

Evaluation of Infrastructure Construction Outcomes in the Implementation of Enhanced New Rural Areas in Phu Binh District, Thai Nguyen Province

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ABSTRACT: Phu Binh is a midland district in the southern part of Thai Nguyen province, covering a total natural land area of 241.39 km². It is administratively divided into 20 commune-level units, including one town and 19 communes. In 2022, Phu Binh district met the new rural standards, with all 19 communes fulfilling the criteria. The district continued to focus on developing advanced new rural areas. The article employs a data collection method that combines field surveys with synthesis, statistical analysis, and comparison techniques to evaluate the results of implementing advanced new rural areas. The study evaluated and analyzed the results of infrastructure construction in 11 communes of Phu Binh district, with a focus on implementing advanced new rural areas during the 2021-2025 period. This includes transportation, irrigation and disaster prevention, electricity, education, culture, rural trade infrastructure, information and communication, and residential housing. The results of infrastructure construction in 11 communes have met the criteria for advanced new rural areas, providing a solid foundation for the locality to continue working towards this goal in the near future.

KEYWORDS: new rural area, advanced new rural, criteria, Phu Binh, Thai Nguyen.

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Target Program on New Rural Construction is a comprehensive program for economic, social, political, and national security development, implemented in rural areas nationwide. New rural construction helps improve people's lives, develop technical infrastructure in a synchronized manner, and create a green, clean, and beautiful environmental landscape. The changes resulting from the new rural construction process were highlighted by the author Lai Thi Loan [1] in her research on Yen Son district, Tuyen Quang province. At the same time, author Ha Quang Trung and colleagues [2] highlighted people's satisfaction with the results of new rural construction in Lao Cai. To achieve successful new rural construction, localities continuously strive and propose effective solutions to meet the set targets. The study by Vu Van Long [3] focuses on policies for developing high-tech agriculture in connection with new rural construction, while the research by Le Van Bay and Duong Van Son [4] explores various solutions for agricultural economic development within new rural construction, aiming toward urbanization in Pho Yen town, Thai Nguyen province. Additionally, author Nguyen Van Anh [5] examines human resource development in new rural construction through a study conducted in Cho Moi district, Bac Kan province. After completing the new rural program, many localities across the country have focused on implementing advanced NTM construction, including Hung Yen province [6], Vinh Truong district in Vinh Phuc province [7], and Tan Cuong commune

in Thai Nguyen city [8]. The above studies have assessed public satisfaction, proposed development solutions to enhance new rural construction outcomes, and addressed the next stages of the new rural program. However, these studies remain limited as they have not thoroughly evaluated the detailed outcomes of implementing the advanced new rural program, particularly its specific impacts on the economic, social, and environmental aspects of the localities where the program has been carried out.

After more than 10 years of implementing the National Target Program on New Rural Construction, Thai Nguyen province has seen many positive changes in infrastructure and people's quality of life. Phu Binh district is a key agricultural area of the province. Since the beginning of the program's implementation, the district has proactively developed new rural in connection with green agricultural growth, as reflected in the research by Nguyen Thi Thu Ha [9]. In addition, Nguyen Thi Bich Lien [10] conducted research assessing the current state of advanced new rural construction in Bao Ly commune, Phu Binh district.

In 2022, Phu Binh district was recognized for meeting new rural standards, becoming the first district in the province to achieve this status after three cities. This milestone lays a solid foundation for the district to continue promoting toward advanced new rural construction. To achieve this goal, Phu Binh district continues to maintain and enhance the quality of its criteria. Based on practical data, this article analyzes and

evaluates the results of infrastructure development in the implementation of advanced new rural communes in Phu Binh district, Thai Nguyen province, providing a scientific foundation to help the locality orient its development toward achieving its goals.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Data Collection Methods

- *Collecting Secondary Data:* Relevant legal documents, policies, and guidelines from the central government, Thai Nguyen province, and Phu Binh district on new rural construction and advanced new rural construction; documents on local natural, economic, and social conditions; records on the current implementation status of advanced new rural criteria; published scientific studies; and information available in mass media (online newspapers, the Internet, etc.) related to the topic.
- *Collecting Primary Data:* Conduct field surveys in the study area to gather information on natural conditions, natural resource potential, and the socio-economic situation. The field survey is combined with direct observations to assess the implementation of criteria in comparison with the collected data on the current status of advanced new rural commune criteria in the district.

