



PART I:

Communities taking charge

Introduction

3

by JOHANNA PENNARZ

This section looks at how communities have experienced the gradual change of roles and responsibilities. It shows that although communities are keen to take charge, the transition to new ways of working is a learning process for both the community and government staff involved.

Village communities are the basic social and economic unit in rural China. In the southwest the village ‘community’ may cover a huge diversity of natural settings and economic, social and ethnic groups. There are ‘administrative villages’ – the basic administrative unit with elected representatives (including the village head) and cadres (including the party secretary).

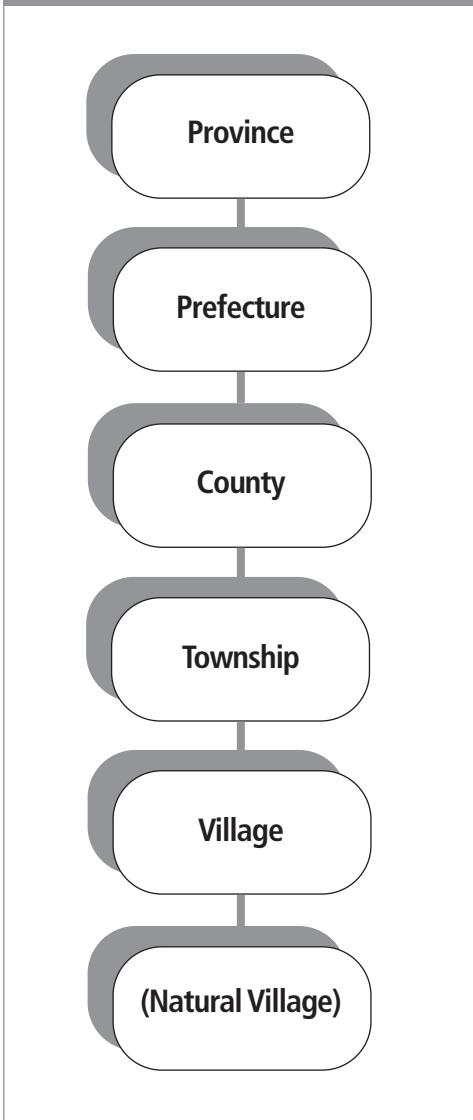
The administrative villages emerged from the former production brigade which was the basic accounting unit during the era of collective agriculture. The brigades included several work teams which owned most of the land. Production brigades were

organised into communes, which were also the basic unit of government. The collective production system was dismantled with the introduction of rural reforms from 1979, which crucially meant a return to family farming.¹ An administrative village will cover a number of hamlets (‘natural’ villages), which may be scattered over a vast area. The natural village tends to form a more cohesive social unit, where people with a common history and ethnic background live together.

Today, villages still play an important role in the provision of rural infrastructure services, and are involved in poverty reduction activities, social welfare, basic education and public health, particularly in better-off areas. Villages are in theory ‘self-governing’ and central government has emphasised that communities should increasingly take responsibility for their own affairs.

The legal basis for community partici-

¹ See ‘Introduction – a basic guide to development from 1949 to 1989’ (Cannon and Jenkins, 1990).

Figure 1: Administrative structure**Box 1: The Poor Rural Communities Development Project (PRCDP)**

The PRCDP was funded by the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development (DfID) to reduce poverty in the three Southwestern provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan and Guangxi. It had an overall investment of US\$140 million. The project supported the government's objective of development in western China through a participatory and multi-sectoral approach to the reduction of absolute poverty among ethnic minorities living in extremely remote and resource-deficient areas. PRCDP covered more than 1,000 administrative villages (519 in Sichuan, 305 in Guangxi and 187 in Yunnan), home to about 1.4 million people. Project components included:

- environmentally sustainable mountain agriculture;
- community-based infrastructure;
- basic health, education and other social services;
- project management and support; and
- village-level training.

The overall objective of PRCDP included the aim to 'achieve sustained participation of the poorest rural people'. This meant that PRCDP fully involved poor people from project villages in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of project interventions. During the preparation phase, PRCDP developed an approach to community participation that built on existing experiences with participation in the three provinces, adapted to the context of such a large and diverse region. Participatory Poverty Analysis (PPA) and Participatory Planning (PP) were piloted in Yunnan and Guangxi during the PRCDP feasibility study phase.

