

Real impacts of new rural construction on customs and practices in Lang Son province - Vietnam

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Abstract: This article is the research results on the impact of new rural construction on customs and practices in a province in the Northern Midlands and Mountains region in Vietnam - Lang Son province. It is a province with 7 ethnic groups, the customs and practices of the people in this region are quite rich and diverse. Basically, those customs and practices are the typical features of the ethnic groups living here, but, in the current context, when implementing the new rural program, many customs and practices are being adapted to suit the general development conditions of the society. There are positive changes, but there are some changes that need to be carefully considered and studied so as not to lose the people's identities themselves. Due to a small scope of research, we only focused to some customs and practices: Tet holidays, weddings, funerals and ancestor worship.

Background: Generally, there have been not only many studies on the impact of customs and practices on the process of new rural construction in Vietnam but also provinces in the Northern Midlands and Mountains in particular. Based on the real situation, there haven't been any studies on the impact of the new rural construction on the customs and practices of the ethnic minorities in Lang Son province recently; therefore, we chose to do this research.

Materials and Methods: The article was researched on 1 city and 10 districts of Lang Son province - Vietnam through a sociological survey with subjects aged 18 and over, with many occupations of 7 ethnic groups living in this province. The study period was from September 2021 to February 2022.

Results: Through the survey process, this article has analyzed the positive and negative aspects of the impact of new rural construction on customs and practices in Lang Son province.

Conclusion: Recognizing and promoting the positive aspects will help the process of new rural construction in Lang Son quickly be successful.

Key Word: customs, practices; customs and practices in Lang Son; new countryside; new rural construction.

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I. Introduction

New rural construction is a comprehensive program on socio-economic development, politics and national defense which was developed and implemented by the Government of Vietnam on a rural scale nationwide, according to the Conference Resolution, the 7th Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, term X on agriculture and rural areas (August 5, 2008). Up to now, many provinces and cities have had 100% of communes recognized as meeting new rural standards, such as Thai Binh, Nam Dinh, Ha Nam, Hung Yen, Da Nang, Binh Duong, Dong Nai, Can Tho, Vinh Phuc.

Lang Son is a province located in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam, which is an important province in terms of national security and defense of Vietnam. It has a large geographical area; the climate is quite suitable for socio-economic development. In the process of implementing the new rural construction program, the ethnic minorities in Lang Son province have always seriously implemented the documents, policies and laws of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Socialist State of Vietnam promulgated, and up to now, many localities in Lang Son province have fulfilled the criteria of this program.

New rural construction in Vietnam relates to many different fields: economy, politics, culture and society. In the field of culture, the relationship between new rural construction and customs and practices is the spiritual culture in society. It is a two-way relationship, between them there is a dialectical relationship. When the process of new rural construction is carried out, the customs and practices of ethnic minorities make a significant contribution to the implementation of guidelines and policies to bring success. Accordingly, many customs and practices have also changed since the country's socio-economic life was improved. Besides the positive effects of new rural construction on customs and practices, negative factors are also reducing many traditional values in the cultural and spiritual life of ethnic minorities. In this article, we conducted research and survey the impacts of the new rural construction process on customs and practices in Lang Son province -

Vietnam.

II. Material and Methods

This study was carried out by using a sociological investigation method on “Impacts of new rural construction on customs and practices of ethnic minorities in Lang Son province” through a pre-designed questionnaire with 10 questions. Specifically:

- **Research location:** Lang Son province - Vietnam, the residents live in 1 city and 10 districts of this province.
- **Study age:** ≥ 18 years old.
- **Ethnic composition:** 7 ethnic groups live in the area.
- **Occupation:** farmers, civil servants, public employees, businessmen, seasonal workers, living in rural areas.
- **Investigation period:** from September 2021 to February 2022.
- **Number of questionnaires:** 500 votes.
- **Sample size calculation:** 788,700 people in the province.

III. Result

1. Theoretical issues

* *Customs and practices* are a system of rules and requirements established in the community, reflecting the living activities of people which were formed in the course of ethnic history, recognized and accepted by the community passed down from generation to generation, and community members accept it as a rule in that community.

