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# Ho Chi Minh's Thought on Community Development Through the Literary Work "Mass Mobilization"

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**To cite this article:**

Ngoc Loi Pham. Ho Chi Minh's Thought on Community Development Through the Literary Work "Mass Mobilization". *International Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. 8, No. 3, 2020, pp. 68-74. doi: 10.11648/j.ijp.20200803.12

**Received:** July 7, 2020; **Accepted:** July 23, 2020; **Published:** August 10, 2020

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**Abstract:** Community development is an interesting topic that attracts the concerns of many researchers. It is a collection of activities taking place to change the political, economic, cultural, social, and environmental values of a community in a better way. This paper aims to analyze Ho Chi Minh's ideas on community development in Vietnam through the article "Mass mobilization" which is one of his well-known articles published in The Truth (Su That) Newspaper in 1949. President Ho Chi Minh's thought on community development reflects his goals, life motto, and revolutionary activities. In "Mass mobilization", President Ho Chi Minh emphasized the necessity to mobilize the active participation and internal resources of the people to develop the community. The main goal of mass mobilization in Vietnam is to promote the people's solidarity to fight for our country's independence and happiness for the people. He affirmed that community development must come from the practical needs of the people. Only when the people realize the importance of community development, will it become a driving force for them to unite, fight and work together. It is necessary to believe in the people's capacities and promote the internal resources of the people for the victory of the revolutions. In this paper, the author also analyzes the application of Ho Chi Minh's opinions on community development into the Party's guidelines and the State's policies in the period of the renovation, industrialization and modernization of our country.

**Keywords:** Community Development, Mass Mobilization, The People, President Ho Chi Minh

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## 1. Introduction

On October 15, 1949, the Truth (Su that) newspaper published article "Mas Mobilization" by President Ho Chi Minh with the pen name X.Y.Z, providing information about the content and methods of mass mobilization in which one of its focus is community development.

After all, community development can be understood simply as a comprehensive development of the people in the community. In only 619 words, the work "Mass mobilization" conveys the messages demonstrating the great thought of the leader who devoted wholeheartedly to the development of the ethnic community. The work "Mass mobilization" expressed 4 main issues: 1. Our country is a democracy; 2. What is mass mobilization? 3. Who is in charge of the mass mobilization?" and 4. How to mobilize the masses? The idea "taking people as the root" is the focus throughout the work.

According to Truong Thi Mai, Member of the Politburo of

Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh's ideas of mass mobilization in this article is to summarize and develop the strategic path of gathering revolutionary forces and mobilizing the masses that have been shown in his previous works such as "Revolutionary Way", "History of our country", "Government is the public servant of the people", "How to win the hearts of the people", "New life", "Changing the way of working" [1]. One of the main content of this work reflects Ho Chi Minh's ideas on community development.

## 2. A brief Literature Review on Community Development

Community development is not a new issue. It can be different things to different people. Community development is a collection of activities taking place in life to change the political, economic, cultural, social, and environmental values of a community in a better way. Scholars have

different ways to define the term “community development”. Bhattacharyya defines community development as the “pursuit of solidarity and agency” [2]. Kelly and Caputov define community development as the beneficial changes for all the community members [3]. Banks and Shenton state that community development is the active involvement of people that affects their lives. The main idea of this definition is community participation [4]. According to Brennan and Barnett, community development should emphasize the potentials of existing communities. Capabilities and resources owned must be leveraged to develop the community [5]. Green and Haines define community development as “a planned effort to produce assets that increase the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life” [6]. Sharing the same idea, Vidal and Keating state that “Community development is a place-based approach: it concentrates on creating assets that benefit people in poor neighborhoods, largely by building and tapping links to external resources” [7]

