

IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICIES FOR THE ELDERLY IN SIN HO DISTRICT, LAI CHAU PROVINCE

Bui Thanh Binh^{*1}, Nguyen Thi Yen¹ and Nguyen Quoc Hieu²

¹*Faculty of Social Work, Vietnam Women's Academy, Hanoi city, Vietnam*

²*Ma Quai Commune, Sin Ho District, Lai Chau Province, Vietnam*

*Corresponding author: Bui Thanh Binh, email: binhbt@hvpnv.edu.vn

Received July 14, 2025. Revised July 29, 2025. Accepted August 7, 2025.

Abstract. The global population aging phenomenon is an irreversible reality, and Vietnam has emerged as one of the countries with the fastest aging rates in the Asia-Pacific region. Statistics show that the country currently has approximately 16 million elderly people, accounting for more than 16% of the total population. Notably, only about 5.4 million of the elderly are ensured by pension and regular social insurance policies. This means that a significant proportion, about 65% of the elderly, have yet to access or benefit from the social security network and existing social assistance programs. Based on this reality, the article employs a literature review method and secondary data analysis from reports and statistical data regarding the implementation of social assistance policies for the elderly during the 2021-2024 period in Sin Ho district, Lai Châu province, in accordance with Decree 20/2021/ND-CP regulating social support for vulnerable groups aiming to understand the actual situation of support for the elderly in the area. The results indicate that the policies have been implemented relatively comprehensively; however, certain limitations persist, including competency issues of front-line officers, a lack of diverse communication methods, and infrequent beneficiary review, among others. By analysing the current situation, the article identifies the root causes of these issues and shortcomings in policy implementation, and subsequently proposes some recommendations to improve the effectiveness of policy enforcement in the area in the future.

Keywords: Social Policy, social welfare, Social support, Policy implementation, Sin Ho.

1. Introduction

Social assistance policies for the elderly play a vital role in ensuring social welfare, improving both material and spiritual well-being, and encouraging active participation in community activities. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam (2023) emphasized that maintaining social welfare is a regular and top-priority political task [1]. Despite the country's remarkable socio-economic progress, the implementation of social welfare policies still faces notable constraints.

A number of scholars have explored this issue from various perspectives. Nguyen Van Dong (2017) investigated the implementation of the Law on the Elderly (2009–2017), summarizing achievements and identifying areas for improvement [2]. Trinh Duy Luan (2014) analyzed the structure, feasibility, and effectiveness of the system of social assistance policies for the elderly,

highlighting how these policies protect the rights and social participation of older citizens [3]. In a subsequent study, Trinh (2016) identified persistent shortcomings in the system and recommended enhancing policy coherence, expanding beneficiary coverage, and strengthening the involvement of non-state actors in elder care [4].

Research has also addressed factors influencing implementation. Using VNAS 2011 data and a probit model, Tran Thi Thu Huong and Nguyen Thi Hong Diep (2021) examined gender-based differences in receiving social assistance [5]. Similarly, Bui Nghia (2019) evaluated the policy implementation process and proposed improvements for future practice [6]. More recently, Luu Van Duy and Nguyen Duc Nghia (2025) evaluated the application of social assistance policies in Bao Yen District, Lao Cai Province, identifying issues such as inaccurate beneficiary determination, budget constraints, and limited professional capacity of local officials, many of whom hold concurrent positions. They suggested streamlining administrative procedures and diversifying funding sources to improve policy efficiency [7].

At the international level, several studies have provided valuable insights. Nasibeh Zanjari et al. (2021) demonstrated that providing social support significantly enhances the well-being of Iranian older adults, even more so than receiving assistance [8]. María-Concepción Vega-Hernández et al. (2023) analyzed social services for the elderly in Spain and found clear associations between the availability of care centers, day-care services, and educational programs for seniors [9]. Meanwhile, Niar Afdhal Luthfi and Muhammad Hanri (2023) found that elderly social assistance programs in Indonesia inadvertently led to a 28.3% increase in out-of-pocket health spending among poor older adults due to higher curative expenditures [10].

