



## Sustainable development in Vietnam: The case in Ho Chi Minh City

**Dr. Doan Thi Nhe**  
Van Lang University, Vietnam

\* Corresponding Author: **Dr. Doan Thi Nhe**

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### Abstract

Today, sustainable development is the goal that countries aim for in the development process. Ho Chi Minh City is a city directly under Vietnam, in the process of integration Ho Chi Minh City has constantly developed mechanisms and policies to realize the goal of sustainable development, contributing to socio-economic development. But besides the achieved results, Ho Chi Minh City is facing some basic problems arising in the process of developing Ho Chi Minh City such as the economy has grown but is not sustainable steady; the combination of economic growth with progress and social justice has not been done well; environmental pollution and natural resource depletion. The article focuses on analyzing the achieved results and limitations, thereby proposing some solutions to successfully implement the sustainable development goals of Ho Chi Minh City in the coming time.

**Keywords:** social, environmental, sustainable development; Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

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### Introduction

Ho Chi Minh City is a special urban area; a large center of economy, culture, education - training, science - technology; a focal point for international exchange and integration; The locomotive, driving force, attraction, and spread of the Southern key economic region. Although Ho Chi Minh City occupies only 0.6% of the area, about 9.2% of the population of Vietnam, it has made the largest contribution to the overall economic development of the country. With an impressive economic growth rate, on average in the period 2016-2019, the economic growth rate reached 7.72%, continuing to play the leading role in the national economy, contributing over 22.2% of GDP and 27% of total national budget revenue (Ho Chi Minh City Statistics Office, 2020, p.47). During the integration process, the City has focused on developing all resources to meet the goal of sustainable development. However, the development of sustainable development goals still has limitations such as slow economic development, unstable society, degraded ecological environment, etc. In the coming time, to overcome the above problems. The city needs to deploy a synchronous system of solutions.

Two research questions are revealed as follows:

- What are the achievements and limitations of sustainable development in Ho Chi Minh City?
- What are some solutions to implement sustainable development in Ho Chi Minh City?

### Methods

Humanity is witnessing changes of ever-increasing speed and scale in all areas of the social life of nations around the world. However, in addition to the positive and progressive aspects, it is impossible not to admit that this process has also been putting all countries in front of a series of hot global issues, directly affecting and threatening the development prospects of the country humanity, such as the increasing trend of social inequality and the gap between rich and poor, unemployment, environmental pollution, the risk of cultural degradation... These are serious consequences of the old concept of development develop. From the naked reality as above, forcing humanity to explore and discover a new development model from which to come up with effective solutions to solve social problems, towards a developed world. People, that is the strategy of sustainable development. Not out of the general trajectory of the world, in Vietnam, sustainable development has been identified by the Communist Party and State of Vietnam as a strategic and long-term goal.

The term "sustainable development" appeared in the 70s of the twentieth century in the movement to protect the environment. In 1978, it was officially used by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in its report titled *Our Future* (Brundtland Report). In terms of content, sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without hindering the meeting of the needs of future generations (World Commission, 1987, p.43)<sup>[47]</sup>. Specifically, sustainable development is understood as the dialectical unity between three aspects of development, including: (i) economic development (the foundation is economic growth), (ii) social development (The objective is a social security policy that ensures social progress and justice) and (iii) environmental protection (the goal is to treat and overcome pollution, restore and improve environmental quality; rational exploitation and economical use of natural resources). The essence of sustainable development is to deal with the relationship between economic growth and equity, social progress and environmental protection. Harmonious combination between economic goals, social goals and environmental protection goals.

In Vietnam, sustainable development is affirmed in Directive No. 36-CT/TW dated June 25, 1998 of the Politburo on strengthening environmental protection in the period of industrialization and modernization. At the IX Congress affirmed: "Economic growth goes hand in hand with cultural development, gradually improving the people's material and spiritual life, realizing social progress and justice, protecting and improving environment" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2001, p. 89)<sup>[1]</sup>. At the Xth Party Congress said that: "Rapid development must go hand in hand with sustainable development... Economic growth must be associated with cultural development, comprehensive human development, implementation of democracy, social progress and justice, creation of many jobs, improve living standards, encourage legal enrichment in parallel with poverty reduction and hunger eradication development gap between regions, environmental protection and improvement must be given great importance in every development step conditions for rapid and sustainable development" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2006, p.178 - 179)<sup>[2]</sup>. At the 12th Congress, the view of sustainable development was emphasized again: "Ensuring rapid development, sustainable on the basis of macroeconomic stability and constantly improving productivity, quality, efficiency and competitiveness... Economic development must be closely linked with cultural and social development, environmental protection, and environmental protection response to climate change. Ensuring national defense and security and maintaining peace and stability for national construction" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016, p.270)<sup>[3]</sup>.

The above perspective on sustainable development has theoretical value and profound practical significance; Sustainable development is a continuous process, in which there is a harmonious combination between economic development and environmental, social, cultural and human development. This means that all strategies, programs and plans for economic development must be scientifically calculated, carefully taking into account all areas of social life for the sake of human development.

