

Study on Status of Rural Poverty Relief Development in Western China and Countermeasures in New Period: Taking Yibin, in Sichuan Province as an Example

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Abstract

Rural poverty relief development work has gained significant effects in the new period, but for China as a developing country, rural poverty relief is still the first step of a long march. There is still a long way for poverty relief work. Meanwhile, poverty relief work also has some problems, such as natural restriction, institutional barriers, mechanism shortage and insufficient justice. These problems hinder development of poverty relief work. Thus, in the new period, rural poverty relief work must have new ideas, new thoughts, new measures and new approaches. To enhance government dominance, to integrate diversified resources, expand the work thoughts and increase capital input are effective measures to develop rural poverty relief in the new period.

Key words: New period; Poverty relief development; Development type

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INTRODUCTION

From “transfusion-type poverty relief” to “hematopoiesis-type poverty relief” and from “poor county” to “concentrated poverty relief”, China’s poverty relief road is strong and hard. The poverty relief work is fruitful and meanwhile shoulders heavy responsibilities. It can

be said that although rural poverty relief in the new period has gained many achievements, it still has a long way. Many problems still need theoretical support. It is required to seek approaches in practice. Poverty relief development is the key work of Yibin to balance urban and rural development and construct “industrialization and urbanization” and also an important link for Yibin to comprehensively well-to-do society. In long-term poverty relief development, especially in the ten years of implementation of Yibin rural poverty relief development plan (2001-2010), the living standard of rural poor population continues to improve; the production and living conditions in the poverty-stricken areas effectively improve; self-development ability of rural poor people enhances significantly. But, rural poverty relief development is a complex system project. In the new period, Yibin rural poverty relief work still faces many difficulties and challenges (Miao, 2006, p.12).

1. ECOLOGY

Yibin is located at the southern part of Sichuan and in the junction of Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou. It is in the transitional zone of Sichuan Basin and the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau. It belongs to Wumeng Mountain. Yibin approaches Yangtze River in the east, the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau in the south, Daliang Mountain in the west as well as Chengdu Plain in the north. Jinsha River, the Minjiang River and Yangtze River converge here. It manages 2 districts and 8 counties and covers the average of 13283 km² with the total population of 5465700, including the rural population of 4416900. As an important constituent part of old revolutionary base areas in Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou, it belongs to concentrated poverty-stricken area in Wumeng Mountain region during in western development-key poverty relief development zone. Yibin has a long revolutionary history and glorious revolutionary traditions, where the Red Army passed through during

the long march. The Red Army once combated here. It cultivated a large batch of revolutionary pioneers such as Li Shuoxun, Yu Zehong, Lu Deming, Liu Hua, Zhao Yiman and Yang Hansheng. Currently, it has nine old revolutionary districts. Yibin is also one of the key regions where the national minorities live in Guizhou Province, including 38 minorities such as Miao, Yi and Hui. The total population of the minorities reaches 100000.

Most poverty-stricken areas in Yibin are located in remote rural areas. So, the issue of getting rid of poverty and achieving wealth has been the key and difficult work in poverty relief development. Through long-term relief, support and construction, the poverty condition of Yibin has improved greatly especially since the reform and opening-up as well as implementation of three rounds of development strategies. The poverty range has narrowed and the poverty degree has relieved. Some rural areas have been on the way of sustainable development. However, severe natural and geographical environment, special social cultural background and many historical problems decide the severity and long term of the poverty problem. Currently, Yibin is in the middle stage of industrialization. As industrialization and urbanization accelerate to develop, many new poverty and re-poverty factors appear in rural areas of Yibin. The poverty issue presents many new characteristics. Moreover, new national poverty relief standards improve. Thus, rural poverty relief development work will encounter more new contradictions. More difficulties and problems need to be solved.