Overall, these studies highlight the critical role and implementation challenges of social assistance policies for the elderly. However, there remains a lack of in-depth, district-level analyses, particularly in mountainous and ethnically diverse areas where administrative capacity and socio-economic conditions pose unique challenges. Therefore, this study focuses on Sin Ho District, Lai Chau Province, aiming to assess the implementation of social assistance policies for the elderly during the 2021–2024 period and propose recommendations to enhance their effectiveness and sustainability in comparable local contexts.

2. Content

2.1. Research subjects and methodologies

The present study focuses on the implementation of social assistance policies for the elderly in Sin Ho District, Lai Chau Province during the 2021–2024 period, with a focus on four main areas: (1) frequent social assistance; (2) health insurance card issuance and medical examination and treatment; (3) funeral support; and (4) propaganda and dissemination of related policies.

A qualitative research design was applied, drawing primarily on a literature review and secondary data analysis. Data sources include seven groups of official documents: (1) legal frameworks such as Decree No. 136/2013/NĐ-CP, Decree No. 20/2021/NĐ-CP, Circular No. 35/2011/TT-BYT, and Joint Circular No. 02/2021/TT-BLĐTBXH; (2) annual reports of the Sin Ho District Elderly Association (2021–2024); (3) statistics from the District People's Committee and Division of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs; (4) monitoring and inspection records; (5) commune-level activity reports; (6) training and propaganda summaries; and (7) provincial-level communication materials.

Documents were selected based on relevance, timeliness, and legitimacy, prioritizing state-issued and association materials. The research procedure involved three main stages: (1) collecting and verifying documents from district and commune agencies; (2) organizing and classifying data into tables according to key criteria (beneficiaries, health insurance coverage, medical care, etc.); and (3) conducting year-to-year comparisons to identify trends and assess

policy effectiveness. Finally, outcomes were contrasted with legal provisions to evaluate the extent to which implementation practices align with prescribed standards, as well as their overall appropriateness and efficiency within the context of a mountainous, socio-economically disadvantaged district such as Sin Ho.

2.2. General overview of the elderly situation and policies implementation context

Sin Ho District is classified as an extremely disadvantaged mountainous region, with 94% of its population belonging to ethnic minority groups. All elderly residents are cared for in the community, as no Social Protection Center operates in Lai Chau Province. The Representative Board of the Sin Ho Elderly Association has established 22 commune-level branches and 182 sub-branches, serving 6,340 members, of whom 4,968 (78.3%) are aged 60 and above.

In addition to national policies, the People's Committee of Lai Chau Province has promulgated guiding documents to facilitate local implementation of social assistance programs. The Sin Ho District People's Committee has planned and mobilized resources for social protection policies, focusing on the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of older persons. Key legal documents include: Decree No. 20/2021/NĐ-CP, Joint Circular No. 02/2021/TT-BLĐTBXH, Resolution No. 06/2022/NQ-HĐND, and several official dispatches from the provincial authorities [1].

Table 1. Structure of the Elderly in Sin Ho District, Lai Chau Province in 2024

No	Structure	Total	Male	Rate (%)	Female	Rate (%)
1	Total number of senior citizens	4.968	2.318	49,3%	2.650	50,7%
2	The older adult members are Communist Party members	496	351	70,8%	145	29,2%
3	Number of members aged 80 and older	785	281	35,8%	504	64,2%
4	Number of members aged 90 and older	39	23	59%	16	41%
5	Number of members aged 100 and older	30	7	23,3%	23	76,7%

(Source: Representative Board of Sin Ho Elderly Association)

Due to frailty, poverty, and marginalization, care for the elderly is a priority. Annual activities include identifying older persons aged 80+ who lack pensions, enrolling eligible members in monthly social allowances (VND 360,000 per person), and issuing annual health insurance cards. By 2024, all 4,968 eligible older persons had received support, including 854 individuals aged 80 years and older and 4,114 individuals aged 60–79 years who experience disabilities, low income, or social isolation. The district also organizes welfare activities, such as home visits and gift distribution, to improve the quality of life for older residents.

