


IMPACTS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE IN THE BORDER REGION OF NORTHERN VIETNAM

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received 21 April 2023</p> <p>Accepted 18 July 2023</p>	<p>Purpose: In this study, we examine the effects of the economic development policies of the Vietnamese government on the living conditions of ethnic minority people in the border region of Northern Vietnam.</p>
<p>Keywords:</p> <p>Ethnic Minority People; Economic Development; Border Region; Northern Vietnam.</p> <div data-bbox="172 987 480 1234" style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<p>Theoretical framework: We examine the impact of economic changes, societal changes, and environmental improvements on the living conditions of ethnic minority people in the border region of Northern Vietnam.</p> <p>Design/Methodology/Approach: The collected data was subsequently cleaned and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with the aid of SPSS 20 software.</p> <p>Findings: The results show that the current Vietnamese government's policies on developing agriculture, industry, trade, and service for ethnic minority people have a diverse impact on their living conditions. In general, agriculture, trade, and service are major fields that benefit the living conditions of ethnic minorities. In contrast, the industry seems to have no effects on improving the standard of living of ethnic minority people in Northern Vietnam.</p> <p>Research, practical & social implications: The results of this study provide suggestion to Vietnamese government on promoting living conditions of ethnic minority people in the border region of Northern Vietnam.</p> <p>Originality/Value: This is the first paper evaluates the impact of the economic development policies of the Vietnamese government on the living conditions of ethnic minority people in the border region of Northern Vietnam.</p> <p>Doi: https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i7.1858</p>

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IMPACTOS DO DESENVOLVIMENTO ECONÔMICO NAS CONDIÇÕES DE VIDA DAS PESSOAS PERTENCENTES A MINORIAS ÉTNICAS NA REGIÃO FRONTEIRIÇA DO NORTE DO VIETNÃ

RESUMO

Objetivo: Neste estudo, examinamos os efeitos das políticas de desenvolvimento econômico do governo vietnamita nas condições de vida das pessoas pertencentes a minorias étnicas na região fronteiriça do Vietnã do Norte.

Quadro teórico: Examinamos o impacto das mudanças econômicas, mudanças sociais e melhorias ambientais nas condições de vida das pessoas de minorias étnicas na região fronteiriça do Vietnã do Norte.

Projeto/Metodologia/Abordagem: Os dados coletados foram subsequentemente limpos e analisados usando a Modelagem de Equação Estrutural Parcial de Mínimos Quadrados (PLS-SEM) com o auxílio do software SPSS 20.

Constatações: Os resultados mostram que as políticas atuais do governo vietnamita de desenvolvimento da agricultura, da indústria, do comércio e dos serviços para pessoas pertencentes a minorias étnicas têm um impacto diversificado em suas condições de vida. Em geral, agricultura, comércio e serviços são áreas importantes que beneficiam as condições de vida das minorias étnicas. Em contrapartida, a indústria parece não ter efeitos na melhoria do nível de vida das pessoas pertencentes a minorias étnicas no Norte do Vietname.

Pesquisa, implicações práticas e sociais: Os resultados deste estudo fornecem sugestões ao governo vietnamita sobre a promoção das condições de vida das pessoas pertencentes a minorias étnicas na região fronteiriça do Vietnã do Norte.

Originalidade/Valor: Este é o primeiro artigo que avalia o impacto das políticas de desenvolvimento econômico do governo vietnamita nas condições de vida das pessoas pertencentes a minorias étnicas na região fronteiriça do norte do Vietnã.

Palavras-chave: Minorias Étnicas, Desenvolvimento Econômico, Região da Fronteira, Norte do Vietnã.

EFFECTOS DEL DESARROLLO ECONÓMICO EN LAS CONDICIONES DE VIDA DE LAS MINORÍAS ÉTNICAS DE LA REGIÓN FRONTERIZA DE VIETNAM SEPTENTRIONAL

RESUMEN

Finalidad: En este estudio, examinamos los efectos de las políticas de desarrollo económico del gobierno vietnamita en las condiciones de vida de las personas de minorías étnicas en la región fronteriza del norte de Vietnam.

Marco teórico: Examinamos el impacto de los cambios económicos, sociales y ambientales en las condiciones de vida de las personas de minorías étnicas en la región fronteriza de Vietnam del Norte.

