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## **VALUES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM RESOLUTION NO. 42-NQ/TW FOR ADDRESSING EMERGING CHALLENGES, BUILDING A COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM, AND PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW ERA**

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**Assoc. Prof., Ph.D. Hoang Kim Khuyen\***

Deputy Head of Economic Law Department

Institute of State and Law, Vietnam Academy of Social Science, Vietnam

[hoangkhuyenisl@gmail.com](mailto:hoangkhuyenisl@gmail.com) or [hoangkhuyentv@yahoo.com](mailto:hoangkhuyentv@yahoo.com)

Phone Number: +84 979631080

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9113-0606>

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### **Abstract**

Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW of the 13th Party Central Committee (hereinafter “Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW”) was promulgated at a time when Viet Nam was confronting a range of emerging socio-economic challenges. The ongoing transformation of the growth model, the profound impacts of digital transformation, the deepening trend of international integration, and the accelerating pace of population ageing have created urgent demands for renewing the mindset, approach, and modalities for implementing social policy. From a theoretical perspective, Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW represents a significant advancement in the Party’s conceptual framework, affirming that social policy functions not only as an instrument to ensure social security but also as a driver of human development and sustainable social progress. From a practical perspective, the Resolution seeks to fundamentally reform Viet Nam’s social policy system in the context of transitioning toward a knowledge-based and digital economy, one that requires modern, data-driven, and people-centered social governance. Accordingly, this article aims to: (1) analyze the foundations and core values embodied in Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW; and (2) propose orientations and solutions for developing a modern, flexible, inclusive, and human-centered social protection system that ensures social equity, enhances quality of life, and promotes sustainable national development in the new era.

### **Keywords:**

*Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW; social policy; comprehensive social protection; sustainable national development.*

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\* Corresponding author: Assoc. Prof., Ph.D. Hoang Kim Khuyen.  
Email: [hoangkhuyenisl@gmail.com](mailto:hoangkhuyenisl@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

Over more than a decade of implementing social policies during the period 2012–2020, Viet Nam has achieved a number of significant outcomes. The national poverty rate has fallen to below 2.9% (Dinh Hiep, 2024); more than 95.5% of the population is covered by health insurance (VOV, 2025); the unemployment rate remains under 3% (General Statistics Office, 2025); and the living standards of the population have continued to improve (Party Central Committee, 2023). However, alongside these notable achievements, Viet Nam continues to face a series of persistent challenges, including income inequality, population ageing, disparities in access to social services, low-quality human resources, climate change, epidemics, and various non-traditional risks.

More importantly, the new development context presents profound and long-term structural challenges. The far-reaching impacts of digital transformation, the knowledge-based economy, and deepening international integration are rapidly reshaping employment structures, social protection systems, and models of social governance. At the same time, challenges in the governance and implementation of social policy have become increasingly evident, as the legal framework remains fragmented and overlapping, resources for social protection are insufficient, and the pace of digital transformation remains slow, limiting the effectiveness of data connectivity, sharing, and monitoring.

In response to these urgent demands, Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW of the 13th Party Central Committee was promulgated, establishing a renewed mindset and strategic vision for social policy development, oriented towards comprehensive reform and ensuring proactive, inclusive, and sustainable social protection. Accordingly, in addition to analyzing the seven core values of Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW, this article also examines the current state of social policy implementation and proposes solutions for building a modern, human-centered, and flexible social protection system, thereby laying the foundation for sustainable national development in the new era.

## 2. Overview of Research and Research Methods

### 2.1. Overview of Research

Since the promulgation of Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW of the 13th Party Central Committee on 24 November 2023 concerning the continued reform and improvement of social policy, initial publications have primarily focused on presenting the viewpoints, objectives, key tasks, and major solutions articulated in the Resolution, serving mainly propagative and interpretative purposes. These works play an important role in clarifying the Resolution's core contents; however, they remain largely descriptive and have not yet engaged in deeper theoretical or empirical analysis of the long-term implications of Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW for shaping a comprehensive social protection system in the new context.

At a broader level, there exists a substantial body of domestic research on social policy and social protection in Viet Nam, particularly in the areas of multidimensional poverty reduction, expansion of social insurance and health insurance coverage, and the development of a more inclusive national safety net. National reports on poverty reduction and sustainable development indicate that Viet Nam has achieved remarkable progress in reducing

multidimensional poverty and expanding access to basic services, thereby gradually forming a more inclusive social protection system. Several other studies examine the evolution of Viet Nam's social protection framework, highlighting the shift from a single-dimensional to a multidimensional approach, the need for modernization in social protection management, the development of integrated social protection databases, and the consolidation of social assistance programmes.