The participation approach is documented in the PRCDP Participation Manual,³ which describes the methodology for planning, implementing and monitoring sectoral projects at the community level in a participatory way; it also includes a wealth of practical cases from the provinces.

pation is laid down in the Organic Law.² This outlines principles of grassroots democracy (election of village committees) and public participation. According to the law, villagers should participate in all projects that affect their lives. The central

government sees farmers' participation in project selection for infrastructure investments (*yishi yiyi*) as critical. Community participation is meant to improve efficiency, halt unwanted projects and facilitate more responsive ways of investment.⁴

² The 'Organic Law of the Villagers Committee', adopted by the Standing Committee of the Ninth National People's Congress at its fifth session on 4 November 1998, provides the legal base for self-governance and elections in Chinese villages (see www.china.org.cn/english/government/207279.htm).

³ See www.itad.com/PRCDP

⁴ The Decision (CCP Central Committee 2008, pp. 13-14) reiterates the importance of setting village compacts (*yishi yiyi*) for individual service provision projects (cited from: Christiansen and Zhang, 2009).

Despite the central government's commitment to increase community participation, the reality is not so straightforward. Local governments and communities are often not clear how the interface between government and society should work in practice. The specific authority of village administration and scope of village finance is largely undefined and varies widely in practice. Local governments are still learning on how delegated responsibility should work in practice (see Part III). Communities often need to build the confidence and skills to assume a greater responsibility in project management.

For the government, greater community ownership and responsibility are expected to solve the problem of maintenance that has previously led to the deterioration of existing infrastructure and repeat investments. In the past, unclear arrangements and lack of ownership often resulted in a lack of follow-up maintenance. Village-level infrastructure was, on the whole, not formally owned by the villages but by the townships. This meant that the villages could refuse to take responsibility. Cases like this have made local governments more supportive of participatory approaches (see **Qin Guozheng's** article, Part II, Article 10).

Internationally funded projects like the Poor Rural Communities Development Project (PRCDP) have been very important in shaping the new interface between government and society. PRCDP aimed to involve poor people fully in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of project interventions (see Box 1). This provided a 'safe space' for local government and communities to experiment with new roles and responsibilities, thus moving the participation agenda forward. PRCDP has helped to reshape the roles and relationships at the local level, as the following articles show, describing how communities have taken responsibility once the local government has delegated management functions to villages.

PRCDP's participatory approach has profoundly influenced the communities involved, which have now, often for the first time, taken charge of investments in their villages. Through the project, the relationship between local government and communities has grown with mutual trust and confidence. The three articles in Part I provide an account of these catalytic experiences. They are written by people who were involved in the process as community members and facilitators.

Nati comes from a small village in Ximeng County (Yunnan Province). This is one of the most remote areas in China, close to the border with Myanmar. In recent years, the number of poor people migrating out of these areas into the more industrialised provinces in the east and south has been soaring. Nati's case study shows that the project greatly benefited from the experience of returning migrant workers who contributed their expertise in the process. She describes how the community was actively involved in all aspects of the project and, as a result, was extremely satisfied with the results.

Qin Guozheng is from Luocheng County in Guangxi Province. His case study describes how local government officials were taken by surprise when the community decided to depart from the common practice of nominating members of the local elite. Instead, they elected an ordinary farmer as Project Manager. The community had identified him as a key stakeholder in a proposed irrigation scheme and agreed that his motivation would be key for a successful project. They were right, and the fact that this project was a success has made government officials rethink their common assumption that ordinary villagers are not capable of taking charge.

Song Haokun's case study (from Pingshan County in Sichuan Province) tells a different story. In this case, a conventional management approach was taken and the

management group only included the village cadres: key stakeholders were left out. When members of the community found problems in the implementation process, it was not until they received support from the local government that their complaints were addressed. The article shows how difficult it is to transform community relationships and conventional mindsets into more democratic ways of local governance.

