

Report on the Targeted Poverty Alleviation in Southwest China: The Study of Longtou Village, Dazhou, Sichuan Province

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Abstract

Purpose: The year 2020 marks the last year of Chinese poverty alleviation project. 70.17 Million extreme impoverished populations in China will be lifted out of poverty. The purpose of this report is to examine the effectiveness and sustainability of targeted poverty alleviation in Southwestern China, using Longtou village as an example. It will also focus on villagers' needs and possible future policies. **Methodology:** The sampling survey covering 30 out of 106 impoverished households in Longtou village, Dazhou, Sichuan province, China was carried out on August 3, 2020, providing sufficient examples for the report. Literature review of China's poverty alleviation history is mentioned to lay a research basis for the study. **Findings:** Needs of impoverished villagers from different age groups, different poverty causes, different identities, are almost fulfilled. The potential problems of Longtou village, such as aging population, as well as their possible solutions are presented in the report. **Policy implications:** The report illustrates China's targeted poverty alleviation in detail. The mechanism's implications are well reflected by the conversation with interviewed villagers and their opinions. Basically, after 6 years of targeted poverty alleviation, villagers' living standards as well as living conditions are well improved. Majority of villagers were satisfied with current poverty alleviation policies.

Keywords

Targeted Poverty Alleviation, Six Precisions, Aging Population, Sustainable Development, Future Development Strategies

1. Introduction

Poverty eradication is the first of seventeen United Nations Sustainable Devel-

opment Goals. With the development of economy and technology, the perception of poverty has changed from the lack of food and resources to maintain basic life to the improvement of health care, longevity, culture and education, political rights and other conditions. The strategy for poverty eradication also transformed from single kind of material input to the combination of capital enrichment and material assistance. From 1990 to 2015, the world poverty eradication project has made great progress. According to the world extreme poverty line, which is about 1.9 dollars per day, in 1990, 1.89 billion people around the world still lived in the extreme poverty. In 2015, the number declined to 0.73 billion. The poverty rate also declined from 35.85% in 1990 to 10% in 2015 (World Bank, 2018). The World Bank divides the world into seven parts: East Asia, the Pacific Europe, Central Asia Latin America, Caribbean Middle East, North Africa South Asia sub-Saharan Africa and other regions. From 1990 to 2015, benefited from the rapid economic and social development, as well as the effective implementation of poverty eradication, the number of impoverished people in Southeastern Asia, and the pacific region has declined from 987 million and 536 million in 1990 to 47 million and 216 million in 2015. But the effect of poverty alleviation in Sub-Sahara Africa is not obvious. Although the poverty rate drops from 54.3% in 1990 to 41.1% in 2015, the number of impoverished people rose from 273 million in 1990 to 413 million in 2015, which is approximately more than half of the world's impoverished population. Besides, in Middle East and North Africa, the number of impoverished people first rises and then falls between 1990 and 2015. On the contrary, the impoverished population in Europe and central Asia first rises and then falls (Li et al., 2018a).

As one of the developing countries with rapid economic growth, China has contributed much to the world poverty eradication. According to the 13th five-year plan (2016-2020), China with its population of 1.4 billion will in 2020 meet the goal of lifting its people out of the extreme poverty (Considering the current domestic poverty situation, China's extreme poverty line is 2,300 yuan per year) (Bosu, 2020), ten years ahead of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals' target of eradicating poverty by 2030. According to the World Bank, more than 850 million people have been lifted out of extreme poverty over the past decade, representing 70 percent of global poverty reduction. The poverty rate of China fell from 97.5% in 1978 to 1.7% in 2018 (Wang & Zhou, 2020). To meet the "zero-poverty" target by 2020, China has been following various poverty alleviation measures with distinct Chinese features, such as financial support to needy families, nine-year compulsory education for every child, social insurance that covers 90% of the medical fees, relocating rural poor to hospitable areas and so on. Besides, these welfare schemes, the conditions and infrastructure in the impoverished region have also been largely improved. For the effort of past decades, the people living in the rural impoverished regions now can get access to clean drinking water, medical care, 4 G internet, as well as some public transportation service, which have enhanced the commerce in the rural areas and small coun-

ties.

