also needs to be borne in mind that these theories are based on the assumption that migrants as individuals or families are decision-makers so they should not be used to explain migratory movements directed by the government in societies such as Vietnam before the full economic renovation introduced in December 1986.



Reality has shown that the strategy of shifting a rural surplus labor out of agriculture into industry so as to provide the much needed economic stimuli for the rest of the economy was not working as planned (Findley, 1977). Rural-urban migration has not only positive but also negative impacts on regional and national development. All this calls for a more general theory of internal migration, one that incorporate the role of some of major socio-economic factors influencing migration. No theory, however sophisticated, can provide a perfect explanation of migration in all countries. Hence, the empirical application of a more general theory, in specific context, would require the inclusion of relevant institutional, cultural and political characteristics.

The previous theories and models of migration in conjunction with a number of multidisciplinary studies on rural-urban migration such as those by S. Findley (1977), De Jong, R.W. Gardner (1981), A. S. Oberai and H.K.M. Singh (1983), R.E. Bilsborrow, A.S. Oberai and G. Standing (1984), N. Islam (1985), A.S. Bhatia (1992), and Q. Wenbao (1996) provide enough material for the formation of such a general theory. The multidisciplinary studies have analyzed both the causes and consequences of migration. They have tried to cross boundaries of each of the main theoretical perspectives on migration reviewed earlier in this chapter. To put it another way, these studies have tried to view rural to urban migration not just from economic, sociological or geographic perspectives but from a combination of these three main perspectives.

## **2.6. SPONTANEOUS RURAL TO URBAN MIGRATION STUDIES IN VIETNAM**

Research on internal migration in the North of Vietnam before the reunification of the country in 1975 and that in the whole country after reunification up to the introduction of the full economic renovation in December 1986 was on a migration organized and sponsored by the government (Vietnam's Center for Population and Human Resources Studies, 1993). During that period, internal migration in Vietnam was organized and sponsored by the government. This took the form of allocation of workers for employment, the transfer of state employees, and the movement of persons to rural settlements as part of the program for the development of New Economic Zones (Vietnam's National Institute for Urban and Rural Planning, et. al., 1995). Therefore, internal migration research at that time was done with an aim of formulating suitable policies and measures to improve the effectiveness of organized migration programs. Thus at the time there was no research on spontaneous migration in Vietnam. It can be noted that during this period the volume of rural to urban spontaneous migration was minimized due to the then administrative and economic measures (which will be detailed in the next chapter).

Since 1987 several economic and social factors (also be detailed in the next chapter) have generated the large increase in spontaneous migration. However,

there have not been many studies on spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas. In addition, these studies - State of the Art Report on Spontaneous Migration in Vietnam (1993), Migration, Human Resources, Employment and Urbanization in Ho Chi Minh City (1997), Status of Labour-Employment in Vietnam (1996), Report on Spontaneous Migration Survey in Hanoi (1997), Report on National Conference on the Plight of Street Children in Vietnam (1996), Di dan tu Nong thon ra Thanh thi voi Qua trinh Do thi hoa va Cong nghiep hoa o Viet Nam [in Vietnamese] [Rural-Urban Migration and the Process of Urbanization and Industrialization in Vietnam: Ministerial-Level Research Work] (1995), Projections of Population, School of Enrollment and Labour Force in Vietnam 1990 - 2005 (1994), Urban Sector Strategy Study Report (1995) - have focused mainly on the causes of this migration, the numbers of migrants, the characteristics of migrants such as age, sex, marital status, education, and occupation, and the impacts of this migration on urban areas.

Although the impacts of this migration on individual migrants and on rural development are sometimes mentioned in newspaper articles but they are not sufficiently systematic and analytical.

## **2.7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE THESIS**

Since 1987 Vietnam has been transformed into a multi-sector economy operating under the market mechanism. As a result, in the context of spontaneous rural to urban migration there is no big difference between Vietnam and most other developing countries. For this reason, the theoretical framework of this thesis is partly based on a combination of the theories and models and multidisciplinary research reviewed earlier in this chapter. The thesis is also partly constituted on the basis of findings of the literature on spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas in Vietnam and on related issues; and in part on the basis of the author's views formed in the process of field research. In this connection, the thesis follows ideas suggested in previous multidisciplinary studies on rural to urban migration in other developing countries to examine spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas in Vietnam from all of its facets.

Between the two approaches to migration studies reviewed earlier in this chapter, this thesis has chosen the migration stream approach to explain the volume and pattern of movement from rural to urban areas in Vietnam. Therefore, this thesis does not focus on the selectivity of certain persons or the tendency of certain groups to be more mobile than others, which are mainly characterized by age, sex, marital status, education and occupation as the migration differentials approach does.

However, for making assumptions, analyses and conclusions, findings of works on migration differentials also have been considered.

Starting from Ravenstein's idea that "the natives of towns are less migratory than those of the rural parts of the country" the topic of this thesis has been narrowed down from internal migration to spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam. Both economic and non-economic factors affecting spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam have been looked at in this thesis.

Lewis' assumption that this migration is induced by the presence of underemployment in the countryside has been taken into serious consideration. However, although underemployment is the most important factor in the migration decision, there are other causes as well.

The thesis has also examined factors affecting spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam on the basis of the causes of migration presented by Lee, Sjaastad and Todaro. Todaro's assumption that the propensity to migrate is responsive to urban-rural differences in expected rather than actual earnings and argument that it is probable for migration to continue in spite of the existence of sizable rates of urban unemployment appears to be relevant in the Vietnam context. No econometric test of any of these models and theories has been made. However, each theory or

model appears, a priori, to provide an analytical framework for examining rural to urban migration in Vietnam.

Sjaastad's analysis of monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits of migration has been taken into account when analyzing the phenomenon of spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam. In addition, Sjaastad's explanation of why there are more younger people than older people in the migration flow has also been taken into account.

One of Lee's hypotheses is that people possess better knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of the origin area than they do of the destination area. For this reason, there is always an element of ignorance or mystery about the area of destination, and there must be some uncertainty in the migration process. This hypothesis has directed one of the recommendations made in the last chapter of the thesis.

Moreover, consequences of rural to urban migration indicated by multidisciplinary studies mentioned earlier in this chapter have been referred to when causes of the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam are analyzed.

Although the literature on rural development is not reviewed in this chapter, different models of rural development in other developing countries have been

carefully studied, yielding several concepts and working ideas related to rural development strategies, agricultural development, food self-sufficiency, rural credit, rural underemployment. These ideas have helped define the context for the migration process at issue in this study.

In addition, studies on spontaneous rural to urban migration in other developing countries, especially China and other South East Asian countries, have been taken into serious consideration. This consideration is reflected in the form of negative consequences of rural-urban migration and the recommendations made with regard to these consequences.

Each developing country has its own economic, social, cultural, political and historical conditions which influence spontaneous migration. Therefore, all such factors have been taken into account when analyses, arguments, and conclusions are made in this thesis. Findings of research on spontaneous rural to urban migration, rural development and issues concerning Vietnam are also a very important basis for this study. Finally, interviews with rural migrants to Hanoi and peasants in rural areas made by the author resulted in ideas which have been incorporated into argument made in support of the thesis of this study.

# **CHAPTER III**

## **AN OVERVIEW OF VIETNAM'S RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RURAL TO URBAN MIGRATION FROM 1976 UP TO THE PRESENT**

Vietnam's economic mechanism and development pattern have undergone great changes since 1954 in the North and since the reunification of the country in 1975 in the whole country. This chapter briefly traces the background of the economic and development conditions in North and South Vietnam before and in 1975, which represent the initial conditions for the first period studied in this chapter (1976 - 1986). Rural areas are places of origin of spontaneous rural to urban migration, thus there is a link between rural development and this migration. The chapter then gives an overview of rural development and rural to urban migration in Vietnam in the periods 1976 - 1986 and 1987 - present with the framework, and with reference to the theories and models presented in Chapter II.

Since all the theories and models of migration reviewed in Chapter II state that economic motives predominate among factors affecting migration, and Vietnam's rural economy remains largely agriculture-based and the agricultural labor force represents nearly 82 percent of the rural labor force (Center for Scientific Information on Labor and Social Affairs, 1997), this chapter discusses agricultural



development in more detail than other aspects of rural development in Vietnam in the above-mentioned periods.

### **3.1. INITIAL ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT CONDITIONS**

Before the reunification of Vietnam in 1975, the political, economic systems and development paths of the North and of the South were quite different from each other. After the departure of the French in 1954/1955, the North adopted the model of a centrally planned economy similar to other socialist countries, especially the former Soviet Union. There had been a sustained effort to implement a program of socialist industrialization. Although in the early 1960s a large number of factories were constructed, by 1975 North Vietnam was still heavily dependent on aid for imports of consumer goods and means of production from other socialist countries. In rural areas, agricultural cooperatives played a substantial role in production and in rural development. During that time, labor was used and production was organized in the pursuit of the war effort. In addition, a significant part of the investment effort was offset by war damage (Ibid.).

The South followed the market economy. In comparison with the North, the South had a more developed economy with substantial exports. Agriculture was organized on the basis of individual or household production. There were large private landholdings in the Mekong Delta. There had been considerable urbanization and

growth of light industry heavily dependent on imports. Urban growth was accelerated by the conditions of war which pushed people from the countryside to the city. During the war time, the South had to import about 800,000 tons of food annually (Tran Thanh, 1995).

However, although the South moved ahead in the commercial development, it lagged behind the North in the mass provision of social services, such as health care and education.

### **3.2. THE PERIOD 1976 - 1986**

#### **3.2.1. Rural Economy**

##### *3.2.1.a. The Agricultural Cooperative Model*

In the spring of 1975, the South of Vietnam was liberated and Vietnam became one again. In April 1976, there were general elections for a single National Assembly. The Assembly convened in June 1976 and it was decided that the country would be called the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. In December 1976, the Fourth National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam set forth the five-year plan 1976-1980 for socio-economic development in the whole country. Efforts were made to introduce the centralized planning system of the North to the South. In terms of agricultural and rural development, the agricultural cooperative model of the North

was applied to the South. The nature of agricultural development at this time was small-scale and self-sufficient.

The description of the cooperative model was that all land, buffalo and oxen as well as agricultural instruments were collectivized and the rural labor force was organized by specialized production teams: soil preparing team, seed preparing team, irrigating team, transplanting team, transporting team, pig raising team, etc. A form of piecework was practiced in specialized teams and farmers received *workpoints*<sup>6</sup> for what they had done without concerning about productivity, crop yield and animal output (Nguyen, S.C., 1995)<sup>7</sup>. By 1979, there were 4,154 agricultural cooperatives in the North, including 835 cooperatives having over 500 hectares, 159 cooperatives having 700 hectares, and several cooperatives having over 1,000 hectares of cultivated land.

It should be noted that since the introduction of agricultural cooperatives in 1955, cooperatives in the North had evolved from a pure production unit into a social, economic and quasi-political entity in each village. Although the village's local government existed, the cooperative had more power in each village. Cooperatives were responsible for all production organization and product distribution in rural

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<sup>6</sup> "Workpoint" system was a payment mechanism applied by the agricultural cooperative under the collective economy. The number of points fixed by the cooperative for a working day depended on the kind of farming work assigned to co-op members. By the end of every crop, the cooperative distributed food and other farm products to every household on the basis of the number of workpoints recorded by each farmer household (Bui, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> There are many Vietnamese authors whose family name is 'Nguyen' mentioned in the Bibliography. Therefore, initials are needed.

communities. In addition, they utilized cooperative resources to fulfill various non-economic functions, such as social insurance, education, health care, infrastructure building in the locality, charity funds for some social groups, family planning, etc. (Vietnam's State Planning Committee, 1990).

The application of the agricultural cooperative model in the North to the South was carried out under two forms: cooperatives and production groups which had a smaller scale than cooperatives. By 1980, 1,518 cooperatives and 9,350 production groups had been established, accounting for 35.6 percent of farming households. The average scale of a cooperative was 312 hectares of cultivated land (1.5 times as much as that of a cooperative in the North) and consisted of 519 households and 1,003 laborers. The average scale of a production group was 40 hectares of cultivated land and 38 farming households (Nguyen, S.C., 1995).

Although the spread of agricultural collectivization in the South was rapid, it was not sustainable. Various cooperatives collapsed in the Mekong Delta a short time after their establishment. There were several reasons for the collapse of cooperatives during this time. The South had had a market oriented economy before its liberation, so most farmers refused the collective and a self-sufficient economy. This economy prevented or even prohibited the circulation of goods, especially grain and foodstuffs. In addition, the Mekong Delta is the biggest rice granary of the country in which there were many wealthy farmers with

accumulated capital, experience, technology and large private land-holdings. Collectivization of farmers' land and other means of production was against their wishes. It was by no means an isolated case for farmers to sell their machines and buffaloes, cut down their fruit trees and leave their land deserted before joining cooperatives or production groups (Ibid.).