At the same time, the thesis uses a combination of research methods such as analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, comparison, and statistical methods. The article is approached from the perspective of cultural philosophy and

value studies.

## Results and Discussion

### Achievements and limitations of sustainable development in Ho Chi Minh City

Ho Chi Minh City is a major center of economy, culture, science - technology, international exchange hub. The North borders Binh Duong province, the Northwest borders Tay Ninh province, the East and Northeast borders Dong Nai province, the Southeast borders Ba Ria - Vung Tau province, the West and Southwest borders Long An and Tien Giang provinces. With this position, the city has a connection with regions of the country such as the Mekong River Delta - the agricultural product region of the country; with the Southeast and the Central Highlands - the industrial crop region of the country, is the "Southern gateway of the Fatherland". With an open geographical position, Ho Chi Minh City is a land of convergence of potentials and advantages that have had a direct impact on economic, social and cultural development... Currently, Ho Chi Minh City is under the strong impact of globalization and the fourth industrial revolution. In that context, the implementation of economic growth and social progress has always been thoroughly understood by the Party Committee and the city government in every step and development policy in order to fulfill the development strategic goals: "Improve the growth quality and competitiveness of the city's economy, associate economic growth with cultural development, build people, realize progress, social justice, and protect the environment; improve social welfare and people's quality of life. Building Ho Chi Minh City with a good quality of life, civilization, modernity, love" (Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee, 2015, p.119), thereby creating dynamism and creativity of all classes of people, mobilize resources and have achieved great achievements, of great significance on all three basic goals: economic growth, social development and environmental protection. If in the pre- doi Moi period (1976 - 1985) the average GDP growth rate was 2.7%/year, then in the 30 years of Doi Moi (1986 - 2016) the average GDP growth rate was 10.7%, 1.6 times higher than the average. National army and in 2017 reached 8.25%. The following table shows us that.

The highlight in Ho Chi Minh City is that economic development achievements are always closely linked with human development achievements, economic growth has focused on solving social and human problems. In the innovation process, people are placed at the center, both the goal and the driving force of socio-economic development. This is reflected in the fact that the human development index (HDI) of HCMC is constantly improving. According to the UNDP Report (2015), Vietnam's HDI in 2012 was 0.752 (up 13.56% compared to 1999), in which, Ho Chi Minh City ranked second (after Ba Ria - Vung Tau) with a value of 0.820. The HDI in the city has been found in the period 2008 - 2012, an average annual increase of 1.57%, 1.7 times higher than that of the whole country. Evaluating these achievements, UNDP has determined that Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang have HDI values equivalent to Poland and Croatia, respectively (UNDP, 2016, p.366). This clearly demonstrates the city's efforts towards the "growth for people" model. The city's overall poverty rate continued to decrease to 1.15% (2018). The rate of malnutrition among children under 5 years old decreased from 5.3% in 2011 to 4.1% in 2015; the under - 5 mortality rate in 2011 was 10.04‰, in 2015 it was 10% or less; in 2015, the number of

children under 1 year of age fully vaccinated with vaccines reached nearly 92%; The average life expectancy of people in the city is 76.2 years old, 3 years higher than the average life expectancy of the whole country (73.2 years old). If compared with health care in the region, this is clearly a great achievement of health policy (Thailand average life expectancy is 72 years; Malaysia's infant mortality rate is about 16%. and average life expectancy of 73.3 years) (Ho Chi Minh City Statistics Office, 2020, p.347). These are optimistic signals about HCMC's sustainable development prospects, being competitive with other cities. Other provinces and cities in the country, retain their position as one of the economic centers of the country, worthy of a city with good quality of life, civilization, modernity and gratitude.

It can be said that the initial achievements in implementing the sustainable development strategy of Ho Chi Minh City are very important, it affirms that the Party's line and the State's policies are correct; at the same time, it is a solid basis to strengthen the people's confidence in the leadership of the Party in the process of bringing the country to socialist-oriented development. However, this does not mean that the implementation of the sustainable development strategy in Ho Chi Minh City in recent years does not pose new and complicated problems. In fact, we are currently facing some of the following basic problems:

First, the economy has growth but is not really sustainable. Although Ho Chi Minh City's economy has been developing for many consecutive years, the quality of growth is still a matter of concern. The proportion of high-value industries and services is still low, industry is still heavily processed; business environment is not open and favorable to attract investment, start - up, develop supporting industries slowly; science - technology content in the product value is still low... The outstanding problems and "bottlenecks" that are hindering the growth of the economy of Ho Chi Minh City are the shortage of high-quality human resources, the level of science - technology and the speed of technological innovation are still low compared to the region and the world, the physical - technical infrastructure is still weak... These weaknesses have limited competitiveness of the economy leading to unsustainable growth.