While the whole country has made great leaps to alleviate the poverty, affected by several geographic or historical factors, in Southwestern China, in 2019, 9.16 million people still remain below the poverty line (Gao, 2017). The southwestern area of China is comprised of several provinces: Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou and part of Tibet. It is surrounded by several plateaus: Qingzang plateaus, Huangtu plateaus, Yungui plateaus. As the region with shortest length and worst intensity of sunlight, the southwestern areas are also around the Qinling-Huaihe line, which divides China's northern and southern climate. The mountainous topography (mainly basins and hills) and subtropical monsoon climate makes the agricultural activities relatively difficult. These rural villages also have to face the challenges of aging population and lack of labor force. The rural-urban migration has induced severe labor loss in the countryside. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, the amount of peasant workers who moved to work outside their villages and hometowns reached the numbers of 169.34 million in 2016 (Li et al., 2018b). How does government provide medical care for the elderly is another severe problem to consider. Even though these regions have various kinds of problems and disadvantages, certain characteristics industries such as plateau black pigs or crispy plums provide potential development opportunities for these places. As the largest province in Southwestern China, Sichuan will be mainly discussed in the report. After 6 years' targeted poverty alleviation, 6.05 million people in Sichuan were lifted out of poverty. In 2019, the poverty rate drops from 9.6% to 0.3% (Xia, 2020).

The purpose of the survey conducted in the report is to evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of China's targeted poverty alleviation strategy in a typical southwestern village—Longtou village: How it could succeed and help the village to develop sustainably.

The structure of this report is as follows: After the introduction part, next section will review the history and effort of Chinese targeted poverty alleviation project as well as its impact on improving the economy, infrastructure, public service, and means of livelihood of residents in Longtou village. The section 3 of the essay will present the statistical results of the survey conducted in the village. The essay closes by the discussion of the research results and possible direction of future development of Longtou village.

2. China's Targeted Poverty Alleviation Strategy

Poverty alleviation has always been a top priority for Chinese government since the economic reform and opening up policy, which has led to a substantial increase in real living standard and a marked decline in poverty. However, as the coastal urbans benefited first from the policy, the inequality in income became inevitable. Policies such as household registration system, which kept the rural-urban migration at certain quota, might have exacerbated this situation, causing the rural-urban divide. Besides the income inequality, there has also been an

inequality in educational resources and medical care. The limited and unevenly distributed funds further widen the urban-rural gap.

In 1994, Chinese government promulgated the “8 - 7 poverty alleviation plan”, in order to relieve the 80 million rural poor in 7 years. It marked the transformation of poverty reduction policy from poverty relief to developmental poverty alleviation. The plan aimed to increase the household income of the rural poor to 500 yuan, improve infrastructure, and reduce the cultural, educational and medical disparities between rural and urban regions. It was mainly comprised of several measures: credit assistance, taxation reduction and government funding to stimulate investment. Around RMB 125 billion budgetary grants were transferred to the 592 national poor counties for economic development during the program period (Meng, 2013). The government also invested RMB 27.8 billion in the subsidized loan to rural enterprises and households. As a result, the annual per capita net income of the national poverty counties increased from RMB 648 to RMB 1337, while the number of the poor population decreased from 80 to 30 million (Wen, 2013). As a result, the net per-capita annual income of the poor mounted by 2.8%, from 648 yuan to 1337 yuan. The agricultural yield of the national poor counties increased about 12.3%; In all the 592 poor counties, 318 of them realized the compulsory 9-years education (Wu, 2011). From 2001 to 2010, since poverty rate in rural areas declined to only 3%, instead of focusing on the counties, China started to move the priority of poverty eradication to the villages.

In 2014, the targeted poverty alleviation policy was released. Unlike the poverty eradication strategy before, this mechanism mainly contained six aspects (Figure 1) and enhanced the importance of “precision” during the alleviation project (China Gate, 2017), first of which is to define the poor precisely. Local government will create archives for each impoverished villager, which will help the government to track the family status, income, medical care as well as other financial needs. The identification process of the impoverished household is complex but accurate. According to their annual income and other factors, such as health conditions, age, the impoverished household will be voted in the village meetings. The second aspect reinforces the arrangement of targeted programs. Targeted assistance project is implemented to the impoverished household based

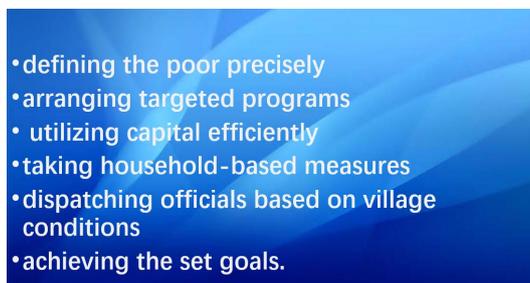
- 
- defining the poor precisely
 - arranging targeted programs
 - utilizing capital efficiently
 - taking household-based measures
 - dispatching officials based on village conditions
 - achieving the set goals.