Under the “Scaling Up the Intergenerational Self-Help Club Model until 2025” (Decision No. 1336/QĐ-TTg, 2020), the district has established clubs for cultural, artistic, and sports activities, with training provided for club leaders and members in soft volleyball, badminton, walking, Chinese chess, and therapeutic exercises. These initiatives aim to promote physical fitness and social engagement among older persons.

Overall, all communes are classified as extremely disadvantaged areas, and about 83% of older persons aged 60–79 fall into vulnerable categories such as living alone, having disabilities, or lacking a stable income. Regular, targeted social assistance is therefore essential for

maintaining basic living standards, dignity, and safety for the elderly in mountainous regions like Sin Ho.

2.3. Social assistance policies implementation results for the elderly in Sin Ho District, Lai Chau Province

2.3.1. Implementation results of frequent social assistance

The District People's Committee has focused on directing the district agencies, divisions, branches, unions, and commune People's Committees to organize and implement support for social protection beneficiaries in the district; directed the Division of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Division of Finance - Planning of the district to establish procedures, social protection beneficiaries's records, fund allocations. Up to now, monthly allowance payment for social protection beneficiaries in the area has been strictly assured, accurate, and timely.

**Table 2. Senior citizens receiving social allowance in Sin Ho District
in the period 2021 - 2024**

Year	Total of senior citizens	Persons aged 80 and older	Percentage	Persons aged from 60 to 79 years old*	Percentage
2021	4.538	832	18,3%	3.706	81,7%
2022	4.666	913	19,56%	3.753	80,44%
2023	4.589	872	19%	3.717	81%
2024	4.968	985	19,8%	3.983	80,2%

(Source: Representative Board of Sin Ho Elderly Association)

According to data from the Sin Ho District People's Committee, the number of the elderly has increased annually, with individuals aged 80 years and older accounting for more than 18% of the total. In addition, local authorities have systematically reviewed and compiled lists of individuals aged 60–79 years who are eligible for monthly social allowances, including people with disabilities, poor households, and persons living alone. These findings indicate that authorities at all levels have closely directed the compilation of lists and recognition decisions and provided comprehensive subsidies to eligible beneficiaries, ensuring that policy entitlements are accurately and equitably delivered.

In addition, the Representative Board of Sin Ho Elderly Association has closely coordinated with District Division of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs to direct Elderly Association to review list of the elderly who have received monthly social allowance in accordance to Decree No. 136/2013 of the Government for senior citizens from 90 to 100 years old, requesting the Central Government to congratulate them on their longevity, advising the Commune People's Committee to decide to hold Longevity celebration ceremony on the occasion of the Lunar New Year. According to district records, the number of beneficiaries and the corresponding expenditure have increased slightly each year. In 2021, longevity celebration ceremonies were organised for 422 persons (70-75-80-85-95 and over 100 years old) with a total disbursement of 49,470,000 VND; in 2022, longevity celebrations were organized for 459 elderly people with a total disbursement of 52,490,000 VND; In 2023, for 455 persons with the total disbursement of 54,800,000 VND and in 2024, for 484 persons with the disbursement of 56,500,000 VND.

2.3.2. Implementation result of health insurance card issuance, medical examination and treatment for the elderly

The issuance of health insurance cards and the provision of medical examination and treatment for older adults have been carried out in accordance with Circular No. 35.2011/TT-BYT of the Ministry of Health. By the end of 2021, 5,793 health insurance cards for the elderly had been provided. Sin Ho People's Committee coordinated with the District Health Center and directed commune health stations in health care provision for people. As a result, 2,350 senior citizens received at least one periodic health check, 2,350 individuals benefited from free health consultations, 1,140 people received hospital-based treatment, and 5,425 individuals were treated at commune health stations. Under the implementation of the "Bright Eyes" Program, conducted in collaboration with the Central Eye Institute, 162 patients underwent specialized eye examinations. Among them, 50 cases of cataracts and 28 cases of pterygium were identified, and 36 patients subsequently received surgical intervention. By the end of 2022, 4,666 elderly people had been granted health insurance cards; 2,776 elderly people received periodic health check-ups, and 1,307 people had health records. By the end of 2023, the number of elderly people granted health insurance cards reached 4,628, including 2,852 who underwent periodic health examinations and maintained updated medical records. There were two hospitals equipped with geriatric departments or separate treatment rooms for the elderly. The most recent data, as of the end of 2024, indicate that 4,968 older adults had been issued health insurance cards, with 1,896 individuals participating in periodic health checks and maintaining health records.