Second, we have not done a good job of combining economic growth with progress and social justice. This is reflected in such things as: "the effectiveness of poverty reduction is not sustainable", "the difference in living standards and cultural enjoyment levels between the people in the inner city and the suburbs is bigger" (Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee, 2015, p.34); the gap between rich and poor tends to increase rapidly; The quality of medical examination and treatment has not met the requirements, especially at the grassroots level. Human resource training for health is currently facing difficulties in both quantity and quality. Many hospitals are currently in a crisis of shortage of human resources, especially in the suburbs; Many districts pay little attention to cultural development and social progress. Moreover, the state of "pollution of the social environment" with manifestations such as illegal trade and addiction, drug use is increasing; the evils of prostitution and depraved culture have crept into the previously peaceful rural areas; crime, moral and personality decline, especially among young people... have been and are concerns of the whole society.

Third, resources and environment are also currently "hot" issues, becoming one of the special concerns of society. Manifestations of this group of problems focus on the

following aspects: Environmental pollution has reached an alarming level. According to data from the Center for Environmental Monitoring and Analysis in Ho Chi Minh City today, the hourly average concentration of carbon oxide gas, the hourly average concentration of suspended dust next year is always higher than the previous year. In addition to dust, the city's air also contains many toxic gases, common being sulfur anhydride, hydrogen carbide, ammonia, hydrogen sulfide... Ho Chi Minh City has a large number of motorbikes and cars; with high traffic density, vehicles are a serious source of air pollution. Regarding waste management, with the rapid urban development of nearly 10 million people, the amount of waste and domestic wastewater is already overloaded compared to the city's handling capacity. Domestic wastewater together with industrial wastewater are exacerbating the level of water pollution of the City. The Dong Nai river system and the Saigon river system are receiving thousands of cubic meters of wastewater daily from urban areas, industrial and agricultural production zones in the locality. Ho Chi Minh City is the locality at the end of the source that is most affected by surface water pollution of the Dong Nai and Saigon river systems. If there is no coordination mechanism between the City and the localities, the quality of water sources will be difficult to improve. It is the above impacts that have caused diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, bronchitis, lung cancer, etc., which affect the social security of the people of the City.

Besides, Ho Chi Minh City is a large city with a large population and high density, which is the most suitable environment for social evils that are complicated, sophisticated and difficult to control like the age of addicts the younger you are, the higher the percentage of people who are addicted by injection; theft takes place with increasingly dangerous levels; prostitution, smuggling, gangs, corrupt interest groups... have been affecting the safety of society.

### **Some solutions to implement sustainable development in Ho Chi Minh City**

In order to implement sustainable development in Ho Chi Minh City in the current context, it is necessary to implement the following solutions

First of all, it is necessary to unify the awareness and grasp the Party's viewpoint on linking economic development goals, social goals and environmental protection. In the context of the market economy and due to the impact of many factors, there are still many industries and business units (both collective and private) that continue to pursue economic growth and increase profits at all costs, including covertly violating or taking advantage of loopholes in the State's laws, especially the law on environmental protection, which did not seriously implement the requirements on waste treatment in order to protect the environment - obligatory conditions to commit to implement right from the time of being licensed to operate. Therefore, it is necessary to continue to be deeply aware of and thoroughly grasp the Party's stance on sustainable development, resolutely reject the idea of economic development at all costs, thereby creating unity in awareness and action in the political system of the City, towards the goal of sustainable development.

Second, it is necessary to perfect the legal system, forming in the whole society the cultural habit of "living and working according to the constitution and law". The law must create a favorable legal corridor for all economic actors (industries, sectors and all workers) to freely produce and develop the

economy according to the law. At the same time, the law is a tool to handle violations, ensuring that all activities in society must be disciplined. Accordingly, the legal system must be strong enough, strictly enforced, objective and fair to all subjects.

Third, strongly develop education and training, science - technology. The socio-economic development is slow and unstable due to the absence or lack of fundamental premises. In the current conditions, high-quality human resources combined with advanced science and technology is the key to solving the problem of socio-economic development. Therefore, Ho Chi Minh City promotes innovation in education and training in association with science and technology in order to train quality human resources - a fundamental factor for economic development as well as solving environmental problems. It is a fundamental measure for sustainable development.

Fourth, Ho Chi Minh City needs to actively develop and implement policies aimed at solving social problems arising in the development process in accordance with the characteristics of large cities in the country. The good resolution of social problems will create stability in social life-a particularly important factor for the country's socio-economic development in the direction of socialism.

Thus, sustainable development in all three aspects, such as economic sustainable development, socially sustainable development and environmentally sustainable development, is a common trend of countries and territories. It is also a prominent feature of the contemporary world, reflecting the joint efforts of the international community for the goal of ensuring and improving the quality of life of present and future generations. It is also the priority development strategy that the Party Committee, government and people of Ho Chi Minh City aim for for a prosperous, civilized, modern, and loving city.

### Conclusion

In the process of international integration, Ho Chi Minh City has made policies towards sustainable development goals and has achieved important achievements in all fields such as economy, society and environment, contributing to the present realize the goal of building a civilized, modern, loving city with a good quality of life. However, the sustainable development of Ho Chi Minh City still has a number of problems in the economic, social and environmental fields that have negatively impacted the city's development goals. With the solutions offered, we hope to contribute to finding the right direction in building a sustainable development strategy for a civilized and modern city.

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