



# PART III:

## Management practices – towards fairer and more transparent resource allocation



# Introduction

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by JOHANNA PENNARZ

More than 20 years of poverty reduction in China have seen substantial successes. But there are also notable adjustments in government strategies in targeting the poor. The most significant shift was from area-based poverty reduction to people-centred approaches, with a gradual realisation that poverty can only be effectively addressed if the poor are actively involved.<sup>1</sup> This has been a long journey, but there is an increasing recognition that it is the poor who hold the key to successful poverty reduction.

A major innovation in the recent 10-year plan on poverty reduction was to target poor villages. Under the previous plan, only poor counties and townships were targeted. As a result, few funds have reached the remote and less accessible villages. In an attempt to improve target-

## Box 1: New ideas on poverty reduction are trickling through

Mr. Wang Zhi, Director of the Yunnan Poverty Alleviation and Development Office (PADO), pointed out in the Workshop on Poverty Reduction of Yunnan Province (2010) that successful poverty alleviation is:

*...to actively motivate social forces to participate in the promotion of poverty alleviation development in all townships; to promote incentives to the general public to fully participate in pilot work; to regard the general public as the decision-making subjects, construction subjects and beneficiary subjects; to motivate them to construct their own homes, and achieve the dual benefits of improving quality of infrastructure and services and enjoying achievements.*

ing and better address the needs of the poor, the national Poverty Alleviation and Development Office (PADO) introduced participatory village plans. All designated

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese government has implemented programmes on (area-based) poverty reduction since the 1980s. In 1994, the government introduced the '8-7 Plan' (National Plan for Poverty Reduction), which was meant to lift the majority of the remaining 80 million poor above the government's poverty line during the seven-year period 1994–2000. The 8-7 Plan focused on three main programmes: subsidised loans, food-for-work and government budgetary grants. In 2000 the Government adopted the New Century Rural Poverty Alleviation Plan for the period of 2001–10, which focused on targeting 50,000 designated poor villages.

**Box 2: PPA in Guangxi – feedback from a township facilitator**

Who were the poor in the communities? Who were the target groups for the poverty alleviation development project? The previous practices were to weigh by the standard of per capita annual net income of the farmers. The households with *per capita* annual net income below 628 RMB were considered as destitute households, and the ones between 628–924 RMB were considered low-income poor households. The net income = total incomes – family operational costs and expenditures – depreciation of production-purpose fixed assets – taxes – hand-outs to rural relatives, etc.

Such a calculation was difficult for ordinary government staff, not to mention ordinary farmers. I had once been to a farmer's home and calculated his family net incomes with him, and we just could not make it in half a day. Therefore, who were the poor? It was totally impossible to define with the previous method. Many township and village cadres determined by estimates, which were highly subjective and biased. Such arbitrary estimations could not be recognised by the communities, and many people fought hard to be recognised as 'poor households.'

Through the PPA, the communities themselves worked out their own criteria for classification of poor households. They soon reached unanimity in defining a poor household which lay a solid foundation for accurately identifying the target groups. We also learnt that the poverty status of community farmers was not fixed. If the normal households, which were defined as relatively better off, once experienced a serious disaster or illness, they might revert to poverty very soon; whilst the poor households, after being supported by projects, might have a better life. In this case, whose lives changed? How effective were the poverty alleviation projects? We used poverty trends and seasonal charts to understand the changes.

**Source:** Zhou Zhifei (2005).

poor villages targeted by the plan were required to prepare a participatory village development plan as a basis for the investments. However, many villages never prepared such a plan, and where they had plans, they often failed to inform the government department dealing with the allocation of funding (Park and Sangui, 2009).

Linking participatory planning with funding decisions remains a major challenge. Funding for specific projects is usually allocated through a lengthy top-down process, moving through the government hierarchy. Local government may seek to address local priorities, but this is often done on an ad-hoc basis. The interface with village planning is usually not managed in an active and transparent way.