These case studies all highlight the energy at the community level that the

government often oversaw and neglected. Once communities are given the space, individuals and groups quickly recognise this as an opportunity to become active and demand greater responsibilities on behalf of the communities. The articles underline the tensions arising from unclear relationships and insufficient delegation of responsibilities. But negotiation takes place not only around issues of roles, but also on the extent to which responsibilities should remain within the formal governance structure.

CONTACT DETAILS

Johanna Pennarz
ITAD, Hove, UK
Email: Johanna.pennarz@itad.com
Website: www.itad.com

REFERENCES

- Cannon T. and A. Jenkins, eds (1990) *The Geography of Contemporary China*. Routledge: London.
- Christiansen, F. and H.X. Zhang (2009) 'The Political Economy of Rural Development in China: Reflections on Current Rural Policy'. *Duisburg Working Papers on East Asian Studies* 81.

How community farmers participated in project planning and implementation

4

by NATI

NATI is a farmer from Muguba village in Ximeng County, Yunnan Province. She is a member of the Lahu ethnic minority. Nati was involved in PRCDP as a community representative. In 2009, she presented her experience of the participatory process to a wider audience at the Kunming workshop. The following is a transcript of her speech, which provides a first-hand account of how her community experienced the process of empowerment in the project. Although the style of her presentation is factual, her presence and contribution made a deep impression on the audience, who had never seen a member of a marginal ethnic community speaking out at a national event. Nati made active contributions to the workshop discussions and gained further confidence through this event, which she then brought back to her village.

Manheng Administrative Village is part of the PRCDP project, which started in 2005. Our village has 85 households and 315 people, and we are all Lahu ethnic minority. Our village is just 1km away from the China-Myanmar border.

In August 2004, our village set up a project working group. We organised the dissemination and participatory planning meeting, which I attended as group leader of Muguba natural village. The project working group was elected by the representatives of different wealth groups. Each group contributed 20% of the representatives. At least 35% had to be women. During

this meeting we used participatory tools, such as group interviews (poor households, women, men) and special household interviews (such as divorced households), to discuss priorities and project ideas.

Women's participation was very weak at the beginning of the meeting, especially during the mixed group discussion by men and women. But gradually women gained respect from both the men and the working group, and they contributed more ideas, especially concerning their vision for a better future.

After the meeting I passed the findings of the working group on to the villagers.



Photo: Johanna Pennarz

Nati giving her speech during the Kunming workshop.

Everybody contributed their own ideas on the main difficulties of the village. When we selected the projects, each household had at least one representative participating in the discussion.

In May 2006, our villagers started implementing the first project; rehabilitation of the drinking water system. Before implementation, county and township project staff had meetings with the villagers to select the water supply sources and identify a suitable site for building the water pool. It was particularly noteworthy that women were consulted consistently during the implementation phase, for example with regard to the location of the taps in their homes. In order to ensure the quality of project implementation, the villagers elected twelve people, including five women, to form a project supervision group. These people often worked as migrant labourers and, therefore, had the

skills to supervise all kinds of construction work.

In the course of the project implementation, we organised the farmers to actively participate by providing labour, such as digging ditches and transporting sand and gravel to the job site. The supervision group members took turns to visit the job site every day and inspect whether the construction materials were up to a desirable standard. If they found any substandard materials, they would promptly request the construction team to take remedial measures.

After completion of the project component, we – including the women representatives – also participated in its final check and certificate (*yanshou*). The check and certificate group also asked the farmers to provide their opinion. The working group then facilitated the villagers to develop the maintenance

rules, so that the project facilities could be well maintained by the community organisation.

To date, we have completed several project components: drinking water for people and livestock has been provided, and three 1.5km ditches have been dug, which can irrigate 200mu of rice fields.¹ All 85 households in the village have been covered by these project components.

PRCDP was implemented in our village with the participation of the villagers throughout the entire project cycle, includ-

ing deciding the components, monitoring and supervision, management and final check and certificate. Compared with the way in which projects were implemented in the past, the villagers feel much more satisfied with PRCDP. The satisfaction of the beneficiaries is an important indicator for the successful completion of any project. The more local people participate in the decision-making, the more satisfied they will be. Good participation means that all groups in the village have an opportunity to participate in the decisions.