### 3. An Analysis of Ho Chi Minh’s Thought on Community Development Through the Work “Mass Mobilization”

Upholding the national traditions and applying theories of Marxism - Leninism, President Ho Chi Minh attached great importance to the role of the people in community development. In the work “Mass mobilization”, he affirmed that the people are the root of the nation, the main force of revolutions. All strength comes from the people. President Ho Chi Minh's thought on community development reflects his goals, life motto, and revolutionary activities. It comes from the perspective that all movements are for democracy and the welfares of the people. The main objective of mass mobilization is to promote solidarity to fight for the independence of the nation, and to bring the people freedom and happiness. President Ho Chi Minh's work "Mass mobilization" has opened a guiding path for the development of the Vietnamese community today and in the future that the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Vietnamese people are implementing on the principles of “the people know, the people discuss, the people do, the people check”. The main contents of Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on community development are as follows:

*Firstly*, community development must come from the practical needs of the people. It means that community development must come from internal factors, from the needs of the people. Community development is not one or a few individual activities but a career, a long, challenging, arduous, and complicated process. People only participate in the community development process faithfully if they are “truly enlightened” about the problems of the community, their current living situation. They are not satisfied with that situation, and they find it necessary to change to have a better and more equal living environment. In other words, awareness

must translate into needs so that people have the motivation to participate in the community development process. It is entirely consistent with the theory of Marxist-Leninist on social revolution, which pointed out that social revolution only occurs when the "revolutionary situation" is ripe. The ripe situation for a revolution is that the people cannot stand their real life. It seems that the people’s awareness of community development is not the same in all the classes of the people. The problem is to make the people aware of their situation and turn the awareness into a need to change.

*Secondly*, regarding the participation and right of self-determination of the people in community development, only when the people realize the importance of community development, will it become a driving force for people to unite, fight and work together. In the process of reorganization, the establishment of groups, their representative organizations will be a practical need. Each organization must encourage the people to participate in the activities. Leaders and community development workers must act based on people's opinions. People have to be involved in doing and solving their problems. Dealing with this problem is very hard, so it requires community development workers and leaders to be persistent to explain so that the people can see all the advantages and disadvantages of each solution.

*Thirdly*, it is necessary to believe in the people’s capacities. When people are motivated and mobilized, they will find the mental and physical strength needed to act. The people can think appropriately, to contribute their experiences and resources. The capacities do not belong to one or two individuals, but the entire community with enormous strength. He asserted that “everything needs to be discussed with the people, asking for their opinions and experiences, combining with them to make practical plans for the local situation, then encourage and organize them to enforce”. Lessons learned at the hardest times in the resistance against colonialist imperialism of our country said that if we promote the ability of the people, it will become an immense power. For example, when a section of the bridge is destroyed, cars cannot walk, so it requires human strength, energy, and time to repair it. In the context of a fierce war, we cannot make the convoys to stop; therefore, the families in the village near the broken bridge do not spare their property to contribute to rebuilding the bridge to pay the way for the convoys.

*Fourthly*, it is imperative to promote the internal resources of the people. The constant battles against the foreign invasion of our ancient ancestors and the resistance war against the French and America recently show the strength of the people and the determination of a people. In a small community, too, if all people agree on ideas and actions with local authorities and share the hard problems of the village, it is not difficult to solve the problems of the community.

*The idea “taking the people as the root” is the main content of community development throughout President Ho Chi Minh’s work “Mass mobilization”*

In the introduction part of the work, President Ho Chi Minh has affirmed that “Our country is a democracy”. It can

be seen that the idea of community development based on the democratic spirit is the theoretical basis and the key to community development. The people are considered as the root of the country and the subjects of all activities in the community life. Community development is essentially the development of the people - for the people to be the state owners, "All the interests are for the people. All the authority belongs to the people". The state is an organizational system to help people improve the quality of their lives. The people's interests must be the goal of all activities of the State. All power, guidelines, policies, laws must be for the benefit of the people and served for the people. The Party and Government do not have any other benefits. President Ho Chi Minh states that "the people are masters, the government must be the servants. Today working is not for promotion and earning money" [8]

In his thought, the regime of our State is a democratic state, that is, the people are the masters. Community development means that the people enjoy all democratic rights, that is, the right to life, freedom and to work according to their ability to the extent permitted by law. The State must protect people's ownership by building and perfecting democratic institutions so that people can be masters in reality, in all fields: economy, politics, culture, and society. Ho Chi Minh emphasized that the highest position belongs to the people because the people are the masters, that is, all power belongs to the people, all benefits are for the people, all jobs are for the people.

