

Poverty Reduction Path of Rural Women in the Perspective of Empowerment

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Abstract

As an important subject of rural revitalization, rural women are not only the beneficiaries and beneficiaries of rural revitalization, but also the promoters and builders of rural revitalization. Poverty alleviation of women is an indispensable part of China's decisive battle against poverty. As an important tool of development, empowerment of rural women has been applied to all areas of development, and the empowerment of rural women contributes to rural revitalization. This paper takes the process of poverty reduction of Women in China as an example. Starting from the theory of empowerment, this paper makes an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of women's empowerment in promoting poverty reduction of Women in China in six ways, including Self-empowerment, individual empowerment, group empowerment, organization empowerment, community empowerment and politics, and summarizes the specific path of rural women's empowerment in rural revitalization.

Keywords

Empowerment Theory; Women's Empowerment; Poverty Reduction and Development.

1. Introduction

Poverty reduction is closely related to women's development. On the basis of large-scale poverty reduction in today's world, how to solve the problem of women, who account for more than half of the poor population, is an important issue for all countries in pursuit of comprehensive development. In China, women's poverty reduction has always been regarded as an important part of the national poverty reduction strategy, and a series of policies and measures on women's poverty reduction and comprehensive development have been formulated and implemented. From top-level design to grassroots community implementation, the government is actively targeting poverty reduction through the empowerment of women. 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 have been lifted out of poverty, completing the arduous task of eradicating absolute poverty. Adhering to the basic state policy of equality between men and women, the Chinese government has given priority to women in poverty alleviation, with women accounting for about half of the nearly 100 million people lifted out of poverty. [1] The survival and development of poor women in China has improved significantly, and the achievements of Chinese women in poverty reduction have provided valuable experience for the rest of the world.

2. Empowerment Theory and Women's Empowerment

There are many definitions of Empowerment, but no unified conclusion has been reached so far. Empowerment has been widely used in various development fields, becoming an important framework for understanding personal organization and community development and a mainstream theory in many disciplines and fields. The word "empowerment" comes from the book "

Black Empowerment: Social Work in Oppressed Communities" written by Barbara Solomon, a scholar at Columbia University in the United States, in 1976. [2] It means giving or enriching power to an individual or group. It is a process in which individuals gain greater control and confidence in their living space through positive interactions with others and the environment, and promote the use of environmental resources and opportunities to further help individuals acquire more abilities.

Since the 1970s, the issue of women's development has attracted more and more attention, and two mainstream studies of "women in development" and "gender and development" have gradually formed around the world. [3] The theory of women's participation in development holds that women are excluded, while the theory of social gender and development holds that women have always participated in development but need to change the original social gender power relationship to achieve gender equality, and the important means of change is to "empower women". [4]

At present, the academic community has formed a consensus that empowerment is an important tool for development, and that women's empowerment is a key factor in national development. [5] Empowerment, at its core, is not about giving or allowing from the outside, but about affirming inner power and self-reliant action. For women, it is not only the individual consciousness and behavior, but also the consciousness and behavior of women as a group. [2] The origins of Women's Empowerment are discussed in the United Nations book Women and Empowerment: Participation and Decision-making, published in 1995. A new approach to women's empowerment arose because of the lack of success of equality demands, as well as third World feminist writings and grassroots activism. Empowerment of women is actually a process, rather than something that can be given, and should be achieved through proactive self-reliance and self-improvement. The empowerment of women can be seen as an ongoing process of several intrinsically related and mutually reinforcing factors. These factors are powerful as a step towards gender equality and the empowerment process is both individual and collective.

3. Rural Women's Empowerment in Poverty Reduction

China has always been a strong advocate and promoter of poverty reduction in the world. As an important force to promote agricultural and rural modernization, rural women are not only beneficiaries of rural revitalization, but also promoters and builders of rural revitalization. Poverty alleviation of women is an indispensable and important link in the decisive battle against poverty. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the Chinese government has attached great importance to poverty alleviation and formulated an all-dimensional and multi-tiered targeted poverty alleviation policy to eradicate poverty in rural areas and among women. Poverty alleviation of women is an indispensable and important link in the decisive battle against poverty.