Customs and practices have been formed for a long time in communities and have a number of characteristics such as: historical, ethnic, regional, and class characteristics; it has a stable and sustainable nature that has been slowly formed for a long time in the process of historical development; belongs to the inner psychological mechanism, it controls and regulates the behavior and lifestyle of the group members; customs and practices are handed down from generation to generation by way of communication, imitation through personal communication; it is very conservative but has a strong psychological impact on the material and spiritual life of people. Accordingly, the customs and practices include: weddings, funerals, ancestor worship, festivals, culture, activities... In the scope of this article's research, we focused on the style customs and practices of the ethnic minorities in Lang Son province about festivals, weddings, funerals and ancestor worship.

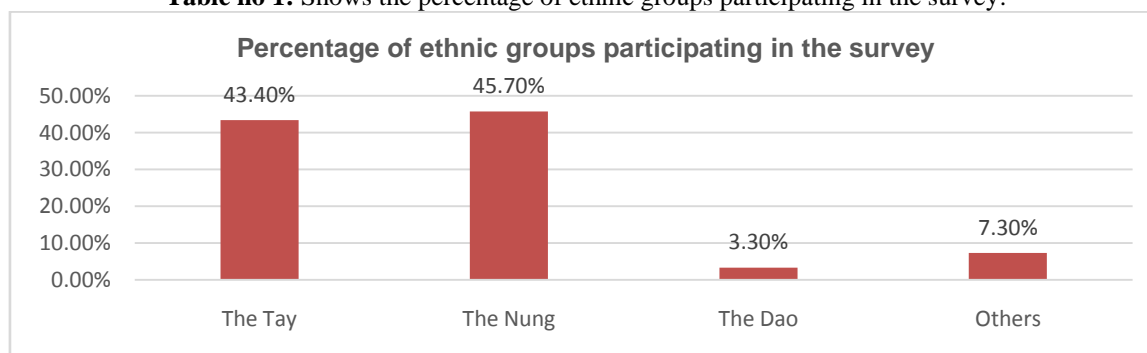
* *New rural construction* in Vietnam is understood as a rural area with sustainable economic development, improved material and spiritual life of the people, and preservation of the people's traditional culture. Since then, creating a strong political system, contributing to maintaining political security and social order.

New rural construction criteria include 19 criteria: 1- Planning; 2- Traffic; 3- Irrigation and natural disaster prevention and control; 4- Electricity; 5- Education; 6- Culture; 7- Rural commercial infrastructure; 8- Information and Communication; 9- Residential houses; 10 -Income; 11- Multidimensional poverty; 12- Labor; 13- Organization of production and rural economic development; 14- Medical; 15- Public administration; 16- Access to the law; 17- Environment; 18- Quality of living environment; 19- National defense and security.

2. Real impacts of new rural construction on customs and practices in Lang Son

Lang Son province has an area of 8,310.2 km², with a population of 788,700 people and has 7 main ethnic groups, in which the Nung ethnic group is 42.97%, the Tay 35.92%, the Kinh 16.5%, the rest are other ethnic groups such as Dao, Hoa, San Chay, H'Mong, and others: 4.61%.

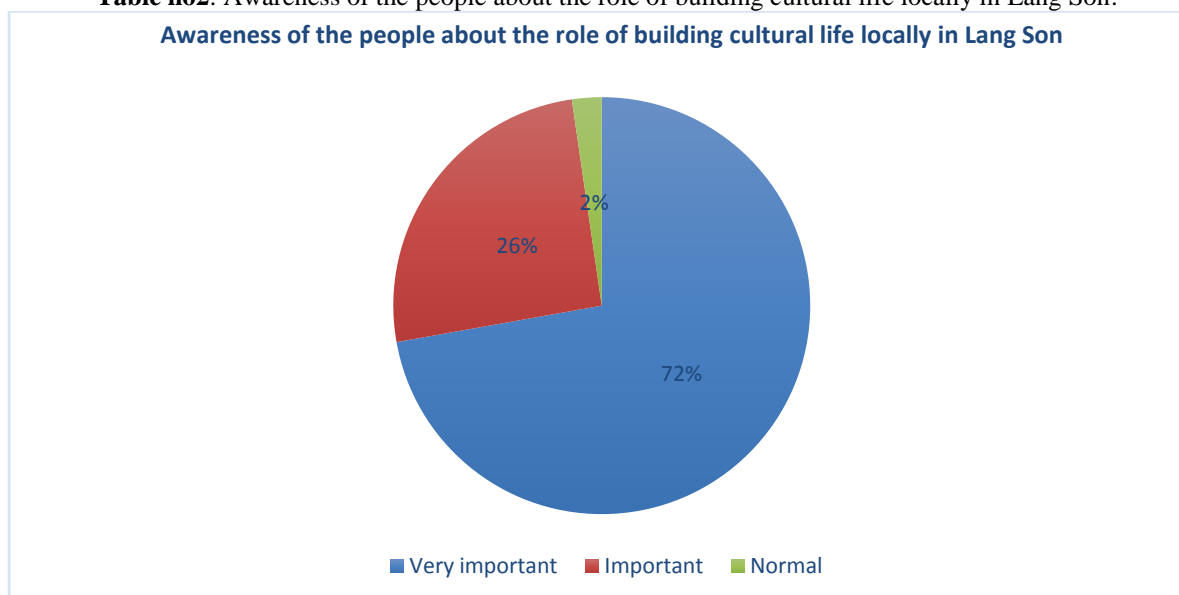
Table no 1: Shows the percentage of ethnic groups participating in the survey.