Making creative use of the dialectical materialism view of Marxism-Leninism, in President Ho Chi Minh's view on community development, the rights and responsibilities have a mutual dialectical relationship. Therefore, the people enjoy the ownership rights, and at the same time, they must have the owner's obligations and responsibilities. "Reform and building are the responsibilities of the people. The cause of struggle against foreign aggressors and national construction is the people's work" [8]. People are responsible for building and managing their state since "Authorities from the commune level to the central government are appointed by the people. Unions from the Central to commune levels are organized by the people. In short, all power and forces come from the people". Each citizen should fulfill his civic duty and uphold his civic morals to exercise his democratic rights.

President Ho Chi Minh affirmed that community development means that "power and force belong to the people" as stated in the work of "Mass mobilization" which is the starting point and the guideline for all activities of the Party and State. In community development work, the State and each cadre and Party member must have a profound grasp of the people's role, thereby cultivating a sense of responsibility to fulfill all the tasks assigned by the people. At the same time, they must closely associate with the people, to learn from the people, to understand the people's feelings and aspirations so that they can carry out the tasks for the well-being and happiness of the people. In other words, it is necessary to perform well the mobilization, gathering, and promoting the strength of the entire people to

serve the people better.

Explaining the nature of the State, President Ho Chi Minh has gradually clarified many issues in mass mobilization, both in content and methods. By answering the question "What is mass mobilization?", "Who is in charge of the mass mobilization?" and "How to mobilize the masses?" represents Ho Chi Minh's very simple and profound dialectical logic of the relationship between the task and the solution. To develop the ethnic community is to bring free, prosperous and happy life to all people through the construction of a democratic state of the people, by the people, and for the people, in his work "Mass mobilization" President Ho Chi Minh pointed out one of the basic tasks is to unite, gather forces and build a great unity bloc of the entire nation. "Mass mobility is to mobilize every capability of each person without leaving anyone behind, to create the all-people force to execute the work that should be done or was entrusted by the Government and the Unions" [8]. This is also the content of community development, which explains what community development is. To well carry out the community development, according to Ho Chi Minh, it is necessary to synchronously implement many solutions that need to take the people as the root. First of all, it should be clear: Who is in charge of community development. According to Ho Chi Minh, community development is mobilizing all people, so this responsibility belongs to the entire political system, led by mobilizing the government: "All governmental officials, Party members and members of the people's organizations (Lien Viet, Viet Minh...) must be in charge of mass mobilization work".

Regarding the methods to implement community development, according to Ho Chi Minh, it is necessary to combine propaganda, explanation, and action. In particular, propaganda and explanation are the first steps so that "every citizen understands clearly: it was their interests and duties that had to be achieved by any means". At the same time, the cadres had to discuss whatever they did with the people, "ask for people's opinion and experience, and collaborate with people to work out plans suitable to local circumstances, then encourage and organize the people to implement the tasks" [8]. It was necessary to supervise, support, urge, and encourage people". After finishing the work, together with people, cadres had to review the work to draw experience, criticize or praise and reward the people for enhancing the movement. The officials who are in charge of the work of mass mobilization must be mouth-saying, hand-doing directly got involved in the issues, not just saying without doing, not only giving orders. They must take a good example for the people".

The thought of "taking people as the root" is the pillar throughout the work; therefore, President Ho Chi Minh always requires every cadre and Party members to be close to the people. President Ho Chi Minh stated an exemplary style of public relations officers, briefly summed up by him that "Cadres in charge of the mass mobilization work must be mind-thinking, eyes-observing, ears-listening, feet-walking, mouth-saying, hand -doing". Only on that basis, cadres who are in charge of community development can approach the

people, learn from them and understand them, thereby mobilizing them to participate in revolutionary careers.

