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HARVARD PROFESSOR NOTES MARKED PROGRESS IN SOUTH VIETNAM
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SAIGON -- A HARVARD PROFESSOR ON A RETURN VISIT TO SOUTH VIETNAM HAS FOUND THAT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS IN RURAL AREAS HAVE IMPROVED MARKEDLY SINCE HIS FIRST VISIT TWO YEARS AGO.

SAMUEL L. POPKIN, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF GOVERNMENT AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY, SAID HE NOTED EXTENSIVE IMPROVEMENT IN THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF VILLAGES AND HAMLETS, MORE POLITICAL AWARENESS AND A GREATER TRUST IN LOCAL LEADERS.

PROFESSOR POPKIN HAS BEEN IN SOUTH VIETNAM SINCE MAY UNDER A STUDY GRANT FROM THE ASIA SOCIETY. AFTER GOING TO SEVERAL REMOTE PROVINCES WHICH TWO YEARS AGO WERE VERY DIFFICULT TO VISIT BECAUSE OF VIET CONG DOMINANCE, PROFESSOR POPKIN SAID HE WAS "AMAZED" AT THE FACILITY WITH WHICH HE HAD RECENTLY DRIVEN BY MINIBUS THROUGH HUNDREDS OF MILES OF FORMERLY INSECURE AREAS.

PROFESSOR POPKIN SAID THE PRESTIGE OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN SAIGON, AS A RESULT OF THE LATTER'S PROGRAMS, ALSO HAS GROWN IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

MUCH OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HAS RESULTED FROM IMPROVED ROADS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS, DREDGING OF NEW CANALS, CROP IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS AND SIMILAR MEASURES INITIATED BY THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT, DR. POPKIN SAID. BUT A LOT OF THE CREDIT, HE ADDED, SHOULD GO TO THE LOCAL LEADERS, THE VILLAGE COUNCILS AND HAMLET CHIEFS AND TO THE SYSTEM OF LOCAL ELECTIONS WHICH WERE INSTITUTED THROUGHOUT VIETNAM THIS YEAR.

PAGE TWO HARVARD

BEFORE THE EFFECTS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ACCELERATED PACIFICATION PROGRAM BEGAN TO BE FELT, VILLAGES AND HAMLETS WERE SEMI-ISOLATED, SELF-SUFFICIENT AND LOCALLY AUTONOMOUS. THEIR PEOPLE ARE REALIZING THAT THEIR LOCAL PROBLEMS ARE NO RPT NO LONGER NECESSARILY THEIR OWN. THEY KNOW THAT MUCH IS BEING DONE TO SOLVE THEM THROUGH THEIR LOCAL LEADERS' CONTACTS WITH THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT.

"A NEW AND WIDESPREAD BELIEF HAS GROWN AMONG THE LOCAL POPULATION THAT LEADERS CANNOT RPT NOT GOVERN UNLESS THEY LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE," PROFESSOR POPKIN SAID. THIS IN ITSELF, HE POINTED OUT, IS A COMPLETE REVERSAL OF THE VIETNAMESE PEASANT'S TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF GOVERNMENT.

ANOTHER FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TOWARD MORE EFFECTIVE RAPPORT
BETWEEN RURAL POPULATIONS AND THEIR LOCAL AND CENTRAL LEADERS.
MR. POPKIN SAID, IS THE PROGRAM AT VUNG TAU UNDER WHICH
NEWLY-ELECTED HAMLET AND VILLAGE OFFICIALS ARE TRAINED IN
ADMINISTRATION TO BETTER FIT THEM FOR THEIR JOBS.

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THEY ENJOY GREATER PAY INCREASES ALONG
WITH A GREATER AUTHORITY OVER LOCAL DEFENSE AND OTHER GOVERNMENT
ELEMENTS OPERATING IN THEIR AREAS, GREATER DISCRETION IN THEIR
BUDGETARY OPERATIONS, AND OTHERWISE INCREASED RESPONSIBILITIES.

PAGE THREE HARVARD

RURAL DWELLERS NOW FIND THAT THEIR LOCAL LEADERS CAN
HELP THEM WITH ALL THEIR PROBLEMS AND IF THEY CANNOT REPORT NOT
SOLVE THEM LOCALLY, THERE IS RECOURSE TO A FORMERLY NONEXISTENT
CHAIN OF HIGHER LEVEL GOVERNMENT.

WZAIPICL#-3 OF THE GOVERNMENT'S COUNTRY-WIDE RURAL ELECTION
PROGRAM WERE UNDERTAKEN IN MARCH AND JUNE THIS YEAR. TWO
ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS WERE UNDERTAKEN IN NOVEMBER AND IN DECEMBER,
2,132 VILLAGES AND 16,775 HAMLETS.

PROFESSOR POPKIN PRAISED THE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS
BEING UNDERTAKEN IN VIETNAM BY EXPERTS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF

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WARMLY RECEIVED BY VIETNAM'S FARMERS, AND
THE TECHNIQUES AND IMPROVEMENTS THEY INTRODUCED HAVE VASTLY
BENEFITED THE COUNTRY'S PREDOMINANTLY AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY
AND PRODUCTIVITY.
PROFESSOR POPKIN ALSO WAS FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY IMPROVEMENTS

IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM UNDER WHICH 70 PERCENT OF VIETNAM'S
RURAL CHILDREN IN MANY PROVINCES ARE NOW ABLE TO GO TO SCHOOL. ITEN.

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