**Yang Gang's** case from Sichuan Province presents an innovative practice of how funding can be allocated in a participatory and transparent way. A participatory planning process is a prerequisite for all proposals selected through a competitive process. The main achievement of this practice is that the criterion for selection is

open and the process is done in public, thus introducing some accountability in the allocation of funding.

The government does not have an approach to target the poor beyond administrative villages.<sup>2</sup> This is an issue particularly in the southwest, where administrative villages are large and stretched out, often covering more than 10 natural villages, with very different natural and socio-economic conditions (see also the articles in the earlier section, describing the project background). When it comes to the allocation of funding within administrative villages, these often depend on informal relationships. Village cadres are the main point of contact for local government to decide what is needed most and where. The process of Participatory Poverty Analysis (PPA), which Guangxi conducted in 2004, was a new and different way of identifying the poor.

**Qin Zhurong** describes how his village identified the poorest natural villages and households. He highlights the fact that identification of the poor may be a contentious process. Because it has impli-

<sup>2</sup> The poorest of the poor, mostly disabled or single elderly people, are targeted by social protection mechanisms.

### Box 3: What is Participatory Poverty Analysis (PPA)?

PPA focuses on the perspectives of the poor and marginalised. It aims at understanding poverty within a local context. Focusing on people's own understanding of poverty means that the analysis is more practical and realistic. It can also help to make policies and projects better tailored to the needs of the poor and assist with better targeting of certain groups, for example women or the poorest households.

Based on the PPA, farmers identified their priorities for immediate project support and planned their projects accordingly. The process of allocating resources was challenging. The facilitators were required to mediate conflicts and learn how decision-making can be facilitated in a transparent and fair way. At the same time, they learnt how to protect the interests of poor and marginal groups for more equitable outcomes.

In the PPA process, attention is paid to the vulnerable groups – women, children and the aged. Villagers use their own criteria and scoring for identifying poverty-stricken households. Then the causality of poverty is discussed.

- The villagers comment freely and their comments are **documented** on a large sheet of paper.
- They also **rank and score** the principal factors causing poverty, as seen by the poor households.
- This is followed by **trend analysis** to learn whether the community is getting poorer or richer over the last five years, in terms of grains, food, income, natural disasters and relevant factors.
- **Seasonal analysis** of poverty is also conducted over food availability, expenditure, revenue, disaster and scored for deficit and easy months.
- This is followed by interviewing and analysing responses from five or six **very poor** households on food availability, clothing, transport and causes of poverty.
- **Women** are also selected and interviewed at random to learn about their position, their views on poverty etc.
- Then **community meetings** are held to facilitate the learning process and validate ongoing analysis.
- PPA is followed by Participatory Planning (PP) so as to culminate PPA into actual village planning.

cations for funding eligibility, it had to be carefully managed. For his village the process was about reaching consensus on who should be eligible, a decision that would have caused much resistance if taken by outsiders.

Community contributions are another contentious issue. Basic infrastructure projects, like those funded by the Poor Rural Communities Development Project (PRCDP) require some contribution from

the community, usually provided in the form of labour. The question of whether and how much labour to contribute can result in much discussion and dissent. In PRCDP, local government has learnt that contentious issues like this are rather dealt with through open discussion than avoidance. **Chen Chunyun's** case study (Longling County, Yunnan) describes how two communities have agreed different approaches to the issue of labour contributions.

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# From participation inside villages to competitive selection amongst villages

by YANG GANG

**YANG GANG** is the deputy director of the Poverty Alleviation and Development Office (PADO) in Pingshan County, Sichuan Province. He was the project coordinator for PRCDP in the county. His case study describes an innovative practice to strengthen transparent allocation of funding through a competitive process, which involves communities from the beginning. The practice has since been rolled out to other parts of the province.

