

The Innovation of First Secretary Poverty Alleviation Mechanism in China's Rural Development

Wenyan Lei

School of Public Administration, Guangxi University, Nanning, Guangxi, China

Wenyan_lei@163.com

Abstract

The dispatching of the First Secretary of the village is an important measure proposed by the Chinese government to achieve poverty alleviation in rural areas. Since it was promoted and implemented nationwide in 2015, the first secretary has achieved positive results in eliminating poverty and improving people's livelihood. It has formed a unique poverty alleviation model from four aspects: strengthening the construction of grassroots Party organizations, developing rural industries, cultivating the ability of sustainable development and innovating the governance model. The experience and practice of the First Secretary in helping poverty alleviation will provide useful reference for enabling rural revitalization in the future, and will be further developed and continuously innovated in the Post-poverty reduction era.

Keywords

First Secretary Poverty; Alleviation Mechanism; Rural Governance; Post-poverty Reduction Era.

1. China's Achievements in Poverty Reduction

Poverty is an objective phenomenon in the process of economic and social development. 'The immediate causes of poverty are often clear, but the ultimate causes are obscure'. [1] Promoting global poverty governance and poverty reduction is one of the most important issues facing the world today.[2] By the end of 2020, China had fulfilled its poverty alleviation targets for the new era as scheduled. All 98.99 million rural residents living below the current poverty line had been lifted out of poverty, 832 impoverished counties had been lifted, and 128,000 impoverished villages had been designated as regional areas, thus completing the arduous task of eliminating absolute poverty. China has won a comprehensive victory in the battle against poverty, and achieved the poverty reduction targets set by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 10 years ahead of schedule. his significant achievement is an important contribution to achieving a better and more prosperous world as outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

China's efforts in poverty reduction over the past decades are commendable. To achieve the political goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2020, the central government has advocated a new model of poverty alleviation. The important idea of targeted poverty alleviation was first introduced in November 2013, Xi Jinping made important instructions on 'seeking truth from facts, taking measures in accordance with local conditions, classifying guidance and targeting poverty alleviation' for the first time during his visit to Xiangxi, Hunan Province. Later in Guizhou, he explained six targeted principles.[4] In January 2015, When General Secretary Xi Jinping visited Guizhou Province, he stressed the need to ensure that the poor population will be lifted out of poverty as scheduled by 2020, and put forward the importance of 'targeted poverty alleviation', which has become a hot keyword. In the stage of targeted poverty alleviation, the system of China's first village secretary has

achieved great innovative efficiency in poverty reduction by effectively embedding it into rural governance. The research on the first Secretary's poverty alleviation mechanism and poverty alleviation governance logic will help to continuously summarize China's poverty reduction experience and provide more effective reference for global poverty governance.

2. Background and Purpose of the First Secretary System in Village in China

It is an innovative move by the Chinese government to dispatch first secretaries to important posts at the grassroots level in rural areas. The first secretary system is an important working mode in China's targeted poverty alleviation, and the first secretary plays an important role in winning the battle against poverty.

2.1. Background of the System of the First Secretary Accredited to the Village

2.1.1. Practical Needs of Improving Rural Governance

The selection and dispatch of village cadres has always been a traditional poverty alleviation mechanism in the field of poverty alleviation in China. Since 2013, the key word rural governance mechanism has been mentioned in the No. 1 central document every year. The First document of the Central Committee in 2013 proposed to improve the rural governance mechanism, from the perspective of strengthening the construction of grassroots organizations, to adapt to the profound changes in rural economic and social structure, urban-rural benefit pattern, and farmers' ideas. The No. 1 document of the CPC Central Committee in 2014 called for strengthening party building at the grassroots level and establishing and improving a dynamic rural governance mechanism in line with China's national conditions. The central government has made a series of policy arrangements for poverty alleviation in the new era from the aspects of top-level design, overall layout and working mechanism. At the same time, China's rural poverty governance system has evolved along with the poverty reduction situation, and targeted poverty alleviation has become the new strategic policy of China's rural poverty alleviation work at that time. [3] In the selection of cadres in the village, special emphasis was placed on the accuracy of the appointment. In April 2015, the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee, the Agricultural Affairs Office of the CPC Central Committee and the Poverty Alleviation Office of The State Council jointly issued the 'Notice on The Selection and Appointment of Outstanding Cadres of Organs as First Secretaries of Villages' promoting the selection and appointment of first secretaries at the national level.

