

A FEW GUIDELINES ON AMENDING PREFERENTIAL POLICIES FOR REVOLUTIONARY DEVOTEES

Ever since the establishment of the country, preferential policies for revolutionary contributor have been amended and supplemented many times to extend the types of policy beneficiaries, diversify preferential treatments and raise the standard pension. However, more still need to be amended and further developed to ensure that every revolutionary contributor enjoys fair preferential treatments among different types of policy beneficiaries and revolutionary devotees with average or above living standard.

1. Significance of preferential policies for revolutionary devotees

Preferential policies for revolutionary devotees (PPRDs) are major policies of the Party and the State. They are special treatments for revolutionary devotees (RDs), a responsibility, a means to commemorate and honor their contributions to the country. These policies bear political, social and humanitarian, and legal significance.

- *Politically*, PPRDs represent the guidelines of the Party and the State on showing gratitude to those who have rendered service to the people, the Motherland, the power and political stability, and the legitimacy of the regime.

- *Socially and humanitarially*: PPRDs represent the nation's humanitarian traditions and morality of "When drinking water, think of its source; help instill revolutionary traditions and inspire the sense of pride in the youth, encouraging them to take up their forefathers' cause of building and protecting the Motherland. PPRDs also have practical significance in commemorating and ensuring

the material and spiritual life of RDs.

- *Legally*: PPRDs institutionalize the views and guidelines of the Party; concretize the Constitution's regulations.

2. Real situation of the implementation of preferential policies for revolutionary devotees

In the last 70 years, PPRDs have been amended many times (extend the range of policy beneficiaries, raise the standard pension, etc.) to suit the context of economic growth, and ensure social progress and justice. In the initial period, the State only focused on implementing special treatments for war invalids and families or martyrs. Until now, 12 types of RDs¹ have been recognized with special treatments covering all aspects of life, including: monthly allowances; one-time allowances; health insurance cards; nursing; fostering; means of assistance and orthopedic equipment; assistance in education, vocational training and employment; housing assistance; offering incense and paying visits to fallen combatants' graves, burying and relocating their remains; death allowance. The preferential treatment level of several regulations has been raised, including:

- The standard pension has been raised regularly. In the last 5 years, it has been raised 3 times with faster pace than the growth rates of the consumer price index (CPI) and gross domestic product (GDP). In terms of absolute value, the standard preferential pension has always been higher than the basic wage, poverty line's income and especially the standard social subsidy (now 5 times higher).

- RDs and their next of kin² will have

health insurance paid for by the State, with 100% and 95% medical bills covered respectively.

- RDs' nursing regulation has been changed from once every 5 years to once every 2 year.

- With war invalids who have lost 81% or more of their ability to work and come home to live with family, their caretakers will receive monthly allowances in cash and health insurance paid for by the State.

Table 1. A few standards and the increase rate of standard preferential allowance

Unit: thousand dong

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Average spending per capita of the country*	1603	-	1888	-	2157	-
Basic wage (thousand dong)	1.050	1.150	1.150	1.150	1.210	1.300
Standard social benefits	180	180	180	270	270	270
Urban poverty line	500	500	500	500	900	900
Rural poverty line	400	400	400	400	700	700
<i>Standard preferential allowance for RDs</i>	<i>1.110</i>	<i>1.220</i>	<i>1.220</i>	<i>1.318</i>	<i>1.318</i>	<i>1.417</i>
<i>Increase rate of standard preferential allowance for RDs (%)</i>	<i>27,0</i>	<i>10,0</i>	<i>0,0</i>	<i>8,0</i>	<i>0,0</i>	<i>7,5</i>
<i>Growth rate of CPI (%)</i>	<i>9,2</i>	<i>6,6</i>	<i>4,1</i>	<i>0,6</i>	<i>4,7</i>	<i>3,5</i>
<i>Growth rate of GDP (%)</i>	<i>5,3</i>	<i>5,4</i>	<i>6,0</i>	<i>6,7</i>	<i>6,2</i>	<i>6,8</i>

Nguồn: - Compiled from documents on existing policies.