Pingshan County is one of the World Bank project counties in Sichuan Province where villages were selected for PRCDP. In Pingshan, we introduced a competitive selection method into the PRCDP project. The aim was to mobilise grassroots groups to participate in the project, improve the project outreach and generate maximum benefits from limited funding. Before finalising the annual project plans, we requested that the villages participate in a competitive process for project selection. We asked the project villages to convene assemblies or congresses to formulate implementation plans. We asked village headmen to act as representatives and to attend the open debate where projects were discussed and to sign letters of responsibility with the PMO once the projects were

agreed. In the following, we describe some of the positive outcomes of this competitive project selection process.

### **Past experiences and new expectations**

In the past, the county issued plans to the project units. We notified them to prepare project implementation plans and organise accordingly. This traditional means of project management has the following disadvantages:

- Decision makers arrange projects based on their personal impressions, which could hardly be fully fair, open and equitable.
- Since projects are arranged by the higher authorities, the attitude of the communities is to simply do things to match the amount of money they get. Communities are passive in organising the participation

of the masses or implementing the project.

- There is insufficient active participation of project farmers. Supervision and management is poor, as are the project outcomes.
- In stressing construction but neglecting management, many projects implemented in the past were not sustainable, because with nobody managing them serious destruction was caused.

Having learnt from these shortcomings, we introduced a competitive selection mechanism into the practices of PRCDP. Its guiding principle was to apply a participatory approach, to release internal energies and allow farmers to participate in the entire process of project planning, implementation, monitoring, management and final check and certificate. Through this process, we wanted to strengthen the capacities of grassroots groups, mobilise the farmers, and engender a change in attitude from 'I am requested to do it' to 'I want to do it'. We wanted to introduce an element of competition into the participation process and in doing so, actively promote participation, thereby strengthening the participatory process itself and promoting democracy as a wider principle.

### **Innovative methods for funding allocations**

Competitive selection is a new method. Based on extensive inquiry into the opinions of the departments and project villages, we formulated the following rules to be carried out in three steps:

#### **Mobilising the masses and preparing the implementation plan**

In May 2007, we issued a circular on applying and competing for World Bank projects (PRCDP), based on 1 million RMB of the fiscal poverty alleviation fund and 2 million RMB of loans available for PRCDP in the year. In the circular, the scope, conditions and requirements for competing for the projects were clarified. It stressed that the project villages should convene farmers'

assemblies or congresses to adequately promote democracy and listen extensively to the opinions of the masses. So the first step was to convene plenary meetings in villages, where farmers proposed project components and selected representatives.

Next, the villages convened a farmers' representative meetings, collated the farmers' needs, and voted on the prioritisation of components. They conducted detailed discussions about the prioritised components, prepared an implementation plan and subsequent management method and then submitted their plan to the tendering process. Simultaneously, they wrote the presentation report for participating in the tender for components.

The next step was to criteria for project selection. The PMO took the lead. They listened to the opinions of the participating departments and farmers in the community, and formulated the criteria. These included:

- the technology, feasibility and necessity of the implementation plan;
- whether the project planning design process was conducted in a participatory manner;
- whether the components were proposed after convening the villager's congress;
- how the implementation plan, labour input plan and subsequent management method were discussed;
- whether there were specific labour inputs and a fundraising plan; and
- whether subsequent management methods and guarantee measures were formulated.

To examine the implementation plans, the county established an evaluation committee comprised of experts from 11 project management and implementation departments (such as poverty alleviation, finance, work relief, agriculture, agricultural machinery, animal husbandry, water conservancy, education, public health). They would evaluate and give credits to the implementation plans. A supervision group was also established, comprised of



Photo: Yang Gang

#### Open debate on the project.

members from County Congress, the Disciplinary Committee and Supervision Committee, with the Audit Bureau sealing and filing the evaluation results.

