

HO CHI MINH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF POLITICS

MAI QUANG THANG

**ENSURING THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO
INFORMATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE
IN VIETNAM'S NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND
MOUNTAINOUS REGION**

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

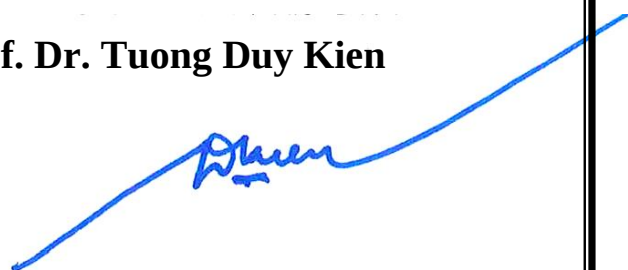
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Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tuong Duy Kien

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INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale for the Study

Vietnam has 54 ethnic groups, including 53 ethnic minority groups. Most ethnic minority people live in mountainous, midland and border areas of strategic importance. Ensuring their right of access to information is therefore both a legal requirement and a condition for improving the effectiveness of national governance.

The 2013 Constitution and the 2016 Law on Access to Information have given concrete expression to the right to know, the right to request information and the right to oversee state agencies. The practical enjoyment of this right, however, remains limited. A 2024 survey showed that 84.6% of ethnic minority people aged 15 and over could read and write Vietnamese; 85.6% of households had an internet-connected device, but only 10.2% used a computer. Technical connectivity, therefore, does not necessarily amount to meaningful access.

These difficulties are concentrated in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region. In 2019, the 14 provinces existing before the administrative reorganisation had more than 7.03 million ethnic minority residents, accounting for 56.15% of the population; in 2024, population density stood at 140 persons per square kilometre and the household poverty rate was 7.8%. Fragmented terrain, poverty, linguistic diversity and disparities in digital capacity increase the cost of access and require appropriate methods of information provision and support. The 2026 Law on Access to Information adds requirements to support ethnic minority people and residents of disadvantaged areas. This provides the basis for the doctoral candidate's selection of the topic, **“Ensuring the Right of Access to Information of Ethnic Minority People in Vietnam's Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region”** with a view to clarifying the theoretical foundations and current situation and proposing solutions.

2. Research Purpose and Objectives

2.1. Research Purpose

The dissertation aims to establish the theoretical and practical foundations for proposing viewpoints and solutions to ensure the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in Vietnam's Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region.

2.2. Research Objectives

To achieve the above aim, the dissertation performs the following principal tasks. First, it analyses and clarifies fundamental theoretical issues concerning the assurance of the right of access to information of ethnic minority people, including its concept, characteristics, role, principles and content. Second, it examines

international standards and the experiences of selected countries in ensuring this right for ethnic minority people or social groups facing comparable conditions of access, thereby drawing lessons relevant to Vietnam. Third, it surveys, analyses and assesses the current state of ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in Vietnam's Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region, identifying achievements, limitations and shortcomings and their causes. Fourth, it proposes viewpoints and feasible solutions to ensure this right more effectively in the coming period.

3. Research Object and Scope

3.1. Research Object

The dissertation examines theoretical, legal and practical issues concerning the assurance of the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in Vietnam's Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region.

3.2. Research scope

- *Substantive scope: The dissertation focuses on the theoretical foundations for ensuring the right of access to information; relevant Vietnamese laws and policies and international standards; the responsibilities of state agencies for proactive disclosure and the provision of information; and the ability of ethnic minority people to access, receive, exploit and use information. It also draws on international experience in order to propose solutions suited to Vietnam's conditions.*

- *Geographical scope: The dissertation is limited to ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in Vietnam's Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region.*

- *Temporal scope: The dissertation surveys, analyses and assesses the situation from 2018 to 2025, the period during which the 2016 Law on Access to Information was in force.*

4. Theoretical Basis and Research Methodology

4.1. Theoretical Basis

The dissertation is grounded in Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought and the views of the Communist Party of Vietnam on human rights, citizens' rights, ethnic equality, human development and sustainable development in ethnic minority areas. To enhance analytical depth and scientific persuasiveness, it also applies several modern theories, including information justice theory, digital divide theory and the capability approach. These theories allow the right of access to information to be approached not only as a legally recognised right, but also in terms of fairness in opportunities to access and benefit from information, the ability to bridge the digital divide and the actual capability of ethnic minority people to receive, understand and use information.

4.2. Research Methodology

The dissertation employs the systems approach; documentary analysis and synthesis; comparative analysis; statistical, data-processing and data-analysis methods; and field surveys.

5. New Scientific Contributions of the Dissertation

First, the dissertation develops a theoretical approach to ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region by combining human rights theory, the principle of ethnic equality, the requirements of the socialist rule-of-law state and the distinctive geographical, economic, cultural, social, linguistic and information-infrastructure conditions of the study area.

Second, it systematically analyses and assesses the legal framework and actual practice of ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region during 2018-2024.

Third, on the basis of the theoretical and practical findings, the dissertation proposes a coherent set of viewpoints and solutions to improve the law, enhance implementation effectiveness and strengthen the conditions for ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region.

6. Theoretical and Practical Significance of the Dissertation

Theoretically, the dissertation contributes to enriching the theoretical foundations for ensuring the right of access to information in the process of building a socialist rule-of-law state in Vietnam, particularly from the perspective of protecting the rights of groups whose conditions of access to information are unequal.