In addition to the above-mentioned reasons which were particular to the South, there were other reasons for the failure of the cooperative model which were common to both the North and the South. In the entire country cooperatives had lost their attractiveness. The utilization of cooperative resources to fulfill various non-economic functions, as mentioned above, posed a heavy burden on the cooperative economy. Moreover, an egalitarian income distribution system limited the farm level incentive to expand output. As a consequence, cooperative members found their work for the cooperative relatively unattractive, and they concentrated on private economic activities such as trading or exploitation of their family land plots (Vietnam's State Planning Committee, 1990).

The following table indicates the country's main agricultural indicators in the period 1976-1980:

**Table 1. Main Agrarian Indicators in the Period 1976 - 1980**

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Food output (mill. tons)	13.5	12.6	12.2	13.9	14.4
Sown area of paddy (1000 ha)	5,297	5,469	5,462	5,485	5,600
Yearly yield of paddy (100 kg/ha)	22.3	19.4	17.6	20.7	20.8
Food/capita (kg)	274.4	240.6	238.5	266.5	268.2
Buffaloes (1000 head)	2,256.5	2,289.7	2,327.7	2,293.0	2,313.0
Oxen (1000 head)	1,595.2	1,655.7	1,646.0	1,628.1	2,664.0
Pigs (1000 head)	8,958.1	8,739.2	8,838.9	9,348.0	10,001.2
Food import (1000 tons in paddy equivalent)	903	1,567	1,994	2,244	1,274
Food export (1000 tons in paddy equivalent)	7	5	24	7	47

Source: Vietnam's General Statistical Office, 1990.<sup>8</sup>

*3.2.1.b. The Initiation of Agricultural Reform*

Recognizing the problems caused by the existing agricultural cooperative model, on January 13, 1981, the Secretariat of the Communist Party of Vietnam introduced Instruction No. 100, the first legal document for agricultural reform. This Instruction called for contracting end-products to individual laborers or groups of laborers. Farmer households were allotted a certain amount of land and provided with certain services needed to produce the amount of rice that they had promised to deliver to their cooperatives. Cooperatives still maintained control over part of the work in the farming process. Farmers enjoyed certain autonomy in business.

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted from (Institute of Economics, 1994: 134)

They were free to put in more investments and apply the farming techniques they deemed most suitable to their crops in order to increase productivity and produce a surplus.

In the years from 1981 to 1985, this model proved a major engine driving the country's agricultural production, helping it out of the stagnation and crisis of the 1979-1980 period. More than that, increase in food output led to the decrease in food imports which in 1985 was down to 603 tons from 2,244,000 tons in 1979. This was a remarkable achievement of agriculture under Instruction No. 100 (Institute of Economics, 1994).

However, this model yielded positive results for about five years only, then performance deteriorated. This occurred for two reasons. Firstly, while in principle the quota was to be fixed for a period of five years, in practice it was often raised before the contract was due, minimizing the possibility of surpassing the quota. Secondly, the financial burden placed on the cooperative economy was so heavy that income left for workpoint payments became insignificant. As a result, households were unable to deliver their quota (Vietnam's State Planning Committee, 1990). So, they even returned land to cooperatives, keeping back only just enough to produce for their own consumption. What is more, they refused to remit their contract quotas or underpaid them. It was this conflict that once again pushed agriculture back into stagnation in the mid-1980s (Institute of Economics,

1994). But this stagnation was not so serious and critical as that in the late 1970s, since part of the process of agricultural production had been given to farmers. Agricultural occupations such as livestock breeding and gardening were now fully in the hands of farmer households. The stagnation and recession thus hit only rice cultivation and the areas still controlled by cooperatives while other lines of agricultural production continued to increase (Institute of Economics, 1994). Table 2 illustrates the main agricultural indicators in the period 1981-1986.

***Table 2. Main Agrarian Indicators in the Period 1981 - 1986***

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Food output (mill. tons)	15.0	16.8	17.0	17.8	18.2	18.4
Sown area of paddy (1000 ha)	5,652	5,711	5,611	5,675	5,704	5,689
Yearly yield of paddy (100 kg/ha)	22.0	25.2	26.3	27.3	27.8	28.1
Food/capita (kg)	272.8	299.6	296.4	302.9	304.0	300.8
Buffaloes (1000 head)	2,442.9	2,477.8	2,513.3	2,549.2	2,590.2	2,657.6
Oxen (1000 head)	2,082.3	2,188.7	2,300.5	2,418.0	2,597.6	2,783.5
Pigs (1000 head)	10,325.5	10,609.3	10,900.9	11,200	11,800	11,800
Food import (1000 tons in paddy equivalent)	642	451	121	514	603	829
Food export (1000 tons in paddy equivalent)	13	25	154	146	85	243

Source: Vietnam's General Statistical Office, 1990.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Quoted from (Institute of Economics, 1994: 144)



### **3.2.2. Rural Poverty**

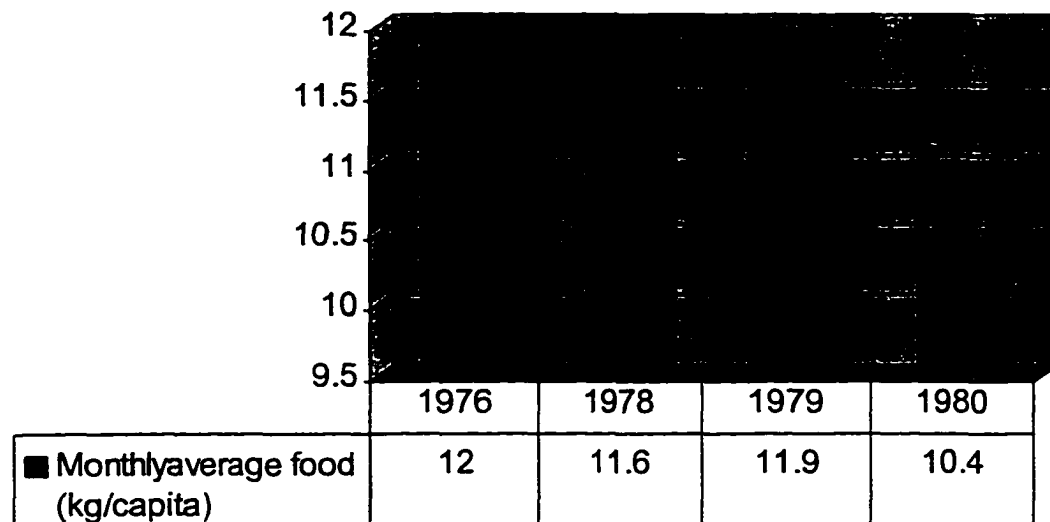
The Vietnamese Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs has identified poverty lines in the context of Vietnam as follows:

- Households whose average income per capita is under 8 kilograms of rice/month (in rural areas) and 13 kilograms of rice/month (in urban areas) are considered 'hungry'.
- Households whose average income per capita is under 15 kilograms of rice/month (in rural areas) or 20 kilograms of rice/month (in urban areas) are considered 'poor'.

(Institute for Labor Sciences and Social Affairs, 1994: 7-8).

In the collective economy, farmers' main income was derived from food production within the collective economy. The rural average monthly food consumption per capita during 1976 and 1980 was as follows (Figure 2):

**Figure 2. The Rural Average Food Consumption/Capita, 1976 - 1980**



Source: Chu, V. L., Nguyen, T. N., Phung, H. P., Tran, Q. T. and Dang, T. X. , 1992.

According to the poverty line identified above, farmers were generally very poor.

They had few interests except to maintain their own basic existence.

In the years 1981-1986, farmers' real income increased only slightly in comparison with the 1970s (Norlund, 1996), even though their situation had changed greatly as mentioned earlier in Section 3.2.1.b.

It can be concluded that during the period of centrally-planned economy, rural people's living standards were very low. However, as people relied completely on the state and cooperatives for an equal distribution of food and social benefits, the gap between the rich and the poor within rural areas and between rural and urban areas was very narrow.

### **3.2.3. Rural Infrastructure**

During the period 1976-1980, the government laid out the policy that priority must be given to heavy industry in a rational way, on the basis of agricultural and light industry development combining the building of industry and agriculture in the whole country into an economic structure for industry and agriculture (Communist Party of Vietnam, 1976). This policy was adopted with a view to exploit the potential of agriculture in building up a new countryside. In accordance with this policy, the state invested in infrastructure serving agriculture, in particular irrigation. A large number of centers for agricultural extension services were established in order to promote technical progress in agriculture and a network of agricultural research and training schools was developed and consolidated (Central Institute for Economic Management and Stockholm School of Economics, 1989). The following table (Table 3) indicates the increase in agriculture servicing infrastructure in the period 1976 -1986.

**Table 3. Irrigation Works and Electricity for Agriculture in 1976,  
1980, 1985 and 1986**

	1976	1980	1985	1986
Number of water conservation projects	2,245	4,141	4,952	n.a
Electricity for agriculture (mill. KWh)	219.7	259.3	308.5	332.2

Source: Vietnam's General Statistical Office and Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery, 1996.

This period was just after the end of the war. Decades of war meant very poor infrastructure and inadequately maintained roads, etc. Most of the roads in rural areas were soil-based and in a bad condition. The network of sub-roads were not only in shortage but also in such serious decay that in the stormy season, it was impossible to walk. Electricity was provided to farmers primarily for water irrigation and drainage (Central Institute for Economic Management, 1994). Rural people did not have clean water; they had to rely on water supply from rainwater, wells, ponds, lakes, springs, rivers, etc. This caused many health problems as these sources were often polluted (Ibid.)

#### **3.2.4. Rural Social Services**

During the period of a centrally-planned economy, Vietnam had strengths in that the state was capable of setting objectives of the development process, concentrating all the human and material resources of the country on the implementation of several of its key objectives, ensuring the basic necessities of life

for all members of society, and promoting the rapid development of health care, literacy and skill formation. Almost every rural village and every city ward had a trained health professional available. These primary health level workers were supported by successively higher echelons of health service, each echelon providing an increased level of skills and facilities. There were adequate numbers of health personnel at all levels, and they were distributed throughout the country on a reasonably even basis (State Planning Committee, 1990). Education, both at general level and tertiary level, was free throughout the country, thus Vietnam's literacy rate was high. In this connection, the State Planning Committee noted that "in the census of 1979, the literacy rate in the age group of 15-50 years was around 90 percent, the same percentage as for children of 10-15 years" (State Planning Committee, 1990:110).

This indicates that rural development in Vietnam before the economic reform, in general was low in terms of economic growth but high in terms of equality and social services.

### **3.2.5. Rural Underemployment**

One of the typical features of the centrally-planned economy in Vietnam in the past was that employment for all people was ensured. So, in the rural area, all farmers received jobs from the agricultural cooperative and had a family land plot to work on. In addition, due to the equal distribution of income from the cooperative and

the prevention or even the prohibition of the circulation of grain and foodstuffs, farmers did not have incentives to work more and harder to increase their income. As a result, underemployment was not considered a phenomenon existing in rural areas. However, it is argued here that underemployment in rural areas did exist but it was disguised under the centrally-planned economy.

### **3.2.6. Internal Migration**

As far as internal migration is concerned, during the 1976-1986 period, internal migration in Vietnam was organized and sponsored by the government. This took the form of the movement of persons to rural settlements as part of the program for the development of New Economic Zones, the allocation of workers for employment, and the transfer of state employees (Vietnam's National Institute for Urban and Rural Planning, et. al., 1995). The government's program to organize migration to develop new economic zones, which had been carried out since 1960 in the North, was continued to be applied to the whole country in the period 1976-1986. The objectives of this program were:

- to reduce the population pressure in the Red River Delta, the North Central region and the Central Coastal region;
- to control the level of population growth in cities and towns, particularly in populous cities;
- to redistribute the population within provinces and districts and

- to link population redistribution with the strengthening of national defense and security.

In the period 1976-1986, organized migration to develop new economic zones was carried out on a nation-wide scale. The main areas of origin were the Red River Delta, the North Central region and the Central Coast region. The main destination areas were the Central Highland, the South-east region and the Mekong Delta. While implementing the organized migration program, the government issued several policies to support migrants in the process of moving and settling in the destination area (Ibid.). However, for many reasons, especially inadequate investment allocated for resettling the people, around 20 percent of organized migrants left the new economic zones to return to their place of origin (Center for Population and Human Resources Studies, 1993).

In this period, policies concerning migration to urban areas, especially Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city, were intended to restrict as much as possible the volume of spontaneous migration. Generally speaking, those who were permitted to move into urban areas had to fit into the planned number set up either by the central government or the city government, or met a number of criteria determined by the government. Migration was mainly in the form of the recruitment of workers, job assignment for university graduates, or the transfer of workers in the state sector. Administrative and economic measures were designed and implemented to

facilitate the purpose of controlling rural to urban migration. These included the residence registration system and the distribution of food coupons. These measures were effective for the period 1976 – 1986.