Implementing Resolution No. 20-NQ/TU, dated 12/8/2011 of the Provincial Party Committee on new rural construction in Lang Son province, the emulation movement "Lang Son and the whole country join hands to build new rural areas" was widely deployed and created a profound and clear change in awareness in the entire political system and people's strata, and has really become a widespread movement, popularized by the people agree to comply. Over the past 10 years, the new rural construction program in Lang Son has achieved many important achievements, initially bringing good signals of change. Lang Son province has mobilized a total resource of 28,141,398 million VND, of which the period 2016-2020 is 19,685,390 million VND (up 2.33 times compared to the period 2010-2015).

Determining that the new rural construction is essentially the standardization of development investment for agriculture, farmers and rural areas, so Lang Son's way of doing things is also flexible, not constrained, tied in a pattern, specific model. The province always identifies the role of farmers as the subject in new rural construction, so it has supported and encouraged farmers to get rich in their own land. In addition, the implementation of the "Four Houses" Affiliate Program including farmers, entrepreneurs, scientists, and the State is considered the "key" to develop modern agriculture, creating a driving force for the roadmap. The province's new rural construction will progress faster and more firmly. The more effective and professional the association of these four houses, the more professional it will be to promote agricultural production to develop under high specialization, increasing the value of agricultural products. This is a new way of doing things, contributing to changing people's awareness and consciousness about economic development, production practices, house decoration, green fence construction, and environmental protection.

Table no2: Awareness of the people about the role of building cultural life locally in Lang Son.



Ancestor worship is the filial piety of children and grandchildren towards grandparents, parents, who were born to the next generation but died. Ethnic minorities in Lang Son, like many other ethnic groups in other regions in Vietnam, believe that the soul of the deceased is always on the ancestral altar to be close to their descendants, to daily monitoring and blessing for children and grandchildren in doing business, strengthening the blood relationship between people of the same bloodline. They burn incense to their ancestors mostly on New Year's Day, the full moon and the first day of each month. Among them, especially the Tet holiday (Lunar New Year), the full moon of the first month (the Lunar New Year), the Thanh minh Festival (the 3rd day of the third lunar month), the full moon of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, they prepare sacrifices to their ancestors hearty, all kinds of fruit cakes, wine and meat, yellow incense. Before the implementation of the new rural program, many forms of magic that existed in the lives of ethnic groups had gradually disappeared, but were still practiced in some communities. The Tay, Nung, Mong, and Dao use all kinds of magic in life such as healing magic, love magic, harmful magic, etc. The phenomenon of amulets, love spells and some other forms of magic is still practiced in the ethnic groups in the study area. The system of agricultural-related rituals continues to be practiced in ethnic communities such as: Long Tong (festival in the fields, praying for rain for good fruit trees and favorable crops), New Rice Festival and some other rituals.

Nowadays, in modern life, when the effects of industrialization, modernization, market economy, and globalization seems to have been a change in the way rituals and offerings are practiced. On holidays and Tet, instead of cumbersome and sophisticated procedures, the people have adjusted to suit the current living

conditions, however, annual holidays and Tet are still celebrated by generations maintain and preserve.