From an international theoretical perspective, comprehensive social protection systems and the social protection floor have been recognized by major global organizations such as the ILO, the United Nations, and the World Bank as foundational pillars for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the objective of "leaving no one behind" (ILO, 2023). These studies emphasize the importance of a multi-tiered, universal social protection architecture that links social insurance, social assistance, and essential social services, while also requiring modernized social governance based on digital data systems, streamlined benefit delivery, and lifecycle-based risk management. These insights serve as valuable references for situating Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW within global trends in social protection reform.

Nevertheless, several clear research gaps can be identified:

- (i) a lack of in-depth studies that systematize and elucidate the new core values embodied in the Resolution as a development in the Party's conceptualization of social policy;
- (ii) limited research directly linking the Resolution to the requirements of building a comprehensive social protection system in the context of digital transformation, population ageing, territorial inequalities, and intensifying climate-related risks; and
- (iii) insufficient analytical work proposing concrete models and policy instruments to implement the vision of "proactive, inclusive, and sustainable" social protection in Viet Nam.

This article seeks to contribute to addressing these gaps by identifying and analyzing the key values of Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW and proposing policy recommendations to develop a modern, flexible, inclusive, and human-centered social protection system aligned with the requirements of sustainable national development in the new era.

### **3. Discussion**

#### **3.1. Foundations and Core Values of Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW in Practice**

As Viet Nam enters a new stage of development characterized by comprehensive transformations in the growth model, social structure, and the quality of human resources, Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW of the 13th Party Central Committee was promulgated, marking a major turning point in the Party's thinking and strategic orientation regarding social policy. The Resolution deeply inherits the ideological principle of "placing people at the center" of the Vietnamese revolutionary pathway, while concretizing the imperatives of deep international integration, rapid digital transformation, and accelerated population ageing. With a strategic vision, the Resolution not only expands the scope of social protection but also shapes a new model of social development, shifting from "passive support" to "proactive 保障," and from a

“subsidizing state” to a “facilitating and coordinating state” (Đào Ngọc Dung, 2025). This asserts the role of social policy as a central driver of sustainable, equitable, and humanistic development.

Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW crystallizes six core values that embody the Party’s comprehensive reform mindset on human development in the twenty-first century—harmonizing economic growth with social equity, and integration with national identity. It may be regarded as a new charter for social development, laying the foundation for inclusive welfare, comprehensive human development, and strengthened social cohesion in the cause of building and safeguarding the socialist Vietnamese Fatherland.

**First, reaffirming that people are the center of social policy and sustainable development.**

*Historically*, this value stems from the ideological foundations of Marxism–Leninism and Ho Chi Minh’s thought regarding the role of the People in the revolutionary cause, consistently reflected in the principle “the people are the root.” President Ho Chi Minh emphasized: “There is nothing more precious in the sky than the People. There is nothing stronger in this world than the unity of the People” (Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, 2011). Building upon this tradition, the Communist Party of Viet Nam has always identified human beings as both the center and subject, the resource and objective of all development policies. This core value thus embodies the humanistic and progressive nature of the socialist regime in Viet Nam—placing human beings at the heart of all undertakings. Beyond representing the philosophy of “development for the people,” it also reflects a shift from purely economic development toward holistic development, in which growth must be linked to equity, welfare, and human dignity.

*Substantively*, Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW affirms that social policy must aim to improve material and spiritual well-being, ensure equitable development opportunities for all, and guarantee that no one is left behind. Policies related to education, health care, employment, social insurance, and welfare must be designed and implemented with people at the center. All policy decisions must be measured by the extent to which they improve the quality of life, public satisfaction, and the active participation of people in development processes. In practice, Viet Nam has achieved significant progress reflecting this value. The multidimensional poverty rate declined from 9.9% (2015) to 2.9% (2023) (General Statistics Office, 2023). The Human Development Index (HDI) reached 0.726 in 2023, ranking 107 out of 193 countries, placing Viet Nam in the group of high human development nations (UNDP, 2025). Universal health insurance, the National Target Programme on Sustainable Poverty Reduction, and policies on open education and lifelong learning are concrete illustrations of the “people-centered” principle.