### **3.3. THE PERIOD 1987- PRESENT**

#### **3.3.1. New Economic Policies**

The changes in Vietnam's development were marked by the full economic renovation introduced by the sixth National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam held in December 1986. New policies or reaffirmed previous measures can be summarized as follows:

- a long-term development of the multi-sector economy;
- confirmation of the important role played by market relations in the boosting of commodity production,
- establishment of new economic priorities including development of agriculture, promotion of consumer goods production, and an increase in export production and trade,
- stabilization of the socio-economic environment (e.g. reducing inflation and budget deficits rate, and improving people's living standards),
- implementation of better external relations.

(Norlund, Gates and Vu, 1996).



Agricultural stagnation in the mid-1980s as mentioned earlier led the Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of Vietnam to the adoption of Resolution No.10 in April 1988, two years after the introduction of the full economic renovation in 1986. The main content of this resolution was as follows<sup>10</sup>:

“- Farmers no longer have to sell produce to the state at low prices. Instead, they are to pay agricultural taxes on the basis of the yield of the land they receive from cooperatives. The substitution of state procurement by a fixed tax removed one form of uncertainty. In the economic dealings between farmers and the State (via cooperatives or state trading companies) only one price is quoted (this price is largely dependent on the price on the free market and subject to mutual agreement). Unless there is a contract, farmers are free to sell their produce on the free market.

- The expenses incurred by local party branches and authorities are no longer covered by the cooperative budget. The number of cooperative managerial cadres who do not directly undertake farming has been reduced by as much as one half.

- Land allocation takes into account the number of members of each household as well as their farming capacity. In some cooperatives 40 to 50 percent of the land is distributed on a per capita basis among households in order to provide them with a basic income, the remainder being distributed to the most able farmer households.

- Cooperatives now concentrate on carrying out major supportive activities which can be best done on a scale larger than household, such as irrigation.”

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted from Vietnam's State Planning Committee, 1990: 88.

### **3.3.2. Rural Economy**

Resolution No.10 provides for the decentralization and abolition of the bureaucratic and in-kind relations between farmers and their cooperatives. The shift to the commodity economy and the abolition of bureaucratic subsidization and centralized planning have led to changes in the relations between the State and cooperatives, hence also the relation between the State and the farmers. The farmers and cooperatives' only obligation to the State now is to pay agricultural tax and they no longer have to remit most of their produce to the State. This, in fact, is a great step toward decentralizing and liberalizing farmers' economic activities. The restoration of the household economy, making the farmer household an autonomous economic unit, is the most profound decision in this economic revolution. This restoration spells out the end of the collective economy. For this reason it is called 'economic revolution'.

The revolution has brought agriculture to a great turning point: from a rice-importing country before 1989, Vietnam has become the third largest rice-exporter in the world since 1989 (Tran, Thanh, 1996), as shown in the tables below.

**Table 4.a. Main Agrarian Indicators in the Period 1987 - 1991**

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Food output (mill. tons)	17.6	19.6	21.5	21.5	22
Sown area of paddy (1000 ha)	5,588	5,726	5,896	6,028	6,303
Yearly yield of paddy (100 kg/ha)	27.0	29.7	32.3	31.9	31.1
Food/capita (kg)	280.8	307.3	332.2	324.4	324.9
Buffaloes (1000 head)	2,752.7	2,806.8	2,871.3	2,854.1	2,858.6
Oxen (1000 head)	2,979.1	3,126.6	3,201.7	3,116.9	3,135.6
Pigs (1000 head)	12,050.8	11,642.6	12,217.3	12,260.5	12,194.3
Food import (1000 tons in paddy equivalent)	720	715.2	282	0	0
Food export (1000 tons in paddy equivalent)	185	140	2,185	2,308	1,590

Source: Vietnam's General Statistical Office and Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery, 1996.

**Table 4.b. Main Agrarian Indicators in the Period 1992 - 1995**

	1992	1993	1994	1995
Food output (mill. tons)	24.2	25.5	26.2	27.5
Sown area of paddy (1000 ha)	6,475	6,559	6,598	6,765
Yearly yield of paddy (100 kg/ha)	33.3	34.8	35.6	36.9
Food/capita (kg)	348.9	359.0	360.9	372.5
Buffaloes (1000 head)	2,886.5	2,960.8	2,977.3	2,962.8
Oxen (1000 head)	3,201.8	3,333.0	3,466.0	3,638.9
Pigs (1000 head)	13,891.7	14,860.8	15,587.7	16,306.4
Food import (1000 tons in paddy equivalent)	0	0	0	0
Food export (1000 tons in paddy equivalent)	2,955	2,660	3,000	3,076

Source: Vietnam's General Statistical Office and Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery, 1996.

In addition, Vietnam's number of cash crop and fruit trees has notably increased. In 1995 coffee output reached about 180,000 tons increasing three times compared to 1986 and double compared to 1990. Dry rubber latex output has increased by 30 percent in 10 years: from 1987 - 1996 (Nguyen, S. C., 1996b).

Livestock also increased rapidly. In the period 1989-1994, cattle herds increased by 5.7 percent, pig herds increased by 26.9 percent, pig live weight product increased by 64.9 percent and poultry flocks by 32 percent (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 1996).

Another area which is also important is aquaculture. In 1995 aquacultural output achieved 1.4 million tons. Export aquacultural products gained more than half billion dollars, increasing by 4 times compared to 1986 (Nguyen, S. C., 1996 b).

More important than all the above-mentioned remarkable gains in agriculture is that farmers now have considerable freedom in their farming activities and business. It is pointed out here that this is the firm base for sustainable agricultural development. Only when the producer is encouraged, then can high production be ensured in the long run. More than that, after farmers' business autonomy was recognized, their capital and investment in farming equipment increased.

### **3.3.3. Rural Poverty**

According to the General Statistical Office, the poverty rate was reduced from 50 percent in 1989 to 19.9 percent in 1993. Although farmers' living standards have improved as a result of the increase in agricultural production, the gap between the rich and the poor within rural areas and that between rural and urban areas are becoming wider (Nguyen, S.C., 1996b). Ninety percent of the poor in Vietnam were reported to be in rural areas (Nguyen, H.H., 1997). According to the standards of the poverty line identified by the Vietnamese Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, Vietnam's poverty status can be viewed as follows (1993 statistics):

- Rural areas: Hungry households : 5 - 7 percent  
Poor households : 28 - 34 percent
- Urban areas: Hungry households : 2.29 percent  
Poor households : 4.28 percent

In rural areas, poverty is regionally different. In the northern mountainous regions, where minority ethnic people are living, the poverty rate is higher than the average of the rural areas: hungry households account for 20-30 percent and poor households constitute 40-60 percent of total households. This is due to an unfavorable climate, tradition and customs in addition to poor infrastructure (Institute for Labor Sciences and Social Affairs, 1994). In 1996, in rural areas there were 2,800,000 households (more than 13 million people) reported in the category

of hungry and poor households. As 90 percent of the poor reside in the countryside, poverty reduction very important in the strategy for rural development (The World Bank, 1995).

#### **3.3.4. Rural Infrastructure**

At present in Vietnam 60.4 percent of rural communes have electricity. Farmers' houses have been improved; 58 percent of farmers have permanent or semi-permanent houses, many of which have two or three stories. There are many villages with 100 percent of brick and tile houses; and 65 percent of rural households have access to clean water. Dike systems in the North have been reinforced to reduce the threat of floods. Irrigation systems have been enlarged to irrigate and drain about 50 percent of total cultivated land (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 1996).

However, after the introduction of Resolution No.10, there appears a worrisome situation in that the infrastructure system of power stations, rural transport network, research and experiment stations, markets, schools and commune clinics are not given the attention by cooperatives as in the past. The degradation of infrastructure is visible, and so are the systems of pumping stations, tractor stations, seeds stations, and plant protection stations. This occurred because after land was assigned to households, each household only pays attention to its contracted land plot, paying little attention to common facilities. In addition, agricultural

cooperatives, after allocating all land stock to households, have lost their real power in regulating production, and therefore no longer pay attention to rural infrastructure. On the whole, rural infrastructure is still poor. Most rural roads are very low in quality, especially in the mountainous regions and Mekong Delta. Rural transportation and communication networks are still difficult and costly to establish and maintain. The quality of school buildings, clinics and electricity systems are not good. Dike and irrigation systems need to be upgraded and developed to meet the requirement of the enlargement of cultivated land (Ibid.).

#### **3.3.5. Rural Social Services**

As for social services, due to the reduction made in governmental financing capability in economic transformation process, subsidy for the health care system and education in general and in rural areas in particular is consequently lower than desired. As a result, the health care system and education in rural areas are on the verge of serious decline despite considerable development in the past. The proportion of children from six to twelve years old going to school has been reduced by 0.8 percent per year, percentage of children at secondary school age has also been reduced. The drop-out rate is 10 percent per year, of which more than 50 percent of cases are due to difficult economic conditions. Survey results demonstrate that up to 16.55 percent of children never go to school, and 11.52 percent of people from 10 years old and above are illiterate. This represents 43.44

percent of poor people (Ibid.) Illiteracy rates in mountainous provinces are seven to nine times higher than in urban centers (The World Bank, 1996).

### **3.3.6. Rural Underemployment**

The labor force in rural areas increased rapidly due to a natural annual population growth rate of 2.1 percent, while agricultural land resources are limited. Arable land per capita has been declining: 0.18 ha in 1982, 0.16 ha in 1992 (Nguyen S. C, 1995) and 0.1 ha in 1996 (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 1997). In addition, the open door policy has brought about better technology for agriculture while non-agricultural occupations have been developed slowly. Moreover, due to the state's removal of subsidy to state enterprises many laid-off workers from urban areas have returned to rural areas to engage in agricultural production. All this has resulted in the increase of rural surplus labor force. Statistically, 28 percent of the rural labor force is underemployed (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 1997). In this situation, the contradiction arisen in the relation between land, labor and employment in the rural areas has become aggravated, inevitably leading to rural low income.

### **3.3.7. Spontaneous Rural to Urban Migration**

After 1986, policies to control spontaneous migration in both urban and rural areas became less effective when the government decided to shift from a centrally planned economy to a multi-sector economy operating under a market mechanism.



As a result, the volume of spontaneous migration from rural to urban migration has increased tremendously.

In Hanoi, since 1986 the population of the city has increased, on the average, by 55,000 per year, of which the net migration was 22,000. Three-fourths of net migration has been concentrated in the city. The volume of in-migration is five times the volume of out-migration. In addition, in Hanoi there is the presence of seasonal migrants seeking jobs in the slack agricultural season, or of temporary migrants who come to Hanoi to earn a living for a number of years before deciding to settle here or move to other places. In Ho Chi Minh City, it has been estimated that the volume of in-migration is about 80,000 per year.

In 1996, throughout Vietnam, there were 2,042,685 rural people aged 15 and above migrating spontaneously to urban areas in order to find jobs, of which female represented 48.85 percent. The number of spontaneous rural to urban migrants of working age accounts for 93.98 percent of the total number of spontaneous rural to urban migrants looking for jobs in Vietnam, and of 7.14 percent of the number of laborers of working age who are economically active in rural areas. The figures for the female labor force are 91.76 percent and 6.77 percent respectively (Center for Scientific Information on Labor and Social Affairs, 1997).

The region that has highest rate of spontaneous rural to urban migrants compared with the rural labor force of the same region is the Red River Delta at 12.94 percent. The Northern Central region comes next with 8.43 percent. This rate is lower in other regions, especially in western highlands: 2.25 percent and the mountainous and midlands in the North: 4.06 percent (*Ibid.*).

The number and rate of spontaneous migrants from rural areas to Hanoi to find jobs in 1996 are very much different from those of Ho Chi Minh City. In Hanoi, there are 138,797 migrants, among whom the number of people of working age is 133,507. In Ho Chi Minh City, the figures are 59,258 and 58,085, respectively (*Ibid.*).

On the whole, in Hanoi and other urban areas in the North, spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas is occurring at a larger scale and volume than that in Ho Chi Minh City and other provinces in the South.

In summary, this chapter has provided an overview of Vietnam's rural development and the situation of internal migration in the periods from 1976 to 1986 and from 1987 up to the present. The overview indicates that government policies on internal migration and the model and situation of rural development have strong effects on spontaneous rural to urban migration. The next chapter will analyze the

impact of the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam after the introduction of the full economic renovation in December 1986.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE IMPACT OF SPONTANEOUS MIGRATION FROM RURAL TO URBAN AREAS IN VIETNAM**

As mentioned in Chapter III, spontaneous rural to urban migration has been increasing in Vietnam since the introduction of the full economic renovation in December 1986. Economic renovation brought about a shift from an organized form of migration to a spontaneous form. Almost all rural to urban migrants in Vietnam are spontaneous migrants (Center for Population and Human Resources Studies, 1993). This chapter analyzes the impact of the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration on individual migrants, their family and on both rural and urban areas. It is argued that this phenomenon has both positive and negative impacts. The determination as to whether these impacts are positive or negative is based on whether they are consistent or inconsistent with national development goals.