Figure 1. Summary for “Six Precisions”: Generally, they are six aspects that the government officers should focus on while implementing the targeted poverty alleviation policies. They function as outlines, ensuring the effectiveness of poverty alleviation.

on their real needs and different poverty causes, including the lack of funding, technology, labor force, and disease. For instance, the housing relocation programs are aimed to move the impoverished household to suitable and hospitable areas; The health insurance covers 90% of the medical bills; The grain subsidies encourage those poor farmers to grow more and diversified crops; The micro-credit plan, which lends the discount loan to impoverished households, reduced the pressure of starting business.

The third “precision” is the accurate use of the government funds to support the projects. The local and county governments have more rights to decide the use of funds since they fully understand the situations and needs of each household. The responsibility of provincial and central government is to supervise and evaluate the local governments’ decisions and actions. Forth the mechanism reinforces the importance of selecting cadres from superior administration, state-owned enterprises stationing in the village to provide assistance. Since the education level of cadres in impoverished region is relatively low and a large number of young labors have emigrated to urbans to find jobs, the stationing cadres can improve the management of the villages and working efficiency. The fifth point highlights the social participation. The poverty alleviation project encourages people from different organizations, regions, cultural background to assist the impoverished household. The last point focuses on the establishment of evaluation system to assess the work of local governors, ensuring the effect of poverty alleviation strategy.

3. Impact on Longtou

The Longtou Village is located in Zhoujia Town, Dazhou, east part of Sichuan province (**Figure 2**). Dazhou is a city situated in the eastern part of Sichuan province. As a transportation, cultural and commercial center, Dazhou performs



Figure 2. Dazhou in Southwestern China.

a vital role in the poverty alleviation project. Zhoujia town, which is located between Tongluo Mountain and Mingyue Mountain, the east western part of Dazhou, covers an area of 108 square kilometers and has a population of 55,900. The area is also rich in natural resources, including coal, phosphorous, iron, lead, limestone, natural gas and gypsum. As the model village for poverty alleviation, Longtou village is a typical Chinese southwestern mountainous village and has eradicated the poverty in 2018. Covering 2.3 square kilometers with arable land of 1500 acres (**Figure 3**), Longtou village has a population of 1578, composed of 560 labor force, 480 migrant workers and 230 senior citizens over 60 years old.

The infrastructure of Longtou village is well-developed: The village sets up a bus stop that has two or more round-trip buses every day. There are also several concrete roads connecting the village to the county. Besides the road, the whole village is also covered with 4 G internet as well as electricity and clean drinking water. The primary education facility in the village is also well-noticed. In addition to a primary school and kindergarten, the Longtou village has also constructed a night school (**Figure 4**) to provide adults with some basic agricultural and political knowledge.

Longtou village also has diversified public service. The health center with resident doctors can offer medical care in time whenever villagers get injured around 24 hours. The convenience store guarantee the provision of daily necessities, saving the trouble of long-distance traveling. The cards room, reading room (**Figure 5**), and the basketball court near the village office provides a way for residents to entertain and relax after a whole day's work. At their spare time, villagers can also enjoy some cultural activities held by the local government, such as countryside movie, drama, and sports competition.

According to the independent survey conducted in July 29, 2020, in Longtou village, contributing factors to poverty for all the 103 impoverished households



Figure 3. Longtou village's arable land.



Figure 4. Farmers' night school for basic education.



Figure 5. Well established infrastructure and public service (Reading room).

are lack of the labor force, which is mainly caused by disability and disease. In this section, the results of the survey will be briefly discussed. After 6 years targeted poverty alleviation program, all of these impoverished households have been lifted out of poverty. This survey mainly covers information of 30 out of the 103 households. It aims to examine the effectiveness of targeted poverty alleviation policy and collect villagers' opinions. In the end, it will also include a conclusion about whether Longtou village can develop sustainably after the 2020, the last year of poverty alleviation program. Among all the 30 impoverished households, none of them have an education level higher than junior high school. Besides, while chronic diseases strike 26 households to poverty, disability to the remaining 4 families. Their income is mainly from crop farming, micro-scale breeding, working as migrant workers and government subsidies.