Practically, the dissertation provides additional scientific and empirical grounds for assessing the suitability of current law and the effectiveness of implementing the right of access to information for ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region. Its proposed viewpoints and solutions may also serve as a useful reference for policy-making bodies, state administrative agencies, local authorities, education and research institutions, and other relevant organisations seeking to improve the assurance of this right in the coming period.

7. Structure of the Dissertation

In addition to the Introduction, Conclusion, References and Appendices, the main body of the dissertation comprises four chapters and nine sections.

Chapter 1

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH RELEVANT TO THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

1.1. INTERNATIONAL STUDIES RELEVANT TO THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

1.1.1. Studies clarifying access to information as a human right, a fundamental right and a constitutional right

Studies in this group clarify access to information as a human, fundamental and constitutional right closely linked to freedom of expression, transparency, accountability and the control of public power. Many also identify the role of this right in promoting democracy, preventing and combating corruption, protecting vulnerable groups, and ensuring meaningful access to and use of information in the context of digital transformation.

1.1.2. Studies approaching access to information from the perspectives of access-to-information law, regulatory models and comparative law

Studies in this group approach the right of access to information through access-to-information law, regulatory models and comparative legal analysis across countries. They clarify the principles, substance, procedures, exceptions and protection mechanisms associated with the right, while identifying its relationship with privacy, personal-data protection and the public interest. Comparative analysis demonstrates that effective enforcement depends not only on legislation but also on the political and governance context and a culture of transparency.

1.1.3. Studies linking access to information with transparency, open government, accountability and control of state power

Studies in this group place the right of access to information in close connection with transparency, open government, accountability and the control of state power. They affirm that it is not only an individual legal right but also a condition for modern public governance, helping to curb the misuse of secrecy, strengthen social oversight and reinforce public trust. They also demonstrate the need to balance information disclosure with privacy and data security.

1.1.4. Studies on the right of access to information of vulnerable groups, minorities and ethnic minority communities

Studies in this group show that the right of access to information of vulnerable groups, minorities and ethnic minority people must be considered in relation to language, culture, gender, geography, socio-economic conditions and degree of inclusion. They identify distinctive barriers, including the digital divide, culturally inappropriate information, the absence of ethnic minority languages and weaknesses in communication mechanisms, thereby pointing to the need to ensure the right in a substantive, inclusive and difference-sensitive manner.

1.2. DOMESTIC STUDIES RELEVANT TO THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

1.2.1. Studies on the general theoretical, legal and practical foundations of the right of access to information

Studies in this group provide a relatively comprehensive account of the general theoretical, legal and practical foundations of the right of access to information, from its concept, characteristics and role to its principles, substance and implementation safeguards. They also analyse international law, Vietnamese law and the implementation of the 2016 Law on Access to Information, thereby providing an important theoretical and legal basis for further research on access to information in Vietnam.

1.2.2. Studies on ethnic minority rights, human rights in ethnic minority areas and the assurance of access to information for ethnic minority people

Studies in this group clarify the theoretical, legal and practical foundations of ethnic minority rights and have begun to address this group's right of access to information directly. They identify barriers related to language, gender, geography, infrastructure, educational attainment and socio-economic conditions, and consequently stress the need to improve mechanisms for ensuring access to information in accordance with regional characteristics, culture and the actual needs of ethnic minority people in Vietnam.

1.2.3. Studies on communication, journalism, basic social services and digital transformation in connection with ensuring the right of access to information

Studies in this group extend research on the right of access to information to communication, journalism, basic social services and digital transformation. They show that information is an essential service and that journalism and digital platforms are important channels for ensuring this right. At the same time, digital transformation creates opportunities to expand access while posing challenges concerning the digital divide, language, infrastructure and users' capacity to receive information, especially among ethnic minority people.

1.3. GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH RELEVANT TO THE DISSERTATION TOPIC AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER STUDY

1.3.1. General assessment of research relevant to the topic

A review of studies, documents and articles in Vietnam and abroad concerning the assurance of the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region permits the following observations:

First, domestic and international studies provide important theoretical and practical foundations for the dissertation. At the general level, authors such as Toby Mendel, Alasdair Roberts and Helen Darbishire, together with other international researchers, have helped clarify access to information as a human

and fundamental right and as an instrument for promoting transparency, accountability and control of state power. In Vietnam, the works of Phan Trung Hien, Nguyen Trung Thanh, Liem Van Dinh, Bui Thi Hai and others further clarify the concept, substance, principles, safeguards and practical implementation of the right within the Vietnamese legal system.

Second, within the body of research on ethnic minority rights and the assurance of access to information for ethnic minority people, the works of Lu Van Tuyen, Do Mac Ngan Doanh, Nguyen Thi Song Ha, Vu Thi Thanh, Pham Vo Quynh Hanh and others raise important issues concerning minority rights, barriers to access and the need to improve safeguards under the distinctive conditions of ethnic minority areas. Studies by Luu Van An, Do Thi Hai Ha, Duong Van Quy, Le Thi Hong Hanh and others broaden the approach by linking the right of access to information with communication, journalism, basic social services and digital transformation.

Third, despite the considerable body of related research, few studies offer a comprehensive, specialised and systematic examination of how the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in Vietnam's Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region is ensured from the perspective of human rights law. Published studies constitute valuable sources from which the dissertation inherits theoretical insights, approaches and reference data, but they also reveal research gaps that require further clarification, especially through a specialised, interdisciplinary approach grounded in the actual conditions of ethnic minority people in the region.

1.3.2. Issues for further study in the dissertation

Building selectively on findings from published studies, the dissertation focuses on the following issues:

First, it clarifies the theoretical foundations for ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in Vietnam's Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region from the perspective of human rights law, including the concept, characteristics, role, substance, assessment criteria and enabling conditions.