*Thus*, the value of “people at the center of development” serves as a guiding principle and evaluation criterion for social policy effectiveness in the new period. Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW reaffirms the Party’s mission of building a society of the people, by the people, and for the people where every citizen enjoys the fruits of growth and has opportunities for comprehensive development.

**Second, comprehensive reform, modernization, and enhancement of social policy quality.**

This core value arises from the inevitable requirements of the new development stage, in which Viet Nam is undergoing profound transformations in its growth model, social governance, and public service delivery. In the context of rapid digital transformation, deep international

integration, and accelerated population ageing, the current social policy system reveals limitations in interconnectivity, managerial effectiveness, and adaptability to technological advancement. Responding to these realities, Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW establishes a fundamental and comprehensive reform orientation for social policy, positioning it as a pillar of sustainable development governance rather than merely a support instrument. Reform here entails not only technical and administrative changes, but also a conceptual shift from “passive support policies” to “proactive developmental policies,” and from a “subsidizing state” to a “facilitating and coordinating state.” Social policy is therefore conceptualized as a driver of social regulation and development orientation, contributing to reducing inequality, strengthening social trust, and ensuring equitable access to opportunities. This reflects a strong people-centered development mindset in which the State plays a leading role while fostering active participation from businesses, social organizations, and communities.

Fundamentally, comprehensive reform of social policy under Resolution No. 42 involves modernizing the entire policy governance cycle—from formulation to implementation and monitoring—based on digital platforms, open data, and transparent coordination mechanisms. This process rests on three pillars:

- (1) Institutional reform and enhanced state management capacity, towards a unified, transparent, predictable legal system with effective intersectoral coordination;
- (2) Modernization of social service delivery, through digital transformation, national databases, digital identification, and cashless benefit payments;
- (3) Strengthening evidence-based policymaking, ensuring scientific, data-driven policy formulation, strict monitoring, and timely policy feedback.

Empirical developments strongly illustrate this orientation. The national database on social and health insurance now covers more than 98 million citizens and is connected with the national population database (Viet Nam Social Security, 2024). The implementation of the National Digital Transformation Programme to 2030, with a vision to 2045, has created breakthroughs in social protection governance. According to the 2023 National Digital Transformation Report, all ministries, sectors, and localities operate electronic administrative procedure systems, and over 90% of applications related to social insurance, health insurance, and social assistance are processed online (Ministry of Information and Communications, 2023). Notably, data integration between the National Population Database and Viet Nam Social Security has reduced the time required for social assistance payments to one-third of previous levels, greatly improving service delivery (Viet Nam Social Security, 2024). As a result, UNDP recognizes Viet Nam as one of the fastest-progressing countries in human-centric digital transformation in Southeast Asia. In 2023, Viet Nam’s HDI reached 0.767, ranking 107 out of 193 countries, reflecting the country’s efforts to harmonize economic growth, social development, and technological innovation (UNDP, 2024).

From these foundations, it can be affirmed that the value of “comprehensive reform and modernization of social policy” embodied in Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW reflects not only the Party’s strategic vision for modern social governance but also the adaptability and institutional

creativity of Viet Nam in the digital age—towards building a smart, flexible, and human-centered social policy system in service of sustainable national development.

**Third, developing human resources and a modern labour market capable of adapting to the digital economy and population ageing.**

This core value is shaped by two structural challenges that Viet Nam is currently facing. First, the quality of human resources remains limited, with a large share of the workforce lacking advanced professional and digital skills, and therefore not yet meeting the requirements of industrialization, modernization, and digital transformation. Second, the rapid pace of population ageing is exerting significant pressure on social protection expenditures and reducing the ratio of workers to dependents. Specifically, according to the 2024 mid-term population census, people aged 60 and over accounted for 60.2% of the population, indicating a clear ageing trend (General Statistics Office, 2025). This value demonstrates that the Party and the State regard high-quality human resources as a strategic factor determining sustainable development. At the same time, developing a labour force with digital capabilities, an innovative mindset, and the capacity for international integration is not only essential for the digital economy but also a means of ensuring equity and preventing vulnerable groups from being left behind.

In essence, this value is about human development within a flexible, modern, and future-oriented labour market. Human resources are not viewed as a cost, but as a long-term investment. The labour market operates both as a mechanism for allocating employment and as a platform for unleashing individual potential, fostering creativity and enabling adaptation to technological change, while still ensuring social protection for all age groups.

At the substantive level, Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW sets out four strategic, transformative pillars for building a flexible, high-quality, and sustainable labour market.