Table no 3: Practice worshipping days of the year

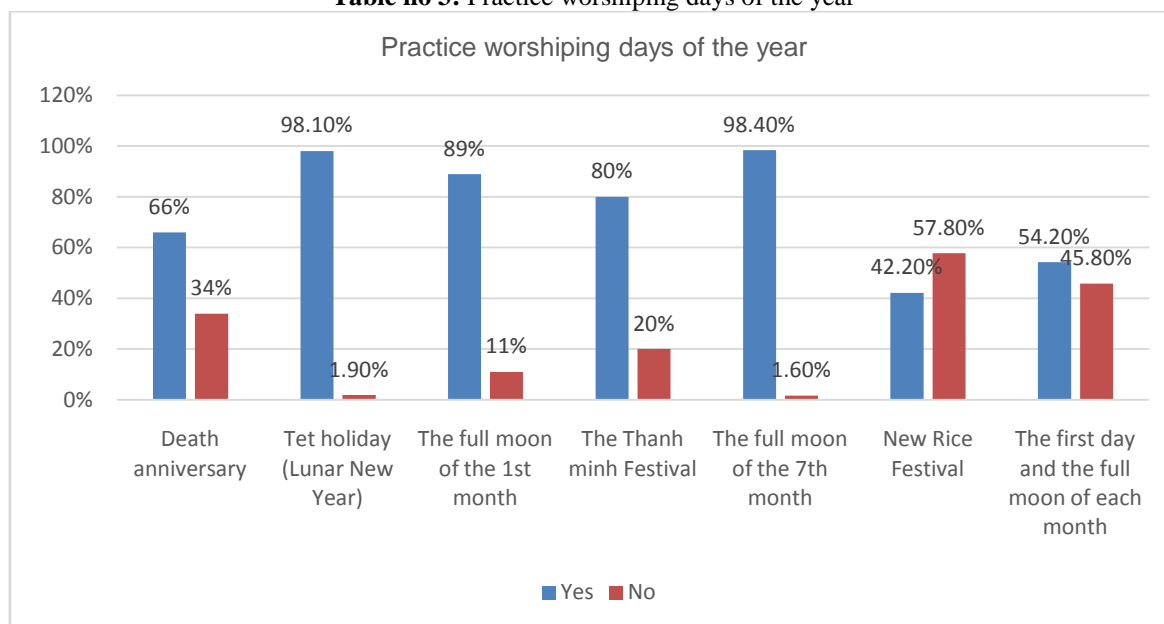
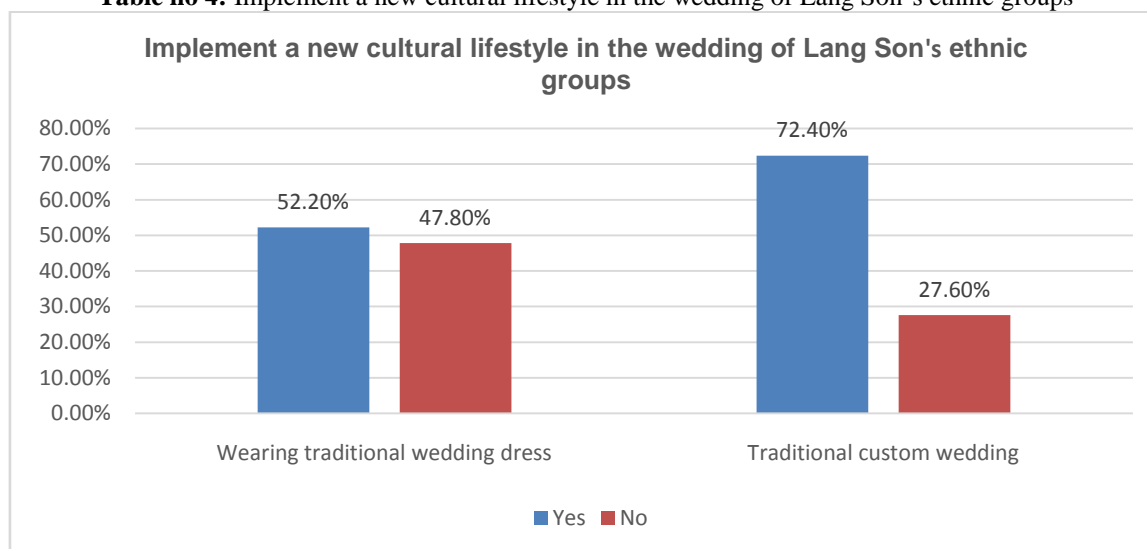