Second, it systematically analyses the current law and practice relating to the assurance of this right, considering not only legal provisions but also implementation arrangements, information and digital infrastructure, access capabilities, language, educational attainment, customs, practices and settlement patterns.

Third, it identifies limitations and shortcomings and their causes, particularly causes associated with the information gap, the digital divide, socio-cultural characteristics and the current requirements of digital transformation.

Fourth, it proposes viewpoints and solutions to improve the law, enhance implementation effectiveness and strengthen the conditions for ensuring the right

of access to information of ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region in a coordinated, feasible and regionally appropriate manner.

1.4. SCIENTIFIC HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1. Scientific hypothesis

The right of access to information of ethnic minority people in Vietnam's Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region is not currently ensured with effectiveness commensurate with development requirements because the legal and policy framework lacks sufficient specificity and does not fully account for language, culture, geographical conditions and level of development; moreover, the digital divide and limitations in information infrastructure remain significant barriers. If a comprehensive, human-rights-based policy framework is developed that incorporates ethnic minority characteristics, inclusive digital transformation, appropriate information infrastructure and diverse forms of information provision, including ethnic minority languages and suitable communication methods, the effectiveness of ensuring this right will improve. This will help increase participation in state and social governance, strengthen autonomy and promote sustainable development in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region.

1.4.2. Research questions

1. How should the right of access to information of ethnic minority people be understood and ensured under human-rights-based and sustainable-development approaches?
2. What is the current state of ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region, and what are the principal limitations and their causes?
3. To what extent do the existing legal and policy frameworks on access to information account for the distinctive characteristics of ethnic minority people, and where do the legal gaps lie?
4. How do language, culture, geographical conditions and the level of digital-infrastructure development affect ethnic minority people's ability to access information?
5. What lessons can Vietnam draw from international experience in ensuring access to information for minority groups?
6. What policy model and solutions should be designed to ensure the right of access to information of ethnic minority people effectively in the context of digital transformation in Vietnam?

Conclusion to Chapter 1

Domestic and international studies have clarified access to information as a fundamental human right associated with democracy, transparency and sustainable development. In Vietnam, however, research on this right in relation to ethnic

minority people remains fragmented and has not adequately examined the cultural, linguistic and geographical characteristics or digital transformation of the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region. The dissertation topic is therefore urgent and significant in both theoretical and practical terms.

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL AND LEGAL FOUNDATIONS FOR ENSURING THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE

2.1. CONCEPT, CHARACTERISTICS, ROLE, PRINCIPLES AND CONTENT OF ENSURING THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE

2.1.1. Concept and components of the right of access to information

2.1.1.1. Concept of the right of access to information

Under Vietnamese law, the right of access to information is understood as the right of citizens to read, view, listen to, record, copy, photograph or download information proactively disclosed by state agencies or disclosed upon request.

Compared with international law, the right of access to information in Vietnam is significantly narrower: the right-holder is a citizen rather than every person; and, under Vietnamese law, the subject matter is limited to information created by state agencies rather than all information held by them.

2.1.1.2. Components of the right of access to information

Under international law, the right of access to information comprises three specific entitlements: the right to seek information, under which people actively request state agencies to provide information of concern to them; the right to receive information, under which people gain access passively through the State's responsibility and initiative to disclose information; and the right to impart information, which allows people freely to communicate and share information they have obtained with others.

2.1.2. Concept of ethnic minorities

In Vietnam, the term “dan toc” is understood in two senses. In the broad sense, “nation” means a unified community with a common state, territory, economy, socio-political system, language and culture. In the narrow sense, “ethnic group” means a particular ethnos, such as the Tay, Thai, Ba Na, Khmer or Kinh, that is, one of the ethnic components of the Vietnamese national community.

Countries around the world have minority groups distinguished by race, language or religion. The term “minorities” is widely used by international

researchers. Under international law, minorities are protected by human rights law. To date, however, no international instrument has provided a definition of “minorities” or “minority rights.”

Under Government Decree No. 127/2024/ND-CP dated 10 October 2024, amending and supplementing a number of provisions of Decree No. 05/2011/ND-CP on Ethnic Affairs, “ethnic minorities” are ethnic groups whose populations are smaller than that of the majority ethnic group within the territory of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

2.1.3. Concept of the right of access to information of ethnic minority people

The convergence between Vietnamese views and international legal standards shows that access to information for ethnic minority people is not merely a constitutional entitlement arising from ethnic equality, but also a concrete expression of the enjoyment of human rights under distinctive conditions. Accordingly, the right of access to information of ethnic minority people may be defined as the right of citizens belonging to ethnic minorities to access information that responsible agencies and units are required to disclose proactively or provide upon request, in the forms and within the scope prescribed by law, while receiving support and enabling conditions appropriate to their language, culture, place of residence and capacity to receive information so that they may enjoy the right equally and substantively.

2.1.4. Concept, characteristics, role and principles of ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people

2.1.4.1. Concept of ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people

Ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people means the totality of legal, organisational, policy and resource measures established and implemented by the State and other responsible actors to protect and respect the right, create enabling conditions, and ensure that every ethnic minority individual has the practical ability to seek, receive and use information in accordance with law, together with remedies when the right is infringed.

2.1.4.2. Characteristics of ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people

First, it is implemented through ethnic policies and the sector-specific legal system.

Second, the assurance of this right is strongly affected by the languages and cultures of ethnic minority people.

Third, most ethnic minority people face multiple barriers to information because they mainly live in mountainous and border areas and regions with difficult socio-economic conditions.