(1) Developing a flexible, integrated, and sustainable labour market so as to promote stable employment while allowing flexible contractual arrangements, adjusting the size of the informal labour force, and expanding international cooperation in labour mobility. In the context of deep integration, opening the labour market and promoting flexible contractual forms help workers adapt more quickly to economic fluctuations.

(2) Strengthening the linkage between the education and training system and the labour market is an indispensable requirement. The Resolution calls for reform of curricula, enhancement of digital and vocational skills, and the organization of retraining for workers to cope with technological change. For example, Decision No. 2239/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister dated 30 December 2021 approving the Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education for the period 2021–2030, with a vision to 2045, emphasizes that “developing vocational education is a top priority in human resource development” and sets the target of raising the proportion of trained workers with qualifications and vocational skills to 35–40% by 2030.

(3) Promoting lifelong learning, based on the view that constant knowledge renewal and flexible career transitions are vital in the digital era. Workers are encouraged to participate in short-term and online training courses to acquire new skills and adapt to market demands. In practice, many communication and training programmes in enterprises aimed at building the

“learning citizen” have been widely promoted to foster a culture of learning within the workforce, such as the Green Learning Promotion initiative (Truong Manh Tien, 2025).

(4) In the context of population ageing, developing an employment strategy for older persons, prioritizing jobs that are suitable for their health conditions, and mobilizing labour potential across all age groups. This not only reduces the burden on the social protection system but also enriches the social labour resource. International cooperation documents likewise stress the importance of ensuring the right to work and lifelong learning for older persons within a “society for all ages.”

Thus, taken together, these four pillars reflect a shift in thinking under Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW from viewing labour merely as a passive production factor to building a proactive, flexible, and innovative labour market, in which people are invested in, learn and develop throughout their lives, enabling the country to escape the low-skill trap in the era of digital transformation.

#### **Fourth, building a multi-tier, inclusive, and socialist-oriented social protection system.**

This value arises from the pressing requirements of national development in a context of increasing social risks driven by climate change, epidemics, population ageing, and global economic instability. In reality, Viet Nam needs a social protection network that is sufficiently broad and sufficiently deep to respond to rising social risks. Although the Vietnamese social protection system has achieved important results during the period 2012–2020, with the poverty rate falling to 2.93% in 2023 under the multidimensional poverty standard (General Statistics Office, 2024), it remains fragmented, with limited coverage and insufficient resilience to new shocks. Therefore, designing a multi-tier, flexible, sustainable, and socialist-oriented social protection system is a strategic step towards ensuring equity, stability, and human development in the new period.

Accordingly, Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW affirms that social protection is not merely a safety net but a pillar of national development. It is designed to be multi-tiered, sustainable, and flexible, combining the roles of the State, society, and citizens, and ensuring that “no one is left behind.” In other words, social protection plays a crucial role in strengthening social trust, maintaining political stability, and laying the foundation for sustainable development. Each tier of social protection, from social insurance and health insurance to social assistance and public welfare services, is aimed at strengthening people’s capacity for self-protection while simultaneously supporting vulnerable groups, so that no one is left behind.

At the substantive level, the social protection system envisaged by Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW is structured around four strategic tiers that are both inclusive and flexible, ensuring that each tier supports and complements the others in protecting people from social risks:

(1) The first tier is social insurance, which serves as the core mechanism for income replacement when workers lose their jobs, fall ill, take maternity leave, suffer occupational accidents or diseases, retire, or die. Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW clearly identifies the task of expanding social insurance coverage towards universal participation, with the target that 60% of the labour force will be covered by social insurance by 2030, marking a shift in thinking from needs-based income transfers to sustainable income security for workers across the life cycle.

(2) The second tier is health insurance, which ensures that every citizen has equitable access to basic health care services. In practice, by 2023, more than 93.6 million people were enrolled in health insurance, equivalent to 93.35% of the population, approaching the universal health coverage goal set by the Resolution and relevant legislation (Viet Nam Social Security, 2024). The expansion of health insurance demonstrates a strong commitment to equity in health care and is evidence of the growing flexibility and responsiveness of the social protection system.

(3) The third tier consists of social assistance and basic welfare, targeting vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, older persons, and children in difficult circumstances. Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW emphasizes the expansion of community-based care services, support for accessing public services, and connecting people to social welfare networks to reduce social isolation and enhance linkage between individuals, communities, and the State.