Diseño/Metodología/Enfoque: Los datos recolectados fueron posteriormente limpiados y analizados utilizando el programa SPSS 20.

Hallazgos: Los resultados muestran que las políticas actuales del gobierno vietnamita sobre el desarrollo de la agricultura, la industria, el comercio y los servicios para las personas de minorías étnicas tienen un impacto diverso en sus condiciones de vida. En general, la agricultura, el comercio y los servicios son esferas importantes que benefician las condiciones de vida de las minorías étnicas. Por el contrario, la industria parece no tener efectos en la mejora del nivel de vida de las personas de minorías étnicas en Vietnam del Norte.

Investigación, implicaciones prácticas y sociales: Los resultados de este estudio ofrecen sugerencias al gobierno vietnamita sobre la promoción de las condiciones de vida de las personas de minorías étnicas en la región fronteriza del norte de Vietnam.

Originalidad/Valor: Este es el primer trabajo que evalúa el impacto de las políticas de desarrollo económico del gobierno vietnamita en las condiciones de vida de las minorías étnicas en la región fronteriza del norte de Vietnam.

Palabras clave: Minorías Étnicas, Desarrollo Económico, Región Fronteriza, Vietnam del Norte.

INTRODUCTION

While Vietnam has witnessed rapid growth and poverty decline since the Doi Moi reforms initiated in 1986, the existing literature shows that these gains have not been shared equally across ethnic groups. Members of ethnic minority groups make up 15 percent of the

country's population but account for 70 percent of the extremely poor (measured using a national extreme poverty line). During Vietnam's two decades of rapid growth, members of ethnic minority groups in the country have experienced overall improvements in their standards of living, but their gains have lagged behind those of the Kinh majority.

Using household income as an indicator for welfare, research has found not only that the ethnic minorities were systematically worse off than the Kinh but also that this gap widened during the 1990s (Baulch et al. 2007, 2012; Van de Walle and Gunewardena 2001) and the likelihood of them escaping poverty was relatively much smaller (Glewwe et al. 2002). A variety of explanations have been put forward for the poor performance of the minority households in Vietnam. The ethnic minorities are less endowed (in key aspects such as land holdings, education, access to credit, etc.) and also face lower returns to endowments. While the remote location of the minority households can partially explain the gap in endowments, research has consistently found that it is not the sole reason for the gap.

Recognizing the importance of enhancing economic development for ethnic minorities to achieve the goal of "leave no one behind", the Vietnamese government has implemented many supportive policies focusing on the ethnic minority people. Based on Nguyen (2020), Vietnamese basic views, guidelines, and policies on ethnicity and ethnic affairs are institutionalized in a great number of codes, laws, ordinances, decrees, resolutions, decisions, directives, circulars, and others promulgated by competent authorities. In the period 2010-2015, apart from legal documents, the Government issued approx. 154 policies on ethnic issues, presented in 177 documents, 37 Government Decrees and Resolutions, and 140 Decisions of the Prime Minister. The system of policies and laws on ethnic issues, especially the ones regarding poverty reduction and societal security is comprehensive in every aspect and covers all ethnic minorities and mountainous areas. Many documents contain specific provisions on schemes and policies that are regularly amended and supplemented to suit the country's socio-economic development as well as the implementation of ethnic policies for specific regions or subjects. Numerous policies on ethnic minorities have been deeply embedded with renovative ideas and thinking such as attaching importance to openness and transparency, strengthening the coordination among ministries, sectors, and localities, and emphasizing the people's role in policy realization.

In this study, we evaluate the impact of the economic development policies of the Vietnamese government on the living conditions of ethnic minority people in the border region of Northern Vietnam. We conduct interviews with ethnic minorities people to access their

evaluation on the improvements of their lives, focusing on the three main aspects including economy, society, and environment.

The rest of the paper is as follows. Section 2 illustrates the study area. Section 3 describes the literature review and hypotheses development. Section 4 introduces the conceptual framework and methodology. Section 5 provides results and discussion. Section 6 gives some suggestions and concluding remarks.