The next step was to determine the project villages in an open debate. There were eleven project villages eligible for the Pingshan County open debate. Attendees included the leaders in charge of the PRCDP as well as executive directors of PRCDP township working stations from nine project townships. Representatives (village headman usually) came from 11 project villages and more than 50 people from the relevant project implementation departments. The Deputy Party Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party Pingshan County Committee, Director of Publicity Department, and Deputy County Governor also attended the meeting and gave speeches, and the Foreign-Funded Poverty Alleviation Project Management Centre of Sichuan Province sent two officials to the meeting. The meeting lasted for four hours.

An anchorperson from the local TV station presided over the open debate, where the 11 village representatives presented their proposals (in an order determined through casting lots). This was followed by a question and answer session, and then concluding statements by the representatives. After this, 11 evaluators awarded their scores according to predefined criteria. The facilitator then ranked the candidates' scores which were then confirmed by all participants. Finally, a final list of project villages was determined and agreements signed with the PMO.

During the speeches there was much warm applause. Afterwards, the Supervision Group opened the sealed documents and announced the scores for the implementation plans from the evaluation committee, adding them to the scores from the open debate. They then selected the top five villages based on the scores: Quanhe, Gaotian, Nianmi, Jieji and Hanxi villages. They were officially selected as priority

Photo: Yang Gang



Open evaluation of the contested plans.

villages for PRCDP and each of these villages obtained 200,000 RMB of national poverty alleviation funds and a 400,000 RMB World Bank loan. The deputy county governor then signed an agreement with the project villages.

The next step was to improve the implementation plans and organise project implementation. Based on the planning and design, all project villages mobilised the masses to support the construction of infrastructure projects. Finally, once the open debate was over, an emotional representative from Zhoujia village, Yachi Township (which did not qualify) said in an interview with reporters: 'I failed to live up to the expectations of my county fellows. However, it is good to adopt such a means. As we failed, it means that we still lag behind. I hope we can be better prepared and participate in such a contest again.'

### Significant effects and lessons

The practice of competitive section has led to some remarkable outcomes and lessons:

### Mobilising the project farmers

Gaotian village is the remotest village in Loudong Township, close to Shuifu County of Yunnan Province. It is typical of a poor village in a remote area. After the project was officially approved, the villagers' committee met and decided that each person was to raise 500 RMB of funding to support the construction of the 15km main road to the village. Everyone from the village, male and female, young and old, participated in 'building their own road for themselves'. They were very enthusiastic. To fully take advantage of the local resources, the farmers actively secured loans to plant 1,200mu of mao bamboo (*Phyllostachys edulis*) and construct a 'small sea of bamboo at Gaotian'.

### Building capacity with grassroots groups

To implement the project, Mr. Chen Shan-hong, Party Secretary of Nianmi village, convened a meeting with farmers to discuss the implementation plan. He also specifically went to the County Transportation Bureau and County Water

Conservancy Bureau to consult professionals, study and grasp the technical standards and relevant knowledge about village road construction and water supply projects, which the experts and review committee thought highly of in his presentation. After the open debate, he reflected that:

*In order to improve the livelihood situation in our village, we have to make up our minds to carry out the project and to try to do it as early as possible. The masses watch us and expect us to do it as early as possible. Therefore, we must work meticulously, be fully prepared, and we must acquire the relevant knowledge. This competitive open debate promoted me to study, and it is not only a test but also good practice for me.*

### **Demonstrating transparency and fairness in full 'sunlight'**

The project management units implemented competitive approval of projects, which was to implement a 'sunlight' project (open, fair, transparent and subject to

review), to avoid decision makers dominating the decisions. The implementation plans were handed over to the PMO and sealed. The plans for which the review committee was lobbied and which were evaluated by the experts were also sealed for secrecy while the Supervision Group monitored the entire process. This process demonstrated the equity, fairness and openness.

The practice drew great attention from the CPC County Committee and the County Government. It was the first trial of project management in our county, which also had wider repercussions throughout society. Everybody believed that it was an innovative poverty alleviation mechanism which respected the will of the masses, was a symbol of constructing a harmonious society and a specific way of ensuring the transparency of administrative affairs. The competitive selection process has now been extensively applied in other governmental agencies, such as the New Rural Construction Projects, self-funded projects, water conservancy and transportation projects.

