

A Study on Behaviors of Local Government With the Poverty Alleviation Program: Based on the Practice Review of Wulong County, Chongqing

FU Shucai^{[a].*}

^[a]Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

Mankind's development process is characterized by a constant fight with poverty. Up till now, over 1.2 billion people are living under the poverty line and suffered from the threat of subsistence. Poverty is still one of the most severe challenges confronting the world, therefore, how to get rid of poverty has become an arduous task which requires common efforts throughout the world. Chinese government has always attached great importance to anti-poverty, and during this process, we have achieved remarkable results which attracted worldwide attention and made great contributions to global poverty alleviation. Entering into a new historic stage, we are facing a series of challenges like a huge poor population, weak foundation for development, serious re-poverty, high degree of poverty and so on, therefore, it is inevitable to enhance poverty alleviation so as to realize the magnificent object of completely eliminating impoverishment. Local government, an actual organizer, executor, and a manager, play an important role in this battle. In other words, its behavior will decide whether poverty alleviation is successful or not. Therefore, a study on behaviors of local governments with the poverty alleviation program is of realistic significance. With behaviors of local government as entry point and Wulong County of Chongqing as research object, this thesis comprises the following four aspects: Firstly, to define several main core concepts; secondly, to dig out the motive of the poverty alleviation program; thirdly, to straighten out tendency and experience of the program; fourthly, to put forward strategies and methods in terms of the program.

Key words: Poverty alleviation program; Local government; Study on behaviors

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INTRODUCTION

It is a universal focus for our country and society that we should accelerate the modernization drive in government administrative ability and build a moderately prosperous society in an all-around way. The 13th five-year plan is issued by the Central Committee clearly states that "the poverty alleviation program and rural poverty elimination remain the most arduous tasks in comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society. We should make full use of political and institutional advantages to become a winner in this battle." Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Central Committee, also fully emphasized the significance and urgency of poverty alleviation in comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society in his speech named "High-level Forum in Poverty Alleviation and Development of 2015". He also said that in the following five years, more than 70 million people will get rid of poverty according to the current standard. In this urgent and formidable battle, the Wulong (Chongqing) county government (state-level impoverished county) took the blunt and was the first to make promise. It demanded that within 545 days, 55,449 people would get rid of poverty, and they would accomplish the object that poverty alleviation would be achieved throughout the whole area and poor population would all reach the poverty line. As a state-level poor county, the Wulong county of Chongqing is not only one of the 71 poverty alleviation targets in Wulong mountain areas, but also one of the counties with functions of ecological protection and development in the Southeast of Chongqing. Thus, the Wulong county should fully tap its favorable development foundation and set

an example of agent effect to promote the Southeast of Chongqing and Wulong mountain areas to become the demonstration area of ecological planned poverty alleviation and development, ecological construction as well as ecological protection and development. It should also provide experience in reforming and innovating the model of poverty alleviation and development in other areas. In recent years, although Wulong has made remarkable achievement in ecological planned poverty alleviation and development, explored and accumulated abundant practice experience, there still existed such problems as incomplete institution, imperfect element, deficient products and limited poor households participation. People in some areas are still leading a poor life, so we still have onerous tasks in poverty alleviation program. As a result, with behaviors

local government as entry point and Wulong county of Chongqing as research object, this thesis aims to dig out the motive behind poverty alleviation and analyze its related tendency and experience, and finally put forward better strategies and methods so that we can reach our anti-poverty goal.

1. THE CONNOTATION OF CORE CONCEPTS

1.1 Explanations of Poverty From Foreign Scholars

Foreign scholars, who began to study poverty more early, have raised multiple implications concerning the definition of poverty from different perspectives:

Table 1
Explanations of Poverty From Foreign Scholars

Perspective	Proposer	Related explanation based on municipal poverty
Paucity theory	Rountree	The general income capacity is not enough to support the minimum daily necessity which is required in maintaining body function
Capacity theory	Amartya Sen	The capacity of impoverished population in creating income and opportunity poverty
Status theory	Alzer	Poverty is a part of economical, political, social and symbol registration pattern, and poor people is located in the bottom of this pattern

Domestic scholars started to focus on poverty and conduct theory study in the middle of 1980s:

Table 2
Explanations of Poverty From Domestic Scholars

Year	Proposer	Related explanation based on municipal poverty
1990	State Statistics Bureau group	Personal or household income level is under the minimum standard accepted by society
1995	Kang Xiaoguang	Poverty is defined a sort of "survival condition" which includes institutional poverty, regional poverty and hierarchy poverty
2005	Wang Shangyin	Poverty includes material (economy) concept as well as Spiritual (social and cultural) concept