Study Area

On the north side, Vietnam has a long border with China, which is about 1350 km. The border region of Northern Vietnam includes 7 provinces: Dien Bien, Lai Chau, Lao Cai, Ha

Giang, Cao Bang, Lang Son, and Quang Ninh. Most ethnic minorities of Vietnam are living in the mountainous areas near the border region of Northern Vietnam. They live in remote and rural areas, with their geographic location acting as a further barrier to accessing quality education and health services.

In this study, we interview ethnic minority people in the border region of these 7 provinces about the impact of the Vietnamese government's economic development policies on their living conditions. We focus on three main aspects of improvement of lives including economic changes, societal changes, and environmental changes from three economic fields: agriculture, industry, and trade and services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Economic Changes and Living Conditions

Economic growth is the most powerful instrument for reducing poverty and improving the quality of life in developing countries. But under different conditions, similar rates of growth can have very different effects on poverty, the employment prospects of the poor, and broader indicators of human development. The extent to which growth reduces poverty depends on the degree to which the poor participate in the growth process and share in its proceeds. Thus, both the pace and pattern of growth matter for reducing poverty (Dfid, 2008).

Research that compares the experiences of a wide range of developing countries finds consistently strong evidence that rapid and sustained growth is the single most important way to reduce poverty. A typical estimate from these cross-country studies is that a 10 percent increase in a country's average income will reduce the poverty rate by between 20 and 30 percent (Adams, 2003). The positive link between growth and poverty reduction is clear. The

impact of the distribution of income on this relationship – in particular, whether higher inequality lessens the reduction in poverty generated by growth – is less clear. Initial levels of income inequality are important in determining how powerful an effect growth has in reducing poverty. For example, it has been estimated that a one percent increase in income levels could result in a 4.3 percent decline in poverty in countries with very low inequality or as little as a 0.6 percent decline in poverty in highly unequal countries (Ravallion, 2007).

Besides, economic growth generates job opportunities and hence stronger demand for labor, the main and often the sole asset of the poor. In turn, increasing employment has been crucial in delivering higher living conditions (Global Economic Prospects, 2007). From the above literature, we develop the following hypotheses on the impact of economic changes on the living conditions of ethnic minorities in the border region of Northern Vietnam.

H1: The economic changes from agricultural development increase the living conditions of ethnic minorities in the border region of Northern Vietnam.

H2: The economic changes from industrial development increase the living conditions of ethnic minorities in the border region of Northern Vietnam.

H3: The economic changes from trade and service development increase the living conditions of ethnic minorities in the border region of Northern Vietnam.

Societal Changes and Living Conditions

The societal change could be in any form such as a transformation of cultures, demographics, living securities, etc. Most societal scientists, policymakers, and citizens believe that societal development through societal-welfare programs helps to reduce the incidence of poverty and thus increase the living conditions (Kenworthy, 1999). Based on previous studies, there are several advantages of societal developments on living conditions including increasing gender equality, improving human rights, creating more chances for business, making life better for future generations, etc. Therefore, we develop the following hypotheses on the impact of societal changes on the living conditions of ethnic minorities in the border region of Northern Vietnam.

H4: The societal changes from agricultural development increase the living conditions of ethnic minorities in the border region of Northern Vietnam.

H5: The societal changes from industrial development increase the living conditions of ethnic minorities in the border region of Northern Vietnam.

H6: The societal changes from trade and service development increase the living conditions of ethnic minorities in the border region of Northern Vietnam.

Environmental Improvement and Living Conditions

How fast-changing environments impact human living conditions is an issue of broad interest. Previous studies have suggested that the patterns and major influencing factors of human-environment interaction have varied across the stages of human evolution and spatial scales (Dong et al., 2017, 2020; Revelles et al., 2018). Environmental conditions not only affect human health and well-being directly, but also indirectly, as they may have adverse effects on ecosystems, biodiversity, or even more extreme consequences such as natural disasters or industrial accidents. Therefore, we develop the following hypotheses on the impact of environmental changes on the living conditions of ethnic minorities in the border region of Northern Vietnam.

H7: The environmental changes from agricultural development increase the living conditions. of ethnic minorities in the border region of Northern Vietnam.