2.2. Data Processing Methods

This article employs synthesis, statistical, and comparative methods. The collected data will be synthesized and statistically categorized into groups based on specific criteria, then compared with actual survey results to provide an objective assessment of the achieved outcomes. Next, the research team compares the obtained results with the specific targets of each criterion for advanced NTM communes in the 2021-2025 period in the Midlands and Northern Mountainous region, as stipulated in Decision No. 318/QĐ-TTg, issued by the Prime Minister on March 8, 2022 [11].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Phu Binh is the first district in Thai Nguyen province to be recognized as a new rural district in 2022, as stated in Decision No. 567/QĐ-TTg, issued by the Prime Minister on May 24, 2023 [12]. The new rural development program has significantly transformed the landscape of Phu Binh district. Once a predominantly agricultural district with limited infrastructure, it has now become a standout in the province, featuring well-developed infrastructure and an improved quality of life for local residents, both materially and spiritually. Since 2022, all 19 communes in the district have maintained and improved the quality of criteria in accordance with the National Criteria for New Rural Communes for the 2021–2025 period. Among them, 11 out of 19 communes (accounting for 58%) have prioritized investment and strived to meet the standards for advanced NTM communes. These communes include Tan Duc, Duong Thanh, Uc Ky, Xuan Phuong, Tan Khanh, Ha Chau, Thuong Dinh, Nha Long, Diem Thuy, Nga My, and Luong Phu. The communes that have met the advanced NTM standards are primarily key communes of the district, characterized by strategic locations and outstanding potential. They have been targeted for development since the time they first achieved the basic new rural standards. In the set of criteria for building advanced new rural areas, many criteria have stricter requirements compared to the basic new rural standards, particularly those related to infrastructure, the economy, and the environment.

3.1. Evaluation of Traffic Results

Table should be prepare using table tool within the Microsoft word and cited consecutively in the text. Every table must have a descriptive title and if numerical measurements are given, the units should be included in the column heading. Formatting requirement has been summarized in the Table 1.

Table 1. Implementation Results of the Traffic Criterion [13]

No	Criteria Content	Target Indicator	Implementation results	Evaluate
1	The percentage of commune trunk roads and inter-commune roads that are maintained annually, ensuring proper illumination, greenery, cleanliness, and aesthetic appeal, with necessary components (such as signs, guideposts, lighting, speed bumps, and trees) in compliance with regulations	Regulated by the Provincial People's Committee	100% (154.27/154.27km)	Achieved
2	The percentage of village and hamlet roads, as well as inter-village and inter-hamlet roads, that are paved and maintained annually	100%	100% (164.45/164.45km)	Achieved
	The percentage of village and hamlet roads, as well as inter-village and inter-	Regulated by the Provincial	100%	Achieved

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	hamlet roads, that are equipped with the necessary components in compliance with regulations	People's Committee		
3	The percentage of alley and neighborhood roads that are paved and maintained with proper illumination, greenery, cleanliness, and aesthetic appeal	≥85%	100% (187.59/187.59km)	Achieved
4	The percentage of main field roads that facilitate convenient year-round transportation of goods.	Regulated by the Provincial People's Committee	100% (117/117km)	Achieved

All commune and inter-commune trunk roads, along with the entire village and hamlet road system—including inter-village and inter-hamlet roads across 11 communes—have been fully paved and are regularly maintained. No dirt roads remain in the rural transportation network. The road system is fully equipped with lighting to enhance traffic safety and security. Greenery along both sides of the roads has been improved and is regularly maintained, effectively preventing littering. This contributes to a greener, cleaner, and more environmentally friendly landscape.

A total of 117 km of field roads, primarily serving agricultural production and goods transportation, have been designed to accommodate agricultural machinery (such as tractors and combine harvesters) and freight vehicles, ensuring the smooth and efficient transport of agricultural products. Improving the quality of the transportation system is a key factor in economic development, contributing to a higher quality of life and fostering the sustainable growth of the local area.

Evaluation of Results: All 11 communes have met the transportation criteria.