In "Mass mobilization", President Ho Chi Minh outlined the content and implementation methods for community development, at the same time, he criticized the limitations when some cadres did not attach importance to community development, "disregarding mass mobilization work". "This is not only a shortcoming but also a big harmful mistake". Ho Chi Minh's instruction for community development is of great value, a valuable lesson for all cadres, party members, and political apparatus of the Party and the State since "the force of the people is very big. Mass mobilization is critical work. If it is poorly done, everything is bad. With good mass mobilization, everything will be successful" [8].

#### **4. The Communist Party of Vietnam Has Applied Ho Chi Minh's Ideas on Community Development in the Cause of Our Country's Renovation**

The cause of national renovation in Vietnam (1986) comes from the very desire, "aspirations and initiatives of the people" and implemented by the people to get great achievements. Therefore, in the Platform for building the country during the transition to socialism (amended and supplemented in 2011), it is affirmed: "The revolutionary career is of the people, by the people and for the people. It is the people who make historic victories. All activities of the Party must come from the legitimate interests and aspirations of the people. The Party's strength lies in its close attachment to the people. Bureaucracy, corruption, alienation from the people will lead to unpredictable losses to the fate of the country, the socialist regime, and the Party" [9]. Summarizing 30 years of renovation, the Communist Party of Vietnam continues to affirm the role of the people: "Innovation must always thoroughly grasp the view that taking the people as the root, for the benefit of the people, based on the people, promoting the ownership, responsibility, creativity and all resources of the people; promote the strength of great national unity" [10]

Relying on the people to build a clean and strong Party and State to serve better for the people is always a consistent view of our Party's guidelines, the State's policies and laws.

The Communist Party of Vietnam has issued many directives and resolutions that consistently reflect the above opinion, such as Resolution No. 08B-NQ/TW (Session VI), dated March 27, 1990, on renovating the Party's work of public relations, strengthening the relationship between the Party and the people [11]; Directive No. 30-CT / TW dated February 18, 1998, of the Political Bureau (Session VIII) on building and complementing grassroots democracy; Resolution No. 25-NQ/TW, dated June 3, 2013, "On strengthening and renewing the Party's leadership in terms of mobilization in the new situation" [12]; Decision No. 217-QD / TW, dated 12 December 2013 on the "promulgation of the Regulations on social supervision and criticism of the

Vietnam Fatherland Front and political and social organizations", Decision No. 218-QD / TW of the Politburo (Session XI), on "Promulgation of the regulations that the Vietnam Fatherland Front, socio-political organizations and the people contribute ideas to build the Party the government". The relationship between the Party and the people also includes the Constitution and laws of the State. Article 4 of the 2013 Constitution confirms, "The Communist Party of Vietnam is closely associated with the People, shall serve the People, shall submit to the supervision of the People, and is accountable to the People for its decisions" [13]

Community development aims to mobilize people from communities to participate in learning to identify difficulties and resources of the community to discuss and organize activities to help local development. Through these activities, the sense of responsibility, capacity, and community cohesion is promoted. At present, the national target programs for community development have reached everywhere in each locality with the motto "nobody is left behind". The Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam signed Decision 2406 / QD-TTg promulgating the List of National Target Programs for the period 2012 - 2015 and the period 2016 - 2020, assigning the agencies to manage and implement the programs

Accordingly, 16 national target programs for the period of 2012-2015 include: 1- Employment and vocational training; 2- Sustainable poverty reduction; 3. Clean water and rural environmental sanitation; 4. Health; 5- Population and Family Planning; 6. Food hygiene and safety; 7- Culture; 8- Education and training; 9- Drug prevention and fight; 10. Crime prevention and combat; 11- Economic and efficient use of energy; 12- Responding to climate change; 13- Building a new countryside; 14- HIV / AIDS prevention and control; 15. Bringing information into mountainous and remote areas, borders, and islands; 16. Overcoming and improving environmental pollution. In particular, the National Target Program on Employment and Vocational Training has 6 component projects include: 1- Innovating and developing vocational training; 2- Vocational training for rural laborers; 3. Borrowing capital for creating jobs from the National Employment Fund; Supporting to send workers to work abroad under contracts; 4- Supporting the development of the labor market; 5-Improving the capacity of communication and monitoring and evaluation of program implementation. This program is chaired by the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs, in coordination with relevant ministries, branches, and localities. The national target program of Sustainable Poverty Reduction consists of 4 component projects: 1- Supporting infrastructure investment in poor districts, extremely difficult communes in the littoral, coastal, and island areas. 2- Investment in infrastructure of extremely difficult, border communes, and communes in safety zones; especially difficult villages. 3- Replicating the poverty reduction model. 4- Enhancing the capacity of poverty reduction, communication and monitoring and evaluation of Program implementation. The Prime Minister requested ministries, ministerial-level agencies, and central agencies to