1.2 Concept Definition: Local Government

Local government is a widely-used word in our daily life, but in terms of its connotation, people hold different opinions. As a sort of institutional arrangement, local government is a key component in national politics and government system. Take our country as an example, government has its broad and narrow meaning. The broad government refers to all country authorities, including the legislative body, judicial body, administrative body and other public bodies, while the narrow government solely refers to administrative bodies at central and local level in a country. Here, we only focus on the narrow government. Besides, our understanding in terms of local government limits involves hierarchy of our national administrative powers. In accordance with relevant stipulations in the *Constitution* and *Local Organization Law*, our national administrative body delegate its power to administrative bodies at all levels according to specific standards, forming two hierarchical

structures, namely, the central authority and local authority. The central administrative organ refers to the State Council and all departments under it. The local administrative organs refer to local governments and their departments apart from the central government. To sum up, the local government in this thesis refers to the narrow government, which corresponds to the central administrative authority, including the municipality directly under the control of the central government, county government and its departments.

1.3 Local Government and Poverty Alleviation

Ever since the implementation for poverty alleviation program began in 1986, our country has gradually established and perfected the organization and management system coordinating and leading by government in all levels and fully collaborating of various departments. In 1986, the Central Committee of the CPC set up the leading group of poverty alleviation and development in our country, the leading group of

economic development in poor areas under the State Council, and by the end of 1993, it changed its name into the leading group of poverty alleviation and development group under the State Council.

China's poverty alleviation and development take on the work mechanism of responsibilities taken by various levels and the main task falls on the provinces. The governments of all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government shall set up the corresponding organizations in their respective jurisdictions to refine and decompose the poverty alleviation plan of the leading group of national poverty alleviation and development. In addition, at the beginning of each year, the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government will receive one-time funds, with the implementation of the funded, the provincial governments enjoy the rights of allocation of them, but also assume the corresponding tasks and responsibilities, which is called "the four (capital, power, tasks, responsibilities) coming to provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities)" principles. According to the regulations, all funds at the provincial level shall be allocated, scheduling and used by the provincial governments.

Leading Group Office is the most basic level of poverty alleviation and development. Besides responsible for the implementation of the poverty alleviation strategies at the central, provincial and municipal levels, for under the county government's leadership, it's also responsible for the implementation of specific deployment of the poverty alleviation and development at county government level, responsible for managing and using poverty alleviation, supervising and inspecting for the register, assessment, report and implementation process of poverty programs; all social poverty alleviation work at country level; accepting and managing social poverty donation; organizing and motivating social participation in poverty alleviation, and contacting and coordinating poverty alleviation at national, provincial, municipal and county areas; supervising and evaluating of basic information of poor farmers in the country and dealing with other errands set by country government and leading group of poverty alleviation at the country level.

Although a lot of departments participating in poverty alleviation, the core sector is mainly the Poverty Alleviation Office, the Ministry of Finance and the Development and Reform Commission, and even the people's committee in some areas inhabited by ethnic minorities. Poverty Alleviation Office is a leading group at all levels of the organization.

In summary, this paper discusses the behavior of local government in poverty alleviation, which refers to the actions taken by main bodies of city and county governments whose purpose is eliminating poverty in the process of performing their basic duties.

2. MOTIVES BEHIND POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAM

For many years, Wulong (Chongqing) government and all its departments have made fruitful achievements in poverty alleviation within this area, which have gained high recognition from its superior government and widespread praise from grass roots. However, how to completely get rid of it is still a big headache for government leaders and the general public.

2.1 Wide in Poverty Coverage and Profound in Poverty Degree

The Wulong county now has 75 municipal-level poverty villages and 25 county-level poverty villages. Within these areas, the income is low and life is difficult. In 2014, the per capita GDP here is 34,338.87 yuan, accounting for 76% of the national per capita GDP which is roughly 7,485 dollars (roughly 44,910 yuan). The per capita net income of rural population is only 7,633 yuan. Apart from economic poverty, there still exist serious social poverty issues, such as difficulty in medical and education services, low level of social security, terrible living environment, all kinds of intertwined poverty problems, extreme poverty and arduousness of poverty alleviation.