2.1.4.3. Role of ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people

First, it is an important precondition for ensuring the civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights of ethnic minority people.

Second, it enables ethnic minority people to participate in state and social governance.

Third, it strengthens ethnic minority people's trust in the Party and the State.

Fourth, it raises the awareness and responsibility of agencies, organisations and individuals designated as information-provision focal points under the law.

2.1.4.4. Principles for ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people

First, equality and non-discrimination.

Second, the provision of accurate and complete information.

Third, the timely, transparent and convenient provision of information in accordance with legally prescribed processes and procedures.

Fourth, respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity of ethnic minority people.

Fifth, restrictions on the right of access to information only in cases prescribed by law and for reasons of public interest.

2.1.5. Content of ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people

2.1.5.1. Ensuring the availability of information

2.1.5.2. Ensuring the accessibility of information

2.1.5.3. Ensuring the usability and quality of information

2.1.5.4. Building ethnic minority people's capacity to receive and exercise control over information

2.1.5.5. Ensuring mechanisms for inspecting and overseeing the implementation of the right of access to information of ethnic minority people

2.2. INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND SELECTED NATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN ENSURING ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE'S RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION, AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO VIETNAM

2.2.1. International law on ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people

First, the right of access to information is an integral and inseparable component of human rights.

Second, states have an obligation proactively to facilitate access to information for vulnerable groups.

Third, the right of access to information is a precondition for the exercise of other rights.

Fourth, non-discrimination is the legal foundation of every access-to-information policy.

Fifth, ethnic minority people's rights to participation and oversight must be secured through the right of access to information.

2.2.2. Experiences of selected countries in the region and the world in ensuring ethnic minority people's right of access to information

The doctoral candidate selected the experiences of three countries - China, the Commonwealth of Australia and Sweden - because their laws, policies and practices are relatively representative of different regions of the world; China, in particular, shares many similarities with Vietnam.

2.2.3. Lessons relevant to Vietnam

First, all the countries have policies specifically addressing ethnic minority people and ethnic minority areas in order to ensure access to information and encourage the exercise of this right.

Second, these countries regard ethnic minority people as a vulnerable social group that continues to face socio-economic difficulties, is susceptible to harm and has limited access to information. The State therefore devotes particular attention to this group through specialised laws and policies that provide both material and non-material support for information access.

Third, the State invests in physical infrastructure - electricity, roads, schools and health facilities - and technical infrastructure, including internet networks and mass media, to mitigate difficulties arising from natural and socio-economic conditions and educational attainment, thereby increasing ethnic minority people's access to information. In addition to providing the principal resources, the State encourages economic sectors to support ethnic minority people in all areas, including information access. Information technology and internet services using ethnic minority languages and scripts are also promoted.

Fourth, the State strengthens the training and professional development of cadres and civil servants to safeguard ethnic minority people's right of access to information. Grass-roots civil servants, especially those in poor and mountainous communes, receive training in communication and legal dissemination skills. Ethnic minority cadres are encouraged to serve as linguistic and cultural intermediaries.

Fifth, mechanisms exist for inspecting and overseeing the assurance of access to information for people generally and ethnic minority people in particular. These may take the form of an independent body within the

administrative system, as in Australia and Sweden, or inspection and oversight through requirements that subordinate agencies submit periodic reports on the implementation of citizens' right of access to information, as in China.

Conclusion to Chapter 2

Chapter 2 demonstrates that the right of access to information of ethnic minority people shares the general characteristics of citizens' rights while also displaying distinctive features arising from natural and socio-economic conditions, culture and educational attainment. The chapter identifies the substance of this right and measures for ensuring it, draws on international experience, and affirms that improving Vietnam's access-to-information laws and policies is important for enhancing the responsibility of state agencies, preventing and combating corruption, and meeting people's need for authoritative information.

Chapter 3

CURRENT STATE OF ENSURING THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE IN VIETNAM'S NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION

3.1. FACTORS AFFECTING THE ASSURANCE OF THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE IN VIETNAM'S NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION

3.1.1. Socio-economic characteristics

The socio-economic characteristics of the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region create both potential and barriers for ensuring ethnic minority people's right of access to information. Economic and geographical conditions, infrastructure, educational attainment, linguistic barriers and traditional socio-cultural characteristics directly affect information needs and the ability to access and use information. Policies for ensuring this right must therefore be linked to infrastructure investment, lower access costs, multilingual provision and cultural adaptation.

3.1.2. Current legal and policy framework relating to the assurance of ethnic minority people's right of access to information

The Vietnamese State has progressively developed a constitutional, legal and ethnic-policy framework to ensure ethnic minority people's right of access to information. The right is recognised in the Party's Platform, the Constitution, the 2016 Law on Access to Information and specialised policies on language, communication and technology. Implementation nevertheless remains limited because many provisions are predominantly principle-based and lack arrangements adapted to remote and isolated areas, digital infrastructure, language, and ethnic minority people's capacity to receive information.

3.2. ACHIEVEMENTS, LIMITATIONS AND THEIR CAUSES IN ENSURING THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE IN VIETNAM'S NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION

3.2.1. Achievements in ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region

3.2.1.1. Achievements in ensuring the availability of information

The availability of information in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region has improved through the creation of information catalogues, diversification of disclosure channels, investment in organisational and technical conditions, and stronger legal communication. Substantive effectiveness nevertheless remains uneven across localities: many information portals are difficult to use; information-provision focal points are unclear; grass-roots infrastructure remains limited; and communication activities have not fully enabled people to identify where and how they may access information.