Table 3. Implementation results of health insurance policies and health care for the elderly in Sin Ho District

Unit: Person

No	Criteria	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	Number of the elderly granted a health insurance card	4,546	4,666	4,628	4,968
2	Number of the elderly receiving regular health check-ups	2,350	2,776	2,852	1,896

(Source: Representative Board of Sin Ho Elderly Association)

The data presented in Table 1 indicate that the number of elderly persons who were granted health insurance cards and received periodic health checks remained consistently high across the years, except 2021, when the number of senior citizens receiving medical examination and treatments slightly reduced due to the outbreak of Covid-19 causing temporarily interruption of medical examination and treatment to ensure prevention of spread. Overall, these findings suggest that health-related initiatives for the elderly in Sin Ho District have been implemented regularly, comprehensively, and with sustained administrative commitment.

2.3.3. Implementation results of funeral support

During the 2021-2024 period, Sin Ho fully and promptly disbursed funeral support payments for the elderly, in compliance with current legal regulations. Funeral support is provided to beneficiaries as stipulated in Clause 5, Article 5 of *Decree No. 136/2013/NĐ-CP* of the Government, which regulates social assistance policies for individuals under social protection. Simultaneously, Sin Ho district has strictly complied with *Decree No. 20/2021/NĐ-CP* (dated March 15, 2021) of the Government, which outlined social assistance policies for social protection beneficiaries, especially the elderly. The beneficiaries covered under these decrees include: (a) elderly from poor households, who do not have relatives with the obligation and right to support them, or have relatives but this person is receiving monthly social allowances; (b) the elderly aged from 75 to 80 years old from poor or near-poor households living in communes and villages in

extremely disadvantaged areas inhabited by ethnic minorities and mountainous regions, who do not fall under the category specified in Point (a); and, (c) persons aged 80 years and above who are not covered under Point (a) and who do not receive pensions, monthly social insurance benefits, or other social allowances.

Table 4. Results of implementing funeral support policies in Sin Ho District

Unit: Person

No	Criteria	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	Number of the elderly receiving funeral support	66	59	47	86

(Source: Representative Board of Sin Ho Elderly Association)

2.4. Evaluation of the procedure of social assistance policies implementation in Sin Ho district, Lai Chau province

2.4.1. Evaluation of the policy implementation procedure

** Developing a policy implementation plan*

Sin Ho People's Committee has deployed a comprehensive system of legal documents, including resolutions, decisions, and plans, to operationalize social assistance policies for the elderly, while closely linking them with the socio-economic development goals and ensuring annual social security. Specific solutions have been established to ensure effective implementation. Innovative social assistance methods have been deployed, such as assigning responsibility to local party committees, party members, government officials, and mass organizations, in coordination with local elderly association branches. This collaborative approach allows for monitoring, supporting, and guiding older adults in implementing social assistance policies on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, some localities have organized direct dialogues between local authorities and older adults, while also enacting policies to encourage and mobilize older adults to play an active role in building families and communities.

** Policies, propaganda and dissemination*

Proactive and coordinated communication campaigns regarding social assistance policies for the elderly have been implemented across Sin Ho District, playing a crucial role in translating policies into practice. The implementation of social assistance policies for the elderly is facilitated through various methods, including dissemination via local mass media and at the village level, distribution of leaflets, and posting announcements on public notice boards, creating favorable conditions for everyone to access necessary information. Social assistance policy communication for the elderly is consistently implemented proactively, synchronously, and uniformly throughout the district. This activity is not only diverse in content but also rich in form, ensuring comprehensiveness and depth.