(4) Finally, the fourth tier integrates employment policies, poverty reduction, and sustainable development, ensuring that social protection is not separated from economic development and formal employment. Under this orientation, social protection is closely linked with the creation of stable jobs, incentives for enterprises to use formal labour, and the promotion of innovative vocational training to enhance workers' capacity and reduce dependence on pure cash transfers.

In practice, this multi-tier system has demonstrated clear effectiveness. By 2023, more than 95.5% of the population had participated in at least one form of insurance (social insurance, health insurance, or unemployment insurance), and over 33 million people received social protection benefits annually (Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, 2024). Notably, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government implemented two large-scale social protection support packages: Resolution No. 42/NQ-CP dated 9 April 2020, with a support package of VND 62 trillion, and Resolution No. 68/NQ-CP dated 1 July 2021, with a package of VND 26 trillion. In total, more than VND 88 trillion was disbursed to provide direct support to approximately 56 million individuals affected by the pandemic. These measures demonstrate that Viet Nam's social protection system has shown timely, flexible, and effective responsiveness to severe economic and social shocks (Government, 2022). Importantly, the international community has also recognized Viet Nam as one of the ASEAN countries with a comprehensive and sustainably inclusive approach to social protection, effectively combining social insurance, health insurance, social assistance, and multidimensional poverty reduction within a unified institutional framework (UNDP, 2024).

**Fifth, enhancing universal social welfare towards equitable, high-quality, and comprehensive access.**

This core value arises from the profound socio-economic transformations taking place in Viet Nam, especially as the economy enters a phase of growth driven by knowledge, technology, and innovation. In this context, gaps in income, living conditions, and access to social services among different population groups and regions remain substantial; although the multidimensional poverty rate has fallen sharply, people's quality of life has not yet fully matched the achievements in economic growth. This is evidenced by the General Statistics Office's report showing that the multidimensional poverty rate decreased from 9.9% in 2015 to 2.93% in 2023, while rural areas, mountainous regions, and ethnic minority communities still experience significantly lower living

standards (General Statistics Office, 2024). This situation provides both the empirical and theoretical basis for the Party to establish the enhancement of universal welfare as a new pillar of social policy, inheriting the spirit of “a prosperous people, a strong country, democracy, justice and civilization” in Ho Chi Minh’s thought and in the Party’s line on comprehensive human development.

In essence, this value reflects a shift from social policy primarily oriented towards poverty reduction to a model of proactive welfare development, in which improving quality of life, ensuring equity in access, and expanding development opportunities constitute the core objectives. Social welfare is no longer understood merely as “support for vulnerable groups” but as a fundamental right of every citizen, associated with the shared responsibility of the State, enterprises, and society in creating a safe, humane, and sustainable living environment. Furthermore, the essence of this value lies in its comprehensiveness and integrative nature. Social welfare is expanded not only in the economic sphere but also across culture, education, health care, housing, the environment, and digital transformation. Six basic social services education, health care, housing, culture, information, and clean water—are regarded as foundational standards of modern social protection, ensuring that every citizen can develop in a balanced manner both materially and spiritually. This reflects the socialist orientation of welfare policy: placing human beings at the center, equity as the objective, and sustainable development as the long-term orientation.

Accordingly, in education, Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW emphasizes expanding learning opportunities from early childhood education to higher education, with particular attention to disadvantaged and remote areas, while promoting models of lifelong learning. In health care, it requires universal access to basic health services, the accelerated application of information technology in health care, the interconnection of medical examination and treatment data and electronic medical records, and broader sharing of health data among facilities. In housing, the State promotes policies on social housing, including preferential access to land, credit, and regulatory incentives to reduce costs and increase supply. In the cultural sphere, it prioritizes the development of cultural infrastructure, the preservation of traditional values, and the expansion of access to cultural and recreational activities, especially in disadvantaged regions. In the field of information, it calls for expanding access to digital technologies and information and communication services to all communities, narrowing the digital divide between regions, and encouraging universal Internet access and digital applications in social governance. In relation to clean water and the environment, it aims to secure a safe water supply, improve wastewater treatment, and enhance living environments, particularly in economically disadvantaged and rural areas.