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# Participatory planning and poverty analysis in Guangxi

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by QIN ZHURONG

**QIN ZHURONG** is a farmer from the Chenghuang Village, Huanjiang County, Guangxi Province.. He is from the Maonan ethnic minority. He participated in the PRCDP project from 2005, and was elected by the villagers as the coordinator at the village level. Together with other villagers, he facilitated the use of the PPA and Participatory Planning (PP) tools. From 2006, he was one of the members of the Project Executive Team of PRCDP and was responsible for the participatory project implement and monitoring. His case study describes the innovative practice of PPA, which enabled the community to identify those most in need of support and to decide on their priorities for the project.

## Village profile and PRCDP project background

Chenghuang administrative village has 10 natural sub-villages, 12 villagers' groups, 210 households and 1,160 residents. The population consists of 71.1% of Zhuang and the rest of Han, Yao and Miao ethnic groups. Chenghuang village is 26km away from the location of the Longyan township government. The total cultivated area is 1168mu, including 796mu of paddy fields.<sup>1</sup> The total forest area is 6216mu, and the most common species are fir and pine. Historically, Chenghuang village is one of the poorest villages in Huanjiang County

due to the poor condition of its natural resources and the land scarcity.

The PRCDP project was to address issues of poverty in Chenghuang village and started in April 2005. The project aimed to enhance the local villagers' capability to make the project self-serving, self-sustained and self-managing in the long term. To do this, it involved local villagers in problem identifying, project planning, implementation and decision-making. The following describes the process of poverty analysis and project planning that was conducted by Chenghuang villagers themselves.

<sup>1</sup> One measure unit (mu) equals 1/15 hectares.

### Box 1: The administrative system in China

There are six levels of administrative hierarchy in China: national, provincial, prefecture, county, township and administrative village. The prefecture is the highest level of formal bureaucratic representation in terms of local government. Below the prefecture are the cities, counties and townships, with township government as the lowest level of government in the official administrative structure. A township governs a number of administrative villages, each of which holds a collection of a number of natural villages or hamlets (villagers' groups).

At the same time, and in parallel with the administrative hierarchy, there are several Communist Party line systems well-established in China. Similar to the administrative structure, there are vertical hierarchies with subordinate party committees in all branches of the provincial, prefecture, county, township, administrative village and natural village levels. At the administrative village level, usually the administrative committee and party committee work together to take charge of the planning, instruction, organisation, coordination and supervision functions in general.

### Participatory training and publicity

The county, township and village facilitators attended the PRCDP workshop on the application of participatory approaches at the county seat (August–September 2004). Afterwards, they conducted door-to-door publicity about the Participatory Planning (PP) contents of the World Bank Project. In April 2005, the village committee and village party committee agreed to divide the village cadres into two groups. The party secretary and village director who had already attended participatory training were each responsible for a group and would go to all the sub-villages for direction, investigation and to take records.

### Classification of poor sub-villages

In May 2005, the first villagers' congress was held for the participatory PRCDP project. In total, 36 people out of 1160 attended, including township facilitators, village facilitators, village representatives and village cadres. Poor households and the elderly were represented and 16 women attended.

At the beginning, individual villagers

had different perspectives about the poverty assessment and they came up with over 30 criteria for poverty. Next, the representatives discussed them one by one, and finally summarised them into four main indicators:

- road access;
- access to drinking water;
- housing conditions; and
- year-round food security.