Table no 4: Implement a new cultural lifestyle in the wedding of Lang Son's ethnic groups



Marriage customs as well as other cultural factors, up to the time of implementation according to the new rural construction regulations, there have been many changes with traditional elements. In particular, ethnic groups' marriage customs of not only show the values that need to be promoted, but also reveal limitations that have certain impacts on the process of new rural construction. In the past, the practice of arranging and matchmaking in marriage was quite popular among ethnic minorities. This custom comes from conceptions related to marriage such as the matter of destiny, the suitable alliance... The Tay, Nung, Dao, and Mong ethnic groups in Lang Son in particular and in the North of Vietnam in general attach great importance to the fate of the couple. At present, the arrangement of adults in marriage has decreased much, basically the couples are free to discover things about each other and decide to marriage, but basically parents still have orientation and intervention in their children's marriage according to traditional criteria.

The wedding ceremony in each ethnic group has its own identity, in general, there are many rites: The entrance ceremony, the number matching ceremony, the betrothal ceremony, the New Year ceremony (after betrothed to the wedding day from 1-3 years to the family). The groom's family raises pigs and chickens, prepares gifts for the wedding. During the time of waiting for the wedding, every year on New Year's Day, especially the Lunar New Year, the full moon of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, the groom's family has

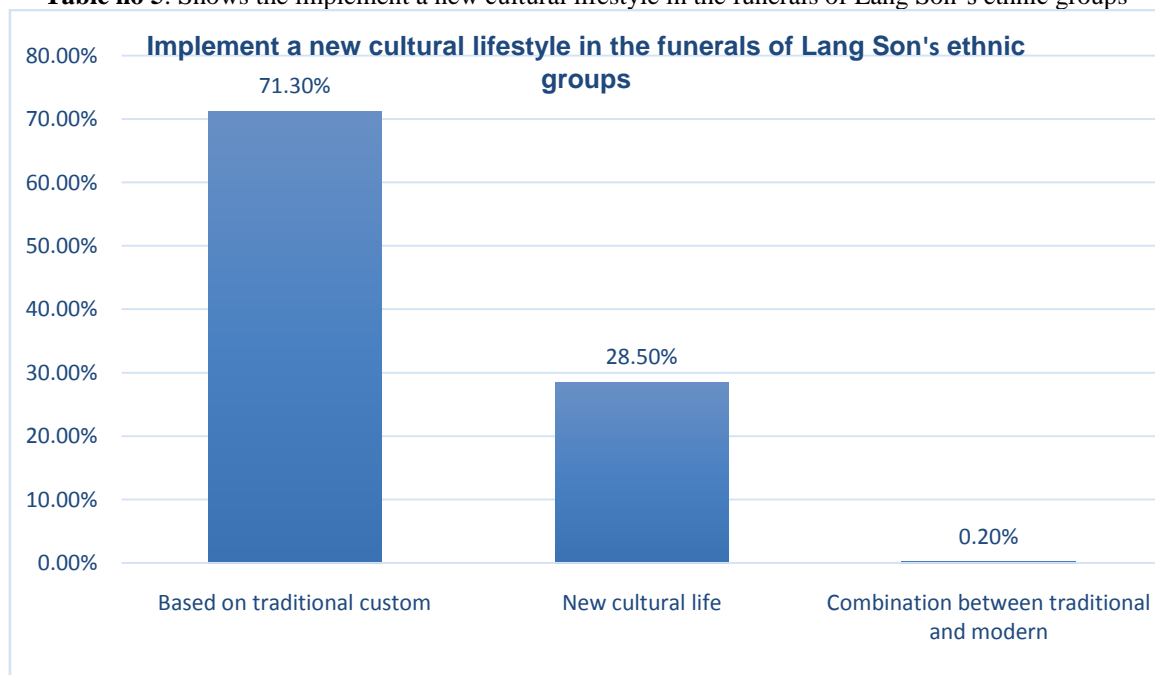
to carry the gifts to the bride's family bonding relationship between two families), Wedding Announcement Ceremony (usually takes place 2 days), Wedding Ceremony, Return Ceremony (a couple returns to their parents-in-law). Today, the ceremony shortens the time to not wait until a year like before to hold the wedding ceremony, some rituals are also simplified such as the New Year ceremony, the correspondent ceremony...