3.2. Evaluation of Irrigation and Disaster Prevention Outcomes

The area of agricultural land with an active irrigation and drainage system: 98% (6,299/6,426.6 ha) of agricultural land is efficiently supplied with and drained of water, meeting the requirements for effective production. The active irrigation and drainage system ensures a timely water supply during cropping seasons, particularly in the dry season, and efficient drainage during the rainy season, creating optimal growing conditions for crops. This contributes to enhancing agricultural productivity and product quality, improving production efficiency, stabilizing farmers' livelihoods, and fostering local economic development. To sustain and further increase this rate, it is crucial to prioritize improving irrigation infrastructure, sustainably managing water resources, and strengthening the capacity to respond to climate change impacts.

At least one local irrigation organization operates effectively and sustainably: All 11 communes have established local irrigation organizations (cooperative

groups) that function efficiently in accordance with regulations on the management and utilization of irrigation systems. These organizations play a crucial role in enhancing agricultural productivity and mitigating risks associated with drought and flooding. These organizations operate effectively by ensuring a timely water supply for irrigation, efficiently managing irrigation infrastructure, and reducing maintenance costs through community collaboration. The efficient management and utilization of irrigation systems support agricultural production and contribute to sustainable economic, social, and environmental development in the communes.

The percentage of key crop areas utilizing advanced and water-efficient irrigation: All communes ensure that designated key crop areas (rice) are irrigated using advanced, water-saving techniques. The specific percentages achieved by each commune are as follows: Luong Phu – 84.86%, Tan Duc – 98.15%, Duong Thanh – 91.75%, Xuan Phuong – 95.58%, Tan Khanh – 86.41%, Uc Ky – 74.94%, Nha Long – 53.9%, Diem Thuy – 94.95%, Nga My – 31.6%, Thuong Dinh – 52.5%, and Ha Chau – 39.4%. Ensuring that key crop areas (rice) are irrigated using advanced and water-efficient techniques demonstrates progress in the application of science and technology in agriculture. The adoption of water-efficient technology promotes sustainable agricultural development and reduces reliance on outdated farming methods. Upgrading agricultural infrastructure generates economic benefits for farmers, supports water resource conservation, enhances environmental quality, and fosters sustainable development.

100% of small-scale irrigation works and on-field irrigation systems are maintained annually: All communes develop annual plans for canal dredging, maintenance, and upkeep of irrigation structures. Regular inspections are conducted before and after the rainy season, with complete documentation on labor and materials maintained for planned infrastructure maintenance. All infrastructure components are periodically dredged, maintained, and serviced, achieving a 100% completion rate.

Conduct an inventory and monitor wastewater discharge into irrigation structures: Annually, all communes enhance

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efforts to promote and guide organizations and households in conducting an inventory and monitoring wastewater discharge into irrigation structures. They also strengthen inspection and enforcement to address violations, effectively manage organizations and individuals discharging wastewater, and record and regularly update wastewater discharge sources for regulatory compliance.

Ensure proactive disaster prevention following the "Four-On-the-Spot" principle: All 11 communes have established and continuously strengthened their commune-level Command Committees for Disaster Prevention, Search, and Rescue. Sufficient materials, equipment, and human resources are fully prepared to meet disaster prevention and emergency response requirements. Disaster prevention and response activities are proactively and effectively implemented in accordance with the "Four-On-the-Spot" principle, ensuring timely intervention and recovery from natural disasters.

Evaluation of Results: All 11 communes have met the criteria for irrigation and disaster prevention.

3.3. Evaluation of Electricity Performance

All 22,118 households across 11 communes have directly registered for and are safely, reliably, and consistently using electricity for both daily activities and production. The electrical system remains stable, ensuring technical safety and providing a continuous and timely power supply without disrupting residents' daily lives or production processes.

The electrical infrastructure is continuously upgraded and enhanced, contributing to increased labor productivity, reduced production costs, and higher household incomes. Furthermore, it serves as a foundation for communes to implement rural modernization programs, attract investment, and foster service development.

Evaluation of Results: All 11 communes have met the required electricity criteria.