2.1.2. Sending Cadres to Villages has Always been an Effective Way for the Chinese Government to Carry out Rural Work

In 2012, the central government launched a campaign to build grassroots organizations. At that time, Shandong and Anhui provinces and other provinces successively sent outstanding officials from directly affiliated organs and enterprises and public institutions at the provincial level to serve as first party secretaries in poor villages. [4] In April 2015, the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee and other departments jointly announced the implementation of the first secretary system. Since the beginning of the battle against poverty, a total of 255,000 village task forces have been dispatched across the country, and more than 2.9 million officials from Party and government organs at and above the county level, state-owned enterprises and public institutions have been appointed as first secretaries or village officials in poor and weak villages.[5] The main responsibilities of the First Secretary are to strengthen grassroots organizations, promote targeted poverty alleviation, serve the people, and improve governance.

2.2. The Main Purpose of Appointing the First Secretary of the Village

The first secretary is a way for the country to set up innovative institutions and a powerful institutional arrangement in the process of poverty alleviation. From the perspective of structure-function theory, the embedded approach of the first Secretary's poverty alleviation mechanism to village governance contains three purposes. The first secretary is a way for the country to innovate its institutions and a powerful institutional arrangement in the fight against poverty. From the perspective of structural function theory, the embedded approach of the first Secretary's poverty alleviation mechanism in village governance contains three purposes.

2.2.1. Lifting Villages Out of Poverty

The previous approach of connecting leaders and units to help the poor was carried out from a top-down perspective. To a certain extent, it ignored the guidance and cultivation of the independent poverty alleviation ability of grassroots society. The poverty alleviation mechanism of the First Secretary starts to activate and develop villages through external stimulus, so that the top-down and bottom-up forces form a synergy at the village level, embed with each other and jointly promote the realization of the vision of poverty alleviation. The state, through the first secretary of the party, leads and improves grassroots leading bodies, and truly builds grassroots organizations into fortresses to lead the people out of poverty and get rich.

2.2.2. Promoting Community-level Social Governance and Village Development

The central document emphasizes the dispatch of the first secretary to villages where Primary Party organizations are weak. The first Secretary promotes the construction of Party organizations through the resources he or she carries, and ultimately improves the governance capacity of rural political power and promotes the sound development of villages. Thus, the First Secretary will achieve two purposes; One is to improve the governance capacity of grassroots society to ensure the stability of social order at the grassroots level; The second is to promote the development of villages. The state takes improving governance capacity as a driving force for development and makes it the driving force and engine of grassroots social development to promote the coordinated development of economy and society. Therefore, the first Secretary poverty alleviation mechanism is a reform experiment realized through the construction of grassroots Party organizations. This experiment should not only realize the achievements of national modernization in the field of poverty alleviation, but also open up the situation of stable order and comprehensive development of villages.

2.2.3. Ensuring the Benefits of Development Benefit the People and Achieving Fairness, Equity and Justice

General Secretary Xi Jinping has stressed that we should ensure that the fruits of development benefit all the people in a more equitable manner, promote all-round human development, and strive to achieve common prosperity for all. [6] The concept of 'common prosperity' provides ideological guidance for the impoverished population to get rid of poverty stably and all the people of the whole country to stride into a well-off society together. By constantly reforming the old system and creating new ones, China's ultimate goal is to realize social equity, justice and the concept of a modern civilized country by spreading the fruits of development to every corner of society and enhancing the well-being of the people. These are also an important part of realizing the Chinese Dream.

2.2.4. Training and Exercise Outstanding Cadres

Working at the grass-roots level directly faces the front line of society, which is the most training place for people. Selecting and dispatching the first secretary is an important opportunity and realistic need to train and exercise cadres. [7] The mass line is the fundamental work line. Leading cadres are selected from and trained among the masses. By dispatching the First Secretary to serve the masses, this is not only conducive to the smooth completion of the

first Secretary's poverty alleviation work, but also of great significance for maintaining a consistent mass line.

3. The Embedding Path and Effect of the First Secretary in Village Development

Poverty governance is an important part of rural governance. The participation of the first secretary in village development has broken through the original poverty governance mechanism and supplemented and changed the rural governance system and pattern. In the construction of a new rural governance model, the first Secretary clearly defined responsibilities and positioning, to maximize his role in rural governance.