Under the targeted poverty alleviation policies, these impoverished households are able to enjoy several government subsidies, such as medical insurance that covers 90% of medical bills, grain subsidies (300 yuan per 1/6 acre) that in-

crease their income, education subsidies (free nine-year compulsory education and grants for higher education) that reduce the burden of receiving education. services such as house relocating, clean drinking water, liquid gas, improves the living standard of the localities. Besides, people above 60 in each impoverished household can benefit from the endowment insurance, which subsidize them 200 yuan per month (China Fertilizer, 2020). 86.7% of impoverished households receive the endowment insurance since they have people who are over 60 years' old. Villagers who were veterans can also receive compensation annually from the military. All the impoverished households receive the grain subsidies. Besides, 43.3% of households who have juveniles under 16 receive the free nine-year compulsory education. Lastly, 76.7% of the surveyed households have enjoyed house relocating or renovation service. Rest of the 23.3% of the households had lived in safe houses and hospitable areas.

In addition, considering that most of the impoverished villagers are over 60 years old, the local officers actually help them to apply for government funds to develop small-scale breeding industries. Poultryies such as chickens and ducks, which are easy to raise and have a high survival rates, become another optimal method for most of these senior villagers to raise household income.

Besides the stationing cadres, the liaisons systems connect each impoverished household with officers from high administration, social organizations, state-enterprises, who will offer them financial aid monthly. This special relation could also assist the poor villagers to find occupations or start their own business.

Most importantly, the poverty alleviation program boosts villagers' expectations and confidence for the future. Instead of simply providing financial or technical aid, the village officers actually chat with villagers regularly to increase their productivity.

Based on the information above, the main reasons why Longtou village had eliminated the poverty are: First, the government subsidies or benefits increase households' income and reduce some of the living cost. At the same time, small scale characteristic industries increase the villagers' income. Second, construction of infrastructure such as roads, internet service, reinforces the connection between the village and the outside world, which may possibly bring the job opportunities and boost the development of local characteristic industries.

Third, stationing cadres bring some agricultural and management knowledge to the village and organize the skill-training activities, improving the agricultural yield and working efficiency. Forth, the well-established public service systems, such as cardroom, reading room, simple fitness equipment, provide villagers with diversified entertainment options in their spare time.

4. Results of the Survey and People's Needs

4.1. Research Method

The methodology used in the research is sampling survey. Spending nearly a week living in Longtou, researchers have interviewed 30 out of 106 impoverished

households. The questionnaires used in this survey mainly comprise three parts: basic information (name, age, family members, impoverished reasons), life quality (clothing, food, living, and traveling and voices) (future needs, evaluation of local government work). Despite questionnaires, researchers also went to villagers' homes to converse with them and estimate their current living standard by observation.

4.2. Research Results

In the survey, samples households across different ages, poverty reasons and family structures will be analyzed. Chinese government has implemented various kinds of policies to help lift different groups of people out of poverty. This section will mainly discuss the following questions: How do they get rid of the poverty? How's their life now? How do they evaluate the poverty alleviation project? Do they have any other needs?

4.2.1. People with Different Poverty Causes

Basically, in the survey, all 30 households' poverty is caused by disease and disability. However, these two kinds of villagers have different needs.

In China, 44% of the impoverished households are caused by disease. During the poverty eradication mechanism, the central government invested 24.5 billion yuan in medical aid and subsidies. It also spent a grant of 4 billion yuan to improve the medical level in extreme impoverished regions. According to National Health Commission of People's Republic of China, in 2019, 9.98 million disease caused impoverished households have been lifted out of poverty (National Health Commission of China, 2020). The disease-stricken impoverished households demand the medical insurance to cover majority of the bills and less daily expenditure due to inability to work long hours. All these needs are fulfilled 6 years after the initialization of the targeted poverty alleviation program.

Xunhong Huang, a 56 years old female in Longtou village, lives with her husband and teenage son (Figure 6). The main poverty causes for her are hypotension, lung



Figure 6. Researcher and Xuhong Huang (Right).

disease and cerebrovascular inflammation. The lack of labor force, as well as the child's tuition made the family difficult to sustain their daily life. Besides, the expensive medical bills made her nearly impossible to get rid of poverty. But the situation is totally reversed after the implementation of poverty alleviation policy. The grain subsidy and education subsidies relieve the family's burden. Currently, the total annual income for the family is 15,000 yuan.