Ethnic people in Lang Son province believe that death does not mean the end, but the soul still exists in another world - "the afterlife". Every human being consists of two parts: the soul part and the body part. The body part is a biological entity that has only limited existence, while the soul part is the immortal part. The soul determines the life and all activities of a person. A healthy living person also means that the body and soul are still attached to each other. When the soul leaves the entity, the natural balance is lost, leading to illness and disease; If the soul leaves the body forever, the person will have to die. When people die, there is no body for them to live in, so chaos will turn into ghosts...

On the basis of the concept of the existence of the living realm, the dead realm, the soul after death is one of the factors to form and maintain the existence of forms of mourning, associated with many different rituals. In addition to the unified concepts and practices, there are customs with specific characteristics of each ethnic group. Basically, when implementing the process of building a new countryside, the funeral rites of the ethnic groups have changed to match the change of society. Through the survey, funeral organization according to traditional customs still prevails, but it tends to change according to modern factors to suit the actual situation (see chart below).

The forms of magic that existed quite commonly in the lives of ethnic groups have gradually disappeared but are still practiced in the community. The Tay, Nung, Mong, and Dao use all kinds of magic in their daily lives such as healing magic, love magic, harm magic... The phenomenon of amulets, love spells and some other forms of magic is still practiced in the research community. The system of rituals related to agricultural production continues to be practiced in ethnic communities such as: Long Tong, New Rice New Year, a number of rituals on annual New Year holidays to pray for crops. bountiful in many different ethnic groups. Since the implementation of the new rural program, the ceremonial elements in funerals and weddings of ethnic minorities in Lang Son have remained basically maintained and popularized, with strong aspects promoting the success of the village, new rural areas, especially playing an important role in promoting the movement to build a new cultural life. High community character is an expression in the culture of most ethnic minorities in the Northern mountainous region in general, it is the internal force in each village to promote collective strength in the construction of agriculture. new village. The spirit of mutual assistance in the community contributes to promoting the implementation of the current criteria of building a cultural family and cultural village.

Table no 5: Shows the implement a new cultural lifestyle in the funerals of Lang Son's ethnic groups



IV. Discussion

Although, the new rural construction program in Lang Son has not fulfilled the criteria in all localities in the province, but the impacts of the new rural construction process on socio-economic - cultural - social life the association of this province is shown very clearly. Besides the positive effects, there are still limitations.

*** Positive:**

The most outstanding achievement of the program on new rural construction is infrastructure, which was built quickly, meeting the travel and transportation needs of people in large-scale concentrated production areas, large-scale concentrated production areas in remote areas, mainly ethnic minorities live. Many local people in Lang Son province have donated land to build roads and other shared infrastructure. In addition, the newly built irrigation system has helped to increase the value of agricultural production. The new rural construction Program has also focused on investing in electricity supply for households without electricity in remote, border and remote areas. In general, the rural appearance has been renewed, more spacious, cleaner and more beautiful, the infrastructure in the localities has been upgraded and invested, so the roads and electricity system have become more spacious, creating favorable conditions. for the consumption of agricultural products, creating a new rural building atmosphere throughout the countryside.

People's lives are improved; social culture and environment in rural areas have made many advances; democracy is expanded; increasingly strong political system; social order and security are maintained. Building production development models in the direction of concentration, not spreading, supporting with focus and focus, giving priority to supporting the replication of models that have been implemented effectively, associated with product identification. key products, develop trees, plants, craft villages and traditional trades with existing local strengths and competitive advantages; encourage the building of production models in the direction of VietGap in association with product branding, labels, and packaging of origin, towards linkages in production and consumption of products.

The awareness of environmental protection is raised; people follow the guidelines and policies of the Party and State more seriously; promote the spirit of solidarity in the population community and mobilize the participation of the whole political system in building a new countryside, towards the goal of making the countryside a "place worth living" and a "place where one wants to live". The implementation of the "four houses" linkage program including farmers, entrepreneurs, scientists and the State is considered the "key" to develop modern agriculture, creating a new way for the province's new rural construction progress faster. The more effective and professional the association of these four houses, the more professional it will be to promote agricultural production to develop under high specialization, increasing the value of agricultural products. This is a new way of doing things, contributing to changing people's awareness and consciousness about economic development, production practices, house decoration, green fence construction, and environmental protection. Experiences from practice and creative and proactive ways have helped the province effectively implement the construction of new rural areas and model rural areas. To Lang Son province, the criteria for new rural construction is not the top goal, but it is important to promote and improve the lives of people in rural areas, especially identifying agriculture and farmers. Rural development has always been the province's development strategy with the highest goal of sustainable rural development, farmers really enjoying the fruits of the new countryside.