To address the communication needs tailored to each target group at the grassroots level, the District Division of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs has collaborated with other divisions, sectors, and socio-political organizations to organize training courses. From 2021 to 2024, local Association branches organized 58 communication sessions on social assistance policies for older adults in the district, attracting the participation of over 2,634 members.

As shown in Table 5, advocacy and communication efforts regarding social protection policies for the elderly in Sin Ho district have increased year over year. Furthermore, attention has been given to communicating about healthcare for older adults, as well as organizing community activity clubs for them. Advocacy and communication regarding social assistance policies for older adults have helped the public and the community understand the importance of these policies. Simultaneously, they have empowered senior citizens to enhance their role and responsibility in modeling and guiding their children and grandchildren to comply fully with the

Party's and the State's policies and laws, adhere to local regulations, and access available legal support mechanisms designed to protect the rights and welfare of older citizens.

Table 5. Propaganda on social assistance policy for the elderly in the Sin Ho district for the period 2021 - 2024

Year	Number of propaganda sessions	Number of participants	Total number of senior citizens in the year	Percentage of participating senior citizens
2021	8	1.693	4.538	37,3%
2022	19	2.147	4.666	46%
2023	14	1.832	4.589	40%
2024	17	2.634	4.968	53%

(Source: Representative Board of Sin Ho Elderly Association)

**** Task assignment and coordination in policy implementation***

The District People's Committee assigns the Division of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs to take the lead, with the District Division of Finance and Planning and the Representative Board of the Elderly Association directly coordinating in the implementation of social assistance policies for older adults in the locality, ensuring consistency and synchronization in operations. Regarding the establishment of organizational structures for elderly affairs, the focus is primarily on building and strengthening the Representative Boards of the Elderly Association at all levels. Implementing Resolutions V and VI on the task of building and strengthening the Association's organization, the Representative Board of the District Elderly Association consistently urges and directs local Association branches to pay attention to and strengthen the Association's organization. Throughout the district, from 2021 to 2024, 22/22 local association branches have been consistently maintained, achieving a rate of 100%; and 182/182 villages and residential groups have sub-branches, achieving a rate of 100%.

Local Association branches perform well in developing membership, annually recruiting new members, and increasing the overall membership rate in the whole district.

Table 6. Membership development of Sin Ho Elderly Association in the period 2021 - 2024

Year	Number of newly admitted members	Total members	Total number of senior citizens in the year	Percentage of participating senior citizens
2021	228	5.793	4.538	78,3%
2022	230	5.868	4.666	79,5%
2023	306	6.085	4.589	75,4%
2024	59	6.340	4.968	78,4%

(Source: Representative Board of Sin Ho Elderly Association)

As shown in Table 6, the number of older adults participating in the Elderly Association increased steadily each year. Even in 2024, the year with the lowest participation, 59 individuals

joined the association. Overall, the membership rate remained high, with the lowest level being 75.4% of the total number of older adults in the district.

** Inspecting, urging, and implementing policies*

To inspect and supervise the implementation of social assistance policies, the District People's Committee has conducted numerous inspections of activities related to the implementation of social assistance policies for older adults in the district. This aims to evaluate the results achieved, identify existing limitations, propose solutions, and draw lessons learned for implementation in subsequent years.

During the 2021-2024 period, the district issued detailed plans for monitoring, inspecting, and evaluating the effectiveness of social assistance policies for older adults. Simultaneously, the district directed divisions and mass organizations to actively participate in this process. The direction and organization of social assistance policy implementation for older adults in the locality include: (a) monitoring and inspecting the implementation of annual plans and operational measures; (b) developing and executing targeted action plans based on local needs; (c) identifying key priorities to enhance the effectiveness of policy delivery; and (d) conducting annual surveys and reviews of older adults eligible for social assistance.