Besides growing crops, she also raises 30 ducks and chickens (The bills for poultry vaccine are fully covered by the government). She has to take medicine every month, but expensive medical bills are largely covered by her medical insurance. Now, she told the researcher that the poverty alleviation project has covered her main demand: daily expenditure and medical bills.

To the impoverished households caused by disability, besides having medical insurance, grain subsidies, they'll still have the disability subsidies. In Longtou, all the disable will get 60 yuan per month. Besides, to the severe disability, First-degree disability will get 80 yuan per month; Second-degree of disability will get 50 yuan per month. In all the 30 surveyed households of Longtou village, all 4 impoverished households caused by disability have received disability subsidies. The survey also showed that despite the all the subsidies they have, all these 4 households also hope that as they get elder, they could have subsistence allowance (In Longtou, it's 520 yuan per month) to relieve the family's burden. However, applying for subsistence allowance is not easy. Almost all of them don't meet the standard.

Xiaoshu Lu, a retired railroad constructor, lived with 6 of his family members in their brand new relocated house (**Figure 7**). Unlike many other villagers' houses, his house is decorated with wood floorings and a golden door. The household annual income is 20,000 yuan. His son used to work as a migrant worker, but now, he chooses to stay in village and helped his father to do farming. Besides the 1/3 acres' lands, Lu also raised 10 chickens. As showed in the picture above, his face got injured, when he constructed the railroad. In this



Figure 7. Researcher and Xiaoshu Lu.

case, he's granted with a disability subsidy monthly. Lu showed his optimism for the future life during the interview.

4.2.2. People of Different Age Groups

In the survey, the age of all 30 samples are over 50 years old. As a result, these interviewees are divided into three different groups: From 50 to 60, 60 to 80, and over 80. The survey results show that the aging population is a severe problem that Chinese rural areas face.

In all the 30 interviewees, 4 of them are between 50 and 60. Since this group of people are still relatively young in the village, they always try to seek opportunities in big cities to work as migrant workers, such as construction workers, waiters. The occupation training and liaison system can fulfill this need. Children's education fee was a large part of their expenditures, since most of their children are still in the university or even high school. However, this is no longer a problem. The survey results showed that all these 4 households get education subsidies every month. To university students, government will subsidize them 4000 yuan/semester. In addition, if they make progress in colleges, those students can also have the opportunity to apply for the national scholarship (8000 yuan/year for undergraduates, 20,000 yuan/year for graduates, and 80,000 for doctors). To high school students, none of them have to pay for the school tuitions. Besides, government will subsidize them with National Education Funds, which are 2000 yuan/year. For those excellent student's government can even reward them with a 2000-yuan scholarship.

Zhimei Long, a 52-year-old villager (**Figure 8**). After 6 years of poverty alleviation program, now, her household annual income is 68,000 yuan, which are way higher than the average standard. Her husband worked as a construction worker in cities; His salaries are the household's main income. She stayed in the village to take care of her high school son and grew some rice and corns. As the picture above can show, her home is tight and neat. Since the government and



Figure 8. Researcher and Zhimei Long (Left).

stationing cadres had fulfilled her main needs: employment assistance and education subsidy, the survey showed that she is satisfied with government's poverty alleviation project and doesn't have any other need. She was excited and expressed her hopes and plans for the future life during the interview. This example showed that the poverty alleviation project didn't only give material assistance to these impoverished households, but it also strengthened their willingness to develop independently and pursue the future happiness.

For people aged between 60 and 80, the survey results showed that the main income of this group of people comes from growing crops and raising poultries. In Longtou village, nearly all the villagers in this age group choose to stay at the village instead of working in large urbans. Part of the reason is because they are old and can't afford heavy work, However, the main reason is the belief deep-rooted in most Chinese that the "fallen leaves should return to the roots"—people should be back to where they came from. They also believe that they have the responsibility to watch over the family's house and lands.