3.4. Evaluation of Educational Results

The educational development status of the 11 communes is detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Implementation Results of the Educational Criterion [13]

No	Criteria Content	Target Indicator	Implementation results	Evaluate
1	The percentage of schools at all levels (preschool, primary, lower secondary, or multi-level schools with lower secondary as the highest level) that meet level 1 infrastructure standards, with at least one school meeting level 2 infrastructure standards	100%	100% (34/34 schools)	Achieved
2	Maintain and enhance the quality of universal preschool education standards for 5-year-old children	Achieved	100%	Achieved
3	Achieve and sustain the standards for universal primary and lower secondary education	Level 3	Level 3	Achieved
4	Achieve the literacy eradication standards	Level 2	100% (62,771/62,771 people)	Achieved
5	The commune-level learning community is evaluated and classified	Fair	Fair	Achieved
6	A physical education model is in place for students to develop their fitness, skills, and endurance	Regulated by the Provincial People's Committee	A model is in place	Achieved

All 34 schools (100%) across 11 communes meet Level 1 infrastructure standards, with each commune having at least one school that meets Level 2 infrastructure standards. These schools include Duong Thanh Preschool, Tan Khanh Preschool, Xuan Phuong Preschool, Luong Phu Preschool,

Nha Long Preschool, Xuan Phuong Primary School, Nga My I Primary School, Diem Thuy Primary School, Uc Ky Secondary School, Tan Khanh Secondary School, and Tan Duc Secondary School. Educational infrastructure is continuously invested in and upgraded to enhance quality,

creating a safe, modern, and conducive learning environment that provides students with better conditions for comprehensive development. To better meet future learning and teaching needs, communes must continue investing in, upgrading, and effectively managing educational infrastructure. This not only enhances the quality of education but also promotes sustainable socio-economic development.

All 11 communes maintain and effectively implement quality improvements for universal preschool education for 5-year-old children. The total number of 5-year-old children enrolled in classes across 11 communes is 1,866/1,866, achieving a 100% enrollment rate. The attendance rate of 5-year-old children is 100%. Additionally, all 5-year-old children have completed the preschool education program for the 2023–2024 school year. All 11 communes meet and sustain Level 3 standards for universal primary education and Level 3 standards for universal lower secondary education. Additionally, 100% (62,771/62,771) of individuals aged 15 to 60 in these communes meet the literacy eradication standards.

The communes implement community education activities, including skills training classes, literacy programs, vocational training courses, and other educational initiatives. Community learning centers are fully equipped with the necessary infrastructure, materials, and learning support technology. However, to sustain and enhance quality, localities must continue investing in, innovating, and expanding learning programs to ensure that all citizens have access to educational opportunities for personal and professional development.

Physical activities such as volleyball, soft volleyball, badminton, and shuttlecock kicking are implemented at the district level to foster a healthier, more dynamic, and engaging learning environment for students. Additionally, all 11 communes have established physical education models that enable students to develop their fitness, skills, and endurance through activities such as volleyball, soft volleyball, badminton, and shuttlecock kicking.

Evaluation of Results: All 11 communes have met the education criteria.

3.5. Evaluation of Cultural Results

Currently, all 11 communes have installed outdoor sports equipment in public areas, creating recreational spaces for various groups, including children, teenagers, and the elderly. Additionally, a wide range of cultural, artistic, physical, and sports activities are regularly organized, providing opportunities for community members in villages and communes to engage, interact, and strengthen social cohesion. Furthermore, 100% of the historical sites in all 11 communes have been inventoried, registered, protected, restored, preserved, and promoted, with management boards established in accordance with regulations. No violations or alterations that would distort the cultural heritage value of these sites have been recorded.

The percentage of villages meeting cultural standards as per regulations and achieving new rural standards is as follows: 99.3% of villages in the 11 communes meet cultural standards in accordance with regulations, while 100% of villages meet new rural standards.

Investments in infrastructure, economic development, improved living environments, and enhanced living standards for residents have created favorable conditions for villages to meet cultural standards and achieve new rural standards.

Evaluation of Results: All 11 communes have met the cultural criteria.

3.6. Evaluation of Results on Rural Trade Infrastructure

As of August 2024, a total of 12 markets are operating in the district, distributed across 11 communes and towns. These include two grade-II markets and ten grade-III markets, with over 800 merchants conducting business regularly. Among the 11 communes striving to meet the advanced new rural standards, six communes (Thuong Dinh, Diem Thuy, Nha Long, Tan Khanh, Xuan Phuong, and Tan Duc) have markets that meet the rural market criteria as stipulated in Decision No. 1327/QĐ-BCT, issued on June 3, 2024, by the Minister of Industry and Trade. Additionally, these communes have implemented pilot market models that ensure food safety in accordance with regulations. In addition, traditional markets in the district are regularly maintained, effectively meeting the demand for purchasing and exchanging essential goods and agricultural products among local residents.