In recent years, Yibin has put poverty relief development on the priority among priorities in economic and social development. In the whole city, rural poor residents reduced to 179000 from 717000 in 2001 (year on year); the poverty incidence dropped to 4.1% from 16.7%; annual per-capita net income of peasants in the whole city rose to 7771.2 Yuan in 2012 from 2084 Yuan in 2002. The long-lasting problems of vast rural poor residents such as “traffic difficulty”, “difficulty in getting drinking water” and “difficulty in receiving medical treatment” have been basically solved. Over the past 10 years, the whole city has strived for and inputted RMB 1.1 billion as financial poverty relief capital and various kinds of input have reached RMB 15 billion. Thus, the living standard and quality of the poor people improve a lot. Meanwhile, the production and living conditions improve obviously. This greatly promotes national unity and social stability in rural areas of Yibin. However, rural poverty relief development case has experienced development for many years; various jobs have effectively advanced; the poverty range and degree have reduced. But, rural poverty relief development faces more arduous situations in the new period. In accordance with the new 2300 Yuan rural poverty standard, there were 818500 rural poor residents in Yibin in 2012, increasing 102000 people compared with 10 years ago. Therefore, rural poverty relief development case in Yibin does not end, but enters a new period.

2. ANALYSIS OF RURAL POVERTY RELIEF DEVELOPMENT PROBLEM IN NEW PERIOD

2.1 Natural Restriction: Serious Re-Poverty for Poor Population Due to Disasters

Under the situation where medical treatment and other social career development lag behind, the proportion of the expenditure of diseases and serious diseases to the expenditure of rural residents are large. It is also a general factor leading to poverty and re-poverty. Firstly, disasters lead to poverty and re-poverty. Rural poor areas and poor population in Yibin mostly concentrate in remote mountains and plateaus with severe living environment, where natural disasters and local diseases frequently occur. Secondly, diseases and medical care issue result in poverty and re-poverty. Seeing from practical conditions of Yibin, residents in rural areas and especially poverty-stricken areas mainly suffer threats of various local diseases. Although new-type rural cooperative medical treatment system (hereinafter referred to as “new rural cooperation”), medical treatment supply is insufficient in poverty-stricken areas of Yibin. The insurance coverage scope of new rural cooperation is limited. The cost for enjoying high-quality medical services is far beyond peasants’ economic ability. In some areas, some peasants reflect after new rural cooperation is implemented, the medical treatment price increases obviously and the cost for medical treatment is higher than original cost.

2.2 System Barrier: Poverty Relief Fund Has Structural Contradictions

The biggest issue for China’s poverty relief development is system barrier. This makes the use of poverty relief funds has structural contradictions. Firstly, poverty relief fund allocation and use are not appropriate to the complexity of rural poverty relief development. Secondly, poverty relief fund allocation deviates from the objects of poverty relief. Thirdly, dispersive poverty relief fund channels, multi-leader management and other function crossing situations are general, and effective resultant force cannot be formed (Fang, 2007, p.12). In a bid to accelerate poverty relief development and supply all-round help and support of poverty-stricken areas and poor population, the state has formulated a series of poverty relief policies and increased capital input gradually, such as “textbook fee exemption, tuition exemption and living expense subsidy” in education, “direct subsidy” in agriculture, “rural minimum security” project, “new rural poverty relief” project, scientific and technical poverty relief, “rain and dew” plan, industrial poverty relief, agricultural comprehensive development, poverty relief soft loan and special poverty relief in regions inhabited by ethnic groups. However, since various policies and funds are responsible by different organizations and the

situation where divided management is carried out by multiple sectors forms. Although special management and operation mode can to some extent make poverty relief funds do not deviate from practical purpose. However, on the one hand, fund allocation can be realized for some time. Many projects must start at the beginning of the year. On the other hand, since the level of each sector is equal, there is lack of effective overall planning and coordination. They restrict each other. Thus, it is hard to form effective resultant force.