3.2.1.2. Achievements in ensuring the accessibility of information

Information accessibility in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region has advanced markedly through mechanisms for information provision upon request, the designation of receiving focal points, diversification of access channels and compliance with statutory procedures. In practice, however, access still depends heavily on in-person methods, while digital access is uneven because of infrastructure limitations, inadequate digital skills, geographical conditions and ethnic minority people's established information-reception habits.

3.2.1.3. Achievements in ensuring the usability and quality of information

The findings show that the usability and quality of information in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region depend not only on content but also on the suitability of delivery formats, feedback mechanisms and technical information infrastructure. Although many localities have achieved positive results in transmitting and receiving information and handling feedback, enjoyment remains uneven. Gaps in digital infrastructure, mobile-coverage dead zones, limited technological capability and highland conditions continue to constitute major bottlenecks for ethnic minority people.

3.2.1.4. Achievements in building ethnic minority people's capacity to receive and exercise control over information

The capacity of ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region to receive and exercise control over information has improved in literacy, digital skills, legal awareness and demand for information. It remains constrained, however, by disparities in education, gender and place of residence, weak digital infrastructure and uneven legal knowledge. Continuing efforts are therefore required to eliminate illiteracy, improve digital skills and legal awareness, and support access according to actual needs.

3.2.1.5. Achievements in ensuring inspection and oversight mechanisms for implementing ethnic minority people's right of access to information

Inspection and oversight mechanisms in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region have gradually been established through internal regulations, information-provision focal points, feedback and accountability channels, and transparency in decision-making. Their practical operation remains limited, however. Low PAPI and SIPAS scores and low use of complaints, denunciations and legal proceedings indicate that trust and people's capacity for feedback and oversight, especially among ethnic minority people, remain insufficient.

3.2.2. Causes of the achievements

The foregoing analysis shows positive changes in many aspects of ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region. These achievements are not incidental; they arise from a combination of political and legal factors, implementation arrangements and enabling conditions in practice.

First, the leadership and direction of the Party, the State, the Government and local authorities at all levels constitute the foundational cause of the achievements in ensuring the right of access to information.

Second, the legal framework on access to information has gradually been improved and supported by relatively coordinated implementation guidance.

Third, state agencies' awareness of and responsibility for access to information have progressively improved.

Fourth, increased application of information technology and digital transformation has actively supported the exercise of the right.

Fifth, greater attention has been devoted to communication, dissemination and training, with increasingly broad coverage and relatively diverse formats.

Sixth, expanding access channels and methods and combining in-person and electronic approaches have also contributed importantly to these achievements.

3.2.3. Limitations and their causes

3.2.3.1. Limitations

First, although many agencies have developed catalogues of information subject to disclosure, created access-to-information sections and maintained portals or websites, the availability of information remains uneven across agencies, levels of government and localities.

Second, ethnic minority people's practical access continues to be impeded by spatial, infrastructural and linguistic barriers and by the ways in which access is organised.

Third, although an increasing volume of information is disclosed, it is not always easy to understand or use or suited to ethnic minority people's information needs.

Fourth, ethnic minority people's capacity to receive and exercise control over information remains a significant bottleneck.

Fifth, although the law has established an initial basis for inspection, oversight, citizen reception, feedback, petitions and the accountability of state agencies, the practical effectiveness of these mechanisms remains limited.

3.2.3.2. Causes of the limitations

First, causes arising from the legal system. Although a legal framework on access to information has been established, certain provisions of the Law on Access to Information and its implementing decree remain principle-based and insufficiently specific, and some concepts, the scope of information, information-provision responsibilities and implementation mechanisms remain unclear.

Second, causes arising from organisational arrangements and enforcement capacity. In many places, information-provision focal points perform this function concurrently with other duties; staffing is thin and lacks specialised training; and coordination among information-generating units, focal-point units and technical sections is not sufficiently close.

Third, causes arising from material and technical conditions and financial resources. Resources devoted to access-to-information activities remain limited in many places; information-technology infrastructure, data repositories, equipment, management software, records digitisation and interoperable connectivity do not yet fully meet requirements.

Fourth, causes arising from the socio-economic conditions, geography and demographic characteristics of the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region. The region has highly fragmented terrain and dispersed populations, with many remote, isolated and border communes; transport, telecommunications and internet infrastructure are uneven; and a large proportion of ethnic minority people continue to face economic hardship.

Fifth, causes arising from linguistic barriers, educational attainment and digital capability. In many areas, ethnic minority people still encounter difficulty using standard Vietnamese, comprehending legal materials, operating in digital environments and distinguishing authoritative information from unverified information.

Sixth, causes arising from awareness and administrative habits. Some agencies and units do not fully recognise the importance of the right of access to information; caution and concern about responsibility when providing information persist, and administration is sometimes oriented more towards closure and risk avoidance than proactive disclosure.

Seventh, causes arising from communication and dissemination activities and inspection and oversight mechanisms that have not achieved sufficient depth.

Conclusion to Chapter 3

Chapter 3 shows that the assurance of ethnic minority people's right of access to information in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region has achieved positive results in disclosure, information provision, diversification of access channels and improvement of enabling conditions. Enjoyment nevertheless remains uneven because of infrastructure, language, socio-economic conditions, digital capacity and oversight mechanisms. These findings provide an important practical foundation for the solutions proposed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

VIEWPOINTS AND SOLUTIONS FOR ENSURING THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE IN VIETNAM'S NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION

4.1. VIEWPOINTS ON ENSURING THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE

4.1.1. Ensuring ethnic minority people's right of access to information is an inevitable requirement of Vietnam's socialist rule-of-law state

Ensuring ethnic minority people's right of access to information is an objective requirement of Vietnam's socialist rule-of-law state, linked to the protection of human and citizens' rights, the promotion of democracy and the control of state power. The requirement is particularly urgent because ethnic minority people continue to face geographical, linguistic, infrastructural and digital-capacity barriers. The State must therefore ensure this right substantively and equally, in a manner suited to ethnic characteristics and connected with sustainable development and the narrowing of regional disparities.