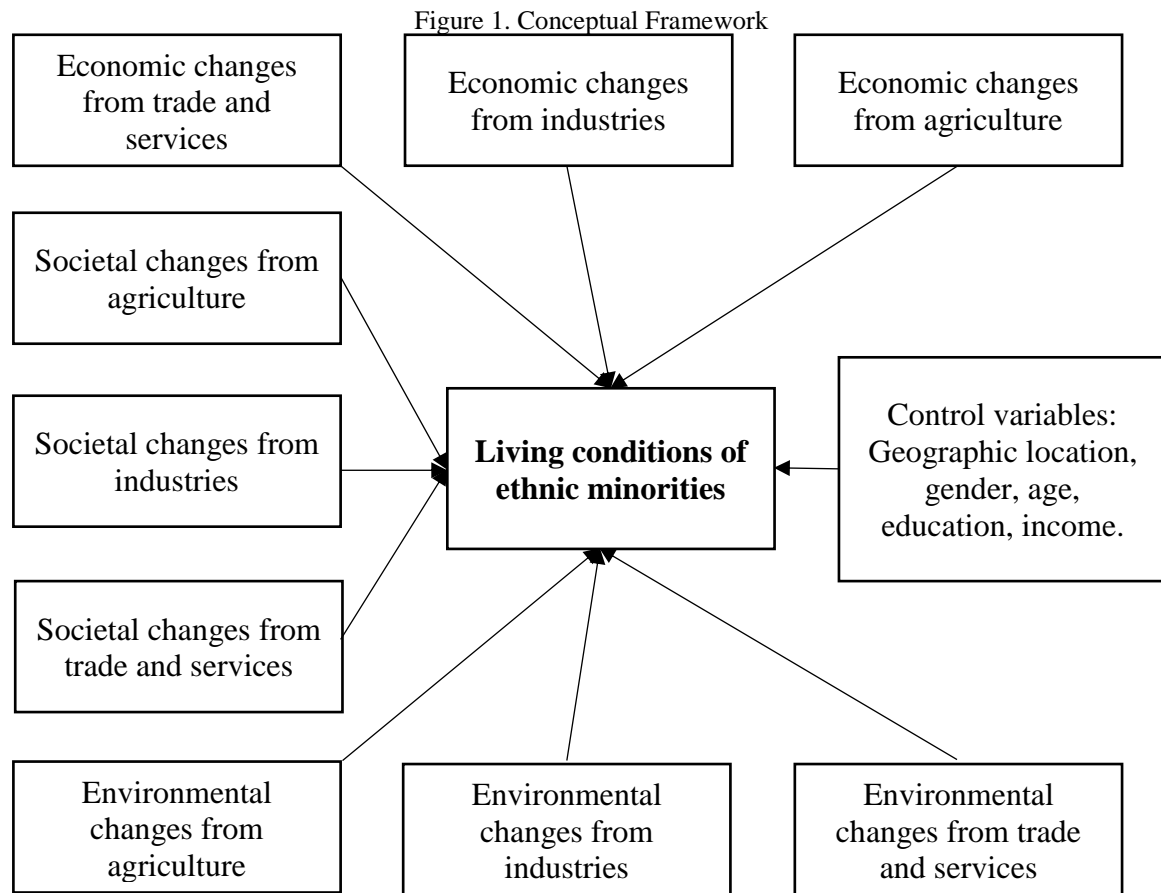
H8: The environmental changes from industrial development increase the living conditions. of ethnic minorities in the border region of Northern Vietnam.

H9: The environmental changes from trade and service development increase the living conditions of ethnic minorities in the border region of Northern Vietnam.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework

From the above theoretical foundations, we illustrate the conceptual framework of our study in Figure 1.



Source: The Author, 2023

Sampling and Analysis

The research sample was drawn from ethnic minorities in the border region of Northern Vietnam. Interviewees are randomly selected from the population for questionnaire administration. Face-to-face, drop-off, and phone-calling methods were employed to distribute the questionnaire. Among 725 send-out questionnaires, we receive 544 completed returns. The collected data was subsequently cleaned and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with the aid of SPSS 20 software.

Measures

All the questionnaire items in this study were chosen from extant measures of the constructs which had proven reliabilities and validities (as reported in Section 5.3). The detailed constructs and items on our questionnaire are illustrated in the Appendix.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Profile

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the study participants. A majority of the respondents were low educated (59.01% are Secondary education or lower education) while a very low proportion of respondents have post-secondary education and higher degrees. For this reason, it is unsurprised when the monthly income of most of the respondents is very low (68.57% earn VND less than 5 million approx. USD 220 per month). In terms of gender and age, the sample equally covers all categories.

