

Reading

Through the eyes of an American journalist, we gained an overview of the various measures China has taken in poverty alleviation and its accomplishments. Now, we will focus on a specific impoverished village to examine how the targeted poverty alleviation strategy has been implemented and explore the local government's sustained efforts to promote rural revitalization.



Log on to Ucampus for interactive learning.

From vine ladder to steel ladder

"Cliff Village" in Zhaojue County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province

- ¹ On the morning of May 13, 2020, 51-year-old Mose Dati arose earlier than usual. The sunlight gently slanted into the small courtyard perched on a mid-mountain terrace that soars more than 1,500 meters above sea level. With a sense of bittersweet farewell, he tidied the ashes from the firepit, swept the courtyard floor, and closed the gate. He paused a moment, taking one last look at his old, familiar house, then turned and strode forward. Today, he and his wife would descend the mountain, starting a new chapter that would bring fresh hope and endless possibilities.
- ² West of the fertile plains of Sichuan lie high mountains, where some of the most impoverished villages are nestled in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture. Mose Dati's home is in Atulie'er, one such village. More widely known as "Cliff Village," it gets its name from the "Sky Ladder" made of vines and wooden sticks. In the past, the villagers had to climb this ladder for two to three hours to get up and down from the mountain. Despite the constant risk to their lives, it was an unavoidable choice.
- ³ Poverty has long cast a shadow over this mountainous region, with the vine ladder standing in the way of a better life for the villagers. However, ever since 2016, life in "Cliff Village" has undergone a transformation thanks to an unprecedented anti-poverty initiative in China.



Vine ladder in "Cliff Village"

- ⁴ In 2016, the local government raised one million yuan to build a 1.5-meter-wide steel ladder made of over 6,000 steel pipes. The upgraded ladder made it easier and safer for the villagers to climb up and down the mountain. The goat farming cooperative, which raised over 400 goats and more than 80 sheep, no longer needed to worry about sales thanks to the improved access to the village. The navel orange trees planted in 2016 began to provide a significant source of income for the villagers in 2019. In the several acres of

greenhouses, the villagers began to cultivate the profitable herb *sanqi* using drip irrigation technology. This boosted their income greatly.

- 5 With the construction of the steel ladder, a base station was also set up, bringing 4G network to the village. The villagers no longer had to “climb to the top of the mountain to find a signal.” Drones were used to deliver essential medicines to the clinic within five minutes, addressing the previous lack of basic supplies, and became a lifeline for the villagers. The village also established a preschool, enabling children to receive free preschool education without having to make the trek down the mountain.
- 6 With the help of the Internet, some villagers even became Internet celebrities, with their micro-videos racking up millions of views. “Cliff Village” has also gained increasing fame, attracting nearly 100,000 tourists in 2019. As more tourists arrived, many villagers started running small stores and home stays. These small businesses significantly increased the villagers’ income, becoming their primary source of revenue.
- 7 While some villagers had seen their lives improve, 84 households were still registered as living in poverty in 2019. It was recognized that lifting all the residents in “Cliff Village” out of poverty would require an unbearably high cost to further improve infrastructure, including transportation, communication, and electricity. After careful consideration, the local government decided that it might be best to relocate these impoverished households to apartments specifically built for them in the county and help them settle and rebuild their lives there.
- 8 When these impoverished households move, their cliff houses can be repurposed for tourism, and a large amount of land also becomes available, allowing those who remain to have more per capita land for use. While developing this tourism, they can also engage in larger-scale farming and further generate their income streams.



- ⁹ It was under such circumstances that Mose Dati and other impoverished villagers packed up and moved away from the mountain. Along the way, they carried only simple belongings, just bedding and clothes, as they had been assured that everything would be provided in their new home. More than 10 modern agricultural



industrial parks have been developed near these resettlement areas to offer local job opportunities to those relocated. The local government continues to provide skills training, labor export services, and subsidies to help them quickly adapt to their new urban lives.

- ¹⁰ From the vine ladder to the steel ladder, and now to stairways, the local government will continue to pool resources by combining housing construction with urbanization, rural tourism, and educational balance. This ensures that both the remaining villagers and the relocated residents can move toward prosperity.
- ¹¹ The path of “Cliff Village” continues to broaden, mirroring the sweeping changes that resonate across China’s rural landscape. These villages, each with their own tale to tell, contribute to a harmonious chorus, hailing China’s remarkable transformation and unwavering dedication not only to eradicating poverty, but also to fostering sustainable growth, revitalizing rural areas, and ensuring that the sweetest fruits of progress are enjoyed by all its people.

Notes

In 2016, the poverty-alleviation group in Atulie’er facilitated the establishment of a **goat farming cooperative**, allowing villagers to invest and become shareholders. They further supported the initiative by helping purchase high-quality goats and enlisting experienced shepherds to manage the farming operations. As a result, the cooperative centralized goat farming, enabling efficient production, and villagers who had invested in the cooperative began to receive dividends from its earnings.