4.1.2. Ensuring ethnic minority people's right of access to information must be linked to institutionalising the Party's guidelines and improving state law

Ensuring ethnic minority people's right of access to information must be linked to the full and timely institutionalisation of the Party's guidelines on the rule-of-law state, democracy, human rights, citizens' rights and ethnic policy. This requires selective adoption of international standards and progressive experience while remaining grounded in Vietnam's conditions and the distinctive characteristics of ethnic minority areas. Only then can the right be ensured substantively, equally and feasibly and contribute to sustainable development.

4.1.3. Ensuring ethnic minority people's right of access to information must form part of the overall assurance of other human rights

Ensuring ethnic minority people's right of access to information must be placed within the overall assurance of other human and citizens' rights because it is closely connected with the rights to life, development, culture, language,

participation and social security. Only when ethnic minority people have access to complete information appropriate to their language, culture and living conditions can they exercise other rights equally and substantively and strengthen their capacity for self-protection and development.

4.1.4. Ensuring ethnic minority people's right of access to information must be linked to sustainable and inclusive development, substantive equality and ethnic and regional characteristics

Ensuring ethnic minority people's right of access to information must be linked to sustainable and inclusive development and the commitment to leave no one behind. This involves not only protecting a constitutional right, but also creating the conditions for ethnic minority people to participate in, benefit from and protect their interests throughout the development process. The State must therefore ensure the right on the basis of substantive equality and in accordance with their language, culture, places of residence and everyday needs.

4.1.5. Promoting the application of scientific and technological achievements and digital transformation to ensure ethnic minority people's right of access to information

Promoting science, technology and digital transformation is essential to ensure ethnic minority people's right of access to information in a digital society. It not only narrows information and geographical gaps and reduces access costs, but also provides a basis for greater openness and transparency and better enjoyment of authoritative information. The process must, however, take account of the infrastructure, language, culture, educational attainment and digital capacity of each ethnic community.

4.2. SOLUTIONS FOR ENSURING THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE IN VIETNAM'S NORTHERN MIDLANDS AND MOUNTAINOUS REGION IN THE COMING PERIOD

4.2.1. Continuing to improve and specify access-to-information law in order to narrow the information gap

First, the law should continue to be improved by clarifying the scope, substance and limitations of the right of access to information.

Second, legal procedures for exercising the right should be simplified, placing people at the centre, reducing access costs and increasing feasibility.

Third, the legal obligation of proactive disclosure should be fully specified.

Fourth, consistency should be ensured between access-to-information law and the laws on data, electronic transactions, archives, personal-data protection and information security.

Fifth, the obligation to ensure substantive equality for information-disadvantaged groups should be specified.

Sixth, the legal grounds for feedback, complaints, legal proceedings, review of refusals and the handling of violations should be improved.

Seventh, the entities responsible for providing information under the new organisational structure and arrangements for administrative decentralisation should be clearly identified.

Solution 1 emphasises the need to continue improving and specifying access-to-information law in order to narrow the information gap amid the development of a rule-of-law state and digital transformation. Its central tasks are to clarify the scope and limits of the right; simplify procedures and reduce access costs; strengthen state agencies' responsibility for proactive disclosure; link access-to-information law with data governance, digital infrastructure and the standardisation of public information; and design mechanisms that ensure substantive equality for vulnerable groups, especially ethnic minority people. Oversight, complaints, legal proceedings and sanctions should also be strengthened, and the entities responsible for providing information clearly identified. The law must thereby move beyond recognising the right in principle and establish concrete, feasible and inclusive implementation mechanisms.

4.2.2. Strengthening openness and transparency and enhancing the responsibility of agencies and organisations authorised to provide information

First, proactive disclosure should be made more complete, timely and responsive to users' needs.

Second, disclosure on state-agency portals and websites should be standardised.

Third, responsibility for providing information upon citizens' request should be strengthened, particularly where information that should have been disclosed has not been disclosed, is no longer publicly available after expiry of the disclosure period, or is ostensibly disclosed but cannot be accessed by citizens for objective reasons.

Fourth, information should be designed to be easy to understand, use and verify and appropriate to the languages and cultures of ethnic minority people.

Fifth, the role of village elders, village heads, reputable persons and other intermediaries should be promoted as bridges for communication and feedback.

Solution 2 emphasises that stronger openness and transparency and greater responsibility of agencies and organisations authorised to provide information are fundamental to the substantive exercise of ethnic minority people's right of access to information. It requires proactive, complete and timely disclosure; standardised sections, catalogues and information-provision procedures on portals and websites; and information that is accurate, easy to locate and retrieve, and verifiable. Information disclosure should also be linked to transparent administrative procedures, accountability, feedback mechanisms and the

individual responsibility of agency heads and information-provision focal points. In ethnic minority areas, information must be designed to be readily understood and suited to language, culture and actual needs. Digital environments should be combined with grass-roots communication, and village elders, village heads and reputable persons should be engaged to bring authoritative information into community life.

4.2.3. Developing information and communications infrastructure, narrowing the digital divide and establishing appropriate information systems

First, coordinated information and communications infrastructure development should prioritise disadvantaged, remote, isolated, highland and border areas and villages with large ethnic minority populations.