#### **4.1. THE IMPACT OF SPONTANEOUS RURAL TO URBAN MIGRATION ON MIGRANTS AND THEIR HOUSEHOLDS**

##### **4.1.1 Impacts on Individual Migrants**

The social and economic changes which a spontaneous rural to urban migrant experiences are interdependent. Economic impacts can be measured through a shift

from underemployed status to a different underemployed or employed status and through incomes gained in urban areas. Social impacts, on the other hand, can be defined here as changes in the network, pattern, and attitude toward social relationships. These may include changes in the roles within the family and in relations with other individuals and their social relations and ties and their participation in communities such as neighborhoods. For spontaneous rural-urban migrants, the most dramatic social changes relate to a shift from a rural to urban lifestyle. At the level of the individual as well as the society as a whole, there are both benefits and costs associated with this change.

However, it is very difficult to measure whether the impact of spontaneous migration on individual migrants is positive or negative because individuals differ in a number of respects. Nevertheless, it is argued here that to a certain extent this can be measured. In terms of economic impacts, the method of measuring is to compare the level of income and the number of hours the migrant is employed in the urban area with those in the rural area before he/she migrated. In terms of social impacts, the method of assessing this can be based on the migrant's answer to the question as to whether he/she has met his/her expectation from migration which is to say, whether he/she is satisfied with his/her new life. But as there is not enough information to argue whether the impacts on spontaneous rural to urban individual migrants are positive or negative, no attempt is made in this sub-section to divide the impacts into positive and negative ones.

#### *4.1.1.a. Impacts on Types of Employment*

As noted in Chapter I, the dominant economic activity in rural areas is agricultural production and the agricultural labor force accounts for nearly 82 percent of the rural labor force. In addition, as noted in Chapter III, the number of people of working age represents 93.98 percent of the total of spontaneous rural to urban migrants in Vietnam. Although the percentage of spontaneous migrants who were involved in agricultural activities before migrating to the urban area over the total number of this type of migrants has not been reported, it is deduced that most of them were involved in agricultural activities in the rural areas before they migrated to urban areas. When in the urban setting, most of them change their economic activity from agricultural production to non-agricultural production. Their employment is mainly in the informal economic sector. They do all sorts of work provided that they can earn money such as mason, porter, cyclo (pedicab) driver, fruit vendor, shoe-polisher, baby-sitter, cleaning person, garbage collector, etc. (Center for Scientific Information on Labor and Social Affairs, 1997).

In addition to the change in types of employment, there is also a change in the number of days they are employed. The average number of employed days for a laborer in the rural area has is 262, while for a spontaneous rural to urban migrant it is 120 (Ibid.). This need not translate into lower incomes for migrants since urban wages are higher. It might also be noted that the higher number of days worked in agriculture may mask significantly more underemployment than in urban areas.

#### *4.1.1.b. Impacts on Levels of Income*

According to the results of surveys on spontaneous rural to urban migration conducted by the Center for Population and Human Resources Studies in 1993 and 1997, Institute for Economic Research of Ho Chi Minh City in 1996, and the answers given by rural to urban migrants to the author of this thesis during her field work in Vietnam in 1997, the average monthly income in the urban area of a spontaneous rural to urban migrant increases by two to five times in comparison with his/her previous income in the rural area. On average, a cyclo driver can earn about 20,000 dong/day<sup>11</sup>, a newly started mason can earn 7,000-10,000 dong/day and when he is skilled, he can earn 15,000-20,000 dong/day; a child working as a shoe-polisher can earn 15,000-20,000 dong/day, etc.(Ibid.). To place these incomes in context the average rural income per capita is only 77,300 dong/month in 1992-1993 (State Planning Committee and General Statistical Office, 1994) and about 100,000 dong/ month in 1996 (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 1997).

According to the result of the survey taken in 1993, among 2,000 spontaneous rural migrants to Hanoi, 17 percent earned 500,000-800,000 dong/month, 78 per cent could earn 200,000-500,000 dong/month, and the rest 5 percent earned less than 200,000 dong/month. Every month they sent 100,000-300,000 dong to their families in the rural area (National Economics University, 1995). The most recent

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<sup>11</sup> "Dong" is the Vietnamese currency unit. U.S.\$1= 11,600 dong (Mid-1997).

report on spontaneous migration from rural areas to Hanoi delivered by the Center for Population and Human Resources Studies in July 1997 also stated that after deducting their minimum living expenses, rural spontaneous migrants to Hanoi could save 100,000-300,000 dong/month. This is the same amount in nominal terms as that in 1993, but clearly less in real terms due to inflation.

#### *4.1.1.c. Impacts On Types Of Accommodation*

Although the urban area is suitable for job hunting purposes, its land and housing are much more expensive than those in the rural area. In general, with limited skills and relations with urban people, most spontaneous rural to urban migrants cannot find high paying jobs. Moreover, temporary and uncommitted migrants are reluctant to invest more than the absolute minimum amount in housing, even in case they are in a position to do so. All this explains why spontaneous rural to urban migrants usually rent very cheap accommodation. From the surveys mentioned earlier and observations made by the author on the situation of migrants' accommodation, it is mentioned here that migrants to urban areas, especially to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, had very poor accommodation. They usually share among themselves low-quality rooms, sometimes up to 9 people in a room of approximately 15 square meters. Some migrants even built huts on city garbage disposal places, on the riverbanks, etc. despite the prohibition of the authorities.



Making a comparison between their accommodation in the urban area and that in the rural area, it can be safely assumed here that there is a change for the worse.

#### *4.1.1.d. Impacts On Social Status*

As mentioned earlier, most of the spontaneous rural to urban migrants were involved in agricultural production and they had a piece of land to work on, due to the government policy of egalitarian distribution of land. In addition, farmer households have been given autonomy. When in rural areas, they were self-employed, however, in urban areas, many of them have to stand in the manpower market to wait for being hired and have to do all sorts of work to earn money. Moreover, it is perceived that some urban people discriminate against rural migrants. For example, the way they call rural migrants using disrespectful words. Therefore, it is argued that in general these migrants have a lower social status than that they have in their places of origin.

#### **4.1.2. Impacts on Migrant Households**

The situation when an individual migrant leaves and the rest of the family remains is different from that when an entire family moves as a unit. In situations where an individual moves but the rest of the family remains, there are a host of possible consequences for the remaining family or household unit which are often ignored (Oberai and Singh, 1983). This sub-section mentions impacts on the household

consumption per capita and/or production per capita, on household labor supply, on the household income and others.

*4.1.2.a. Impacts On The Household Consumption Per Capita And/Or Production Per Capita*

If the out-migrant is a dependent, either a young child or an older retired person, unless funds are sent to that out-migrant, per capita consumption of remaining household members can rise, since there is one less person to consume but no decrease in the labor input of remaining family members. In Vietnam, the number of spontaneous rural to urban migrants in the working age accounts for 93.98 percent of the total number of spontaneous rural to urban migrants (Center for Scientific Information on Labor and Social Affairs, 1997). Thus the more common situation is for the out-migrant as a young adult, if not the household head, to leave often to work. Although in Vietnam figures on the change in household consumption per capita and household production per capita in rural areas have not been reported, the assumption can be made that the loss of such a family member who may well be the most educated and productive worker in the household, will create a net loss in household production per capita. Of course this need not necessary mean a loss in income (see section 4.1.2.c. below)

#### *4.1.2.b. Impacts On Household Labor Supply*

With the migration of a young adult, his/her household members remaining have to respond to the reduced household labor supply. If underemployment has existed in the household before, additional work effort is possible from existing members of the labor force. Some other time re-allocation is possible within the household, such as children leaving school to work. However, up to now, no research has been done on the nature of the relationship between the rate of spontaneous rural to urban migration and the drop-out rate of rural children. The literature on rural to urban migration shows that in some countries, a substantial increase in the work of women and hence in their economic status has resulted from out-migration of males (Bilsborrow, Oberai and Standing, 1984). However, in Vietnam, females represented 48.85 percent of spontaneous rural to urban migrants (Center for Scientific Information on Labor and Social Affairs, 1997), so spontaneous rural to urban migration results in the increase of workload not only to women but also to men in cases where the out-migrants are females.

#### *4.1.2.c. Impacts On The Household Income*

Since spontaneous rural to urban migration is still a new phenomenon in Vietnam, studies on it have not revealed all aspects of it. Even the most recent studies on spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam do not provide the exact figures of remittances sent home by spontaneous rural to urban migrants. For example,

“Migration, Human Resources, Employment and Urbanization in Ho Chi Minh City” gives the following information:

**Table 5.a. Distribution of Value of Money/Goods Sent by Migrants In 1995 by Receiver of Remittances**

Receiver	Value (1,000 dong)	Percent
Spouse/children	22,352	13.40
Parents	122,600	73.60
Siblings	7,450	4.50
Parents-brothers-/sisters-in law	9,000	5.40
Other relatives	100	0.10
Others	4,992	3.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>166,494</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Institute for Economic Research of Ho Chi Minh City, 1996

**Table 5.b. Distribution Of The Value Of Money/Goods Sent By Migrants In 1995 By Main Purposes Of Sending**

Main Purpose	Value (1,000 dong)	Percent
To support daily subsistence	151,950	91.30
To support family businesses	2,600	1.60
To cover costs of education and health care	3,752	2.20
Others	8,192	4.90
<b>Total</b>	<b>166,494</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Institute for Economic Research of Ho Chi Minh City, 1996

However, this study does not provide figures of remittances sent only by spontaneous rural to urban migrants. In other words, referring to remittances, this

study treats migrants as a homogeneous group and does not deal with spontaneous rural to urban migrants separately. Another example is “The Report on Spontaneous Migration Survey in Hanoi” which does not provide the statistical figures of the amount of remittances sent by spontaneous rural to urban migrants to their families in the rural areas. This study mentions that spontaneous migrants were closely attached to their home village and families at the place of origin and many of them brought funds they earned in Hanoi whenever they came back home to visit. This study also notes that in case they could not return home often, they send money home through friends or relatives in order to help their families.

#### *4.1.2.d. Other Impacts*

In addition to the above-mentioned consequences of spontaneous rural to urban migration on migrant household, there are other consequences. The new access to information and contacts that the household has with the destination area through the out-migrant may lead to out-migration of other household members. For example, from the survey results, 30 percent of spontaneous rural migrants to Hanoi said that their relatives or friends would come to Hanoi in the near future (Center for Population and Human Resources Studies, 1997).

In addition, there are negative socio-psychological effects resulting from the loss of a family member and marital stability, to the extent the person leaving is married and the extent of crowding in the household. Although studies on spontaneous

rural to urban migration in Vietnam have not investigated these aspects, on the basis of the author's perception which is obtained through her life and experience in Vietnam, it is assumed here that these consequences also have occurred in Vietnam. For instance, stories about this or that migrant who has neglected his wife or her husband in the rural area and has an affair in the urban area are common in newspapers and in people's conversations.

Moreover, many people always want to become better off, so although migrant families receive remittances from out-migrants, they still work as hard as before or even harder due to the reduced household labor supply. This results in their overwork. This may even be a tragedy to families who do not receive any remittance at all from out-migrants.

## **4.2. IMPACTS ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.2.1 Positive Impacts**

#### *4.2.1.a. Impacts On Rural Employment And Incomes*

The number of spontaneous rural to urban migrants who are of working age in Vietnam accounts for 7.14 percent of the economically active workforce in rural areas (Center for Scientific Information on Labor and Social Affairs, 1997). Therefore, it is concluded that this transfer of rural labor into the urban areas has brought about a decline in labor/land ratio in rural areas. This factor could

contribute to a decrease in rural underemployment. On the other hand, this transfer of rural labor also create a growing demand for rural output. This may contribute to the increase in rural incomes. In addition, remittances from urban areas are also likely to raise rural incomes. The increase in rural incomes may encourage rural technological change which, in turn, raises rural incomes.

#### *4.2.1.b. Impacts On Rural Technological Change*

Out-migration from rural areas is likely to encourage labor-saving technology change and/or greater work participation by remaining family farmers. Technological change would also be stimulated to the extent that out-migrants repatriate savings to the rural areas in the form of remittances or capital equipment (Oberai and Singh, 1983). Some preliminary evidence in support of this comes from an informal survey conducted by the author in Thi Tran, a village belonging to Tien Hai Commune in Thai Binh province. Thai Binh is in the Red River Delta where the rate of spontaneous rural to urban migration is the highest in the country (Center for Scientific on Labor and Social Affairs, 1997). It is one of the provinces in Vietnam in which 100 percent of communes have electricity. Thi Tran farmers mainly grow rice, yam and rush. They make rush mattresses for sale. Of the 300 households in Thi Tran about 10 percent reported members who have migrated to urban areas. The survey showed that the migrants have supplied their families with electric water pumps, rice-huskers, rush mattress weavers, etc.