- GSO, annual Statistics Report

* Calculated from the surveyed statistics of people's living standards of GSO.

Up until 01/6/2017, the State had been providing preferential monthly allowances for over 1,340,000 RDs, their next of kin and

caretakers. Every year, the budget for PPRDs is quite large, making up 0.75%-0.82% GDP in the period of 2012-2017.

Table 2. The number of people who receive monthly allowance

Unit: thousand people

	2012	2013	2015	2017
<i>Total</i>	<i>1.380,4</i>	<i>1.397,1</i>	<i>1.384,1</i>	<i>1.340,6</i>
Revolutionary devotees	885,4	919,0	920,5	908,0
RDs' caretakers	17,0	24,1	26,4	32,4
RDs' next of kin	395,5	373,1	355,5	324,8
Others*	82,6	84,0	81,8	75,3

Source: Department of National Devotees

* Soldiers who were engaged in the resistance against the US with under 20 years of serving in the military and have been demobilized (Decision 142/2008/QĐ-TTg), Personnel of the People's Police of Vietnam who were engaged in the resistance against the US with under 20 years serving in the People's Police and have retired or demobilized (Decision 53/QĐ-TTg on 20/8/2010), those who were directly engaged in the war for national defense and in the discharge of international duties after 20/4/1975 according to Decision No. 62/2011/QĐ-TTg.

However, the implementation of PPRDs still needs further improvement:

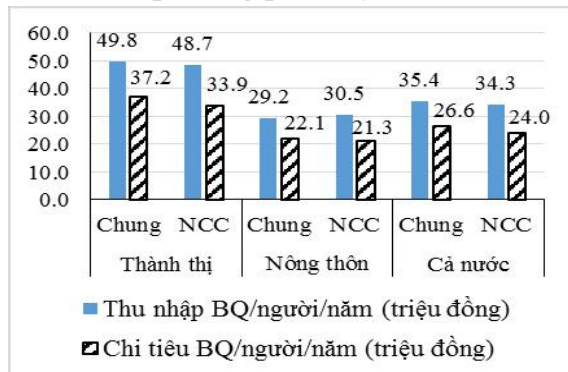
- The standard monthly allowance is still low, specifically only equals 63.8%³ of the

average spending per capita of the whole country.

The average income/person/year of rural RDs' households is higher than others' in the same

region. However, that figure of RDs' households in the national scope and in urban areas is still lower than other households' (34.3 million dong compared to 35.4 million dong and 48.7 million dong compared to 49.8 million dong respectively).

Picture 1. The average income and spending/person/year



Source: Calculated from the statistics in the Survey on household living standards in 2016 of GSO.

- The average spending/person/year of RDs' households is lower than the average spending/person/year of all households (24 million dong compared to 26.6 million dong). This figure is also lower when compared in the urban and rural areas.

- The basis to determine the allowance levels for diseased soldiers and revolutionary participants exposed to toxic chemicals is still inconsistent. Although both are based on the degree of labor disability, the preferential allowance levels for these 2 types of beneficiaries follow inconsistent scales of labor disability (10% and 20% respectively). Consequently, despite having the same degree of labor disability, each type of beneficiaries (both diseased) receive different preferential allowance level.

- The special treatment in education and vocational training is still lower than those belonging to welfare policies. According to existing regulations, beneficiaries of PPRDs can be assisted up to 3 million dong/person/course at primary level or under-3-month course. Meanwhile, people of poor ethnic minorities and poor households in communes, hamlets or mountain villages under especially difficult

circumstances are assisted up to 4 million dong/person/course; participants of unemployment insurance are assisted up to 6 million dong/person/course if unemployed.

- The bonus points added in RDs and their next of kin's results in university entrance exams are too much (due to combining all kinds of preferential points, including those for RDs, ethnic minorities, etc.). Thus, cases with limited ability but still accepted have difficulties meeting training programs' requirements.