2.3 Shortage of Mechanism: The Application Scope of Single Poverty Relief Development Mode Is Limited

Rural poverty relief development task in Yibin is arduous. Multiple poverty relief development modes have practiced in each stage and certain effects have achieved. But the application of these modes has certain limitations. Single poverty relief mode faces many new challenges in the new period (Han, 2007, p.12). Firstly, new rural poverty relief mode can effectively integrate poverty relief resources and stresses the participation of peasants. But its shortcomings include high project threshold and the lack of operable objective evaluation standards for poor villages. So, new rural poverty relief mode is suitable for the poor villages which basically realize adequate food and clothing and whose primary-level organizations are relatively sound. Secondly, relocation poverty relief mode can overall change the living conditions and development environment of poor population. Its ability to get rid of poverty is strong. Besides, it can relieve ecological pressure and is beneficial to ecological protection. But its shortcomings are also obvious: Migration funds are insufficient; the relocation region faces great pressure; the continuous development ability of immigrants is insufficient. It thus can be seen that migration poverty relief is suitable for the regions with very severe natural conditions, high development cost and small population. Thirdly, work relief infrastructure construction poverty relief mode. Its advantage is to stimulate poor peasants' enthusiasm to participate in public welfare work and form virtuous cycle mechanism of gaining the remuneration according to the work completed. It needs cooperation of various conditions. For example, project entirety and coordination, perfection of project management mechanism, acceptance inspection, supervision and follow-up maintenance work need enhancement. Fourthly, the superiority of industrialization poverty relief mode is that it can improve agricultural industrialization degree, boost additional value of agricultural products and add peasants' income. Meanwhile, the improvement of organizational degree can reduce the market risk faced by peasants, control re-poverty factors and change the laggard industrial structure of these regions which only depend on traditional plantation. The disadvantages are as follows: Firstly, the implementation of industrialization poverty relief projects needs poverty-stricken areas in the same region to

coordinate mutually and construct as a whole. Secondly, after the industrial projects are constructed, relevant follow-up service system should be formed. Thirdly, industrial project supervision system needs to be perfected. Fourthly, the focus on cultivation of industrial poverty relief interest linking mechanism is insufficient. So, its applicability is limited to some extent.

2.4 Absence of Fairness: Inter-Generational Transition of Poverty Stands out

Intergenerational transition and transfer is a common phenomenon in rural areas of Yibin. If the gap between the rich and the poor is very large, intergenerational transition of poverty and wealth will correspondingly intensify. Uneven social capital allocation is an important cause of poverty and wealth transition. Social capital is a resource which is embedded in the social network and can be gained or called in the actions with certain purpose (Zeng, 2005, p.5). Social capital can be classified into three modes: 1) social network and embedded resource; 2) association and folk participation; 3) general trust and distrust. Meanwhile, social capital decides the employment opportunity and income of the groups in different status through intergenerational transmission. Janet Currie (an American famous economist) considers, family socioeconomic status depends on parents' health, education, wealth and occupational status etc. These concern the health and education level of the later generation. Currently, the issues of "rich second generation, official second-generation and poor second-generation" have become the focus of the society. In the years when China's economy grows rapidly, descendants of poor workers in the bottom of the society inherit the poverty of the elder generation, called "poor second-generation". Due to the cause of family economy, compared with high-quality education received by children in wealthy families, the education quality enjoyed by the children of poor families is low. Due to different degrees of education and the differences in social capital owned by families, the children from poor families have to pay higher cost in order to improve their economic conditions. The children of many rural poor households and peasant-workers are still in poverty. According to the statistics, currently, China has more than 100 million of peasant-workers. About 50 million of them are "poor second-generation". Intergenerational transition of poverty reduces the expectation of poor families to get rid of poverty and also solidifies the social bracket.

3. STUDIES ON COUNTERMEASURES FOR RURAL POVERTY RELIEF DEVELOPMENT IN NEW PERIOD

3.1 To Innovate for Development Ideas and Realize Leaping Development

Firstly, poverty relief development strategies in the new period should correctly deal with the relations between