#### ***4.2.1.c. Impacts On Rural Population Growth***

Since marriage, migration and labor force participation are conscious decisions of the individual, it is possible that a person may delay his marriage so that he/she can migrate and help out his family. Separation of husbands from wives during the crucial life-cycle phase, when couples are fertile and economically active, may have the effect of lowering the completed family size. A survey of migrant women in Ho Chi Minh City has shown that their fertility level is lower than that at their rural place of origin, and not much higher than the level for non-migrant females in Ho Chi Minh City (Institute for Economic Research of Ho Chi Minh City, 1996).

#### **4.2.2. Negative Impacts**

##### ***4.2.2.a. Impacts On Rural Human Capital***

In 1996, throughout Vietnam, there were 2,042,685 rural people aged 15 and above migrating spontaneously to urban areas in order to find jobs. The number of spontaneous rural to urban migrants in the working age accounted for 93.98 percent of the total number of spontaneous rural to urban migrants looking for jobs in Vietnam (Center for Scientific Information on Labor and Social Affairs, 1997). Most of them are generally young and strong adults. Their movement involves a sizable transfer of human capital out of the rural sector which might adversely affect long-run rural development. If all or most of the strong, skilled and more educated rural people keep migrating to urban areas and rural areas are left with just



a weak labor force then how can agriculture and other aspects of rural development be ensured of a strong growth?

If migrants regularly send home remittances then their children and/or young siblings may be able to concentrate more on their studies. However, not all migrants do so. In cases they do not send any remittances at all, their spouse and children or parents and young siblings have to work harder, which may lead to educational drop-out of their children or siblings. This is an adverse effect on rural development because illiteracy is a key to poverty.

#### *4.2.2.b. Impacts On Rural Sex Ratio*

Although in Vietnam, females constituted 48.85 percent of spontaneous rural to urban migrants (Center for Scientific Information on Labor and Social Affairs, 1997), within a place of origin, the percentage of male out-migrants is higher than that of female out-migrants or vice versa. This can result in severe imbalances of the sex ratio in rural areas and influence the proportion of persons able to find marriage partners.

### **4.3. THE IMPACTS ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

#### **4.3.1 Positive Impacts**

##### *4.3.1.a. Impacts On Urban Wages And Employment*

The most widely discussed consequence of spontaneous rural to urban migration for urban areas is its impacts on the level of unemployment and wages. It is not possible to conclude that unemployment will rise, since much depends on whether migrants add more to the supply of labor or the demand for labor (Oberai and Singh, 1983). Results of migration surveys in Vietnam show that up to now, the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration has not been the main reason for urban people's unemployment or underemployment (Center for Scientific Information on Labor and Social Affairs, 1997). This is because almost all the jobs done by rural migrants in urban areas are heavy but low-paying jobs like digging ground for building foundations, carrying heavy furniture or other things, washing up, working as a domestic servant, cyclo driving and so on. Urban people do not want to do these jobs (Center for Scientific Information on Labor and Social Affairs, 1997). This shows that migrants do not always compete for jobs with urbanites; sometimes they take jobs which the urbanites refuse, or create new jobs for themselves, particularly in the informal sector.

In addition, there are several means by which migrants may directly or indirectly raise the level of employment: they may lower wage rates in urban areas, and this may lead to an expansion of employment (Oberai and Singh, 1983). Spontaneous

rural migrants' consumption patterns tend to be oriented towards "basic needs" goods and services. This has accounted for the appearance of many low-level restaurants, boarding houses, manual tool-lending services, money-keeping services, etc. in urban areas in Vietnam.

#### *4.3.1.b. Impacts On the Urban Labor Force*

The influx of spontaneous rural migrants to the urban areas has added more labor to the urban labor force. An abundant labor force is helpful for urban areas to make a more efficient and economical provision of services if this labor force is properly utilized. The addition of migrant labor to the urban labor force may also result in enhanced specialization and increased labor productivity. In Vietnam most of the masons hired by construction companies are rural migrants.

#### **4.3.2 Negative Impacts**

##### *4.3.2.a. Impacts On Urban Underemployment And Unemployment*

Although spontaneous rural to urban migrants in Vietnam in general have not competed for jobs with urban people - in other words, have not created unemployment or underemployment for urban people - they have contributed to an army of the unemployed and underemployed in urban areas. There have been more and more labor markets in urban areas in which rural migrants are waiting to be hired to do some work. In Hanoi, where the greatest volume of rural migrants have drawn to, labor markets can be seen in Giang Vo, Tran Nhat Duat, Nga Tu So and

Dong Xuan. Among these migrants only 43 percent could find regular jobs, the others had only casual jobs or could not find a job (National Economics University, 1995).

#### *4.3.2.b. Impacts On Urban Population Growth*

The rural population on average has increased at 2.3 percent per year, whereas the urban population grew at a much faster rate, at 3.4 percent per year between the 1979 and 1989 censuses. The urbanization process has accelerated, as a result the proportion of the urban population rose from 18 - 19 percent in the 10 years between 1979-1989 censuses, and from 19 - 20 percent in the six years between 1989-1995 (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 1996). Since the rate of natural increase (excess of births over deaths) is lower in urban areas in comparison with rural areas, the higher rate of population increase in urban areas indicates a heavy flow from rural to urban areas.

#### *4.3.2.c. Impacts On Availability Of Urban Amenities*

The increase of spontaneous rural migration to urban areas in Vietnam has brought about the growing demand for infrastructure facilities and social services such as clean water, drainage and electricity provision, schools, hospitals, transport, communications, cultural and recreational facilities. Urban areas in Vietnam are unable to meet the growing demand for these services, as they often require large overhead investments. For example, the average amount of tap water per capita in

Ho Chi Minh City declined from 134 liters/person/day in 1980 to 82 liters/person/day in 1992 (National Economics University, 1995). The same situation happened in Hanoi. According to the survey conducted by Project VIE/93/P02, in Hanoi in 1993 only 13.64 percent of people interviewed had enough tap water, 41.46 percent did not have enough tap water and the rest 44.9 percent was seriously short of water (Ibid.).

The increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration is also likely to push up rents and land values in urban areas. Land prices in 1990 were around US\$40.00 - 50.00 per square meter, but in they 1994 were around US\$ 700.00 - 900.00 per square meter for central locations in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (National Institute for Urban and Rural Planning, et.al., 1995). Of course the dramatic increase of land prices in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh was perhaps mainly due to the demand for housing of export laborers who came back in large numbers from countries in the former Socialist Blocs, the increase of foreign investment and tourists in these cities. It seems likely that the large influx of rural migrants to these cities also contributed to this increase.

In addition, the great volume of spontaneous rural migrants to urban areas in Vietnam has contributed to urban congestion and traffic accidents. In Hanoi, since 1986, the population of the city has increased, on average 55,000 per year, of which 22,000 as a result of net migration (Center for Population and Human Resources

Studies, 1997). The population of Hanoi is around 2.2 million and the population density is 2,383 person/square kilometer, highest in the country (Ibid.). Within 1996 there were 138,797 rural migrants coming to Hanoi. These figures show that Hanoi has been too overpopulated and rural migrants really have contributed to the city's congestion. The same situation has happened in Ho Chi Minh City. The population of Ho Chi Minh City is around 4.3 million and the population density is 2,068 person/square kilometer (Ministry of Culture and Information, 1995). Within 1996 there were 59,258 rural migrants coming to Ho Chi Minh City (Center for Scientific Information on Labor and Social Affairs, 1997).

#### *4.3.2.d. Impacts On Urban Environment And Beauty*

In urban areas, especially in big cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, land and housing are very expensive, while most of spontaneous migrants just do manual work to earn money, therefore, they cannot afford good accommodation in the cities. Some migrants, especially right after coming to urban areas, cannot even afford the rent of low-level boarding houses. At night they may just cover themselves with a rush mattress or blanket and sleep on steps of stores and offices, on benches in parks, under bridges, etc. Some other migrants are bolder and put up their shelters on river banks, city garbage disposal places or other pieces of state land in spite of the prohibition of the authorities. They may dispose garbage and other kinds of waste not in right places. As a result, the urban environment and beauty have become degraded.

#### *4.3.2.e. Impacts On Urban Social Fabric*

It is noted that spontaneous rural migrants seeking jobs in urban areas in Vietnam normally come in groups, each group consisting of people from the same place of origin. Each group often nominates the leader of the group, who is responsible for jobs and accommodation arrangements and for communication with the place of origin (Center for Population and Human Resources Studies, 1993). In some cases, migrants who are hiding criminals or who used to be criminals threaten other migrants and claim themselves to be leaders of groups and become a kind of broker. These brokers negotiate labor prices with the employer, then assign jobs to migrants in their group but give them a lower amount of money than that paid by the employer. In this way, they earn a lot of money from other migrants' labor.

In addition, as most migrants are away from their families and life in urban areas is more luxurious than that in rural areas, some of them get addicted to drugs, gambling, prostitution.

Moreover, not all migrants can find jobs in urban areas. Some migrants came to urban areas with a deliberate purpose to do some illegal work such as prostitution, robbery, drug selling and so on. Some others became involved in these illegal jobs because they were not successful in finding other jobs as they had expected before their migration but did not want to go back to their place of origin because they felt embarrassed with their family and fellow villagers for not being able to find work

in the urban area. This has contributed to the increase of social vices in Vietnam, especially in urban areas after the economic renovation which is the main factor influencing the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration. The following table partly reflects this phenomenon:

***Table 6. Proportion of Adolescent Criminals***

Before 1986			Recent Time	
The country	whole	8.0 - 8.7%	The whole country	9.0 - 9.2%
			Hanoi	10.0 - 12.0%
			Ho Chi Minh City	18.0 - 19.0%

Source: Ministry of Interior, 1994<sup>12</sup>

Although figures of crimes committed by rural migrants in urban areas have not been systematically reported, newspapers and other means of mass media often talk about cases of crime done by rural migrants in the urban areas.

In summary, this chapter has analyzed the impact of the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam on individual migrants and their households, on both rural and urban areas. For the economy as a whole, the net effects of this migration can be positive in some ways and negative in other ways. Therefore, the agency of the government is needed in issuing policies influencing this migration. The next chapter will discuss the government's point of view on the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration. The next chapter will also provide some

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted from (National Committee for the Advancement of Women in Vietnam, 1995:155)



recommendations for an appropriate policy on spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas in Vietnam.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In Chapter IV, we discussed the impact of the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam. As there are both positive and negative impacts, it is important that the government adopt policies affecting this migration in order to bring into play the positive impacts and to avoid or keep to the minimum the negative impacts of this phenomenon. This chapter discusses the stand of the government on the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam. The chapter also draws some implications for policy.

#### **5.1. THE GOVERNMENT'S POINT OF VIEW ON THE INCREASE OF SPONTANEOUS RURAL TO URBAN MIGRATION**

As mentioned earlier, the volume of spontaneous rural to urban migration has increased tremendously since the introduction of the full economic renovation in 1986 and this phenomenon has both positive and negative impacts. Looking at internal migration in Vietnam, it is noted that the government has recognized the importance of organized migration in economic, political and social aspects. This is seen through the government's direction of organized migration in the North from 1961 and in the whole country after 1975. Since 1961 the government has resettled 5.7 million persons in New Economic Zones (National Institute for Urban

and Rural Planning, 1995) of which 4.8 million persons were resettled from 1976 to 1995 (Center for Population and Human Resources Studies, 1997). This is an indication that the government has played an important role in the redistribution of population in Vietnam. However, to the new phenomenon of the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration, the “[g]overnment has yet to fully understand the implication of this phenomenon unleashed by the reform forces of ‘doi moi’<sup>13</sup>. Neither has it formulated policies that address its causes and consequences” (The Vietnam National Institute for Urban and Rural Planning, et. al., 1995: 36). There is no government agency that is totally in charge of this migration (Center for Population and Human Resources Studies, 1997). The government attempts to manage rather than block the migration by registering migrants and helping them to find jobs (Asian Development Bank, 1996). The government has issued Decision 120/HDBT<sup>14</sup> to encourage spontaneous migrants to find jobs and this was considered as an effective self-job-finding and job-creating way in the national employment strategy (Center for Population and Human Resources, 1997).

Recognizing the positive and negative impacts of the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration, this thesis makes the following recommendations with the intention that these recommendations would be considered for policies avoiding the negative consequences and bring into play more positive consequences of this migration.

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<sup>13</sup> ‘Doi moi’ is the Vietnamese term for ‘renovation’.