** Monitoring and inspecting methods*

The inspection and monitoring process of social assistance policy implementation for older adults revealed shortcomings and inadequacies in the organization and deployment phases at the local level. Violations arising during policy implementation have been addressed or referred to competent authorities for resolution. To ensure transparency and effectiveness, close monitoring must be maintained, and inspections should be strengthened to promptly correct errors and prevent violations. Specifically, the District People's Committee and local association branches have organized monitoring and inspection activities regarding the implementation of social assistance policies for older adults and related policies, as well as the implementation of Association Resolutions and Charters. For example: In 2021, 12 inspections were conducted, with no complaints received; In 2022, 15 inspections were conducted, with no complaints received. These inspections identified and resolved some issues related to determining the age of older adults due to the lack of identification cards or discrepancies between identification cards and household registration books. In 2023, inspections were conducted at 7 local Association branches regarding the establishment of the Fund of "All People Care For and Promote the Role of Older Adults", and 27 inspections focused on the implementation of social protection policies for older adults and related policies. These inspections identified and captured the aspirations of officials and members of the Elderly Association in implementing social protection policies, birthday celebrations, medical examinations and treatment, and health insurance policies for poor older adults in difficult circumstances, promptly resolving difficulties and obstacles from the grassroots level. As a result, there were no outstanding complaints or cross-level petitions during the year. In 2024, 11 monitoring inspections were conducted, with no complaints received.

Table 7. Oversight, Inspection, and Direction of Social Assistance Policy Implementation for Older Adults in Sin Ho District, 2021-2024

Year	Number of inspections and monitoring visits	Inspections and monitoring contents	Detected violations	Discovered problems
2021	12	Implementation of social protection	No violations detected	Challenges in determining age for some cases due to no ID or birth certificate
2022	15			

2023	7	policies		(mainly identified by others having a similar age)
2024	11			

(Source: Representative Board of Sin Ho Elderly Association)

Based on practical experience in implementing social assistance policies for older adults in the district, challenges and errors have been identified in the process of reviewing applications and in addressing obstacles encountered while assisting older adults. Common errors in the application review process include a lack of supporting documentation to verify the eligibility of beneficiaries. Based on these findings, strategies for addressing these shortcomings have been developed.

**Evaluation and summary of the policies implementation*

The District People's Committee assigns specialized divisions to coordinate with the Representative Board of the District Elderly Association in implementing social assistance policies for the elderly, and annually, summarize the Association's work, evaluate the achieved results in the previous year, develop the work program for the following year, and report to the District People's Committee. In addition, the District and Commune Elderly Association Representative Board is responsible for inspecting and urging the Association's units to advise the local Party Committee and authorities on resolving existing issues and difficulties in the implementation of policies for the elderly.

In summary, the implementation of social assistance policies for the elderly in Sin Ho district gained some great results, such as a system of issued directive documents, comprehensive and sufficient policy implementation plans; the policy dissemination and propaganda work were proactively and synchronously implemented with many forms, contributing to raising awareness of the elderly and the community. Inspection and monitoring have been maintained regularly, promptly detecting and handling problems promptly. However, the implementation of social assistance policies for the elderly still encountered some difficulties and constraints.

2.4.2. Influencing factors and causes of challenges and constraints in the policy implementation process

**Influencing factors in the policy implementation process*

The process of implementing social assistance policies for older adults in Sin Ho District has been shaped by a range of influencing factors, both positive and negative. The key facilitating factors identified include the following: (1) strong leadership and commitment from authorities at all levels, demonstrated through the issuance of comprehensive plans and guiding documents that ensure clear direction for policy implementation; (2) active engagement of the Representative Board of the Elderly Association, which has effectively served as a bridge between policymakers and beneficiaries, ensuring that social assistance reaches the intended target groups; (3) innovative communication and advocacy efforts, characterized by the use of accessible and culturally appropriate methods, including ethnic languages, enabling the elderly to better understand their rights and to participate proactively in policy-related activities; and (4) supportive local cultural traditions that value and promote the role of older adults within families and communities, thereby creating a positive social environment conducive to effective policy implementation. Collectively, these factors constitute an essential foundation for gradually overcoming implementation challenges and enhancing the overall effectiveness of social assistance policies for older adults in this particularly disadvantaged mountainous district.