Table 1. Demographic profile

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
<i>Male</i>	291	53.49
<i>Female</i>	253	46.51
Age		
<i>Less than 30</i>	100	18.38
<i>30 – 39</i>	121	22.24
<i>40 - 49</i>	143	26.29
<i>Above or equal 50</i>	180	33.09
Education		
<i>Secondary education or lower</i>	321	59.01
<i>Post-secondary education</i>	147	27.02
<i>Short-cycle tertiary education</i>	46	8.46
<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	30	5.51
<i>Graduate's degree</i>	0	0
Monthly Income		
<i>Less than VND 5 million</i>	373	68.57
<i>VND 5-10 million</i>	171	31.43
<i>VND 10-15 million</i>	10	1.84
<i>VND 15-20 million</i>	0	0
<i>More than VND 20 million</i>	0	0
Total	544	100

Source: The Author, 2023

Common Method Variance (CMV)

The bias generated by Common Method Variance (CMV), known as common method bias, appears when the estimated relationship between one construct and another might be inflated. In another word, CMV produces a systematic covariation above the true relationship between the scale items (Malhotra et al., 2017). To avoid this threat of biased outcomes in our data analysis, we employ Harman's single-factor test (Bell, 2019) to check for CMV in our data.

The results of the principal component factor analysis showed that the highest value of a single factor explained 30.12% of the total variance, which is less than the threshold of 50%

(Kumar, 2012; Doty, & Astakhova, 2020). Hence, bias from CMV does not exist in our data and it is not a concern in our data analysis.

Reliability and Convergent Validity

Before studying the causal effects of variables, we first ensure the validity and reliability of the study model using the factor loadings, Cronbach’s alpha (CA), factor loadings from Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR).

Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the measurement model. The CA met the recommended value higher than 0.70, the value ranges from 0.894 to 0.939. The CR ranging from 0.814 to 0.907 also fulfilled the criteria as it was above the minimum recommended value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). The AVE value of the four variables was within the range 0.594 and 0.765, which fulfilled the recommended value above 0.50. The factor loadings satisfy the recommended value above 0.4 (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity results

Constructs	Items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	Average Variance Extracted	Composite Reliability
Economic developments from agriculture (EA)	EA1	0.815	0.901	0.594	0.814
	EA2	0.804			
	EA3	0.798			
Economic developments from industries (EI)	EI1	0.797	0.927	0.640	0.842
	EI2	0.783			
	EI3	0.782			
Economic development from trade and services (ETS)	ETS1	0.846	0.864	0.765	0.907
	ETS2	0.818			
	ETS3	0.802			
Societal development from agriculture (SA)	SA1	0.788	0.932	0.630	0.836
	SA2	0.765			
	SA3	0.760			
Societal development from industries (SI)	SI1	0.750	0.939	0.639	0.842
	SI2	0.726			
	SI3	0.716			
Societal development from trade and services (STS)	STS1	0.895	0.906	0.676	0.862
	STS2	0.865			
	STS3	0.861			
Environmental development from agriculture (ENA)	ENA1	0.837	0.914	0.634	0.874
	ENA2	0.807			
	ENA3	0.793			
Environmental development from industries (ENI)	ENI1	0.768	0.925	0.694	0.815
	ENI2	0.755			
	ENI3	0.750			
Environmental development from trade and services (ENTS)	ENTS1	0.843	0.883	0.654	0.814
	ENTS2	0.895			
	ENTS3	0.879			

Living conditions of ethnic minority people (LC)	LC1	0.881	0.928	0.762	0.906
	LC2	0.876			
	LC3	0.861			

Source: The Author, 2023

Structural Equation Modeling Results

Table 3 shows the results for the path coefficient analysis of the hypotheses (H1 to H9). Among our nine hypotheses in Section 3, six hypotheses (H1, H3, H4, H6, H7, and H9) are supported by our empirical results while the three others are rejected.