According to these indicators, all natural villages in Chenghuang were classified into three types:

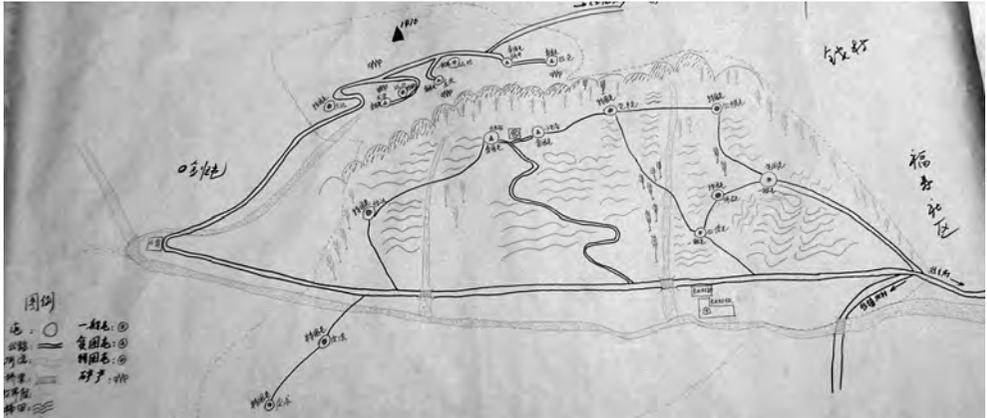
- 'Normal' (meaning 'less poor') natural villages: roads were accessible to vehicles in all weathers; the villagers had no debt; they had no difficulty accessing drinking water; most houses had two floors or higher, and were of brick masonry structure; and the sub-village had considerable amounts of items of agricultural machinery.
- Poor natural villages: e.g. poor access to roads; difficulty in accessing drinking water; the villagers' grain rations were basically secured; the residential houses were not dangerous buildings.
- Very poor natural villages: e.g. no access to roads; being at some distance from the village clinic and school; difficulties in accessing drinking water; insufficient grain yields; shabby housing; weak development potentials.

After clarifying the indicators with all attendants, village representatives were required to classify all natural villages (except for their own) into these three catalogues. They did this by casting votes with corn (poor natural village), stone (very poor natural village) and soybean ('normal' natural village).

### Classifying poor households

It was very difficult to reach an agreement on the criteria for poor households among the village representatives at the beginning. The opinions from women, the elderly, minors and other disadvantaged groups were especially different from the others because they were associated with

Photo: Johanna Pennarz



Map indicating poor natural villages within Changbei administrative village, prepared as part of the participatory poverty analysis (Huanjiang County, Guangxi Province) – poverty levels vary significantly between natural villages.

their own socioeconomic conditions. Also, the representatives are from different sub-villages could hardly agree due to the various conditions between sub-villages. During a facilitated group discussion, a compromise was reached by allowing each natural village to set up their own criteria according to the real conditions of their village. The criteria were slightly different between villages, but had to consider the following main indicators: the number of labourers, housing and per capita income.

Participants then returned to their own natural village and initiated another villager's meeting. At least one family member from each householder was required to attend this meeting. Women were particularly encouraged to attend. The project facilitators introduced the aims, basic procedures and methods of the participatory approach. To help the villagers understand the core concepts of setting up the criteria, some indicators used by three selected natural villages were used as examples (Jiazui, Shangjing and Dongou sub-village).

The participants then classified the natural villages into catalogues. The list of village names was then recorded and voted on in the meeting. Again, voting was done by casting votes with corn (poor natural village), stone (very poor natural village) and soybean ('normal' natural village).

Next, the working group and the natural village representatives (two men and two women from each village) counted the classification results. They submitted them to the village committee to summarise. Once there was complete agreement and the results were published on public notice boards.

Although each sub-village set up their own criteria systems which varied depending on the economic conditions and development level of each natural village, some shared indicators came out in the final results that were submitted to the village committee:

- Very poor households: with a limited amount of labour; having some sick family members; living in dangerous buildings; having heavy debts; with a *per capita* income below 100 RMB.
- Poor households: living in fairly good houses; some family members working as migrant labourers with some labour at home; raising some domestic animals; with a *per capita* income below 300 RMB.
- 'Normal' households: living in houses of two or more floors; raising a considerable number of domestic animals; with family members working as migrant labourers and with a *per capita* income of over 400 RMB.

