Ethnic minority poverty target of new strategy

HÀ NỘI — Sustainable poverty reduction for ethnic and mountainous areas should be an important task for the 2011-15 period, attendants at a conference in Hà Nội were told on Friday.

The function, held by the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs (CEMA) in collaboration with the United Nations in Việt Nam, was aimed at recommending ways of reducing poverty.

Chairman of the National Assembly’s Ethnic Council Ksr Phuóc estimated that the poverty rate in some communes and villages would increase to more than 60 per cent or even 70 to 75 per cent next year.

Giảng Seo Phuur, a member of the Party Central Committee and chairman of the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, said the rate of reduction for ethnic people was much slower than the national average.

“Life expectancy, nutrition and other aspects of their lives remain low. Without big challenges in strategies in the near future, most poor people in Việt Nam will still be in ethnic minority and mountainous areas,” Sù said.

He said Việt Nam had made remarkable achievements in hunger eradication and poverty alleviation. The poverty rate had fallen from 58.1 per cent in 1993 to 12.1 per cent last year.

But there is steady progress. The poverty rate among ethnic minorities and people in mountainous areas fell from 86 per cent in 1993 to about 31.2 per cent last year.

This was in part due to the National Target Programme for Poverty Reduction, the Programme for Socio-economic Development of Ethnic Minority and Mountainous Areas in the 2006-10 period, the Programme for Rapid Sustainable Poverty Reduction in the 62 poorest districts and the policy on supporting ethnic groups facing extreme hardship.

John Hendra, UN resident co-ordinator, said if the ethnic problem was to be effectively addressed, new approaches had to be considered.

“Future poverty reduction is likely to be much more difficult, more complex and more costly,” Hendra said.

He said poverty reduction among ethnic minority groups was culturally sensitive and specific targeting measures were necessary.

Hendra said ethnic minorities would continue to need extra support through national poverty reduction programmes and more attention in key sectoral policies, including health, education, water and sanitation and nutrition.

“In addition, creating opportunities for employment and integration in the market economy is just as important for sustainable poverty reduction,” he said.

Trần Văn Thuật, former director of CEMA’s Ethnic Policy Department, said poor people should be classified into different groups to make intervention more effective. — VNS