national macro-strategy and regional development, reflect overall planning and layout of national economic development strategy and achieve fusion of development strategy of rural poor areas in Yibin and national development strategy. To be more specific, during formulating the development strategy for poverty-stricken areas, it is required to tightly collect national “the 12th Five-year Plan”, new round of western development strategy, construction of Yangtze River industrial belt, regional economic development and poverty relief plan in Wumeng Mountain region (2-11-2020) and overall planning of south Sichuan region. Secondly, the poverty relief development strategy in the new period should regard comprehensive construction of well-off society as the objective and regard scientific development perspective and construction of a harmonious society as the guidance to coordinate and interact among economy, society and environment in poverty relief work and realize harmonious development of man & nature and economy and society in poverty-stricken areas. The objective confirmed by the sixth plenary session of the fourth CPC Yibin Municipal Party Committee in May 2013 is that: By 2017, GDP will have exceeded RMB 230 billion; to rise in the secondary breakthrough strategic layout; by 2019, GDP will have exceeded RMB 290 billion and per-capita GDP have exceeded RMB 35000; to comprehensively complete the well-off society; by 2020, GDP will have exceeded RMB 320 billion; to strive to significantly improve comprehensive economic strength, living quality, social civilization quality and the quality of ecological environment. The new round of poverty relief development should be consistent with comprehensive construction of a well-off society and the overall objective. 2020 is the last year of 10-year poverty relief development work and also the time node of the objective of comprehensive construction of a well-off society. In the new period, rural poverty relief development in Yibin have the direct bearing on comprehensive construction of a well-off society and realization of the overall objective of Yibin. So, poverty relief development should regard getting rid of the most difficult rural areas as the key work, thoroughly eliminate absolute poverty, implement poverty relief projects according to local conditions, realize adequate food and clothing through relocation and work-relief, provide the opportunity and ability of sustainable development through industrial development and quality promotion and achieve the objective of “by 2020, stably realizing that the objects of poverty relief do not worry the food and clothing and guaranteed the compulsory education, basic medical care and housing.” Thirdly, in the new period, rural poverty relief development should stick to comprehensive analysis and overall planning, meanwhile highlight main problems and contradictions in different poverty-stricken areas, differentially treat and give guidance according to the categories and carry out

poverty relief development with pertinence. There are many rural poverty-stricken areas in Yibin, so the tasks are arduous. During poverty relief development in the new period, it is required to stick to comprehensive analysis, overall deployment, integrate various poverty relief resources, make overall arrangements of poverty relief development projects, give play to resultant force of each level and each department and ensure the use efficiency of poverty relief resources and overall effects of poverty relief development.

3.2 To Strengthen Government-Dominance and Boost Comprehensive Poverty Relief

All kinds of poverty relief development modes have their advantages and disadvantages and the coverage is limited. Besides, their implementation needs certain conditions (Zeng, 2006, P.3). Thus, in the new period, rural poverty relief development modes in Yibin should fully consider merits and demerits of single modes, combine practical conditions of rural poverty-stricken areas in Yibin, fully integrate strong points of each development mode, stick to the leading role of the governments at each level in rural poverty relief development and carry out comprehensive poverty relief development. On the one hand, stick to government dominance. Poverty relief development is one of basic functions of the government. Poverty relief development cause is also one of the basic jobs of the government’s economic and social management. Only the government owns the ability and superiority to transfer resources in the whole society and arrange as a whole. Therefore, first of all, poverty relief development should adhere to government dominance, give play to the functions of the government to overall plan and coordinate as a whole, make sure poverty relief development consistent with overall objective of social and economic development and ensure steady promotion of poverty relief development cause and rational allocation of poverty relief resources. During poverty relief development in the new period, Yibin should continue to promote reform of poverty relief development system, integrate resources of each department, set up simple and efficient administrative organizations for poverty relief, specify work duty and actual control right of each item and improve the situation of multi-leader management and multi-party control. On the other hand, it is necessary to consider new rural poverty relief, industrial poverty relief, immigration poverty relief and social poverty relief (Zhao, 2000, p.6). It is necessary to implement poverty relief development policies with different contents and objective in allusion to features of different types of poverty-stricken areas, stick to combination of eliminating poverty and fool and treating diseases, solve the problem of food and clothing in rural poverty-stricken areas of Yibin as soon as possible, further improve basic production and living conditions of poverty-stricken areas, consolidate the effects of adequate food and clothing, boost living

quality and comprehensive qualities of the population, enhance infrastructure construction, improve ecological environment, gradually change the situation of laggard society, economy and culture in poverty-stricken areas and create conditions for reaching the fairly well-off level.