<sup>14</sup> HDBT is the abbreviation in Vietnamese of “the Council of Ministers”

## **5.2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.2.1. Reconsidering the Role of Spontaneous Rural to Urban Migration in National Development**

It is worth mentioning here that the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam is an as-a-matter-of-course phenomenon in the present situation of Vietnam. Presently, rural underemployment accounts for 28 percent of the rural labor force (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 1997) while the development of non-agricultural activities is slow and, as mentioned in the earlier chapters, the difference in rural-urban levels of income is large. In addition, it is perceived that urban amenities, health care, educational and recreational facilities are better than those in rural areas. Most of the rapid growth in industry and services in Vietnam have been concentrated in urban areas, especially in metropolitan like Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hai Phong and Danang. Moreover, the new economic mechanism allows the free movement of labor. This context justifies the acceptance of the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam.

Considering the impacts of spontaneous rural to urban migration analyzed in Chapter IV, it is argued that for national development as a whole, spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas has contributed to bringing about a balance between the rural and the urban sectors in the allocation of labor. This will enhance the over-all labor productivity and lead to higher levels of national output. In

addition, as mentioned in Chapter IV, most of rural migrants in urban areas in Vietnam live in austerity to save money to send remittances home. In the short-term, remittances can shorten the gap between rural and urban levels of income, thereby promoting equity, an important development objective which was stated in the 8th National Congress Documents (Communist Party of Vietnam, 1996). More than that, rural-urban migration is likely to reduce fertility in Vietnam (also analyzed in Chapter IV), so this is a positive impact on national development as one of the goals of Vietnam is to reduce its population growth rate (Ibid.). All these points explain the government's present point of view on spontaneous rural to urban migration.

However, the increase of spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas in Vietnam has also negative impacts on national development. Rural-urban migration can also be viewed as a factor causing uneven development between rural areas and urban areas. On one hand, it deprives rural areas of human capital and leadership potential accompanying out-migration of the strongest and brightest youth. On the other hand, it diverts cheap rural productive labor to growth and service urban areas which have an initial advantage of capital investments. As a result, it is likely that urban areas maintain a clear-cut advantage over rural areas. Literature on rural to urban migration has pointed out that "instead of transmitting development impulses, these primate, metropolitan areas are "parasitic" exploiters of non-metropolitan resources" (Findley, 1977: 53).

Several studies have also pointed out that beyond a certain level when infrastructure facilities are fully utilized, concentration of capital and labor in large cities may also lead to a sharp decline in returns to scale, and lower the over-all rate of growth in the economy (Oberai and Singh, 1983). Moreover, as Hardoy (1973)<sup>15</sup> claims that excessive metropolitan development consumes surrounding agricultural land and labor, negatively affecting food production. Vietnam's arable land resources are limited, the national average population growth rate is rather high: 2.2 percent (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 1995), rural infrastructure and agricultural technology are poor, in the long run Vietnam may become food insufficient if Vietnam does not improve food crop production through the improvement of agricultural technology, better varieties of rice and fertilizer, etc., and rural human capital. The stress on greater food self-sufficiency stemmed from important political perceptions or imperatives, which had both domestic and international aspects (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1985). The more important the share of food in total consumer expenditure, the greater fear that food shortages would lead to social upheaval. In addition, the importance of food self-sufficiency is also based on the existence or threat of trade restrictions on developing countries' exports and the political perception that international markets were dominated by a few developed countries which would manipulate these markets in a way which undermined the food security of developing countries (Ibid.). Based on the importance of food self-subsistence, it is assured that national

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<sup>15</sup> Cited from (Findley, 1977:53)

development would be negatively affected by the transfer of rural innovative human capital to urban areas and the concentration of growth on urban areas.

In addition, the increase of social vices partly caused by spontaneous rural migrants in urban areas is an alarm for policy makers. This is also against the national development goal (Communist Party of Vietnam, 1996).

The foregoing analysis has indicated the over-all implications of migration for rural and urban development and the role it plays in national development. It is argued that the government should allow the flows of spontaneous rural to urban migration to continue, but it should issue policies influencing this migration. It is hoped that the recommendations made later in this chapter concerning these issues would be considered for appropriate policies.

### **5.2.2. Rural Development**

#### *5.2.2.a. Rural Development Strategies*

Rural development strategies are not just for agricultural development, instead they strive to improve rural welfare, level of living, and food self-sufficiency. Some of the major policy components of a rural development strategy could consist of land reform, supervised credit for small farmers, locally adapted agricultural inputs and extension, labor intensive agricultural innovations, complementary and coordinated provision of physical infrastructure, training and education for rural development,

improvement of rural health care and housing, development of nonagricultural job opportunities, and supportive national level policies (Findley, 1977). It is noted that each of these components in isolation may not have a substantial influence on rural to urban migration, but together they have a great potential for altering this migration.

From the goals and objectives for socio-economic development of the country in the 1996-2000 five-year Plan set forth by the 8th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam held in July 1996, and from the Program of Rural Development in Vietnam in the period 1996-2000 launched by Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, it is indicated that Vietnam tries to achieve the following objectives of rural development:

- Ensuring national food security, ensuring enough food for everybody in anywhere and at any time as well as increasing the volume of exports,
- Diversifying the rural economy, accompanied by rapid growth (as for agriculture 4.5 - 4.7 percent), creating more jobs, doubling rural income from its level in 1993, reducing by half of the 20 percent of household ranked to be very poor, shortening the gap in living standards between rural and urban people and restricting malnutrition,



- Developing rural infrastructure: transportation, irrigation, water supply, electricity, communication, social and production services (especially education and health services) and house building,
- Strengthening the political system, ensuring security and order, bringing into play the democracy and social justice and developing rural culture,
- Strengthening natural resources protection especially land, water and forest, and improving rural environment.

In addition, the Communist Party has given tasks and solutions and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has made a program and plans to realize these objectives (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 1996). These documents include all the major components of rural strategies suggested by the literature on rural development as mentioned above.

However, in the process of implementing these program and plans, there have been some problems. The recommendations made in this sub-section of the thesis will address these problems.

#### *5.2.2.b. Agricultural Tax Collection*

At present, The farmers and cooperative's only obligation to the State now is to pay agricultural tax and they no longer have to remit most of their produce to the State. Farmers pay agricultural tax in cash. According to an article written by Tran Minh Chau, farmers in the Red River Delta had a good rice harvest in summer 1997 but they were sad because the market price of rice was only 1,200 dong/kilogram while the price imposed by tax collection was 1,400 dong/kilogram. The author's field work in Dong Anh, suburb of Hanoi, has confirmed this situation.

It is suggested that agricultural tax rate should be determined on the basis of the market price in order not to eat into farmers' incomes which are already much lower than that of urban people.

#### *5.2.2.c. Increasing Access To Affordable Rural Credit*

Presently in Vietnam, farming households have been given long-term, stable use rights over all agricultural land. Farming households have become independent, self-managing and self-financing economic units responsible for the results of their own production and trading. Thus, Vietnamese farmers control their primary means of production, namely land and labor. However, 70 percent of farmers lack funds for investment in production. For the last few years, much progress has been

made concerning farmers' access to rural affordable credit. In 1991 the government set up a rural credit scheme. The government has expanded the number of farmer households receiving credit. Between 1991 and 1994, the Agricultural Bank of Vietnam provided low interest loans to 35 percent of all farm households in order to develop production and increase their income (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 1995b). In 1994 and 1995, the number of households receiving loans accounted for 40 percent and 50 percent respectively. On average each household was allowed to borrow 800,000 - 1000,000 dong. Loans have been used effectively; 94.2 percent of the loan has been put into production. (Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development, 1996). In 1995, the Poor People's Bank was established on Decision No. 525/TTg issued by the Prime Minister to help poor households to get access to credit funds. By the end of 1996, more than 2000,000 poor and hungry households have received loans from this Bank with a low interest rate: 1 percent/month. On the average, each poor or hungry household has been allowed to borrow 1,500,000 dong (Nguyen, H. H., 1997).

Despite the above-mentioned improvements, access to credit continues to be the most common constraint expressed by rural households. In general, the amount of loans given is not enough to meet many households' requirements for their production or services (Ibid.). It is necessary to have more active measures to encourage various forms of credit released by entrepreneurs and private banks in

rural areas working under regular registration and under financial and credit auditing by competent state agencies. In order to do this, it is important to create favorable conditions to invest effectively in rural areas and to expand and increase operation effectiveness and reliability of the banking and credit system. So, improvements in savings mobilization, borrowing procedures, and interest rate structures are necessary to enhance rural household access to credit and improve productivity.

#### *5.2.2.d. Market Information*

To improve market efficiency, market forecasts and information supplied to farmers from both domestic and international markets should be promoted. Information of this kind includes prices of goods, customers' demand and preferences at various market places, etc. The dissemination of these items of information can be made through radio, television broadcasts and other mass media such as newspapers, magazines, etc.

#### *5.2.2.e. Rural Education*

As mentioned in Chapter III, the drop-out rate of children in the rural area is increasing. Rural areas need to be modernized and modernization needs people's knowledge. So, if rural children's education is not paid enough attention, then this

will have a negative effect on rural development in particular and national development in general in the future.

Access to school, especially for the poor, is limited by many fees and contributions parents must pay although there is no formal tuition fee for primary school. The impact of economic circumstances on school enrollment is revealed in lower enrollment rates of the poorest children: only 70 percent of the poorest children are enrolled in primary school compared with 91 percent for the richest quintile (Vietnam General Statistical Office and Asian Development Bank, 1996)<sup>16</sup>.

Many agricultural families do not have enough money for their children to go to secondary school and university. According to estimates, 800,000 dong are spent for each student's high school education per school year and 1,500,000 dong for each student on his/her university education (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 1996). While the average rural income per capita is only 77,300 dong/month in 1992-1993 (State Planning Committee and General Statistical Office, 1994) and about 100,000 dong/ month in 1996 (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 1997). As a result, the rate of high school and university students is much lower in rural than in urban areas (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 1996).

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<sup>16</sup> Cited from (World Bank, 1996).

It is suggested here that there should be a sufficient fund to help the poorest to send their children to school, at least primary school, so that the government can issue a policy to make it legal for every child to finish primary school. But where does this fund come from? The government's funding capacity is limited. However, Vietnam has the advantage of a strong cultural tradition of solidarity and mutual assistance, as a Vietnamese proverb goes: "Let the leaf that is whole cover the leaf that is torn"<sup>17</sup>. In addition, the rich are much better off than the poor in Vietnam. Several studies have indicated that the population's contribution was at least equal to, if not double, that of the government's, for example, the local government authorities have contributed 90 billion dong to the National Fund for Employment Promotion while the people contributed 117 billion dong (Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 1995b). On this basis, it makes sense to mobilize funds from people to supplement limited government funding capacity to ensure a minimum level of health and education services throughout all parts of the country.

#### *5.2.2.f. Information About Rural Migrants In Urban Areas*

Lee's theory of migration has pointed out that people possess better knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of the origin area than they do of the destination area, therefore, there is always an element of ignorance or mystery about the area of destination, and there must be some uncertainty in the migration process. Reality

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<sup>17</sup> This proverb means that the person who is able to help should help the person who needs help.

in Vietnam has proved this assumption to be right. Some young rural people lived under illusion that life in the big city is easy and good. They migrated to the city without enough consideration. Only after they had arrived in the city did they realize that reality was not as they expected. Many rural migrants could not find jobs in urban areas. They had to either return home after spending a lot of money in the migration process or stay in the urban area and do some illegal job as mentioned in Chapter IV.

To cope with this problem, mass media should inform people with the real situation of rural migrants in the urban area. This is feasible because 60.4 percent of the communes in Vietnam's rural areas have electricity, especially in the Red River Delta, where the highest rate of rural to urban migration takes place, 98.2 percent of communes have electricity. Television and radio networks cover all rural areas. About 40 percent of the total communes in rural areas have a radio broadcasting station (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 1996). 37.3 percent of rural households have a radio or television (Vietnam's General Statistical Office, 1995). In addition, the number of newspapers and magazines delivered to rural areas have been increased very fast (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 1996).

### **5.2.3. Other Recommendations**

#### *5.2.3.a. Prohibition Of Child Domestic Servants*

Vietnam's Law on the Protection, Care and Education of Children defines children as all citizens under 16 years of age (article 1)<sup>18</sup>. The Labor Code of Vietnam states that people under 16 shall not be recruited for employment except for certain types of work to be designated by Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, and that they can be employed only if it can be shown that their physical, intellectual and spiritual development will not be impaired by the work. Employers must take special care to ensure that the health, studies and living conditions of their child employees are adequately supported by their employment (Center for the Protection and Care of Children, 1992). Despite the law, in reality some rural children, even at ages 10 - 13, work as domestic servants in urban areas. As they do not have enough basic education and thorough perception, they depend too much on their master. In the future when these children are grown up, they will have difficulty in finding better jobs in the urban area because they could not develop their education and outlook due to working as a domestic servant. They will not be able to work in rural areas either, because these areas will become technically more advanced than when they left home.