The idea of "empowerment" to improve life conditions was pioneered by Amartya Sen, a Nobel Prize-winning economist. He believes that the essence of poverty is not the lack of material, but the lack of feasible ability and freedom, and the loss of rights are the root causes of poverty.[6] It is due to the limitation of social and individual environment that individuals cannot truly control their own destiny. Therefore, empowerment helps individuals or groups to get out of the predicament of exclusion, alienation, lack of resources and so on, and truly control their own destiny. Based on the empowerment theory, this study attempts to analyze the path and effectiveness of poor women's empowerment by combining the Self-empowerment, individual empowerment, group empowerment, organizational empowerment, community empowerment and political empowerment of British scholar Robert Adams. [7]

3.1. Self-empowerment

Self-empowerment is the process by which individuals take control of their own lives and shape their motivation for change. Generally speaking, poverty transitions from Object poverty to Subject poverty until it is shaped. The poor initially faced the scarcity of material resources, such as food, clothing, housing, transportation and medical education. If they live in such a state for a long time, they will lose the mind of self-development. [8] The Chinese government has always been concerned about poverty alleviation and development of poor rural women. President Xi Jinping has repeatedly stressed that no one should be left behind in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and no one should be left behind on the road to common prosperity. By empowering rural poor people from the self-level to the social level, the government stimulates their confidence and motivation for self-change and shapes their subjectivity. In the battle of targeted poverty alleviation, women are regarded as the main force in poverty alleviation. The government insists on giving priority to education, and makes full use of various media and channels to carry out extensive activities such as policy publicity, inspirational education, skills training and typical demonstrations to empower poor women. On October 13rd, 2020, five women shared their stories of participating in poverty alleviation at a press conference titled "The Power of Women on the Road to Poverty Alleviation" organized by The State Council Information Office. Although these women have different experiences, one common feature is that China's good poverty alleviation policies and successful practices in poverty reduction have inspired their passion and drive. [9] Empowerment, at its core, is not about giving or allowing from the outside, but about affirming inner power and self-reliant action. Through their own efforts, they have also become role models in promoting women's poverty reduction.

3.2. Individual Empowerment

Individual empowerment is primarily about enabling individuals to function socially by helping them overcome their own barriers. These empowerment approaches include survival and development skills training and so on. Poor women need not only the confidence and motivation to change themselves, but also the ability to obtain social resources. In China's policies for women's development, individual empowerment is mainly based on local conditions, through various forms (community education, community participation, etc.) to cultivate rural women's survival and development skills, and further enhance their motivation and ability to obtain social resources. In 2009, the All-China Women's Federation, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and the People's Bank of China jointly issued the Notice on Improving the Policy of Financial Discount on Small Guaranteed Loans and Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship and Employment. The main groups concerned by relevant policies are rural women in deep poverty and laid-off and unemployed women. Promote economic development for poor women through micro credit by increasing investment in women. In the five years since the policy was issued, a total of 234.2 billion yuan of small loans with discounted interest have been granted to women, helping more than 10 million women lift themselves out of poverty and start businesses and find jobs. [10] Over the years, the ACWF has carried out multi-channel, multi-level and diversified training programs for poor areas, gradually increasing the proportion of women benefiting from various government training programs to over 40 percent. Statistics from the year of 2015 show that a total of more than 24 million rural women in underdeveloped areas in western China have been helped to improve their productive skills. Since the implementation of the rural Women's Promotion Program, more than 10 million poor women and key female cadres have participated in various training programs at various levels, helping poor women increase their skills and improve their quality. [10]

3.3. Group Empowerment

Group empowerment mainly promotes individual survival and development ability through mutual assistance and cooperation among group members. A well-constructed social network can withstand various social risks. In the context of intensified social transformation and mobility, the biggest problem facing rural women in poverty is the lack of effective social support. The absence of social support networks is more likely to exacerbate the marginalization of poor people. For women, empowerment is not only the consciousness and behaviour of individuals, but of women as a group. Female empowerment is intended to change the original power relationship and expand the scope of women's power throughout their life. This is both a process and an outcome. In communities around the world, women participate in empowerment through group organizing and mutual support. These groups include savings groups, self-help groups, mothers' groups, community mobilization groups and girls' support groups. It's not just women themselves who benefit from these women's groups, which greatly affect the economy of their communities, local and national levels. The All-China Women's Federation is the bridge linking the Party and the government to the women's masses. It is the women's organization with the widest coverage, largest scale and most complete organizational network in the world. It is born with political advantages, organizational advantages and close ties with the women's masses that women's organizations in other countries do not have. China's women's federations have always been a powerful assistant to the government in its work of poverty reduction among women. The All-China Women's Federation has continued to publicize poverty alleviation policies and models of getting rich to strengthen poor women's confidence in poverty alleviation. These media include women's lectures and classes, more than 8,000 websites and new media platforms of women's federations, more than 900,000 Sister we-chat groups, and more than 700,000 women's homes in urban and rural communities. Women now account for more than 60 percent of the rural labor force in China. [11] They have played a great role in the development of diversified industries such as specialty farming, agricultural processing, leisure agriculture, rural tourism and e-commerce. A large number of family farms and agricultural cooperatives founded and run by women have sprung up.

3.4. Organizational Empowerment

Organizational empowerment is mainly to give play to the function and role of social organizations in solving individual problems, especially highlighting their protective function for individuals. Everyone has an attributive need to belong to an organization, and poor women are no exception. In China's targeted poverty alleviation, it is committed to cultivating grassroots women's social organizations and teams in an all-round way and giving full play to their functions of supporting and protecting poor women. By participating in a group, rural women can be better organized to take action together, while their awareness and ability to promote change are fully and continuously developed.