*** Limitations:**

Due to the impact of the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic and complicated developments in some localities, it has greatly affected the situation of production labor and income of people in Lang Son province; a number of delayed works, projects, propaganda and training activities have also affected the implementation progress of the New Rural Program in the communes; provincial and district budgets are still limited, so the balance of resources for the implementation of the New Rural Program is still difficult; progress and achievement of criteria of communes striving to meet new rural standards are slow, sustainability is not high... Geographical obstacles, including long distances, complex and fragmented terrain, as well as the population is sparsely dispersed, investment costs for infrastructure projects in mountainous areas are often very high, 2 to 3 times higher than in lowland areas. In addition, investment in promoting active community participation and local capacity building is limited. Public expenditure is also not prioritized for communes with limited ability to mobilize resources while requiring large investments. In addition, the focus is on building new infrastructure works, but the budget for operation and maintenance is not enough. One consequence is the increasing pollution of water sources, as most solid waste and wastewater (industrial and household) have not been collected and treated thoroughly. Furthermore, country-level indicators – which focus only on economic measures – do not take into account local demand. The government sets a common standard for building a "clean, beautiful, modern" rural appearance with asphalt or concrete roads, brick houses, regardless of whether it is mountainous or coastal. However, this standard is not suitable for all rural villages, where traditional architecture is in

harmony with natural conditions. In addition, the new rural program is built according to the priority of "electricity - road - school - station", ignoring the important village structure and space in terms of cultural factors. Communal houses, pagodas, temples, shrines, are no longer the highlight of the village, thus breaking cultural values. This means a lack of community investment in traditional architecture and culture. This fact can be easily recognized, the construction density is increasing, there are works that directly encroach on the monuments and heritage.

V. Conclusion

With the view of new rural construction in the direction of shifting from quantity to quality, in which farmers are identified as the subjects, directly implementing and benefiting, in the process of implementing the National Target Program on agricultural development. In a new village, Lang Son province has boldly revised and supplemented regulations, criteria, and management mechanisms, and at the same time used budget capital and other resources reasonably, focusing on promoting recycling, agricultural structure associated with new rural construction, attach importance to the planning and development of key products and strengths of the locality, towards building an enhanced and model new countryside.

The appearance of rural areas has prospered, rural socio-economic infrastructure has been paid attention and invested step by step to meet the needs of production development and life of rural communities; culture and environment have been positively changed through directing the formation of model residential areas with outstanding features of landscape, village roads, bright - green - clean - beautiful lanes; The political system, security, order and defense in rural areas have been maintained, thereby creating widespread trust among the people in the guidelines, policies and leadership of the Party and the Government.

Along with the process of economic, cultural and social development of new rural construction, socio-economic conditions of localities and people have been improved. With the improved economic conditions, many fine customs and practices have played an active role in building internal solidarity, supporting the implementation of the law in the process of building new countryside, building national pride and respect for their own culture, ethnic minorities have made great efforts in preserving the nation's unique cultural values. It can be said that the cultural factor in the economy and the economy in the culture has been expressed in the life of each family and the socio-economic development of the local ethnic minority areas.

Besides the beautiful customs and practices of ethnic minorities, ethnic cultural nuances are gradually being forgotten. Therefore, nowadays, a number of customs and practices of the ethnic groups in Lang Son are no longer popular, the people have gradually forgotten, and replaced by modern cultural forms. In addition, the superstitious customs, worshiping ghosts, casting spells, and heavy wedding customs have been slightly adjusted to the new cultural lifestyle but are still quite expensive and cumbersome.

The impacts of new rural construction on customs and practices in Lang Son province are basically positive impacts, it brings a new face to the life of rural areas. However, the preservation of traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities is currently undergoing changes according to the market mechanism, under the process of industrialization and modernization, although that transformation process slowly but more or less has an impact on national life and that also means that traditional culture faces challenges. Accordingly, leaders of Vietnam in general and of Lang Son province in particular need to pay closer attention and adjust policies to suit the actual situation to achieve the best results in the implementation process of the new rural construction program.

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