Second, disparities in device ownership and affordability should be narrowed.

Third, alongside telecommunications infrastructure, increasingly complete, coordinated information systems should be established to meet ethnic minority people's essential information needs.

Fourth, establishing appropriate information systems also requires digital applications connected to ethnic minority people's essential needs and direct interests.

Fifth, an especially important addition is the establishment of information-technology assistance points for ethnic minority people in extremely disadvantaged communes and communes containing extremely disadvantaged villages, linked to support for broadband internet access under the public-utility telecommunications programme.

Sixth, the grass-roots information system should be strengthened and traditional communication channels renewed.

Seventh, social media and digital platforms should be used proactively as authoritative, two-way information channels.

Solution 3 identifies the development of information and communications infrastructure, the narrowing of the digital divide and the establishment of appropriate information systems as foundational to ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region. Priority should be given to telecommunications and broadband infrastructure and grass-roots information-technology assistance points, while infrastructure development should be linked to device support, digital skills and people's practical ability to use technology. Interconnected, multi-layer information systems should combine administrative data with information directly serving everyday life; digital applications should cover law, employment, health and disaster warnings; grass-roots information, journalism, radio and television should be strengthened; and more content should be provided in ethnic minority

languages. The solution requires modern technology to be combined with people-centred, readily understood and culturally appropriate communication so that a legally recognised right becomes an equal, substantive and sustainable capacity to access information.

4.2.4. Raising awareness and building the capacity of cadres, civil servants and public employees regarding human rights and the right of access to information, while developing ethnic minority human resources

First, raise cadres', civil servants' and public employees' awareness of human rights and the right of access to information.

Second, consider increasing the time allocated to human-rights and access-to-information modules in regular and formal training programmes for cadres, civil servants and public employees.

Third, strengthen awareness of the responsibility borne by heads and by the corps of leaders and managers.

Fourth, connect greater awareness of the right of access to information with the development of public-service culture and ethics and a people-serving mindset.

Fifth, diversify communication and educational formats for awareness-raising.

Sixth, extend awareness-raising to intermediary forces that communicate information and support the exercise of the right, including legal rapporteurs, communicators, grass-roots information officers, lecturers, teachers and staff of socio-political organisations.

Second major task: build cadres', civil servants' and public employees' capacity concerning the right of access to information.

First, human-rights and access-to-information education should be more firmly institutionalised within formal education and the training system for cadres, civil servants and public employees.

Second, training should focus on the core skills required to enforce access-to-information law.

Third, digital-skills training for implementing the right in the context of digital transformation should be strengthened.

Fourth, training methods should be renewed with practice at their centre.

Fifth, training should cover administrative communication, legal communication and working with people, especially ethnic minority people.

Sixth, mechanisms should be established for periodic inspection, assessment, testing and lessons learned concerning the capacity to enforce access-to-information law.

Seventh, a core corps of lecturers, rapporteurs and experts on the right of access to information should be developed within training institutions and the system of state agencies.

Eighth, capacity-building should be linked to practical enabling conditions. The capacity of cadres, civil servants and public employees cannot be fully brought into play without coordination mechanisms, clear internal procedures, specialised personnel, equipment and sufficient time.

Third major task: develop ethnic minority human resources in connection with ensuring the right of access to information.

Solution 4 affirms that raising awareness, building the capacity of cadres, civil servants and public employees, and developing ethnic minority human resources are decisive for ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region. The focus is to shift from an administrative mindset to a service mindset and fully recognise access to information as a constitutionally protected human and citizens' right; standardise training by job-position group; and strengthen legal, administrative, digital, communication and public-assistance skills, especially for work with ethnic minority people. Assessment, testing and lessons-learned mechanisms should be established and a core corps of lecturers and rapporteurs developed. In the long term, locally based ethnic minority human resources with knowledge of local languages, cultures, customs and community needs will create an effective bridge between the State and the people, thereby ensuring substantive, stable and sustainable access to information.

4.2.5. Developing the economy, culture and society of ethnic minority areas as foundational conditions for ensuring the right of access to information

First, improve livelihoods, incomes and material conditions in order to reduce the cost of accessing information.

Second, improve the quality of education and the community's information capabilities.

Third, develop health and social-security systems as foundational conditions enabling people to receive and use information.

Fourth, develop the culture of ethnic minority areas in a manner that both preserves and promotes ethnic identity and creates a healthy social environment for receiving and using information.

Fifth, ensure the availability of information serving livelihoods and development.

Sixth, improve the effectiveness of ethnic policies by sharpening their focus, reducing passive assistance and expanding conditions that enable ethnic minority people to pursue development proactively.

Solution 5 affirms that the economic, cultural and social development of ethnic minority areas is a foundational condition for ensuring the right of access to information substantively and sustainably. Only when material living standards, education, health, social security and the cultural environment improve will people possess the conditions needed to access, understand and use information and

translate it into action. The solution therefore emphasises sustainable livelihoods; poverty reduction linked to information disclosure and market connectivity; higher-quality education, training and human resources; expanded health care and social security; preservation and promotion of cultural identity; and improved ethnic policies that reduce passive assistance and expand conditions for proactive development. Information thereby becomes not only the object of a right, but also a resource for advancing human development, narrowing regional gaps and ensuring substantive equality in ethnic minority people's enjoyment of rights.

4.2.6. Improving inspection and oversight mechanisms for implementing ethnic minority people's right of access to information

First, inspection and oversight mechanisms should be improved by defining more clearly the responsibility of each actor throughout the process of ensuring the right.