Thus, these people focus more on agricultural production. As the research results show, the majority of their incomes are actually spent on agricultural products, such as the seeds of rice, corn for the nest year, pesticide and so on. In order to reach the efficiency and help to elevate these impoverished villagers' income, the village head as well as stationing cadres will provide guidance on the agricultural production process and thus improve the productivity. Sometimes, if the Longtou village is heavily het by the natural disasters such as storming or flooding, the cadres can also organize villagers to make effective response to minimize the damage. Besides, the old aged between 60 and 80 also care about the social securities and subsistence allowance. Since most of them lived alone in the village, these people worried about that when they get older, the descent of working productivity will decrease their income. As wrote in the former part of this report, all the impoverished households had obtained several kinds of social securities. But many of these households don't meet the standard of getting subsistence allowance, which is only assigned to people who completely lost the working ability or have severe disability. Another way besides the social securities to increase the income of this group of villagers is to encourage them to raise some easily cultivated poultries with low risks and high survival rates, such as ducks and chickens. The example of an impoverished villager is shown below.

Yougai Lu, a 72-year old man, lived with his wife in a relocating house (**Figure 9** & **Figure 10**). He was holding a beer in his hand while receiving the interview. Television and refrigerator at another corner of the house proved his high living standard. The surveyed questionnaire showed that he thought the guidance of agricultural production from the stationing cadres is effective. The advice they gave helped him to improve utility rate of his 3 mu arable lands and efficiently manage 50 chickens and ducks, as well as 2 pigs. He also mentioned that all the village officers had helped him to buy insurance for these livestock. Now, his annual family income is 40,000 yuan.



Figure 9. Researcher and Yougai Lu (Right).



Figure 10. Lu and his relocating house.

The survey results also showed that in all the 30 interviewees, 3 of them are over 80 years old. For this group of people, one of the only effective ways to lift them out of poverty is to subsidize them and cover the most of their daily cost. The majority of their income comes from their family members' financial support and subsistence allowance. Despite the financial assistance, village officers will also spend time chatting with them and caring about their health status, since these senior villagers always live alone.

4.2.3. People with Different Identities

The survey results showed that in all the 30 impoverished households, some of the villagers have special occupations before, such as soldier. The government has implemented different subsidies and welfare policies for their past contributions. For veterans, the annual compensation is from 8380 yuan to 88,150 yuan according to their level of injuries.

For instance, Dingguo Lu, an 80-year-old veteran used to serve in Chinese army during Korea War (**Figure 11**). He and his disabled son have grown two mu lands and raised ten chickens as well as ten ducks in the village, while his daughter-in-law worked as migrant worker in Dazhou. This old man didn't share too much information about the miserable memory in the war during his service. Instead, he talked a lot about interesting things he had experienced in Korea. For veterans like Lu, besides the medical insurance and grain subsidies, government also offered them the "veteran compensation" annually.

At the end of the interview, Lu expressed his gratitude for government's poverty alleviation policies, which have fulfilled all of his needs.

5. Current Challenges to Stable Poverty Alleviation

While the current poverty alleviation project has made great efforts to fulfill diversified needs of impoverished households, the survey results also show several problems Longtou village faces. First of which, is the poor sanitary conditions in houses of those impoverished villagers, which may bring potential health risks to the households. Considering the main poverty causes for 26 out of 30 people are disease, unhealthy living conditions may likely contribute to their illness, decreasing labor productivity. As a result, there's a large possibility that those households may return to poverty. For example, since the majority of the villagers have raised poultry, the excrement of ducks or chickens is almost everywhere in the houses. The bacteria or parasite in feces can induce diarrhea or dysentery. They will negatively affect both the quality of poultry and the health status of villagers. Another example related to health risks is that since some of the villagers have tedious farming works every day, dirty dishes and orts may not be cleaned in time. As a result, especially during the summer days, flies, mosquitos, which may carry bacteria and parasites, are likely to appear in their houses and transmit the disease.

Secondly, some of these impoverished villagers also tell researchers that some



Figure 11. Researcher and Dingguo Lu (Left).

of the government housing relocating policies actually increase their daily expense. For instance, each relocating house is equipped with liquefied gas. Admittedly, compared to firewood, it is true that liquefied gas is more sustainable and eco-friendly. However, the market price for liquefied gas is 120 per tank (15 kg), which is a little bit difficult for some villagers to afford.

Thirdly, on the village scale, the largest challenge is lack of labor force caused by aging population. In most of Chinese rural areas, senior villagers are the main component of the population. The majority of young labor forces have flowed to large cities for better jobs and higher salaries. Once these young people could settle down in urban areas, they will never return. Hence, many “hollow villages” are formed. This complex problem is also reflected on the survey results: 26 out of 30 interviewees are over 60 years old. It’s impossible for those aged population to do intensive and large-scale farming works, which are actually their main ways of income. For villagers aged over 80 years old, subsidies, social securities or subsistence allowance may be the most effective measurement. This problem is a potential risk in the future sustainable development of the village. When this old generation pass away and most of the young generation choose to stay in the city, the population loss will make Longtou village decline and disappear. At the same time, the pressure of cities will surge. Thus, how to attract young labor force return to rural areas and revitalize the city is the next step after poverty alleviation project.