Comparing the criteria used by the Chenghuang village with the poverty line set up by the state Government, we found



Photo: Johanna Pennarz

Map indicating poverty at household level within one part of Changbei village, prepared as part of the participatory poverty analysis (Huanjiang County, Guangxi Province) - this is a larger and more accessible natural natural village where central facilities, like elementary school, are located.

the income standards of poor households in Chenghuang village corresponded with the official absolute poverty line. The standards of 'normal' households in Chenghuang fitted with the Government's definition of people 'who have just enough to eat and wear' (*wenbao*).

### Project planning

In August 2005, the Second Villagers' Congress was conducted with 58 attendants, including 21 women, and some elderly, poor households and minors. The meeting aimed to analyse the status quo and identify the causes of poverty. The participants discussed the root causes for poverty, using the Problem Tree tool. The priority results were published on wall posts. Only after all these necessary preparative stages were complete could the PRCDP move on to the next stage smoothly.

Most representatives agreed that one of the root causes for households becoming poor was the lack of access to clean drinking water, so that people often become ill. However they could not afford to see a doctor, which led to a further decrease in labour productivity. The representatives believed that to change such a situation, it was necessary to have access to clean drink-

ing water. At the same time, the development of animal breeding was seen as important to increasing incomes.

Afterwards, the attendants voted on and prioritised the following results in order of importance:

- Drinking water for people and animals.
- Water conservancy, animal breeding and roads.
- Public health, education and capacity building.

Finally, with the participation of the villagers, the project plans were listed. A proposal was created and submitted to the World Bank Project Monitoring Office (PMO) for approval. Before implementation of the village project started, the villagers also democratically elected a Project Implementation Group, as well as a Project Executive Group. Members included representatives of women and poor households.

### Project achievements

Today, our village has obtained support from the PRCDP for the construction of five drinking water supply locations, one irrigation water ditch and one village road. All have now been accomplished and have passed the quality acceptance check. At the same time, our village has become one

Photo: Johanna Pennarz



Map indicating poverty at household level within another part of Changbei village, prepared as part of the participatory poverty analysis (Huanjiang County, Guangxi Province) - in this remote natural village the higher number of very poor households is indicated through circle symbols drawn onto the houses.

of the first demonstration villages for granting agricultural loans in the entire county. Over 40 households have obtained PRCDP loans for raising pigs, planting mulberry bushes and raising silkworms. The county and the township also successively conducted four training sessions for farmers, covering planting mulberry and raising silkworms, raising pigs, building community capacity and women's health-care. According to one participatory evaluation conducted by the Chenghuang village committee in April 2010, about 99% of the households in Chenghuang village claimed that they have benefited from these projects.

**Lessons learnt**

- The farmers' participation in the classification of poor sub-villages and poor households makes it possible to avoid the deviations and biases that usually happen when outsiders conduct the classification for them, based on insufficient under-

standing of the village conditions. It also helps to remove the villagers' dissatisfaction with the people who conducted the classification. The classification results reached through the participatory approach were easily accepted by everyone.

- The participatory approach was not only applied to the planning stage, but also throughout the entire project cycle. Villagers were able to determine the priorities for implementation and had the power to make decisions during the project implementation. Consequently, the farmers were more motivated to actively participate, implement, supervise and manage the components they determined.

- In order to ensure that more households could benefit from the PRCDP project in the future, some follow-up efforts are critical, including further investment into mobilisation, institution building and integration with other governmental projects. There have in fact been follow-up investments from national projects.

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## Different ways for implementation in different communities

by CHEN CHUNYUN

**CHEN CHUNYUN** is the deputy director of the Poverty Alleviation and Development Office (PADO) in Longling County, Yunnan Province. He was the project coordinator for PRCDP in the county. His case study provides an interesting insight into how local government has handled the contentious issue of labour contributions by using a participatory approach.