Second, consideration should be given to supplementing and improving more specialised oversight mechanisms for implementation of the Law on Access to Information.

Third, oversight mechanisms should be made people-centred, accessible and suited to the distinctive characteristics of ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region.

Fourth, mechanisms for receiving and processing feedback, petitions and complaints relating to the right, and for disclosing the outcomes, should be improved.

Fifth, the transparency of inspection and oversight activities themselves should be strengthened.

Sixth, inspection and oversight of implementation should be linked to the assessment of task performance, public-service responsibility and the quality of grass-roots governance.

Seventh, the oversight role of elected bodies, the Vietnam Fatherland Front and socio-political organisations in ensuring ethnic minority people's right of access to information should be strengthened.

Solution 6 affirms that improved inspection and oversight are pivotal to ensuring that ethnic minority people's right of access to information is implemented substantively, continuously and accountably. It focuses on clearly defining each actor's responsibility throughout the assurance process; establishing specialised oversight mechanisms with measurable indicators; and designing people-centred, accessible methods suited to conditions in ethnic minority areas. Mechanisms for receiving and processing feedback, petitions and complaints and disclosing the outcomes should be improved; inspection and oversight activities themselves should be more transparent; and implementation should be linked to assessments of public-service responsibility and the quality of grass-roots governance. The solution also emphasises the oversight role of elected bodies, the Vietnam Fatherland Front,

socio-political organisations and communities, thereby ensuring the right through public-service accountability, social feedback and people's substantive participation.

Conclusion to Chapter 4

Chapter 4 affirms that ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region is an objective requirement of building a rule-of-law state, protecting human rights, achieving sustainable development and narrowing development gaps. On that basis, the chapter establishes guiding viewpoints and proposes coordinated and feasible solutions, including improving the law, strengthening openness and transparency, developing information and communications infrastructure, building the capacity of cadres, and promoting the active role of ethnic minority people. These solutions aim to ensure the right not only in law but also in practice, thereby reinforcing public trust and strengthening the scientific basis for future policies and laws.

CONCLUSION

Research on ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in Vietnam's Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region demonstrates that this is both a fundamental theoretical issue and one of profound practical significance in the present context. Access to information is not only a human right recognised in international and Vietnamese law, but also a precondition for political and social participation, economic development, improved public knowledge and consolidation of the great national unity bloc.

The right of access to information is recognised in the 2013 Constitution, the 2016 Law on Access to Information and numerous related legal instruments. The Party and the State consistently regard its assurance, especially for ethnic minority people, as an important requirement for social justice, sustainable development and digital transformation. This constitutes an important political and legal foundation for the practical implementation of the right.

The Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region occupies a strategic position but remains exceptionally disadvantaged, with slow economic development, incomplete infrastructure, low living standards among ethnic minority people and limited conditions for access to information. Diversity in language, customs, educational attainment and ability to use standard Vietnamese is both a cultural characteristic and a barrier to receiving information. Ensuring the right in this region must therefore be linked to socio-economic conditions and the cultural and linguistic characteristics of each ethnic community.

Although telecommunications, radio and television, and internet infrastructure in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region have improved in recent years, the region's readiness for information-technology development and

application remains the lowest in the country. Inadequate infrastructure not only reduces access to authoritative information but also leaves ethnic minority people vulnerable to misinformation and fake news on social media. Investment in digital infrastructure and stronger digital capacity among the population must therefore be regarded as core solutions for ensuring the right sustainably.

Reports on implementation of the Law on Access to Information and PAPI reports show that people remain reluctant to seek information proactively from local authorities. This reflects a gap between legal provisions and actual enforcement. Positive efforts should nevertheless be acknowledged, including the free distribution of press publications in ethnic minority areas, expanded public-service portals, development of grass-roots information systems and greater use of digital technology in state administration. These policies have raised awareness and enabled ethnic minority people to access information about the Party's guidelines and orientations, policies and laws, production models and exemplary individuals and good deeds.

To improve the assurance of ethnic minority people's right of access to information, attention should be given to the following orientations: continue raising awareness of human rights and the right of access to information among ethnic minority people, leaders of state agencies, cadres, civil servants and public employees; further specify access-to-information law to narrow the information gap affecting ethnic minority people; strengthen openness and transparency in state agencies and the responsibility of organisations and individuals authorised to provide information; establish information systems, use traditional channels effectively and make greater use of positive information on social media to support ethnic minority people's access; and develop the economy, culture and society of ethnic minority areas.

In summary, research and implementation of solutions for ensuring the right of access to information of ethnic minority people in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region rest on firm political and legal foundations and address the urgent practical requirements of national development in the new era. Initial achievements are encouraging, but stronger efforts are still required from the State, socio-political organisations, communities and people themselves if access to information is truly to become a driving force for comprehensive, sustainable and equitable development among Vietnam's ethnic groups.

LIST OF THE AUTHOR'S PUBLISHED WORKS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

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2. Mai Quang Thang (2024), “Ensuring the Right of Access to Information of Ethnic Minority People in the Northern Midlands and Mountainous Region: Current Situation and Proposed Solutions,” available at <https://www.tapchicongsan.org.vn/web/guest/chi-tiet-tim-kiem/-/2018/1053203/mot-so-giai-phap-nham-bao-%C4%91am-quyen-tiep-can-thong-tin-cua-%C4%91ong-bao-dan-toc-thieu-so-vung-trung-du-va-mien-nui-phia-bac.aspx>
3. Mai Quang Thang (2025), “Ensuring Access to Information for Ethnic Minority People,” Legal Profession Review, May issue, pp. 52-57.