3.1. Embedding of Organizational Capabilities

3.1.1. Promoting the Development of Community-level Organizations Effectively

In the past, the role of dispatched cadres is often limited to assisting and helping vulnerable groups. The position of the first secretary can be more integrated into the village life, more convenient decision-making and shoulder the overall responsibility, but also targeted to solve the problems of some grass-roots party organizations, such as weakness, weakness, scattered. These infuse new vigor for strengthening rural basic-level party construction undoubtedly. Many field studies show that after the first secretary was stationed in the village, the villagers' congress was standardized, the village party affairs and government affairs were strengthened, and the determination of poor households was democratic and transparent. At the same time, the construction of rural infrastructure, the integration of urban and rural sanitation and the 'one case one discussion' system are more standardized and scientific. The first Secretary has largely standardized the construction of grassroots organization system in rural areas, and people have become more concerned about village development. The villagers of sustainable development and ecological civilization construction also has a deep understanding, participation of village affairs has increased significantly Government about rural governance initiatives from difficult to really implement steady progress up to now, in the maintenance of organizations at the grass-roots level, first secretary of the benign operation, has played a promoting role to strengthen the construction of grass-roots organizations. [8] By strengthening the construction of village-level party branches, the fighting capacity and cohesion of grassroots organizations have been improved, laying a foundation for poverty alleviation work.

3.1.2. Enhancing Relations between Cadres and the Masses

The work of the first secretary includes focusing on the vulnerable groups and people with demands, and mediating conflicts and disputes to solve people's demands in a timely manner. In the course of this work, the relationship between cadres and the masses has been strengthened and the mass line has been put into practice. The successful methods of the First Secretary for village construction have been affirmed by the villagers, and the first Secretary has won the trust of the villagers by virtue of his high quality and affinity. The villagers' trust in the government has multiplied. Most of the villagers in the villages where the first Secretary worked have shown strong trust in the government and the relationship between cadres and the masses is harmonious.

3.2. The Embedding of Rural Development Resources

The first Secretary's approach and ability to embed in village development resources are shown in the following three aspects:

3.2.1. Improving Rural Infrastructure

After the first Secretary arrived in the village, on the basis of mastering the actual situation and taking feasible measures, he focused on solving the urgent infrastructure and other problems. For example, the first Secretary participated in the construction of irrigation and water conservancy projects, including tap water and drinking water projects for daily life, irrigation and water conservancy projects for small-scale farmers in agricultural production, and bridge construction and road hardening projects for villagers' travel convenience. These infrastructure projects, especially those for irrigation and water conservancy, have directly improved working and living conditions in rural areas and laid a solid foundation for various initiatives to enrich farmers. Generally speaking, the first Secretary has made gratifying achievements in agricultural productive infrastructure, rural living infrastructure, ecological environment construction, rural social development infrastructure and other aspects with the support of the poverty alleviation units in his industry, which has fundamentally changed the rural infrastructure conditions.

3.2.2. Promoting the Development of Rural Industries

Industry Poverty alleviation is a long-term measure to enhance the entrepreneurial ability of poor areas and help people find employment locally. Due to the limitations of their own education level and technical ability, poor households nearby employment have become a big problem. In this reality, the development of poor village economy and industry is imminent. The first Secretary began to investigate the actual economic conditions and development requirements of the village where he was stationed. With the policy support and the efforts of the first Secretary, the impoverished villages have successively established industries that meet the wishes and requirements of the villagers. Most of these industries are agricultural or processing projects, which are relatively conservative industries developed based on the advantages of local land resources or labor resources. In terms of industrial benefits, most industries can produce certain benefits to the poor, but the formation of industrial advantages requires a longer period of cultivation.

3.2.3. Increasing Farmer's Income and Collective Economic Income

The first Secretary usually starts his work by creating projects for helping villages and promoting farmers' income. Due to the limitations of farmers' own cultural level, it is difficult for rural areas to get rid of the situation of income from monoculture of grain. The first secretary usually has a high level of knowledge and an open mind, and tailor-made plans to enrich the village by analyzing the actual situation of the village. For example, the first Secretary organized projects such as mushroom greenhouses and tea planting in stationed villages. The plan for getting rich proposed by the First Secretary in light of specific conditions has been gradually implemented with the support of poverty alleviation units in the industry. The external resources that original villager cadre can obtain are relatively limited. The first Secretary uses poverty alleviation projects or attracts external investment to provide start-up funds for village collective income generation. They set up village-run enterprises in villages, such as chicken farms and food processing plants; or developing village collective business projects, such as agricultural parks to promote rural tourism. In the village, the mountain road and forest fruit industrial park are built. All these have led to the increase of collective income and farmers' income and promoted the development of rural industries.

3.3. The Embedding of Rural Culture

Thought guide's action. In the development of all things, the emancipation and development of the mind is the first. Only advanced thoughts and concepts can guide the correct progress of actions and ensure the correctness of the development path. The first Secretary successively carried out the construction of spiritual civilization during his stay in the village, and exerted a

subtle influence on the people's thoughts in daily life by going to the countryside through literary and artistic activities. To the villager's economic poverty alleviation at the same time to support and wisdom. On the premise of emancipating the mind, it will react to the development and progress of industrial economy. Spiritual progress promotes economic development, while economic development drives ideological emancipation. The two promote and influence each other, forming a two-way virtuous circle.