2.2 Simple in Industrial Development and Narrow in Economic Dimension

Since the Wulong county is backward and simple in industrial layout and development, it mainly relies on the tourism industry to boost its local economic development, which results in a deviation from its strategic principle of becoming a powerful county. It also suffers from other disadvantages such as backwardness in communication, terrible foundations in packaging, storage, logistics, and imperfect elements in high-end markets like real-estate, financing, and information technology. Thus, it's hard to absorb financing from large enterprises and extend industrial chain, and also cannot own large-scale industries or industry clusters with core market competitiveness. In 2014, the structural proportion among the first, second and third industry in this area is 14.2 to 40.1 to 45.7, which is slightly higher than the national level of 9.2 to 42.6 to 48.2. It is apparent that its first industry registers a higher percentage, while its second and third industry is relatively backward.

2.3 Weak in Infrastructure and Backward in Public Service

Wulong county is weak in infrastructure and is extremely lagging in softwares and hardwares in areas of education, culture, medicine and so on. Its expenditure on per capita education and hygiene is much lower than the national average, and educational input supplement is also in severe shortage, all of these lead to limited talents with high educational background and long-time sluggish development in this region. Besides, most

towns and villages has no pitch (cement) road, and do not finish the task of transforming rural electrical grid. The water facilities are weak and outdated, electrical and

communication equipment are backward, which have not only limited people's production life but also hampered its economic and social progress.

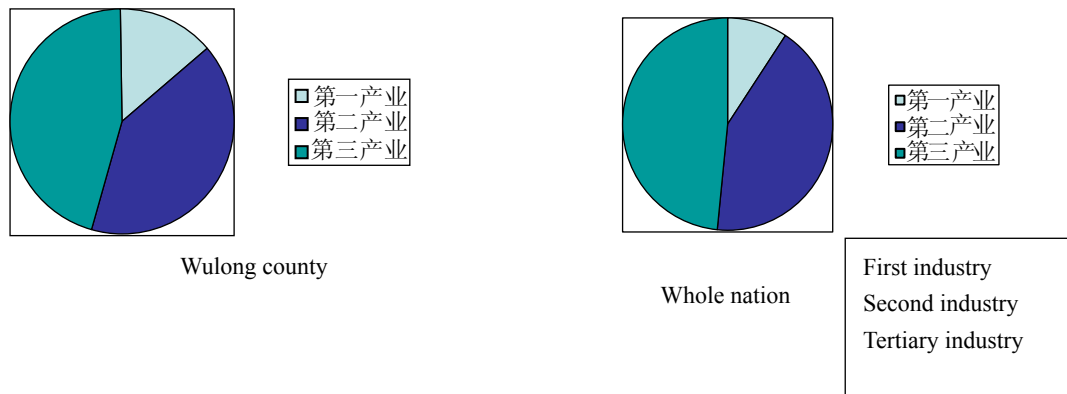


Figure 1
Comparison Between Wulong and National Industrial Structure in 2014

3. TENDENCY AND EXPERIENCE OF BEHAVIORS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT WITH POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAM

In order to accelerate poverty alleviation in this area and promote social and economic development, the government has long pursued poverty alleviation and development as a high priority, and adopted specific measures according to different conditions, thus achieving genuine breakthroughs.

3.1 The Local Government Attaches Great Importance to Poverty Relief and Has Formulated Powerful Policies

In order to implement poverty alleviation thought advocated by General Secretary Xi Jinping, speed up poverty relief and realize the magnificent objective of building a moderately prosperous society in an all-around way by 2020, the local government has highly emphasized poverty relief and successively introduced related policies and measures. For example, Chongqing has formed the policy system featured by 1+1+13, which specifically refers to *Suggestions on Concentrated Implementation of Poverty Alleviation*, *Suggestions on Conducting Well-Targeted Poverty Relief and Elimination* and other supporting polices and implementation plans in 13 areas. Wulong County formulated work programs featured by 1+9 (which includes *Work Programs of Group-to-Group Couple Assistance*, *Suggestions on Solidly Promoting Poverty alleviation*, *Work Program to Completely Eliminate Poverty in Some Poor Villages*, *Work Program of Well-targeted Poverty Aid in Impoverished Households*) and nine concrete work programs. The fact that the local government has conducted a series of policy support for

undoubtedly pinpointed orientation and working emphasis for fighting with poverty, local people therefore became more determined and confident than before.