implement the national target program to allocate and assign the 2012 national target program expenditure estimates to affiliated budget-using units by 28 February 2012. The Chairman of the People's Committees of the provinces and cities under the Central Government shall direct and organize the inspection and supervision and consolidate the Steering Committee of National Target Programs in the 2012-2015 period in localities [14].

2019 is considered as a breakthrough year to complete the objectives and tasks of the national target programs for the period 2016-2020 approved in Resolution No. 100/2015 / QH13 dated 12/11/2015 of The National Assembly approved the investment policy of national target programs for the period 2016-2020; Decision No. 1600 / QD-TTg dated August 16, 2016, of the Prime Minister approving the National Target Program on New Rural Construction in 2016-2020; Decision No. 1760 / QD-TTg dated November 10, 2017, of the Prime Minister adjusting and supplementing some contents of Decision No. 1600 / QD-TTg, Decision No. 1722 / QD-TTg of the Prime Minister dated September 2, 2016, approving the investment of the national target program on sustainable poverty reduction in the 2016-2020 period. According to the Decision, for the National Target Program on New Rural Construction, in 2019 we should continue to promote the good implementation of the campaign "All people unite to build new rural areas and civilized cities" and the movement "The people unite to build a cultural life".

The National Target Program on Sustainable Poverty Reduction continued to improve the poverty reduction policy, encouraging the poor and pro-poor households to actively access basic social services and development opportunities for production and business to get out of poverty, prioritizing resources to implement policies for the people in remote, extremely difficult, ethnic minority areas, replicate efficient and sustainable community-based poverty reduction models. At the same time, the government strengthened the direction from central to local levels to ensure close, effective and timely coordination between ministries, central agencies, localities, and relevant agencies and organizations in advising, proposing policies, solutions to manage, administer the implementation of national target programs, contributing to striving to achieve the set goals in 2019 of each national target program. The government assigned responsibilities of each member of the Central Steering Committee in performing the functions, tasks, and powers of the Central Steering Committee for advising and proposing the management, administration, and implementation of the National Target Programs in 2019 following the provisions of the Prime Minister's Decision No. 1584 / QD-TTg dated August 10, 2016, and Decision No. 317 / QD-BCĐCTMTQG of the Head of the Central Steering Committee dated October 20, 2016, for National Target Programs. In 2019, the target of the National Target Program on New Rural Construction strives that 50% of the communes would reach the new rural standard. There would be at least 70 district units recognized to meet the new rural standards. In the whole country, there was no communes with fewer than 5 criteria, each province