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted from (Committee for the Protection and Care of Children, 1992)



It is suggested here that child domestic serving should be prohibited. Although it is not easy to enforce this because of the free movement of labor, close supervision done by the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Center for the Protection and Care of Children and mass organizations in this field will therefore be necessary. It is also important to bear in mind that a long-term solution would be one that deals with the source of the problem - namely, high rates of poverty in rural areas and the high cost of education.

*5.2.3.b. Keeping The Residence Registration System And Paying More Attention To Migrants*

Although it is regulated that in-migrants have to register for their residence at the sub-department of police in each district, from a survey conducted in 1993, the percentage of in-migrants who did not register for their residence was very high, especially in Hanoi and Hai Phong: 72.8 percent (Department of Police, 1993). This situation has caused some security issues in society because of the movement of fugitives and it is difficult for the police to detect them. In addition, these migrants are not under supervision of the authority in both the place of origin and place of destination. As a result, they may feel “freer” to be involved in criminal activities such as drug-addiction, gambling, stealing and prostitution.

To alleviate some of these problems, what is needed are institutional changes such as the development of local bodies that offer support services to new migrants, in areas of health, housing, entrepreneurship, the law, etc. This may require continuing the registration system (although in a reformed way) for enumeration purposes.

#### *5.2.3.c. Promoting Moral Values*

Vietnam has a tradition of strong family ties and “community spirit” which is reflected in sympathy and mutual assistance between members. However, not all the members of society keep this tradition. As far as spontaneous rural to urban migration is concerned, there exists some moral problems. Some migrants when they can earn more money than they need for their subsistence do not send remittances home to their spouse and/ or children or their old parents. Instead, they may indulge themselves in drugs addiction, gambling and prostitution. Another problem is that some urban people do not sympathize with rural migrants, instead of trying to help rural migrants or show their sympathy, they may discriminate against them to make their life harder in the urban area. In addition, among rural migrants themselves, some migrants bully others to force them to obey these migrants and even worse, they may exploit others.

These moral problems are not easily solved. Moral values should be promoted through education at school and in family. Mass media, stories and films should also play an important part in this promotion because they can direct people without letting people know that they are directed.

In summary, this chapter has mentioned the government's point of view on a new phenomenon in Vietnam: the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration. The government has attempted to manage rather than block this free flow of labor which has been considered as an effective way to reduce rural underemployment and poverty. This chapter has recommended that the role of spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam should be reconsidered because it has negative consequences as well. The chapter also has attempted to provide other recommendations concerning residence registration, attention paid to migrants, promotion of moral values and rural development strategies. It is worth mentioning here that these recommendations are additional solutions to those made in previous studies on rural to urban migration in Vietnam.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **CONCLUSION**

This thesis has been written in the recognition that spontaneous rural to urban migration has increased significantly since Vietnam decided to switch from a centrally-planned economy to a market oriented one in December 1986 and that there have not been many studies on this phenomenon. Further, the studies, mentioned in Chapter II, on Spontaneous Rural to Urban Migration in Vietnam have focused primarily on the link between this migration and urban development. This thesis is written to the purpose of providing an understanding of this phenomenon with a stronger focus on rural development - the place of origin of the migration process - rather than urban development, and giving some recommendations based on this understanding.

Through the previous chapters and this conclusion this thesis is designed as an intellectual support of government policies with respect to the process of spontaneous migration. In this connection, the following points should be made:

- The thesis has focused on the topic of spontaneous rural to urban migration and its link to rural development in Vietnam because it is a new phenomenon requiring more study.

- The theoretical framework of this thesis is based in part on a combination of theories, models and multidisciplinary research reviewed in Chapter II, findings of rural development research, and findings of previous studies on spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam. This thesis has taken the migration stream approach to explain the volume and pattern of movement from rural to urban areas in Vietnam. Since the thesis does not take the migration differentials approach, it does not focus on the selectivity of certain persons or the tendency of certain groups to be more mobile than others on the basis of age, sex, marital status, education and occupation.
- As pointed out in these theories and models of migration, there are different causes of rural to urban migration. Although an overview of urban development in Vietnam in the same period of time has not been provided, government policies on rural-urban migration and in other areas of social and economic development, and a comparison of levels of income and poverty between rural and urban areas have been mentioned. In Vietnam, the government has played an important role in the redistribution of population in Vietnam. In addition, the literature on internal migration has mentioned that economic motives are predominant among factors affecting internal migration. Therefore, Chapter III, an overview of rural development in Vietnam in the period from 1976 up to the present, has provided readers with an understanding of some causes of the increase of spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas in Vietnam.

- The increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam has different consequences for individual migrants and their households, as well as for rural and urban development. In effect, it has both positive and negative consequences. Examples of positive consequences are a contribution to bringing about a balance between the rural and the urban sectors in the allocation of labor and narrowing the gap between rural and urban levels of income in the short-term. Examples of negative consequences are deprivation of rural human capital, an increase of the unemployed and underemployed in urban areas and a degradation of urban environment and beauty. Chapter IV analyzes these consequences.
- For the sustainable development of the whole country, it is important that the positive and negative impacts of spontaneous rural to urban migration should be weighed against each other. Chapter V has pointed out the government's stand on the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam. On the basis of views on rural to urban migration stated in the literature and on the concrete conditions of Vietnam, this chapter makes some recommendations related to the existing problems. Among these recommendations are the need to reconsider the role of spontaneous rural to urban migration in the national development process, to increase access to rural credit, and to provide information about rural migrants in urban areas.

It is worth repeating that spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas relates to both rural and urban development, but due to time constraints and the limited scope of a Master thesis, this study has focused more on development of rural areas - the “input” side of this migration process.

It should be noted that this thesis does not repeat solutions to problems caused by the increase of spontaneous rural to urban migration in Vietnam which have been suggested in previous studies on this migration. With reference to Vietnam’s rural development strategies, the thesis also does not mention recommendations in the Program of Rural Development in Vietnam in the Period 1996 - 2000 and to the Year 2010 put forward by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (1996) and in previous studies on rural development in Vietnam.

Thus, the recommendations given in this thesis may be considered in addition to previous recommendations for the solution to existing problems concerning spontaneous rural to urban migration and rural development in Vietnam.

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## **APPENDIX I**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE FOR A FIELD RESEARCH IN VIETNAM**

(12 May to 23 August, 1997)

#### **1. QUESTIONS**

##### **A. Questions To Migrants In Hanoi [In Vietnamese]**

1. Anh/chi tu dau den Hanoi?
2. Anh/chi bao nhieu tuoi? Anh/chi da co gia dinh chua?
3. Anh/chi den Hanoi mot minh hay di cung ai?
4. Anh/chi o Hanoi bao lau roi?
5. Anh/chi co the cho biet tai sao anh/chi lai ra Hanoi khong?
6. Anh/chi lam viec gi o que?
7. Trinh do van hoa cua anh/chi la gi? Anh/chi co ky nang gi khong?
8. O que anh/chikiem duoc bao nhieu tien mot nam?
9. Anh/chi lam gi o Hanoi?
10. Moi thang anh/chi kiem duoc bao nhieu tien:
  - it hon 200.000 dong?
  - trong khoang 200.000 den 500.000 dong?
  - hay la tren 500.000 dong?
11. Cho o cua anh/chi o Hanoi nhu the nao?
12. O Hanoi, moi thang anh/chi phai tra bao nhieu tien nha:

- ít hơn 150.000 đồng?
- trong khoảng 150.000 đến 250.000 đồng?
- hay là trên 500.000 đồng?

13. Mỗi tháng anh/chị tiết kiệm được bao nhiêu tiền?

14. Bao lâu thì anh/chị về thăm nhà một lần?

15. Anh/chị đã bao giờ gửi tiền về nhà chưa? Gửi được bao nhiêu? Bao lâu thì anh/chị gửi tiền về nhà một lần?

16. Gia đình anh/chị làm gì với số tiền anh/chị gửi về?

17. Sự vắng mặt của anh/chị có ảnh hưởng gì đến thiếu người lao động và thu nhập trong gia đình ở quê không?

18. Ở làng anh/chị thì có nhiều người ra thành thị kiếm sống không?

19. Anh/chị gặp thuận lợi và khó khăn gì trong việc sống và làm việc ở Hà Nội?

20. Anh/chị có định ở luôn lại Hà Nội hay sẽ về quê?

21. Gia đình, họ hàng hay bạn bè của anh/chị có định theo anh/chị ra Hà Nội không?

### **Translation**

1. Where are you from?

2. How old are you? Are you married?

3. Did you come to Hanoi alone or with someone else? and who did you go with?

4. How long have you been in Hanoi?

5. Do you mind to tell me why you decided to leave your home for Hanoi?

6. What did you work in the rural area?
7. What is your educational background? Do you have any skill?
8. What was your yearly income in the rural area?
9. What job are you doing in Hanoi?
10. Is your monthly income:
  - less than 200,000 dong?
  - between 200,000 and 500,000 dong?
  - or more than 500,000 dong?
11. What kind of accommodation do you have in Hanoi?
12. How much do you spend on your accommodation in Hanoi:
  - less than 150,000 dong/month?
  - between 150,000 and 250,000 dong/month?
  - or more than 250,000 dong/month?
13. How much money can you save a month?
14. How often do you visit home?
15. Have you sent back any money to your family? How much? How often do you send money home?
16. What does your family do with your remittances?
17. Has your absence affected your household's labor force situation and household income? If yes, how does your household make up the difference?
18. Is migrating out to urban areas very popular in your village?
19. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working and living in Hanoi?

20. Do you intend to stay in Hanoi, go to another area, or go back home?
21. Will your family/relatives/friends join you to migrate to Hanoi?

**B. Questions To People In Rural Areas [In Vietnamese]**

1. Anh/chi lam san xuat nong nghiep hay phi nong nghiep? Anh/chi lam gi?
2. Mot nam gia dinh anh/chi lam duoc may vu?
3. O que anh/chi, moi khau nong nghiep duoc phan bao nhieu dat nong nghiep?
4. Thu nhap binh quan moi nam cua mot nhan khau nong nghiep trong gia dinh anh/chi tren phan dat duoc giao la bao nhieu?
5. Thu nhap binh quan cua mot nhan khau phi san xuat nong nghiep trong gia dinh anh/chi trong moi thang la bao nhieu?
6. Gia dinh anh/chi can bao nhieu thoi gian de lam nong nghiep tren phan dat duoc giao trong moi vu, trong moi nam?
7. Thoi gian nong nhan thi gia dinh anh/chi lam gi?
8. Nhung thuan loi va kho khan gia dinh anh/chi gap trong san xuat nong nghiep va trong doi song o nong thon?
9. Gia dinh anh/chi co can vay von de san xuat hoac kinh doanh khong?
10. Neu can vay thi duoc vay bao nhieu? So tien duoc vay co dap ung duoc nhu cau san xuat hoac kinh doanh cua gia dinh anh/chi khong?
11. Thu tuc vay von co de dang khong? Neu khong de dang thi tai sao?
12. Theo anh/chi, chinh sach va viec thuc hien chinh sach ve phan dat nong nghiep va thue nong nghiep hay san xuat o nong thon nhu vay da thich hop chua?

13. Gia đình anh/chị có ai ra thành thị kiếm sống không?
14. Việc có người ra thành thị làm việc có ảnh hưởng gì đến việc thiếu người lao động và thu nhập trong đình không? Nếu có, thì gia đình anh chị bù đắp sự thiếu hụt đó bằng cách nào?
15. Người ra thành thị kiếm sống có liên hệ với gia đình anh/chị nhưng thuận lợi và khó khăn mà họ gặp ở thành thị không?
16. Người ra thành thị kiếm sống có gửi tiền về cho gia đình không? Bao lâu thì gửi một lần?
17. Số tiền đó có đáp ứng được sự mong đợi của gia đình không?
18. Gia đình anh chị dùng số tiền đó vào việc gì?
19. Anh/chị có ý định ra thành thị kiếm sống không? Vì sao?

### **Translation**

1. Are you engaged in agricultural or non-agricultural production? What do you do?
2. How many crops do you have a year?
3. In your area, how much of agricultural land has been allocated to each person?
4. What is the average yearly income per agricultural worker in your family earns?
5. What is the average monthly income per non-agricultural worker in your family earns?
6. How much time agricultural activities take your family a year?
7. What does your family do in the slack agricultural season?

8. What are the advantages and disadvantages your family have in agricultural production and in rural life?
9. Does your family need to borrow money from the bank to expand production or business?
10. How much money are you allowed to borrow from the bank? Is that amount enough for your production or business?
11. Is the procedure to get a bank loan easy? If not, why?
12. According to you, are the present policies on land allocation, agricultural tax and rural production tax and the implementation of these policies relevant? Any suggestions for improvement?
13. Is there anyone in your family who has migrated to urban areas? Who, how old and where is she/he?
14. Has the absence of the out-migrant in your household affected your household's labor force situation and household income? If yes, how does your household make up the difference?
15. Does the out-migrant in your family tell other family members, relatives and friends in your area the advantages and disadvantages that person has in working and living in the urban area?
16. Has the out-migrant sent any remittance home? How often does your family receive remittances?
17. Does the remittance meet your family's expectation?
18. What does your family do with the remittance?