CONTACT DETAILS

Nati
 Manheng Village
 Ximeng County
 Yunnan Province
 PR China
 Contact: songhk@ynu.edu.cn

¹ 15 mu = 1 hectare

5

How an ordinary farmer was elected as project leader

by QIN GUOZHENG

QIN GUOZHENG is a township official at Naweng Township in Luocheng County, Guangxi Province. He worked on PRCDP since the preparation phase, first in the township workstation, later in the country project management office (see his reflections in Part II, Article 10). In this article, he describes one of the catalytic events in the participatory process, which was the election of an ordinary farmer as project leader in PRCDP. His article provides a detailed account of the election process and the considerations the community took into account when electing their leader.

When the local villagers elected the Supervision and Implementation Group for the ditch project of Shepu Village, Naweng Township, the villagers unanimously elected Qin Shenggui as the group leader, a result that came totally unexpected for the county and township facilitators. This is the story of how an ordinary villager became the group leader.

Shepu village has ten natural sub-villages, 11 villagers' groups and a total population of 1,327. It is comprised of 322 households and has a total cultivated area of 957mu, including 807mu of paddy fields. About 50% of the natural sub-villages are located in a semi-hilly area, with residents from Zhuang, Miao, Yao, Han and other ethnic groups. The main sources of income

for the farmers are China fir tree plantations and rice crops.

Within Shepu village, the farmland of Shepu sub-village and Hongdong sub-village is topographically more favourable than the other natural sub-villages, with flatter land.

In the past, the villagers of these two sub-villages had grown two crops of rice a year with quite high yields. When the farmland was contracted to individual households in the 1980s, the village's main irrigation ditch had not been maintained for many years. Several parts had collapsed and weeds had grown everywhere. As a result, the ditch became blocked and was unable to hold much water. The villagers were aware that there were problems with

Photo: Qin Guozheng



Completed ditch, Shepu Village, Naweng Township.

the water provision, but nobody was willing to provide the money or labour to maintain or repair the ditch.

When the ideas of the PRCDP project were introduced to Shepu Village in 2005, the villagers were initially very excited, as the project might bring timely help to undertake the long overdue ditch repair. However, the villagers then had doubts whether or not they would be able to participate in this project and make decisions according to their own needs and capability. Also, the villagers had no idea how to start, since they had no previous experience in repairing ditches.

In order to efficiently involve local villagers efficiently in the project, emphasis was put on the following aspects. Firstly, by using tools such as listening, interviews, field visits and a literature review, the coordinators of the PRCDP project eventually established trust and good relationships with the villagers. Secondly, they intro-

duced the villagers to participatory tools such as village mapping, seasonal calendars, timelines and trend lines, risk matrix and priority setting, causal-flow diagrams and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis.¹ By applying these tools to the project, local villagers were able to identify their critical needs, causes of poverty and decipher possible sources and solutions. As a result, the villagers' awareness, knowledge and skills for participation have been dramatically enhanced.

As a result of their inclusion, the villagers became very interested in the project and were motivated to rebuild the ditch. They all expressed the view that as long as the project provided financial and material support, the villagers of both sub-villages were keen to participate in its planning and willing to provide labour inputs into project construction.

While discussing how to build the ditch,

¹ See also Part III for further details on the process of the participatory poverty analysis and planning.

some villagers said that if they were to build it by themselves the problem would be that they did not have the necessary skills. So the construction quality would be difficult to guarantee and the construction schedule would be slow. Also, because it was the China fir timber logging and transporting season, villagers from both sub-villages would not have time to organise the construction. Therefore, they unanimously agreed to contract the construction job to qualified construction teams, and agreed to allow some villagers from both sub-villages to participate in construction on a voluntary basis, so as to manage and supervise the construction quality.