has at least one district-level unit meeting standards, completing the task of building a new countryside, and soon fulfilling the 5-year plan target in 2019. The government considered and recognized some provinces that have completed the task of building a new countryside. Communes and districts that meet new rural standards will continue to improve the quality of criteria and strive to become a new rural commune and district model. Concerning the national target program on sustainable poverty reduction, the goal of reducing the national poverty rate is on average 1-1.5% per year, particularly for poor districts and poor communes, to reduce by 4% per year, for poor ethnic minority households the number of people to decrease by 3-4% per year according to the multidimensional poverty standard for the period 2016-2020, improving the quality of life of poor households, ensuring the average income per capita of the poor will increase by 1.5 times by the end of 2020 compared to the end of 2015 and eliminating poor households whose members are eligible for preferential policies for the people with meritorious services. At the same time, the government has strengthened resources and promoted the implementation of social policy credits contributing to the implementation of national target programs. They have focused on investment in localities in extremely difficult areas, ethnic minority, and mountainous areas, overcoming weaknesses and allocating resources for disadvantaged areas, funding for project maintenance. One of the main contents and key tasks of the Central Steering Committee for the 2016-2020 National target programs is to synchronously deploy solutions to mobilize resources to implement these programs. The government has diversified capital sources through the integration of targeted support programs and projects in the area, and focus on investment in localities in extremely difficult areas with many ethnic minorities and mountainous areas. It is necessary to overcome weaknesses in resource allocation for disadvantaged areas, fund for maintenance of construction works, and speed up the disbursement progress of capital plan in 2019. The government has advised competent authorities to allocate sufficient state budget capital, to thoroughly handle outstanding capital construction debts in new rural construction in 2019 and adopt appropriate solutions not to generate basic construction debts.

It is imperative to promote training solutions and issue new policies on encouraging businesses to invest in agriculture and rural areas, contribute to restructuring agricultural production and increasing incomes for the people. The government has promoted forms of socialization to attract enterprises to invest in activities of environmental protection and treatment. They have mobilized resources from the community and integrate other poverty reduction programs and policies to reduce poverty in a multi-dimensional approach to improve access to essential social services for the poor. At the same time, they have promoted the implementation of social policy credits, agricultural and rural lending loans, contributing to the implementation of the national target program of new rural construction and

sustainable poverty reduction. In addition to the solutions to mobilize resources, in 2009, the Prime Minister requested the continued implementation of the contents and component projects of national target programs, publicizing investment resources to help the people to get access to capital and technology and transfer into production, supporting to sell products and creating livelihoods for the poor. It is essential to improve the effectiveness of the implementation of policies on agriculture and rural areas and sustainable poverty reduction policies. The government have promoted synchronous and effective implementation of programs, schemes, and policies that are integrated into the implementation of national target programs. They have continued to research and implement solutions to improve the effectiveness of communication in the implementation of national target programs. The government has reviewed, amended and completed documents on researching and developing supplementary policies for the implementation of national target programs for the period 2016-2020 [15].

It is necessary to continue training, fostering and improving the capacities of the contingent of cadres engaged in the construction of new rural areas and poverty reduction at commune and district levels, especially poor communes, and areas where exist numerous ethnic minorities. At the same time, the government has directed and guided localities to review targets and plans to strive to achieve the goals of national target programs in the 2016-2020 period. It is also essential to get the inspection and supervision in the implementation of the national target programs, continue to promote the social supervision and criticism role of the Fatherland Front, socio-political organizations, and supervision of community for new rural construction and poverty reduction. The government has completed and effectively operated the comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system to meet the management requirements of each program.

Currently, the situation of the world and the country is changing rapidly, hostile forces try to destroy the revolutionary cause of the Party and the people of Vietnam. Against this backdrop, it is necessary to maintain the leadership of the Party and the people's confidence since it is the most valuable asset of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Losing the people's trust is losing everything. However, sometimes, in some places, people's faith in the Party reduces which can affect the renovation of our country

## 5. Conclusion

To maintain the leadership of the Party, the people's faith under the current conditions, we need to continue promoting the view of "taking the people as the root" – the precious value of Ho Chi Minh's thought on community development through the article "Mass mobilization". All the Party's guidelines and the State's policies and the law must come from the people's desire and wishes, carried out by the people to obtain benefits for them. It is necessary to uphold the close relationship between the Party and the people. The people are also the resources to build a clean and powerful Party and State;

therefore, it is necessary to promote the power of the people. At the same time, it is imperative to attach importance to the community development work, and not appointing poor cadres in charge of mass mobilization as President Ho Chi Minh pointed out. In particular, it is necessary to focus on building a good and talented contingent of officials and party cadres, because each good cadre and party member will contribute to building a strong Party and a wealthy State.

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