In practice, the implementation of this value has produced concrete results. Health insurance coverage reached 93.35% of the population in 2023, ensuring more equitable access to health services across regions (Viet Nam Social Security, 2024). In 2024, 28 housing projects with 20,284 units were completed nationwide (an increase of approximately 46% compared with 2023, equivalent to around 6,420 units); 23 projects with 25,399 units were licensed and commenced construction (an increase of about 13% compared with 2023, roughly 3,000 units); and 113 projects, comprising 142,450 units, received approval in principle (an increase of about 101% compared with 2023). These developments have contributed to improving living conditions

for workers and low-income groups (MOC, 2025). Regarding clean water and sanitary latrines in households in 2024, data from the General Statistics Office show a marked improvement in sanitary and water supply conditions. Some 99.7% of urban households and 98% of rural households use hygienic water sources; the Red River Delta and the Southeast have the highest rates (99.9%), while the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region have the lowest (94.4%). The proportion of households with sanitary latrines reached 97.5%, an increase of 0.8 percentage points compared with 2023 and 17.4 percentage points compared with 2014. Rural areas saw substantial improvement, from 73.6% to 96.2% over 2014–2024. The Red River Delta and the Southeast again lead (99.8%), while the Central Highlands records the lowest rate (92.3%) (General Statistics Office, 2025). These results show that household living standards and sanitation conditions have improved comprehensively, reflecting the effectiveness of the new rural development policy and Viet Nam’s commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals on clean water and sanitation.

**Sixth, innovating the model of social service delivery, and promoting socialization and public–private partnerships (PPP).**

At present, it is evident that public budget resources are inherently limited, while demand for social services is increasingly diverse and quality requirements are becoming higher. In this context, a model in which the State alone finances and manages all social services is no longer appropriate, often resulting in overlaps, inefficiencies, and imbalances. Faced with this reality, the Party and the State have determined the need to diversify resources and mobilize the participation of society and the private sector through public–private partnerships (PPP) and the socialization of service provision, thereby easing fiscal pressure, improving governance efficiency, and ensuring service quality. This value, therefore, reflects a new way of thinking about social policy in the current period: the State is both a direct provider and, more importantly, a facilitator that creates an enabling environment for social actors to participate in service delivery, ensuring that citizens become active beneficiaries. This model contributes to expanding access, improving service quality, and fostering competition, while preserving the State’s coordinating and regulatory role.

Substantively, in reforming the provision of social services, Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW identifies four specific directions aimed at restructuring delivery modalities—from payment mechanisms to quality monitoring—towards socialization and PPP:

(1) First, encouraging public–private partnerships (PPP) is a breakthrough in implementing projects to provide services such as health care, education, water supply and drainage, and urban infrastructure. From a legal perspective, PPP is a model of cooperation between the State and private enterprises in which the parties clearly share responsibilities, risks, and benefits in order to provide public services effectively. Through this model, the State does not have to bear all investment costs; instead, the private sector contributes financial resources, technology, and managerial capacity, thereby expanding service provision without exerting excessive pressure on the public budget.

(2) Second, promoting the socialization of public and publicly oriented services. In this respect, the State may delegate, contract out, or purchase services from non-public entities

(private providers, social organizations) in areas such as health care, education, culture, and environmental sanitation.

(3) Third, advancing modern, cashless, and interoperable payment mechanisms. When services are socialized or delivered under PPP contracts, people can access them more easily via electronic payment platforms; national databases are interconnected to reduce transaction costs, enhance transparency, and shorten processing times.

(4) Fourth, strengthening supervision, standardization, and quality assurance in service provision. This includes setting service standards, establishing independent accreditation mechanisms and monitoring systems, and stipulating sanctions for providers that fail to comply with regulations.

In practice, these orientations have been concretized by the Government's issuance of Resolution No. 91/NQ-CP dated 18 June 2024 on enhancing the socialization of public service delivery, which aims to facilitate non-public providers' access to tax, credit, and land incentives, while reducing administrative procedures. This mechanism preserves the public nature of services while leveraging the capacity and creativity of the non-public sector. The Resolution requires ministries, sectors, and localities to review and improve preferential policies on land, tax, and credit, in order to create favourable conditions for non-public service providers. In reality, many provinces and cities have begun issuing documents to implement this Resolution in their jurisdictions and have simplified procedures for establishing and licensing organizations participating in socialized service provision in specific fields. For example, the People's Committee of Nghe An Province issued Document No. 6092/UBND-KT dated 19 July 2024 on the implementation of Resolution No. 91/NQ-CP on promoting the socialization of public services in the province. These developments attest to a fundamental shift in thinking about social service provision—from a “subsidizing State” model to a “facilitating State,” in which the State assumes the role of orienting, regulating, and accrediting; society and enterprises participate in provision; and citizens become proactive beneficiaries with the right to choose and monitor services.