To sum up, the system of first village secretary is a unique poverty alleviation mechanism in China, and it plays a huge role in promoting rural poverty alleviation and development and rural revitalization through embedded governance. The state relies on the first secretary to embed resources, organization and culture into the village; Exert influence on rural social development. These measures have effectively helped to strengthen village troop building, develop industries, improve infrastructure and enrich spiritual and cultural life; And has helped the village to achieve a more standardized political life, economic and cultural development in a more comprehensive way. [9]

4. The Functional Evolution of the First Secretary's Poverty Alleviation Mechanism in the Post-poverty Reduction Period

By 2020, China has achieved its goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and winning the battle against poverty. In the Post-poverty reduction era, China's poverty reduction strategy and work system should be restructured and transformed with the change of poverty structure, as all the people living in absolute poverty under the current standard will be lifted out of poverty by 2020 and primary and regional absolute poverty in rural areas will end. [10] The rural poverty reduction strategy needs to shift from the long-standing 'poverty alleviation strategy' to a new poverty reduction strategy framework. We should continue to stimulate the endogenous drive of the poor population in poor areas, encourage low-income people who are able to work to get rich, and move forward toward the goal of common prosperity for all.

In the stage of targeted poverty alleviation, the first Secretary poverty alleviation mechanism is a campaign that integrates poverty alleviation, improvement of living environment, construction of new countryside and rural revitalization. The village First Secretary plays an important role in the modernization of national governance system and governance capacity, especially in grass-roots governance. The innovation of this governance model is also in line with the Major strategic plan of the Chinese government to modernize the country's governance system and capacity. In May 2021, the central government issued the Opinions on the Continuous Selection of First Secretaries and Task forces stationed in Key Villages. After 2020, there are still large relative poverty or development gaps between some regions. The new system redefines the main duties and tasks of the first secretary as follows: firstly, strengthening Party organizations in village-level; secondly, promoting village development and villagers' prosperity; thirdly, improve governance; fourthly, serving the people. The purpose of the new mechanism is to make use of the important experience of selecting and appointing first secretaries and task forces in winning the battle against poverty to comprehensively promote rural revitalization in the new journey of comprehensively building a modern socialist country. While consolidating and expanding our achievements in poverty alleviation, we will make rural vitalization a broad stage for training and training officials. The system of first village secretaries will become one of the main working mechanisms for China's poverty reduction measures, providing organizational guarantee and cadre and talent support for comprehensively promoting rural revitalization and consolidating and expanding the achievements of poverty alleviation. Based on its national conditions, China has embarked on a

path of poverty reduction with Chinese characteristics. It is foreseeable that the first Secretary's poverty reduction mechanism will continue to play its role in the Post-poverty reduction era.

References

- [1] Amartya Sen. Translated by Wang Yu, Wang Wenyu, Poverty and Famine on Rights and Deprivation [M]. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2014.
- [2] State Council Information Office, White Paper on Human Poverty Reduction in China [R] 2021-04-09.
- [3] Huixing, JIAN Xiaoying, Song Xiaoping. Rural Economy and Science and Technology, 2017, 28(19): 188-190.
- [4] Lin Guohua, Fan Pan. The Role of The First Secretary in Rural Governance: A Case study of Xuezhuang Town, Fei County, Shandong Province [J]. Shanxi Agricultural Economics, 2016(6): 1-3, 5.
- [5] Zhang Dibiao, Zhou Wentao, Bai Tiantian, Liu Yangtao, more than 2.9 million cadres took root in the frontline, and marched forward in China's battle to rid the country of absolute poverty <https://www.163.com/dy/article/FDN32VT50514R9P4.html>, 2020-05-28.
- [6] Xi Jinping, Speech at the Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the birth of Marx [N]. People's Daily, 2018-05-05(02).
- [7] Wang Hewei. Research on poverty alleviation in Heze City [J]. China's Rural Poverty Alleviation. 2015, 07-14.
- [8] Gong Xiaojie, Cong Xiaofeng. Research on embedded development and rural governance: A case study of the First Secretary of poverty alleviation in Villages [J]. Rural Collection, 2021(3): 83-89.
- [9] Song Huili. The First Secretary in Village: Research on The Embedded Governance Mechanism of Chinese Rural areas. Beijing University of Technology, 2020.
- [10] Li Xiaoyun, YUAN Junjun, Yu Lerong. On rural Poverty Reduction strategies and policies after 2020: The transformation from poverty alleviation to poverty prevention [J]. Problems in Agricultural economy, 2020(2): 15-22.