- The housing assistance does not limit the number of times RDs' households are assisted (when meet difficulties with accommodation), thus takes up a very large proportion of the state budget (40 million dong/household with seriously damaged house that needs rebuilding; 20 million dong/household with seriously damaged house that need repairing). The total of households need housing assistance up until 31/5/2017 is 313,707 (126,733 rebuilding and 186,974 repairing) with the demand for budget being 8,810 billion dong. Moreover, due to not limiting the number of assistance, until now there have been about 14,00 household benefiting from PPRDs that are in debt from borrowing money on their own to rebuild or repair houses while waiting for State allowance⁴.

- The process of verifying and recognizing RDs still face many obstacles and challenges along with time. At present, there are still over 71,000 cases without sufficient certificates and evidences, including over 26.5 cases without papers as proofs. Because of prolonged verifying process, many cases have died before being recognized. The process of determining the identity of martyrs' remains still lack information and face great difficulties because the remains are no longer whole and the quality of ADN tests cannot be ensured as too much time has passed.

- In addition, up to now preferential policies for revolutionary devotees settling abroad have yet to be implemented; there is

no preferential policies for people engaged in revolutionary activities in the period of 1974-1975 but not long enough to be awarded medals.

3. Recommendations for the policy

Following the guidelines “implementing PPRDs well”, “every RD enjoys special treatment” and “ensuring RDs have average or above living standard”, several policies need prioritizing in amending, including:

(1) Raising the monthly allowances so that the standard pension equals the average spending of the whole country as regulated by the Ordinance on PPRDs.

(2) Revising the basis to determine allowance levels for wounded soldiers and RDs exposed to toxic chemicals to ensure consistency and fairness (consistent in the scale of degrees of labor disability to calculate allowance level).

(3) Revising the regulation on assistance in education and training so that its level is at least equal to that for ethnic minorities and poor households in communes, hamlets and mountain villages under especially difficult circumstances.

(4) Revising the regulation on bonus points in the university entrance exam so that beneficiaries of different preferential policies only receive the highest bonus point.

(5) Revising the regulation on housing assistance allowing only 1 housing assistance/household; from the second time, use preferential credit assistance to help rebuild or repair, except for special cases (unforeseeable risks damage the house).

(6) Boosting the process of handling backlog of cases by “following traces from localities” to ensure transparency and democracy in verifying and recognizing records of organizations and individuals. This also helps minimize perjury and falsifying documents.

(7) Quickly studying and implementing preferential policies for RDs settling abroad; people engaged in revolutionary activities in the period of 1974-1975 but not long enough to be awarded medals.

¹ Ordinance No. 04/2012/ UBTVQH13 amended and supplemented several articles in the Ordinance on preferential treatment for revolutionary devotees with 12 types of beneficiaries including: people engaged in revolutionary activities prior to 01/01/1945; people engaged in revolutionary activities from 01/01/1945 to the August Revolution in 1945; fallen heroes; Heroic Vietnamese Mothers; Heroes of the People’s Armed Forces; Labor Heroes during the resistance; war invalids and those who are entitled to policies regarding war invalids; diseased soldiers; resistance activists exposed to toxic chemicals; revolutionary and resistance activists who were arrested, imprisoned or exiled by the enemy; those taking part in the resistance war for national liberation and national defense, and in discharge or international duties; those who made meritorious deeds in assisting the revolution.

² The next of kin of RDs include: biological parents, wife/husband, child (children) from 6 to 18 years old or ~~over 18 years old if is still studying~~ or have serious or special disabilities Those engaged in revolutionary activities prior to 1/1/1945; those engaged in revolution activities from 1/1/1945 to the August Revolution in 1945; Heroes of the People’s Armed Forces; Labor Heroes during the resistance; war invalids and diseased soldiers who have lost 61% or more of their labor capability; resistance activists who were exposed to toxic chemicals and have lost 61% or more of their labor capability.

³ Calculated from the statistics in the survey on household living standards in 2016 of GSO.

⁴ MOLISA (2017), Draft Master plan on Reforming preferential policies for revolutionary devotees.

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