Another problem associated the aging population is inefficient use of internet service. Longtou village is covered with 4 G signal and nearly every household is equipped with internet (**Figure 12**). Besides the convenience it offers, theoretically, it would somehow help the villagers to develop characteristic industries and promote their agricultural product online.

However, the survey shows that most of the senior villagers don’t use the internet. Some of them don’t even have tech-products such as smart phones, computers.



Figure 12. The internet tower has been constructed in the village.

In some of the villagers' house, for example, especially those who are over 80 years old, the internet service is useful only when their sons or daughters come back for Chinese New Year. Thus, the core problem here is how to improve the current age structures of the Chinese rural areas. It's the premise of revitalizing the local economy.

Lastly, another severe challenge related to Longtou village's future development strategy is the relatively single model of development. Restricted by both topography and population structure, the main way of income for localities is growing common crops such as rice, corn and working as an immigrant worker. Although it has already satisfied villagers' current needs and increased their living standard, asks behind this kind of development model is that once the market is not stable for certain agricultural product, the income of villagers would be negatively affected. For instance, if the price of corns declines, as the main fodder for poultries and livestock, according to the demand and supply law, the price of pigs and ducks will also decline. Thus the village has necessities and potentials to develop diversified economic development model, such as tourism industries, local specialties, such as Dazhu crispy plum, fermented glutinous rice and so on.

6. Policy Implications

According to the survey results and villagers' needs, after 6 years of poverty alleviation project, Longtou village is able to develop sustainably. The village has established complete infrastructures, such as concrete roads, internet towers, sanitary systems, bus stations, entertainment facilities, that make the village hospitable. The public service such as stationing doctors is also well-developed to fulfill the villagers' daily needs. Besides, the well-managed farmland and breeding industries provide a solid foundation for the future development of the village.

The accurate poverty identification mechanisms and archives the government constructed successfully record the poverty causes, family status, and diversified needs of different impoverished households. Thus people of different situations are implemented effectively with different government poverty alleviation policies. Whether considering from daily life support, such as medical insurance, farming assistance, crop subsidies, subsistence allowance, to the opportunity of development in the village, every impoverished household's needs are fulfilled. People with different poverty causes, in different age groups, are fully satisfied after 6 years of poverty alleviation project.

In this section, the future possible development model of the village will be proposed. Five challenges mentioned in the previous section can be possibly resolved by several measurements. First, the village heads as well as other local officers should further publicize the importance of healthy household sanitary conditions. Village officers can encourage villagers to attend the night school and illustrate several benefits of keeping the house clean. During the class, villagers can also invite the stationing doctors to illustrate symptom of certain dis-

ease related to unhealthy living conditions and its possible solutions. Besides, each month, the village officers can host activities like “sanitary competition”—go to every villagers’ houses to check the sanitary conditions and encourage all the villagers to vote for top three cleanest household in Longtou. Winners will be given certain incentives such as bonus or little gifts. This kind of activity will not only encourage villagers to keep their houses clean, but it will also harmonize the neighborly relations, increasing the solidarity and productivity of villagers.

Secondly, for the high expense of liquefied gas, the village could consider apply for government funds to construct a communal biogas digester. Normally, the market price for an 8 cubic meter digester is 1000 yuan. Since majority of the villagers have raised ducks, chickens, pigs, they can collect their excrement and use it to generate the methane. The digester decreases the monthly expenses of each household. On the other hand, the environmental impact of the village also declines: The excrement is effectively used instead of being wasted; Possibility of using firewood as the main fuel because of the unaffordable price of liquefied gas also decreases.