The villagers from both sub-villages then held a meeting to elect members of the Ditch Construction Management and Supervision Group. Each household had to send at least one family member to attend this meeting. They discussed and agreed the criteria to select members and finally elected seven villagers according to the criteria. Their duties were to properly control the construction quality of the ditch project, to ensure the successful completion of the works and to make sure that the project construction met both technical requirements and local realities, from design and implementation to completion. The group included four men and three women who were responsible for managing the materials in the course of construction, supervising the construction quality and participating in the completion check and acceptance (*yanshou*).

The next step was to select a group leader to take on the main responsibilities for the project management and implementation. In general, project management offices and villagers usually elect project group leaders from the village and sub-village cadres or economically active people in the village. Compared to the ordinary villagers, the village and sub-village cadres have more extensive social relations. They often have good relationships with the government and different departments.

They have rich social and managerial experience and they are often regarded as 'talents'. They are, therefore, influential within the village or trusted by the higher authorities.

In this case, however, Qin Shenggui, an ordinary villager, was nominated by one representative at the village meeting, and his nomination was immediately agreed upon by all the other villagers. Qin Shenggui accepted the nomination and was formally elected as the group leader of the PRCDP project in Shepu village and was warmly congratulated. Everybody congratulated Qin Shenggui at his election with a warm applause. Due to the fact that he was neither a village cadre, a sub-village cadre nor an economically active man, Qin Shenggui was nicknamed the 'common people's group leader' by the villagers.

The project facilitators were keen to understand why Qin Shenggui was elected as the group leader. The villagers' answer was unexpectedly simple: the paddy fields of Qin Shenggui's family were downstream of the ditch so if the ditch could not be properly maintained, he was one of the most direct stakeholders of the ditch repair.

It was not until then that the facilitators understood that the villagers all believed that the need for water to irrigate the paddy field would push Qin Shenggui to effectively implement the component, and that his sense of ownership and responsibility over the project was the strongest. Only through Qin Shenggui's hard work and commitment would the project would be successful, and he would benefit as well as the villagers of the entire sub-village.

The simplest answer reflected the true feelings of the villagers. The result of the participatory process was that management responsibilities were conferred on someone who had the greatest stake in the project's success. In fact, during the course of the ditch construction, Qin Shenggui worked very hard as the group leader. He organised the Management and Supervision Group to exercise their duties. He

Photo: Johanna Pennarz



Shepu village in Luocheng, with fields waiting to be irrigated.

undertook all the coordination work required over the course of construction. He noted all the problems that were brought up by the villagers throughout and promptly reported them to the village and township project staff. He then made sure that they were addressed by the construction team. He also reported the project construction status to the Village Project Implementation Group and the Township Working Station.

Not surprisingly, Qin Shenggui and the Ditch Construction Management and Supervision Group faced challenges from the first day. As the common villagers did not have any experience of project management, they lacked both sufficient confidence and capabilities required for such a major project. In particular, some knowledge and skills related to ditch construction were quite new to them, such as engineering, budget management and quality control. And because the role was voluntary, undertaking the work responsibly involved a strong commitment, substantial

investment in terms of time and energy and trade-offs between public service and family duty. Qin Shenggui was also confronted with the huge challenge of motivating his members to actively participate in the project all the time.

Through great efforts by all its members and a complicated 'learning by doing' process, the Ditch Construction and Repairing project was finally completed in October 2005, after four months of hard work. In the end, the villagers of Shepu natural village and Hongdong natural village were very happy with the completed ditch, because all households from these two natural villages benefited. The completed ditch made it easy to divert and use water, either for irrigation or drinking purposes, which relieved villagers from worrying about water. So far, the water has irrigated almost 200mu each year, and it has the capacity to irrigate more than 300mu if needed. It ended the cycle of villagers having to ask the government for assistance and fight for irrigation water



Photo: Song Haokun

Poor village in Luocheng.

every year. The villagers from Shepu and Hongdong commented that Qin Shenggui was a responsible 'common people's leader'. They trusted him entirely and were complimentary about his organisation and leadership skills. They were very pleased with the ditch and happy to see the success of PRCDP under the organisation of Qin Shenggui.