In sum, the six core values embedded in Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW crystallize the Party's new development thinking on social policy in a period of comprehensive transformation, reflecting a profoundly humanistic, modern, and internationally integrated orientation. Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW not only seeks to ensure social protection, but also to build an inclusive social welfare system, foster comprehensive human development, and construct a just, civilized, and compassionate society, fully consistent with the principle of “placing people at the center of sustainable national development.”

### **3.2. Recommendations for Addressing Challenges, Building Comprehensive Social Protection and Promoting Sustainable National Development in the New Era**

At present, as Viet Nam enters a new stage of development characterized by profound transformations driven by digital transformation, international integration, and rapid population ageing, the creation of a comprehensive, modern, and human-centered social protection system is not only a policy requirement but also a strategic task of national development. The six core values affirmed in Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW have opened a fundamentally renewed orientation

for Viet Nam's social policy. However, to translate these values into practice, a coherent, innovative, and feasible set of solutions is required, aimed at building an inclusive, equitable, and sustainably developed Viet Nam for all citizens. Specifically:

**First, building a data-driven welfare state to shift from manual management to intelligent digital governance.**

A data-driven welfare state is a model in which the State uses big data, artificial intelligence (AI), and digital technologies to manage, analyse, and make decisions on social protection policies in a scientific, timely, and effective manner. Its central characteristic is the use of data as the foundation for intelligent and proactive governance, oriented towards a comprehensive, interconnected, transparent, and efficient digital social protection ecosystem. In the context of robust national digital transformation, a comprehensive social protection system can only operate effectively if it is built upon a unified, open, and interoperable data infrastructure. It is therefore necessary to establish a “data-driven welfare state” in which all policies are operated, monitored, and adjusted on a digital, real-time, interconnected platform. Linking population, social insurance, health, education, social assistance, and employment databases will make it possible to build an electronic social protection profile for each citizen, thereby ensuring accurate, sufficient, rapid, and transparent benefit delivery. At the same time, a national social protection dashboard should be developed to forecast and automatically trigger policy responses when social risks arise (such as epidemics, natural disasters, or localized unemployment). This constitutes the foundation for Viet Nam's transition from administrative management to smart governance, with evidence-based policymaking at its core. In practice, Viet Nam has achieved initial results in the digital transformation of social protection, especially in connecting and sharing data among national systems. The Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (now the Ministry of Home Affairs) has cooperated with the Ministry of Public Security and Viet Nam Social Security to integrate population, insurance, and social assistance data for management, payment, and policy monitoring. However, the degree of integration and the capacity to exploit data remain limited; most localities are still at the stage of digitizing files and partial connectivity, and a truly coherent “social protection data ecosystem” has yet to be formed.

**Second, reforming multi-tier social protection financing to ensure sustainability and inclusion of the informal sector.**

Multi-tier social protection financing reform is the process of restructuring financial resources for social protection into multiple layers and sources, with risk-sharing mechanisms and long-term fiscal sustainability. “Multi-tier” here refers to the combination of three levels of protection: a basic layer guaranteed by the State (social assistance, social preferences, basic health insurance); a mandatory contributory layer (social insurance, unemployment insurance); and a voluntary and supplementary layer (voluntary pension and other voluntary schemes). The inclusion of the informal sector underscores that social protection financing reform must not only serve the formal labour sector (with contracts and mandatory social insurance contributions), but also extend coverage to informal workers, who are particularly vulnerable and insufficiently protected. An effective social protection system must therefore expand coverage while maintaining a balance between inclusiveness and financial sustainability. The State needs to redesign flexible contribution–benefit models, enabling informal workers to participate with

contribution levels suited to their capacity, and to develop micro-insurance schemes for short-term risks. Establishing a Social Protection Stabilization Fund to cushion economic downturns, together with conditional social assistance linked to education, employment, and nutrition, will help ensure proactive social protection that does not rely solely on the State budget. This reform embodies a preventive rather than reactive approach, enabling people to better cope with and recover more rapidly from socio-economic shocks.