In terms of negative factors, the following key ones are mentioned below:

Firstly, the current framework for social assistance remains largely centralized, with mechanisms, programs, and implementation plans developed primarily based on directives from

higher administrative levels. As a result, the participation of both beneficiaries and local authorities in policy formulation is limited. This top-down approach often leads to misalignment between policy design and local realities, delaying the achievement of policy objectives. In addition, local resources are underutilized, and the social capacity for elderly care remains insufficiently mobilized. The district has not yet established a Social Protection Center to support homeless or neglected older adults, while a sense of dependency and passivity persists at both district and commune levels. A paradigm shift is therefore needed—one that strengthens the participation of older adults and grassroots authorities in both policy development and implementation, and that actively mobilizes community and social resources to enhance policy effectiveness.

Secondly, communication, dissemination, and awareness-raising regarding social assistance policies for the elderly remain ineffective in some localities. Consequently, older adults have only a partial understanding of Party and State social welfare policies, which fosters hesitancy and dependence rather than proactive engagement. The dissemination of patriotic movements such as “Model Elderly” and “Advanced Age – Ideal Model” faces numerous challenges; these initiatives lack sustainability and have yet to fully leverage the pivotal role of the elderly in mobilizing community strength and spreading national solidarity policies.

Thirdly, both objective and subjective factors have contributed to superficial and procedural practices in certain areas. These issues result in inappropriate or delayed interventions, thereby diminishing public confidence in local governance and in social policies directed toward older adults. Although periodic inspections and monitoring are conducted, their effectiveness remains limited. In practice, oversight activities tend to be administrative, inconsistent, and lacking in qualitative depth. Moreover, the absence of timely and comprehensive feedback mechanisms constrains policy refinement and reduces the legitimacy, sustainability, and overall impact of implementation efforts.

Fourthly, the absence of a dedicated Social Protection Center for elderly care in both the province and district imposes significant burdens on the community and local government. The physical infrastructure, including facilities, equipment, computers, and office furniture, remains underdeveloped and insufficient. Financial resources allocated for social protection tasks are limited and inconsistent. Additionally, the nationwide social welfare data management software system also functions ineffectively, impeding coordination, monitoring, and efficient allocation of resources.

** Causes of challenges and constraints in the policy implementation process*

An analysis of the implementation of social assistance policies for the elderly in Sin Ho district, taking into account both positive and negative influencing factors, reveals certain shortcomings and limitations that can be attributed to the following underlying causes:

Current social assistance regulations do not adequately consider the distinct socio-cultural and geographic characteristics of the elderly in different regions. As a result, policy adaptability and overall effectiveness are diminished when these frameworks are applied in mountainous localities such as Sin Ho.

Policy-making bodies responsible for social assistance policies for the elderly encounter difficulties in clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of each implementing unit at the local level, leading to duplication and reduced coordination efficiency.

Functional units at the district level involved in social assistance for the elderly lack proactivity in developing plans tailored to local socio-economic conditions. Plans often rely on top-down imposed targets, lacking innovation and flexibility.

The capacity to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of social assistance for the elderly in Sin Ho remains weak. This results in subpar quality of social assistance programs, lacking practical application, flexibility, and sustainability. Strengthening this capacity is necessary to

ensure policies are implemented effectively and meet the actual needs of the elderly.

Resources, including financial, material, and human resources, for implementing social assistance policies for the elderly in Sin Ho district do not meet the requirements. The number of dedicated staff is insufficient to handle the current workload. The district's budget allocated for social assistance for the elderly is limited.

2.5. Proposed solutions to improve the effectiveness of policy implementation

Based on the implementation results and evaluation of the procedure of social assistance policies for the elderly in Sin Ho District, specific solutions are proposed as follows:

Improving the planning process for policy implementation as a critical tool for social assistance for the elderly requires clear determination of objectives, content, resources, timing, and implementation solutions. Planning must ensure accuracy, high feasibility, and avoid adjustments during the implementation process. The plan must be clearly decentralized, require close coordination among specialized units at the district level, avoid duplication of subjects, and continue to perfect the policy in a more streamlined and effective direction.

Strengthening the propaganda and dissemination of social assistance policies and laws on social assistance policies for the elderly, focusing on innovating the contents and forms of dissemination and propaganda, overcoming the shortcomings and limitations of this work in some communes in particularly difficult economic areas.