By the end of 2020, with the help of the All-China Women's Federation, there had been more than 10,000 poverty alleviation workshops nationwide. This has greatly helped poor women realize their desire to get local jobs and get rid of poverty. In recent years, the All-China Women's Federation has invested 39.3 million yuan in establishing 786 national demonstration bases for women's poverty alleviation, and led local women's federations to set up more than 20,000 bases for women's entrepreneurship in poor areas. More than 300,000 family farms and agricultural cooperatives of various types founded and run by women have lifted more than 5 million poor women out of poverty. [12] Poor women have been actively involved in local industrial poverty alleviation projects, helping poor women steadily increase their income and injecting vitality into poverty alleviation.

3.5. Community Empowerment and Political Empowerment

Community empowerment and political empowerment are macro-level empowerment strategies. Community empowerment mainly means that communities should provide a platform for individuals to participate in public affairs. Community is a platform for rural women to participate in public affairs, as well as a place to help each other and connect emotions. Mobilize women in communities through various channels and forms, absorb and organize women to participate in the specific design, implementation and evaluation of poverty alleviation work. Fully respect their subjectivity and creativity, advocate a participatory poverty alleviation, and then form an ideal community of mutual assistance and cooperation, common participation, common governance and shared development.

Political empowerment is to protect individuals' basic rights of subsistence, freedom and development according to law. The state protects women's equal enjoyment of basic social rights and their basic needs in livelihood, life, education, medical care and old-age care in accordance with the law. At the same time, various systems and policies provide women with the means and opportunities to start their own businesses and increase their incomes so that they can gradually rely on their own capabilities to cope with poverty.

Community empowerment and political empowerment are macro-level empowerment strategies. The Chinese government has gradually improved a series of policies and measures to promote women's empowerment at the community level. For example, before 2016, the All-China Women's Federation and the Poverty Alleviation Office of The State Council issued the Notice on Vigorously Promoting Small Loans in the Battle against Poverty and Promoting Women from Registered Poor Families to Get Rid of Poverty, and the Ministry of Civil Affairs and other 13 departments jointly issued the Opinions on Strengthening Care and Services for Women Left behind in Rural Areas. In 2017, the All-China Women's Federation and the Poverty Alleviation Office of The State Council issued a series of guiding documents to support the development of women in poor areas, including Opinions on Poverty Alleviation and Development for Poor Women and Opinions on Strengthening Care and Services for Women Left behind in Rural Areas. With the release of supportive policies to reduce poverty, the screen capture project provides a platform for poor women to have access to wealth, bringing a multiplier effect. In the past three years, more than 700,000 poor women have been helped to transfer to employment, and a large number of poverty alleviation brands of female homemaking have emerged.

According to the Program for the Development of Chinese Women (2011-2020), women should make up at least 30 percent of village committee members and 10 percent of village committee directors. The villagers committee shall have women members, and women villagers' representatives shall account for more than one third of the members of the villagers' representative assembly. Since the implementation of the program, women have actively participated in community-level social governance. In 2020, women accounted for 24.2 percent of village committee members, 2.8 percentage points higher than in 2010. [13] In addition, in terms of women's participation in decision-making and management, the proportion of women deputies to the National People's Congress and members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) reached a record high. Women are more deeply involved in the operation and management of enterprises, and more extensively involved in grassroots democratic management.

4. Conclusions and Reflections

It is the common responsibility of mankind to eliminate poverty and achieve common prosperity for women. In the long-term practice of poverty reduction, China has constructed a complete empowerment system from micro level to macro level through empowering rural

women from the Self-empowerment to the social level, thus shaping the development subjectivity of rural women and facilitating their poverty reduction and development. Specific measures and approaches include: stimulating the confidence and motivation of rural women to change themselves; Actively build women's mutual aid cooperation group, give play to the group's network support and reciprocity function; Fostering women's social organizations and giving play to their protective functions; Providing development platforms for rural women in the community; Creating a fair and just social atmosphere to guarantee the basic rights and development opportunities of poor women. The successful practice of Poverty reduction by Chinese women in the new era is an epitome of poverty reduction with Chinese characteristics. It is the common responsibility of mankind to analyze the poverty situation of women, demonstrate the poverty reduction and development practices of various countries and promote global gender equality. Poverty eradication is the primary goal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is an important foundation for achieving sustainable development, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Standing at a new historical starting point, the focus of China's poverty alleviation work will also undergo a major change. A long-term mechanism will be established to address relative poverty and promote the smooth transformation of poverty reduction strategies and work systems. Empowering women on the path to poverty reduction and development will be a long-term task.

Acknowledgments

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