**Third, developing adaptive human resources and labour markets to build proactive social protection.**

Developing human resources and adaptive labour markets involves building a workforce with skills, innovative capacities, and the ability to flexibly adapt to the dynamics of the digital, green, and circular economies, while establishing an open, interconnected, transparent, and flexible labour market. Building proactive social protection means that the social protection system not only supports people when risks materialize, but also proactively prevents risks, enhances workers' self-protection capacities, and promotes their active participation through training, sustainable employment, and flexible insurance mechanisms. In essence, developing human resources and adaptive labour markets is a strategic pathway towards proactive social protection, in which workers are no longer passive in the face of risks but are equipped with the capacity to adapt, learn, and develop throughout their lives. This constitutes a dynamic social protection ecosystem, where sustainable employment is the foundation, education is the key instrument, and human beings are the center of development. Substantively, the State needs to implement a National Strategy on digital skills, green skills, and lifelong learning, ensuring that all citizens have opportunities to enhance their adaptive capacity. Skill vouchers or individual learning accounts can enable workers to take the initiative in upskilling and career transitions. At the same time, the vocational education and training system must be driven by labour market demand, with strong linkages among schools, enterprises, and the State. In addition, flexible and elderly-friendly employment models should be developed to address the challenges of ageing while harnessing the experience and potential of older workers, thereby ensuring inclusive development.

**Fourth, innovating the model of social service provision: standardized PPPs, results-based purchasing, and professional social work.**

This is a new orientation in Viet Nam's social policy reform, aiming to create a modern, transparent, and people-centered social service ecosystem, in which the State is no longer the sole provider but primarily acts as a facilitator, coordinator, and quality overseer. In other words, a sustainable welfare system cannot rely solely on the State budget; the State must establish mechanisms to promote the socialization of public services and public-private partnerships (PPP) in areas such as health care, education, housing, clean water, and culture. The State should shift from direct provision to a facilitating and coordinating role by commissioning services, organizing competitive bidding, establishing independent accreditation, and purchasing services based on results (results-based financing – RBF). At the same time, unified standards of social service quality must be developed to ensure that both public and non-public providers adhere to principles of equity, transparency, and the primacy of the public interest. Only when these measures are effectively implemented can the expansion of this model both mobilize social

resources and foster multi-centric governance, in which the State, enterprises, and society share responsibility for welfare development.

**Fifth, territorial welfare and climate risk resilience to reduce disparities and strengthen adaptive capacity.**

This represents a new value of modern social protection policy, reflecting a development approach grounded in territorial equity, environmental sustainability, and societal resilience to climate change. This approach is increasingly adopted by the United Nations and many countries, as territorial inequality and climate risks have become decisive factors shaping the quality of life and human security. Territorial welfare refers to the design and implementation of social welfare policies that take into account regional characteristics, ensuring that all citizens, whether living in urban, rural, mountainous, or island areas, have equitable access to basic social services (health care, education, employment, welfare infrastructure) at a minimum, fair and geographically appropriate level.

Climate risk resilience, in turn, entails integrating climate change considerations into social protection and community development policies to support vulnerable groups such as farmers, fishers, and migrant workers in minimizing losses, recovering quickly, and adapting sustainably to natural shocks, including storms, floods, droughts, salinity intrusion, or landslides.

Thus, territorial welfare and climate risk resilience constitute both a social policy and a new development philosophy for Viet Nam, oriented toward territorial justice, environmental sustainability, and proactive social protection. Its essence is the linkage of welfare policy with territorial governance and climate governance, ensuring that all people, regardless of living conditions, have the opportunity to live safely, develop, and contribute to the country. This forms the foundation of “sustainable territorial welfare,” a model that is gradually emerging in Viet Nam during the new stage of development.

**4. Conclusion**

Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW of the 13th Party Central Committee constitutes one of the major policy orientations and stands as a development declaration for Viet Nam in the new era, where human beings are placed at the centre of all development strategies. The six core values embodied in the Resolution affirm a significant leap in the Party’s thinking on social protection, marking a shift from passive assurance to proactive creation, from subsidy-based approaches to cooperation and shared social responsibility. The realization of these values requires a new approach to social governance, one based on data, digital technologies, and strong interlinkages among the State, the market, society, and citizens. Only when social protection becomes an open, interconnected, human-centered, and adaptive system can Viet Nam build an equitable, inclusive, and sustainably developed society.

In the long-term vision, Resolution No. 42-NQ/TW not only shapes the model of social protection for today, but also lays the foundation for a Vietnamese welfare society of the 21st century where economic development goes hand in hand with social progress, growth is linked with justice, and every citizen has the opportunity to live in safety, dignity, and happiness. This is the living embodiment of the ideal “a prosperous people, a strong nation, democracy, justice, and

civilization,” the core value toward which the Party, the State, and the People of Viet Nam collectively strive./.

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