Enhance coordination among different sectors and local governments at all levels in the implementation of social assistance policies, such as improving the quality of personnel responsible for policy execution to avoid overlaps, omissions, or shirking of responsibilities. Promote decentralization to local authorities with a comprehensive management structure for implementing social assistance policies. Strengthen training, capacity building, inspection, and monitoring of civil servants, ensuring the proper implementation of policies according to plan, at the right time, and targeting the appropriate beneficiaries.

Strengthening the inspection, evaluation, and handling of violations during the implementation of social assistance policies for the elderly. Developing a team of inspectors who possess strong ethics, qualities, and political resolve; setting up training plans on inspection and monitoring procedures for inspection officers at district and grassroots levels to meet operational requirements. Strengthening regular and periodic inspections and supervision throughout the implementation of policies to ensure proper management and target accuracy.

3. Conclusions

An analysis and assessment of the implementation of social assistance policies for older adults in Sin Ho District, Lai Chau Province, indicates that these initiatives have achieved notable positive outcomes. By 2024, monthly financial support had been extended to 4,968 older adults, accompanied by the issuance of health insurance cards, the provision of healthcare services, and funeral support for 86 individuals. In addition, the district's efforts have contributed to improving the spiritual and emotional well-being of older residents through locally organized welfare and community activities.

This work is essential as it offers a foundational basis for a comprehensive evaluation of the elderly population in the district and serves as an important reference for understanding the actual implementation of social assistance policies for the elderly from 2021 to 2024. Additionally, the social assistance policy identifies existing limitations, shortcomings, and reasons such as the infrequent and non-diverse dissemination of policy information; limited capacity and expertise among some officials, leading to difficulties in advising the District People's Council on disability assessments at the commune level; challenges in providing benefits for the elderly; incomplete

coordination in dossier processing for benefits; and irregular review, increase, or reduction of target groups. These findings serve as a basis for proposing directions and solutions to better implement social assistance policies for the elderly in the district, improve planning procedures, enhance communication and dissemination efforts, strengthen coordination among relevant individuals and units, and increase inspection, supervision, and detection of errors during policy implementation.

REFERENCES

- [1] Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam (2023). Resolution No. 42-NG/TW of the Party Central Committee on reforming social policies.
- [2] Nguyen VD (2017). The Law on the Elderly: Implementation realities after 8 years of enactment. *Journal of Sociology*, No. 1 (137), 2017.
- [3] Trinh DL, (2014). Some dimensions of the social assistance policy system for the elderly in Vietnam today. *Journal of Sociology*, No. 3 (2017).
- [4] Trinh DL (2016). Policies on elderly care in contemporary Vietnam. *VNU Journal of Science: Policy and Management Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (2016).
- [5] Tran TTH & Nguyen THD, (2021). Influencing factors to elderly social allowances by gender. *Journal of Science, Hong Duc University*, No. 53 (2021).
- [6] Bui N, (2019). Implementation of policies for the elderly in Vietnam today – issues and recommendations. *Thu Dau Mot University Journal of Science*, No. 2 (41).
- [7] Luu VD & Nguyen DN, (2025). Evaluation of the implementation of social assistance policies in Bao Yen district, Lao Cai province. *Vietnam Journal of Agricultural Sciences*, Vol. 23 (1).
- [8] Zanjari N, Momtaz Y A, Kamal SHM, Basakha M & Ahmadi S, (2021). The Influence of Providing and Receiving Social Support on Older Adults' Well-being. *Clinical Practice & Epidemiology in Mental Health*. <https://clinical-practice-and-epidemiology-in-mental-health.com/>
- [9] Vega-Hernández MC, Román-Gallego JÁ, Pérez-Delgado ML & Torres-García AV, (2023). Social services for the elderly: a multivariate perspective study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1297349.
- [10] Luthfi NAL & Hanri M, (2023). The Effect of Local Government's Elderly Social Assistance on Health Spending of Poor Elderly in Indonesia. *Jurnal Perencanaan Pembangunan: The Indonesian Journal of Development Planning*, 7(2), 299-312.