For us, the local government facilitators provided a number of important lessons. We found that locally-elected community organisations and group leaders were very committed and took their responsibilities seriously. A democratic voting process

helped to ensure the accountability and transparency of the institutions. But in order to ensure the efficiency and fairness of the election process, the external facilitator had an important role to play by helping local villagers clarify the criteria of a good group leader before starting the election.

We conclude from this experience that if the principles of the participatory approach and the core ideas contained within PCRDP are internalised into the villagers' body of knowledge, this could help guide future project management in the area.

CONTACT DETAILS

Qin Guozheng
 Nawen Township
 Luocheng County
 Guangxi Province
 PR China
 Contact: songhk@ynu.edu.cn

How farmers claimed their rights to supervise projects

6

by **SONG HAOKUN**

SONG HAOKUN is an associate professor at Yunnan University and an executive member of the council of the Yunnan Participatory Association (formerly PRA Net). He was one of the first practitioners of participation in the province, as a researcher and project manager. He has worked on PRCDP as a facilitator since 2004. His article presents an interesting case from Sichuan where village cadres have neglected their duty and, as a result, the community has become active in monitoring project quality.

Subconsciously, people always pay more attention to something that is related to their own interests. When a ditch construction project is carried out in a local community, the quality of the work and the actual impacts of the project are the top issues for the local villagers. This article shows how critical it is to establish the relevant institutions to enable efficient information exchange, and how to adapt conflict management to local contexts when various issues are raised.

Project background

West Village, Loudong Township, Pingshan County, Sichuan Province is one of the first villages in Pingshan County where PRCDP was initiated. This large, poor village covers 12 villagers' groups and more

than 420 households. Its basic characteristics are the fragmentary landscape and great variance in altitude. According to different topographical characteristics, the village can be divided into the gully area, semi-hilly area and hilly area. The gully area is relatively flat, but the population density is high and the total area is small. Most cultivated land in West Village is located at a higher altitudes and further away from the river. Therefore it is necessary to pump water for irrigation during the dry season.

Under normal circumstances, each household in West Village spends as much as 200–300 RMB on pumping water every year. With inflation of diesel prices, the pumping expenses also increase each year. Therefore, building a gravity irriga-

tion ditch to divert water from the river upstream was voted as the priority by the villagers. It was finally listed as part of the 2008 Implementation Plan by the Project Management Office (PMO). This irrigation ditch would divert water from a large river with abundant runoff all year round, which is 800m away from West Village. Once the ditch had been completed, only 10% runoff of the river would be channelled to West Village every year, which will meet the irrigation needs of the village without causing too much negative impact to the downstream communities.

Project implementation and supervision

In order to encourage the local villagers to participate in the project process, the project management office decided that this project should be autonomously operated by the villagers. In accordance with this principle, the Project Implementation and Management Group, elected by the villagers, was assigned the responsibility of organising and implementing construction. The members of this group included the village cadres and some village representatives. Having consulted the villagers as well as reviewing some lessons from neighbouring villages which had carried out a similar construction project before, the Village Implementation Group decided that the villagers should provide their own labour to excavate the ditch foundation. Technically demanding jobs like masonry and concrete linings were contracted to local construction teams. Members of the Village Implementation Group and the Township PMO were responsible for supervising and inspecting the construction quality. In order to complete the project, it had to pass the formal acceptance checking, which was jointly conducted by the County PMO and technical department before the Township PMO disbursed the construction funds.

Although it was decided that all members of the Village Management Group were in charge of the day-to-day

supervision and management of the project, it was the village head who ultimately undertook most responsibilities but due to the fact that he was usually occupied by other management duties at the village level, the village head did not have sufficient time to monitoring the ditch project from the start. At the same time, some common villagers showed a strong interest and concern about the progress and quality of the work. The villagers believed that although the village had appointed construction quality supervisors, the members of the Implementation Group were too busy to stay at the job site to oversee construction quality all day long.

One day in September 2008 one of the villagers, Guo Yuanguai, passed by a section of the irrigation ditch that had just been laid with concrete. Out of concern for the irrigation ditch, she used a stone to strike the ditch lining. She watched how the concrete ditch walls cracked, with dry sand flowing out. Obviously, an adequate application of concrete would not have created such a problem. She reported her finding to the contractor, but the contractor was dismissive and ignored her complaint. As the problem could not be solved by talking to the contractor, she reported what she had found to the managers of the Implementation Group, expecting them to handle the matter. However, her report was not taken seriously, and somebody even said: 'You did not pay for building the ditch, so it is none of your business.'