Table 3. Path Coefficient Analysis Results

Hypotheses	Causal relationships	Coefficients	S.E.	P-value
H1	EA → LC	0.166**	0.071	0.020
H2	EI → LC	0.091	0.070	0.193
H3	ETS → LC	0.151*	0.079	0.057
H4	SA → LC	0.120*	0.068	0.077
H5	SI → LC	0.050	0.069	0.725
H6	STS → LC	0.143**	0.071	0.044
H7	ENA → LC	0.250***	0.071	0.000
H8	ENI → LC	-0.014	0.075	0.856
H9	ENTS → LC	0.368***	0.081	0.000

Source: The Author, 2023

In general, the empirical results show that the changes in economics, society, and environment which come from the developments of agriculture, trade, and service help to improve the living condition of ethnic minority people in the border region of Northern Vietnam. In contrast, there is no evidence for the impact of the industry.

For a long time, the livelihoods of ethnic minority people in the border region of Northern Vietnam rely heavily on producing and trading agricultural products. Therefore, the policies in developing agriculture, trade, and services of government can quickly take effect improving the living conditions of ethnic minority communities. Regarding industrial development, although the living areas of ethnic minority people in the border region of Northern Vietnam have quite a lot of mineral resources and forest resources, the development for the industry in this area faces many difficulties. Many reasons can be listed as many reasons such as harsh climates, difficult and inaccessible terrain, underdeveloped infrastructure, especially transportation system; lack of financial resources, etc. Therefore, to select suitable industries that are appropriate to local potential, prepare resources to effectively exploit potentials, attract investment in green industrial production lines, and minimize environmental impacts and people's lives, local governments of ethnic minority and mountainous areas need

long-term industrial development strategies, with strict management mechanisms (Thu et al., 2020).

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire on research “The impacts of economic development on the living conditions of ethnic minority people in the border region of Northern Vietnam”

A. General Information

1. Full name:

2. Gender:

Male Female

3. Age:

40 – 49 Less than 30

30 – 39 Above or equal 50

4. Education:

Secondary education or lower

Short-cycle tertiary education Bachelor's degree

Graduate's degree: Post-secondary education

5. Monthly Income:

Less than VND 5 million

VND 10-15 million VND 15-20 million

More than VND 20 million VND 5-10 million

B. The Impacts of Economic Development on the Living Conditions of Ethnic Minority People in the Border Region of Northern Vietnam

Please indicate your degree of agreement with the following statements related to factors impacting human resource development in high-tech agriculture through the Likert-type scale below and tick the appropriate number accordingly (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree).

Constructs	Items	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
Economic changes from agriculture (EA)	EA1	Agricultural development helps change economic thinking					
	EA2	Agricultural development helps to improve income					
	EA3	Agricultural development helps increase spending					
	EI1	Industrial development helps change economic thinking					
	EI2	Industrial development helps to improve income					

Economic changes from industries (EI)	EI3	Industrial development helps increase spending					
Economic changes from trade and services (ETS)	ETS1	Trade and service development helps change economic thinking					
	ETS2	Trade and service development helps to improve income					
	ETS3	Trade and service development helps increase spending					
Societal changes from agriculture (SA)	SA1	Agricultural development helps reduce poverty					
	SA2	Agricultural development increases educational opportunities					
	SA3	Agricultural development helps develop social and cultural					
Societal changes from industries (SI)	SI1	Industrial development helps reduce poverty					
	SI2	Industrial development increases educational opportunities					
	SI3	Industrial development helps develop social and cultural					
Societal changes from trade and services (STS)	STS1	Trade and service development helps reduce poverty					
	STS2	Trade and service development increases educational opportunities					
	STS3	Trade and service development helps develop social and cultural					
Environmental changes from agriculture (ENA)	ENA1	Agricultural development helps to improve the air					
	ENA2	Agricultural development helps to reduce pollution					
	ENA3	Agricultural development helps to improve the environment					
Environmental changes from industries (ENI)	ENI1	Industrial development helps to improve the air					
	ENI2	Industrial development helps to reduce pollution					
	ENI3	Industrial development helps to improve the environment					
Environmental changes from trade and services (ENTS)	ENTS1	Trade and service development helps to improve the air					
	ENTS2	Trade and service development helps to reduce pollution					
	ENTS3	Trade and service development helps to improve the environment					
Living conditions of ethnic minority people (LC)	LC1	Your family have many opportunities to develop living conditions					
	LC1	Your family have many benefits from economic development					
	LC1	Your overall living condition is improved					