3.2 Endogenous Idea of Poverty Relief, Good Momentum of Industrial Development

Industrial development is the fundamental goal of poverty elimination. General Secretary Xi Jinping said that when we conducted poverty governance, we should stimulate endogenous power of local development through “industrial labor force”, and then promote the overall process of poverty relief. Guided by the endogenous thought, Wulong county adopted an innovative rural tourism pattern suitable for its local conditions in an aim to make “Big Tourism” drive “Small Tourism”, more specifically, to make big tourism industries like Fairy Mountain and Three Natural Bridges drive small tourism industries and related industries in rural areas. By 2014, through this rural tourism, Wulong county has established 6 demonstration towns of rural tourism, 30 demonstration villages, 500 demonstration households, earning 650 million yuan in tourism and creating 18 thousand jobs for poor families.

3.3 Uniting Social Organizations to Create a New Situation for Poverty Elimination

Entering into the sprint stage of poverty elimination, its not enough for us to solely rely on local government. Social organizations, as important social governance power which have competitive cooperation with government, can unite with local government due to their various advantages such as close relations with disadvantaged groups, great communication skills, power supervision. We are facing a huge number of poor population, serious re-poverty, large gap between the rich and the poor, under such serious circumstance, the

local government created a new pattern which united government and organizations together in fighting with poverty, so as to help poor people get rid of poverty as soon as possible and lead a wealthy life. For example, in 2015, Wulong county held a soiree named *With You All the Way*, on which county carders and employees as well as warm-hearted enterprises and personages actively and generously donated money for poor people, the total figure reaching 13 million yuan.

4. STRATEGIES AND MEASURES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WITH TASK OF POVERTY ELIMINATION

In order to better promote new-stage poverty relief, improve anti-poverty quality, help poor population cast off poverty, facilitate coordinated social and economic development in Wulong county, Chongqing, this thesis has put forward related strategies and measures on the basis of analyzing and summarizing the Wulong government behaviors, so as to give impetus to anti-poverty program in Wulong and meanwhile help poor population shake off poverty as soon as possible.

4.1 To Explore New Ways for Cooperation With Tourism Industry as the Core of Poverty Elimination

Abundant tourism resources are one advantage owned by Wulong county. Each government department can take tourism industry as the core. They should make full use of natural heritages of Wulong and Fairy Mountain airport which is under construction to create provincial and international tourism sphere, develop innovative cooperation projects, jointly hold activities like tourism cooperation forum, festival travel, international outdoor games and establish tourism cooperation mechanism to help fight poverty, so that inside people can go out and outside people can come in. They should also expand the influence of mechanism, covering infrastructure, social undertakings, industrial development.

4.2 Establish Well-Targeted Mechanism of Poverty Relief and Improve Accuracy in Determining Poor Objects

We should aim at poor targets, find poverty roots and carry out four accurate things: accurate in recognition, management, policy implementation, measurement. First, to establish a poverty testing system; second, to formulate personalized measures by sorting out poverty roots and according to local conditions, so that we can realize poverty relief in a targeted way and make sure that poor people can gain genuine benefits and shake off poverty.

4.3 Mobilize Poor People's Participation and Improve Operation Mechanism of Participated Poverty Elimination

First, we should clearly define what rights and responsibilities that all parties of participated poverty-

relief program have based on specific local conditions and through ways of democratic consultation. Second, we should adopt more detailed methods and steps in participated poverty relief, streamline and standardize each linkage in the participated poverty-relief program, so that the general public can participate in this program and play a master role. Third, we should make full use of e-commerce online platform and institutional platform with trade associations, villagers council as carriers, ensure that channels to express interests and complains are available, and enhance poor households's speaking rights to ensure that poor people can effectively decide and supervise in poverty-relief project.

CONCLUSION AND PROSPECT

Poverty relief is an important content in socialist construction with Chinese characteristics. To deepen poverty alleviation in impoverished areas is a key move for coordinating rural and municipal development, safeguarding and improving people's livelihood, narrowing the development gap and promoting common share of reform fruit by all people. It is also the fundamental requirement of socialism, embodiment of essential principles that whole-heartedly serve for people as well as the major responsibility of the Party and government. With poverty-relief behaviors by government as an entry point and the Wulong county (Chongqing) as study object, this thesis has mainly analyzed what actions local government has taken in this region and attempted to put forward suggestions concerning improvement in government behaviors. However, poverty alleviation is a systematic project, involving a wide area of disciplines and fields. Due to my limited professional knowledge and capacity, I fail to consider in a comprehensive way and acquire related data and materials, and I also fail to prove available data and explore theory more profoundly. Besides, my explanation is not sufficient and some of my arguments may be not suitable. In the following study and research, I will pay attention to these shortages and work harder to overcome them.

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