3.3 To Integrate Diversified Resources and Concentrate Poverty Relief

In the new period, national poverty relief development strategy puts forward “regarding concentrated and special poor areas as the main battlefield”. Pingshan County, Xingwen County, Gongxian County, Junlian County and Gaoxian County in Yibin are located in Wumeng Mountain concentrated special poor areas, where most areas integrate the region with severe geographical condition and national gathering zone and ecological protection zone. The five counties cover 50% poor population in the whole city. Whether they can successfully get out of poverty to a large extent decides overall performance of rural poverty relief development in Yibin and realization of the objective of a well-off society. Thus, in the next phase of poverty relief development, it is required to continue to enhance the support force for these areas and realize comprehensive development of each area through overall promotion and comprehensive development. In terms of specific work, firstly, break through the infrastructure bottleneck, overall improve production and living conditions in the area and provide basic security for regional sustainable development. Concentrated and special poor area in Yibin generally faces the restriction of weak infrastructure, where the problems such as road traffic, water supply facilities, the buildings for education and medical care and other fixed facilities urgently demand solutions. According to the practical conditions, since national building standards implemented are low and there is lack of enough maintenance cost during the use, infrastructures in many regions start to be old and aged. During poverty relief development in the new period, it is required to increase the input in infrastructures in these areas, boost construction standards, overall promote infrastructure construction, fundamentally change the restriction of infrastructure on economic exchange and industrial development, help the areas break through the development bottleneck and provide basic conditions and guarantee for overall and sustainable development of the areas (Zhao, 2010. P.4). Secondly, overall plan regional poverty relief development strategy, integrate poverty relief resources in the concentrated and special poor areas, realize high efficiency of resource use in the areas, arrange poverty relief projects as a whole, uniformly manage poverty relief resources and form a leading group for poverty relief development; municipal party secretary as the group leader, the mayor as the deputy leader, poverty relief bureau, development and reform commission, finance bureau, bureau for national and religious affairs, council of agriculture and other relevant

city-level functional departments as well as each county to participate; comprehensively plan and concentrate to examine and approve project application in rural poverty-stricken areas; then, deploy and allocate various resources according to the projects; change the situation of “projects surrounding the funds”; establish the mechanism of “funds surrounding the projects”; improve poverty-relief resource use efficiency and give play to resultant force of each project for poverty relief. In terms of resource input, input poverty relief materials according to practical needs; in the process of project implementation, funds, materials and personnel should be effectively integrated and allocated according to regional development planning and actual needs. It is required to concentrate to allocate all kinds of resources in accordance with project planning and make sure the projects are implemented smoothly and the poverty relief effects are exerted.

3.4 To Expand Working Thought and Enhance Coordination and Overall Planning

The concept of “wide poverty relief” not just refers to social wide participation in poverty relief work, but also includes the improvement of poverty standard, expansion of the objective of poverty relief, extension of poverty relief connotation, enriching poverty relief means and improvement of poverty relief functions. “Wide poverty relief” further stresses development and non-income connotation of poverty relief, considers basic living needs, education and medical care of the poor population. Poverty relief development makes the development of poor areas incorporated in overall deployment and development of economic society and makes poor people continuously enhance self-confidence, add skills, increase income and realize sustainable development during participation in poverty relief development. In the new round of poverty relief development, in order to form the pattern of “wide poverty relief”, the following work should be done: Firstly, expand working thought and innovate for the poverty relief mode. On the one hand, it is required to actively utilize all types of poverty relief resources. Poverty relief resources are diversified, including natural resources, material resources, economic resources, information resources and human resources. Efficient allocation effect can be formed through integrating multiple forms of resources. On the other hand, in terms of the working mode, it is required to closely combine primary-level organizational construction, villager self-governance construction and poverty relief development, closely combine material civilization construction, political civilization construction and spiritual civilization construction and strive to realize comprehensive, harmonious and sustainable development. Secondly, boost the operation efficiency of poverty relief organizations and enhance coordination and overall planning functions. At present, overall coordination and overall planning lack among poverty relief organizations.