Guo Yuanguai was enraged by such reply and she argued: 'Why is it none of my business? I did not pay, but I am the beneficiary. If the quality is poor and affects irrigation, I will have to spend money on pumping water.' Frustrated, she called the village party secretary and reported the matter. The village party secretary claimed he did not have time to handle it in person, but he reported the case to Director Wang from the Township PMO.

In less than half an hour, Director Wang came to the site and verified the

Photo: Song Haokun



Guo Yuangui standing on the newly constructed irrigation ditch.

situation together with the villagers, including Guo Yuangui. They reviewed the technical aspects of the job and confirmed that it was an issue related to the construction quality. Faced with the facts, the construction team were forced to agree that this problem occurred as a result of using an uneven concrete mixture. As requested by the villagers and the PMO, the construction contractor had to rework the entire 15m long section. The losses of over 1,000 RMB were covered by the construction team.

The villagers realised that although the problem had been resolved, no-one could guarantee that it would not occur again in the future. After consulting the other women in the group, the women of one village group decided that each household would take turns to input labour and voluntarily supervise the construction quality. The construction team also took on board the lesson, controlled each construction link, and ensured construction quality.

When the work was finally completed,

the farmers were very satisfied, and it successfully passed the technical acceptance check by county inspectors.

Reflections

In fact, villager Guo is just one individual with strong leadership skills who was willing to step forward to be responsible in a situation where wider participation is absent. Compared with the traditional cadre-centred management, the formation of the Project Implementation and Management Group had already made visible changes. However, due to the lack of sufficient participation and unspecified duty assignments, the function and the performance of the Project Implementation and Management Group in monitoring and quality control were very poor. The quality of a ditch would be a serious problem if there was not somebody like Guo playing the monitoring role. Even with Guo's participation, solving the problem was still not easy, because she had not been given a mandate to monitor. This is also the reason why she had to hand over the

problem to the PMO, which has enough power to make changes and did eventually solve the problem. Therefore, the root cause of the problem in this case was the lack of accountability to the community. This problem could be addressed by empowering local people like villager Guo and involving them in the whole monitoring and evaluation procedure.

Lessons learnt

When the community implements and monitors a project, it is necessary to decentralise responsibilities and rights to qualified members. As the main stakeholder in project implementation, the community should not confer all the responsibilities and powers on the Village Implementation Group members, as they are often the village cadres. Because village cadres have so many responsibilities and obligations, they often do not have enough energy to fully accomplish all the tasks they have been assigned. Moreover, when all the powers are conferred on them, they are unlikely to properly perform all their duties. On the contrary, if some responsibilities and powers are decentralised to other farmers, especially principle stakeholders, they could properly undertake tasks such as supervision to safeguard their own interests.

As supervisors, farmers need sufficient power to guarantee effectiveness of

their supervision roles. When farmers from the community find and report problems to the contractor, the latter might reject the farmer's opinions to protect their own interests. On the contrary, if the supervising farmers had certain powers e.g. the contracted works could not pass an acceptance check or be paid for without the supervising farmers' consent the contractors would be forced to listen to and accept the opinions and suggestions of the farmers.

Supervising farmers from the community also needs external support. Supervising construction quality is often technical. Due to limited skills and knowledge, the farmers themselves may not be able to identify specific technical problems, or they may not be able to identify quality-related problems. It may be difficult for them to convince construction teams to make corrections. Therefore, the farmers need support from outside, specifically professional guidance from technical departments, so as to properly supervise construction quality. The transaction costs would be lower if the farmers were involved in ordinary inspection, despite the necessary training that would be needed on the technical aspects of quality assurance. The knowledge would then be retained in the village and could be used again for other projects in the future.

CONTACT DETAILS

Song Haokun
Yunnan University
Kunming
Yunnan Province
PR China
Email: songhk@ynu.edu.cn