Thirdly, changing the conditions of aging population of the village needs both short-term and long-term policies. The main reason why young labors will emigrate from Longtou village is that working in large cities; they can have respectable incomes and higher living standard. Thus, in the short term, Longtou village should improve its living conditions, a task that has already been finished by the government. Well-established infrastructure and public service make the village hospitable. Then, the next step is to create profitable working opportunities. The problems of labor shortage are solved if the villagers can earn the roughly same amount of money in the village as they are in the cities. In this case, the village officers need to observe the market trend and encourage the villagers to develop characteristic industries to raise the income. For instance, in Longtou, villagers can grow crispy plums, well-known fruits that have huge market potential in Chongqing and eastern Sichuan. These plums have strong adaptability and can be planted below an altitude of 1000 meters. The market price for these crispy plums is 6 to 18 yuan per kilo. According to its special growing requirement, each year, consumers only have 50 days to purchase it on the market, which makes the plums have a high demand. Another agricultural product that Longtou can develop is *cedrela sinensis*, a special kind of red vegie that is popular among people who pursue a healthier lifestyle. It already has a wide-spread reputation and high demand in the national and foreign market. The village officers could hire agricultural technicians to teach the villagers method of growing the *cedrela sinensis* and selecting their appropriate seedlings for the next year. Besides the agricultural characteristic industries, Longtou village could also develop small-scale tourism industries. The village could encourage young villagers to construct characteristic Airbnb and taverns to attract people in cities to spend their vacation in Longtou. The main consumers for these little hotels are young people who are under heavy pressure in the cities. Thus the taverns could be de-

signed in both local and modern styles, where the consumers can enjoy amazing sceneries and convenient modern cultures.

Furthermore, in order to maximize the efficient use of internet service and diversify the economic development model, village officers can teach the villagers how to sell their products and promote vacation taverns on the internet. Instead of purchasing it on their own, villagers can use the computer in the village's reading room to promote their agricultural product, such as crispy plums or Chinese toons. Village officers or stationing cadres can teach them how to use website such as Jindong, Taobao, to sell online, expanding their potential market. In addition, villagers can also share the information or make advertisement about their local taverns on apps such as Xiechen, tiktok, to attract a wide range of consumers.

Besides the short-term policies, local officers should grant certain welfare for local young entrepreneurs, such as low-interest loans, small-scale business subsidies, making the local small-scale business stay in healthy profits. In the long-term, the business training class is also necessary for leaders of these local characteristic industries. Instead of "giving the man a fish", these training class actually "teaches a man how to fish". The skills they learned will assist the young villagers to develop sustainably in the future and boosting the productivity of the whole village. In addition to these economic and education policies, in long-term local government can also try to change the "home division" tradition, which plays a vital role in deteriorate the aging problems in Longtou, as well as many other southwestern Chinese rural areas. The negative effect of this tradition is that sons or daughters are not in the same household registration booklet with their parents, which means that they only have a moral tie with their parents. As a result, without the legal relations, the reality is that most of the old people are left in the village while many of their sons or daughters have a new family in other places. Changing this awareness and reinforcing the family bounds can effectively make the young people have a moral responsibility to take care of their parents and thus return to the village.

7. Conclusion

Generally, the targeted poverty alleviation mechanisms in Longtou village are sustainable. Besides the external assistance, such as several welfare policies or material help, the six years of poverty alleviation project also strengthen the internal confidence and productivity of those villagers. With expectation and passion for life, Longtou villagers will have sufficient courage to withstand the future challenges. Although the aging population is a severe problem that might negatively affect the future development path of Longtou, the advice and suggestions mentioned in the last section could potentially overcome this difficulty.

As a typical mountainous rural village in Southwestern China, Longtou village demonstrates several traits that all the impoverished villages have: aging population, mountainous topography. By viewing the example of Longtou, researchers

could potentially evaluate the sustainability of poverty alleviation policy in other southwestern mountainous villages, though the conditions for each village are different. But they have common challenges: poor infrastructure and public service, harsh living conditions, scarce education resources, and lack of labor force by aging, disability, chronic disease. At the end of 2020, majority of these problems have already been solved. As the poverty alleviation project becomes more accurate and targeted, the rest of the challenges related to revitalization and sustainable development of the village could be solved in the next few decades. Basically, after 6 years' effort of national targeted poverty alleviation project, these southwestern mountainous villages successfully eradicate the poverty and start to move along a more sustainable development model.

The research results realistically reflected the efforts of China' targeted poverty alleviation policies. The interviews with the individuals in Longtou village and statistics provided in the report reveal some of the common challenges that majority of the Chinese mountainous villages face. In the end, the report evaluates the effectiveness and sustainability of current targeted poverty alleviation policies and proposes several possible future government policies that could assist the village to develop more sustainably.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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