Rural commercial infrastructure in the district has received investment and expanded in scale, contributing positively to the growth of the district's total retail sales of goods and consumer service revenue, which has averaged over 10% per year.

Evaluation of Results: All 11 communes have met the rural commercial infrastructure criteria.

3.7. Evaluation of Results on Information and Communication

In the district, all 19 communes have postal service points equipped to ensure service provision by local organizations and individuals. Additionally, all 19 communes have broadband internet connections extending to all 261 hamlets through the Viettel, Mobifone, and Vinaphone networks, effectively meeting the usage needs of local residents.

All 11 communes striving to meet the advanced NTM standards have communal cultural post offices equipped with essential facilities, including computers, printers, electronic scales, and internet access, ensuring the provision of postal services and online public services for residents. Additionally, 80% of the working-age population in these communes use smartphones.

All hamlets across the 11 communes have a regularly operating loudspeaker system that promptly broadcasts information to support local political tasks. Additionally, all households in these communes have access to at least one

form of television broadcasting, including satellite TV, cable TV, digital terrestrial TV, or Internet TV. Furthermore, all 11 communes have publishing distribution points located within communal libraries.

Information technology is applied in management and administration to support economic and social activities, as well as to gather public feedback on new rural development outcomes. All officials and civil servants in the 11 communes (100%) have received training in digital skills and information security. Additionally, over 70% of the working-age population in these communes have been educated on computer use and basic digital skills through various methods, including training sessions, distribution of instructional materials, loudspeaker broadcasts, dissemination through the Community Digital Technology Group, and direct communication at households.

Furthermore, all 11 communes have ensured that 100% of their OCOP products are introduced and promoted on e-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, Voso.vn, and Postmart.vn. In addition, all households, agencies, organizations, and historical sites have been assigned digital address plaques and officially notified of their digital addresses.

Evaluation of Results: All 11 communes have met the information and communication criteria.

3.8. Evaluation of Results on Residential Housing

Currently, there are no temporary or dilapidated houses in any of the 11 communes. The percentage of households with permanent or semi-permanent housing across these communes averages over 97.4%, with specific rates as follows: Tan Duc (99.7%), Uc Ky (99.4%), Duong Thanh (95.7%), Xuan Phuong (97.3%), Tan Khanh (97.1%), Luong Phu (98.0%), Nga My (97.6%), Ha Chau (97.7%), Nha Long (93.5%), Diem Thuy Dat (97.6%), and Thuong Dinh (98.1%).

The elimination of temporary and dilapidated houses ensures safe and stable living conditions for residents. Housing infrastructure across the communes has developed relatively evenly, contributing to an improved quality of life and enhanced social welfare. This achievement reflects the effectiveness of local authorities and community efforts in improving living conditions and meeting the standards for advanced new rural construction.

Evaluation of Results: All 11 communes have met the residential housing criteria.

4. CONCLUSIONS

For over 14 years, the district has implemented the National Target Program on New Rural Construction and, for the past two years, has advanced the new rural construction program. This effort has led to significant progress, particularly in infrastructure development. Rural socio-economic infrastructure has been strengthened through substantial investments in electricity, roads, schools, healthcare stations, irrigation systems, cultural facilities,

markets, telecommunications, and residential housing. These investments have facilitated construction, upgrades, and renovations to meet required standards, significantly transforming the district's rural landscape.

This progress promotes sustainable socio-economic development, enhances cultural and spiritual life, and creates favorable conditions for business and production, particularly in agriculture and traditional local handicrafts. Furthermore, improvements in transportation and telecommunications infrastructure have helped narrow the gap between rural and urban areas, strengthening regional connectivity and fostering the growth of agricultural product processing industries—a key economic strength of the district.

During the implementation of the advanced new rural construction program, alongside notable achievements, the district continues to face certain challenges and limitations. Some communes cover large areas with dispersed populations, and the state budget for new rural construction remains limited, necessitating financial contributions from residents and other sources. However, as the income levels of some rural households remain low, fundraising efforts encounter significant difficulties.

Additionally, a small portion of the population has limited awareness of their rights and responsibilities in contributing to new rural construction. As a result, they have not been fully proactive in donating land and assets for road construction or actively participating in new rural development initiatives.

To achieve the goal of advanced new rural construction, the local government must prioritize budget allocation for disadvantaged communes while also leveraging support from the central government, the province, and national target programs to continue investing in infrastructure development in the remaining communes.

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