Relevant functional departments govern respectively. So, overall resultant force cannot be form. The maximum of poverty relief resource benefit cannot be exerted. "Wide poverty relief" requires various poverty relief projects planned uniformly and implemented harmoniously. This requires each department with poverty relief tasks owns and confirms the authority of office uniform with the duties. Besides, they can mutually coordinate, effectively organize, improve operation efficiency of poverty relief organizations and reduce the coordination cost. In the work in the new period, it is required to confirm the core status of the leading group in charge of poverty relief development, give play to the coordination and overall planning functions and solve such problems as capital integration, arrangement of fixed-point poverty relief units and contacting the poverty relief points by the leaders. Under the overall arrangement of other leading groups, each department should coordinate mutually, specify the status and relations of each department during project implementation, integrate financial poverty relief funds, the funds of work-relief, agriculture, forestry, transport, water conservancy and health, counterpart support funds and social donations to input in construction of poverty-stricken areas, form resultant force of poverty relief development work and improve overall benefit of poverty relief fund use.

3.5 To Increase Capital Input and Boost Service Supply

As the total amount of poverty relief funds, capital input should tilt toward the projects which can improve infrastructure and public utilities in the poverty-stricken areas, such as work-relief infrastructure construction, immigration project and new rural poverty relief project. In the Outline 2011-2020, the state explicitly proposed the guiding thought of "paying more attention to transforming economic development modes, enhancing the self-development ability of the objects of poverty relief, equalization of basic public service and solving prominent problems restricting development and striving to push better and faster development of the economy and society in poverty-stricken areas" and the working policy of "sticking to development-type poverty relief policy....., regarding poverty relief development as the main approach to get rid of poverty and become rich, encouraging and helping the objects of poverty relief with labor ability to get rid of poverty through efforts, taking social security as the basic means to solve the problem of food and clothing and gradually perfecting social security system". Since 1980s, development-type poverty relief has been the central thought of poverty relief development in Yibin. The essence of development-type poverty relief is to realize self-Yibin development of poverty-stricken areas and poor population. To achieve self-Yibin development, firstly, it is required to perfect infrastructure conditions and break through condition. On this basis, it is necessary

to develop characteristic industry, drive employment and family income rise according to regional advantages. Meanwhile, population quality should improve through improving medical care and educational conditions to provide high-quality labor force for regional industrial development and form virtuous cycle of industrial development and family income rise. It thus can be seen that the perfection of infrastructure is the prerequisite of self-Yibin development. Only when infrastructure bottleneck is broken through can characteristic industries be set up. Meanwhile, it is necessary to actively develop social undertaking and boost the quality of poor population. The promotion of population quality is the objective requirement of economic development. The quality of the labor force decides economic development speed and quality as well as the income rise of poor population. Although infrastructure construction, industrial development and educational training have been the key projects of poverty relief development in Yibin, in practice, due to the limited input of poverty relief resources, many areas still cannot break through infrastructure bottleneck. It is also hard to effectively realize industrial development and promotion of the quality of the labor force. Therefore, during poverty relief development in the new period, it is required to increase capital input in infrastructure construction and promotion of population quality so as to provide conditions for sustainable development of poverty-stricken areas.

3.6 To Give Play to Subjective Functions and Promote Endogenous Power

It is necessary to give play to subjective initiative of poor population and make them have the unflinching will and strong fighting will. Although the quantity of surplus absolutely poor population is not large, due to the restriction of multiple elements, it is hard to get rid of poverty. Relevant departments, institutions and units enhance the force of poverty relief development and strive to improve production and living conditions in poverty-stricken areas, which are very important external conditions for surplus absolutely poor population to get rid of poverty. But, the fundamental problem is that absolutely poor population must own the unflinching will and strong fighting will during anti-poverty fight. This is the essential condition to overcome poverty. At the same time, re-poverty often occurs with rural poverty relief development process and also a great topic needing to be solved during building a well-off society. For peasants who have removed poverty through hard efforts, it has huge blow or the negative effect on damaging the confidence for anti-poverty. Besides, re-poor peasants may be very easily unable to recover after the setback and lose the fighting will of anti-poverty. Re-poverty swallows the result of anti-poverty and adds the difficulty of rural poverty relief. Thus, it is required to timely guide and help re-poor peasants to walk out of the shadow of

failure and give play to their subjective initiative for removing poverty and becoming rich. Otherwise, it is very difficult to gain the rolling victory in anti-poverty fight only through depending on external poverty relief and assistance.

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