19. Do you intend to migrate to urban areas? Why/why not?

## **2. INTERVIEWING PLACE**

Interviews with rural migrants to Hanoi were made from 12 May to 23 August 1997 in Hanoi, Vietnam. Interviews with rural people were made in:

- Thi Tran village, Tien Hai commune, Thai Binh province.

Thai Binh is in the Red River Delta where the rate of spontaneous rural to urban migration is the highest in Vietnam.

- Vinh Tuong village, Vinh Lac commune, Vinh Phu province.

Vinh Phu is a province in the Northern Midlands.

- Can Khe village, Nguyen Khe commune, Dong Anh.

Dong Anh is in the suburb of Hanoi, around 35 kilometers from the center of Hanoi.

## **3. INTERVIEWEES**

Thirty two migrants to Hanoi were interviewed through the first above-mentioned set of questions. This number consists of both female and male migrants, including 2 child migrants who worked as domestic servants in Hanoi. Twenty six rural people in Thai Binh, Vinh Phu and Dong Anh were interviewed through the second set of questions mentioned above.

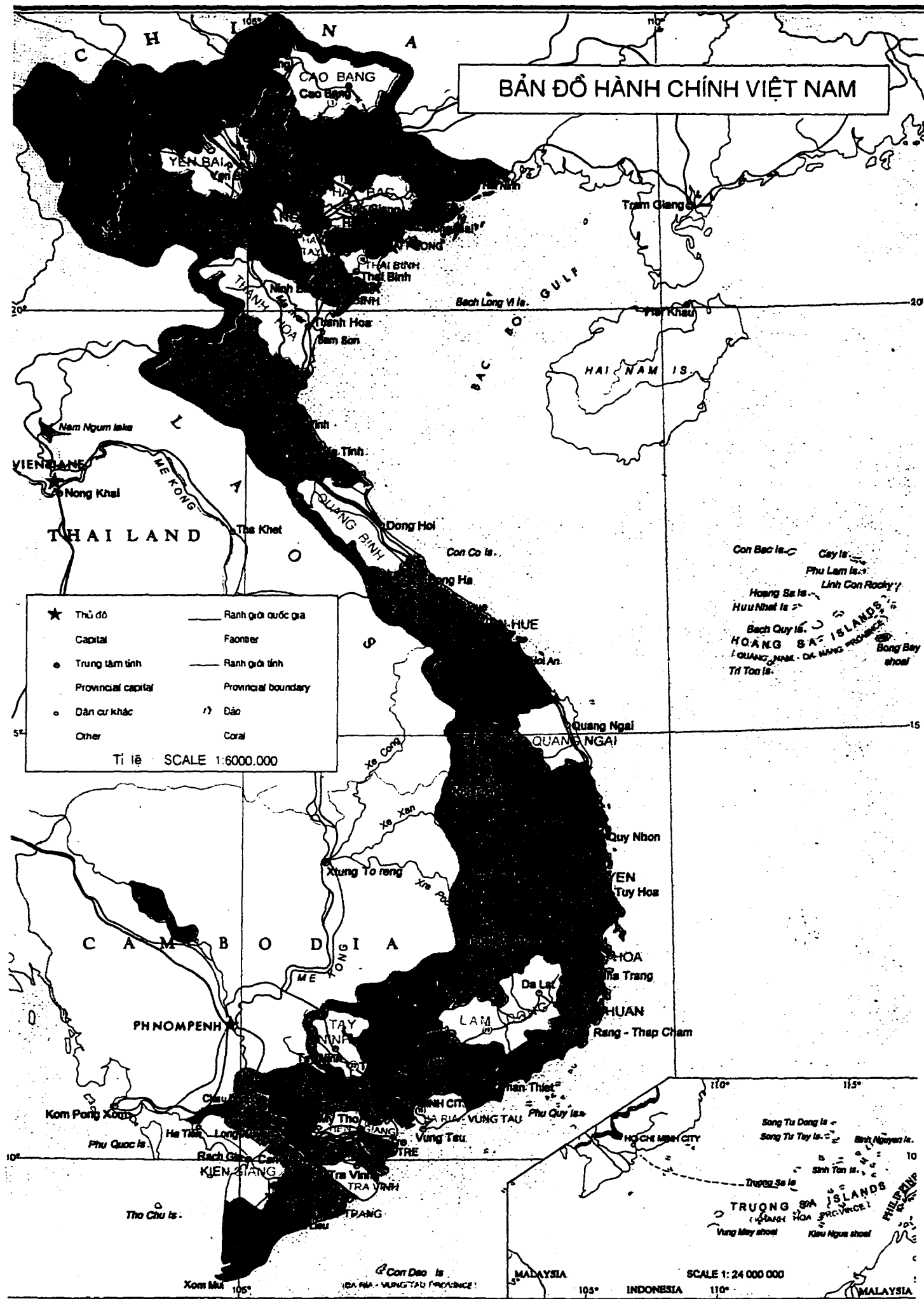


## **APPENDIX II**

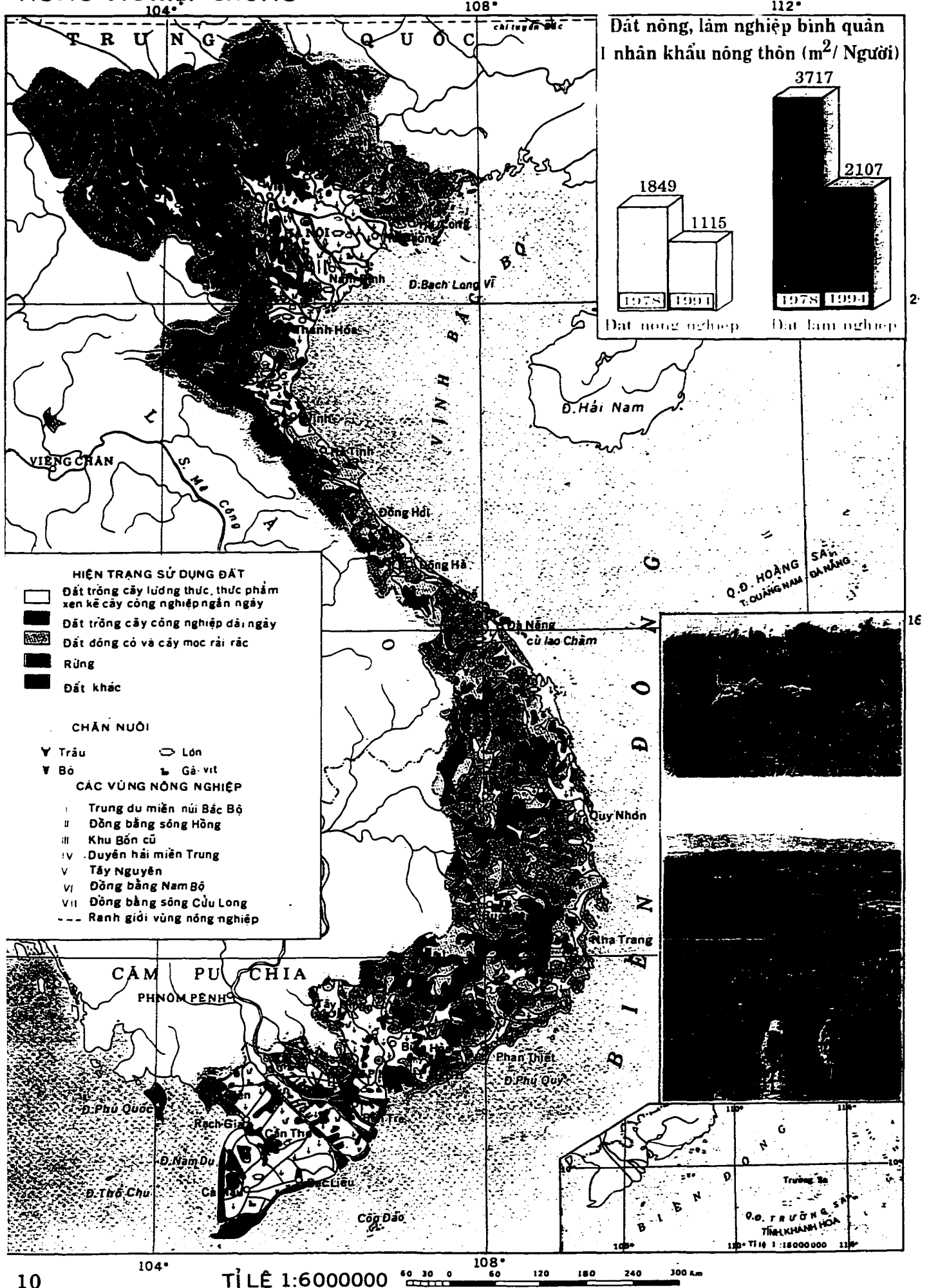
### **MAPS**

**MAP 1: MAP OF PROVINCES OF VIETNAM**

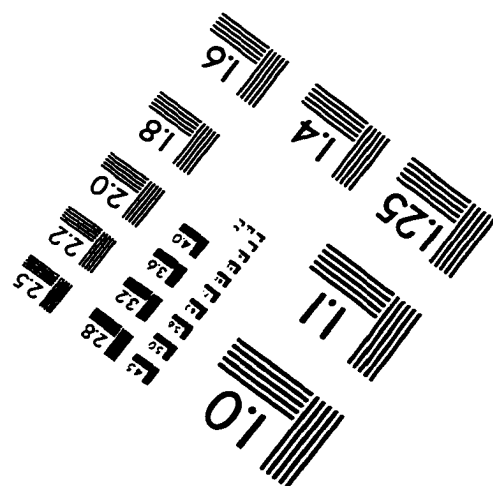
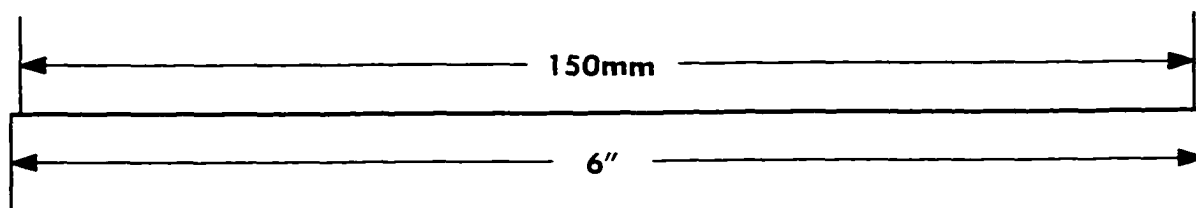
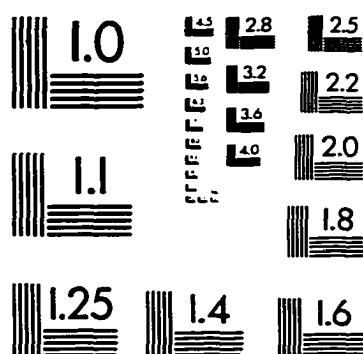
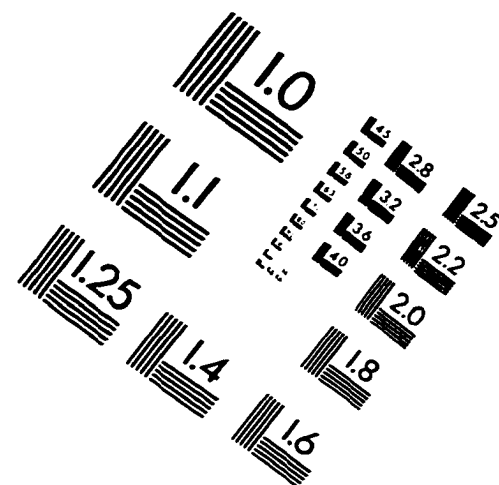
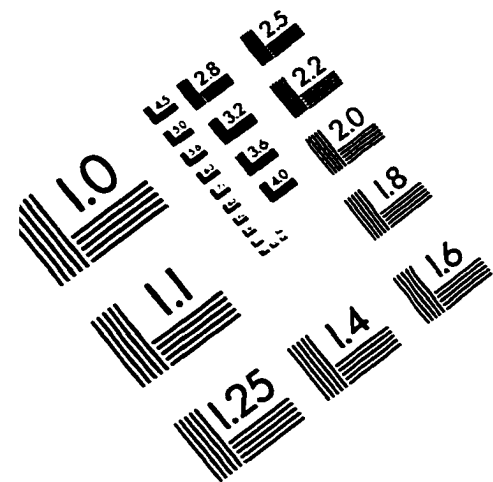
**MAP 2: MAP OF VIETNAM'S AGRICULTURE**



# NÔNG NGHIỆP CHUNG



# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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