Yibashan and Caojiazhai are two neighbouring communities of Lisu people in Huanglianhe River, Pingda Township, Longling County. Both were without access to clean drinking water for people and livestock. This was a common problem for both communities due to the poor investment in those facilities by the Government, as well as poor maintenance by local communities. The villagers of both communities discussed and proposed the installation of water pipes as the priority local development need, facilitated by the local villager head. However, the basic conditions of the two communities were different.

Caojiazhai has 52 households with 203 people and 158 labourers. In comparison to Yibashan, they had more labourers and did

not grow any special cash crops. During the slack farming season, they mainly relied on work as migrant labourers to fund their domestic expenses, and their income from migrant labour was 20-30 RMB per day. Yibashan has 37 households, with 161 people and 78 labourers. Most households planted *Wasabia japonica*, which required an input of 30-40 work days per mu.<sup>1</sup> Some farmers also worked as migrant labourers outside their community. Therefore, there was an issue of labour shortage in the village.

Because of limited funding the PRCDP Project Management Office (PMO) staff agreed that the project could only provide funding to construct pipelines and water ponds. They would also provide support for

<sup>1</sup> One measure unit (mu) equals 1/15 hectares.

Photo: Johanna Pennarz



Lisu people in Longling County.

technical construction. All other costs must be covered by the local community such as providing free labour for construction or fundraising.

Caojiazhai implemented the majority of the labour component of the project according to the project design. Farmers in the community contributed labour in proportion to their population. They completed jobs related to excavation for the water pond, which included blasting stones and moving pipelines. Their total input was more than 180 working days. The households with migrant labourers – who could not contribute any work days – hired labourers or paid for the work days to complete their allocated inputs. In this way the villagers of Caojiazhai provided only labour without any cash contributions.

Yibashan community provided more than 30 work days of labour at the beginning of the project. While moving the materials, they realised that project implementation imposed great pressure on the local women. They only had a total labour force of 78 in the community which

included 21 migrant labourers. Out of the 57 remaining, 34 were women, who ended up providing most of the labour. The women also had to manage the production of *Wasabia japonica* and do the housework. They could not take on any further burdens.

The community held a meeting and decided to change the original approach to implementation. During the meeting they agreed through public voting (by raising hands) to contract out the construction work. The women also agreed to contribute 300RMB per household to cover the additional costs resulting from the change of approach. Villagers could afford this because they had a cash income generated from farming *Wasabia japonica* and migrant work. Finally, the drinking water supply system was completed according to the design.

### Summary

Depending on the basic local conditions of the community, the farmers can deal with unforeseen difficulties and problems that



Photo: Johanna Pennarz

**Cheng Chunyun with villagers.**

might arise in the course of project implementation. They can adjust the means of implementation according to local needs and constraints. This not only guarantees that project activities are implemented, but also that they meet their expected objectives, while suiting to the local conditions of that community. When the farmers have a choice in implementation, they can autonomously decide which tasks are to be conducted by themselves, and which things require hired labour. This case study shows that the farmers were the real drivers of the project implementation and they adjusted their plans to the reality on the ground. If, on the contrary, outsiders impose their implementation plans on the farmers and are not flexible enough, it would not only be against the farmers' wishes, but could also increase the burden on women and make it difficult for the project to be

completed with farmers' participation. It may be difficult for local people to imagine the constraints in implementing projects themselves, especially when they have never implemented such a project in the past. But with more experience, local people become wiser in their decisions and also better managers. This also helps to strengthen project ownership at the local level and hence opens up better scope for sustainability.

From this experience, the PMO and PADO of Longling County have learnt that the community should have the right for selecting and implementing the project according to their specific context. The PMO and PADO of Longling County have learnt that decision-making is the key for local participation. They are now more sensitive to the need of participation and have applied this approach in other projects.

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