

## Culture-orientated Poverty Alleviation in China

In 2018, 592 Chinese counties had been in extremely poverty. It means that people living in these areas had an annual income which was below 2,300 yuan (about US\$ 340). Poverty alleviation has been one of the priorities of Chinese government for a long time, what is more, Chinese government is planning to eliminate poverty by 2020. To achieve this goal, Chinese government has been exploring more feasible sustainable development ways. In recent years, culture-orientated poverty alleviation has been more and more valued.

I interviewed Dan Xie, a SFC's poverty alleviation fellow, and had an opportunity to have a closed look at culture-orientated poverty alleviation in China.

Founded in August 2016, Serve For China ("SFC") is a nonprofit organization that recruits, trains, and supports passionate and outstanding young individuals to commit themselves in striving to alleviate poverty in underdeveloped rural communities in China by developing innovative social enterprises in a two-year fellowship program. The fellows would be assigned to a project located in a poorest county or village after training. They would do the research, find out a suitable industry for the village's development, and conduct it with the local people. SFC does the fund-raising from the society and government, connects experts to provide guidance, and promotes the projects and their products using its own influence and platform. Currently, this young organization has been carrying out a culture-orientated poverty alleviation project at Hanglai village.

Hanglai is a village located deep in valley with the history of 300 years. Based on the long history and the culture of architecture, handicrafts and the custom, they have been trying to make this village a Miao traditional culture village. The plan has made up of three parts. The first one is the building plan, such as building paddyfield huts, refining 100 years-history distillery and refining pigsty restaurant. The second one is that we have launched a series of cultural products based on the local culture which has been preserved to today. The third one is the Experience Tourism, such as the exploration of rivers and caves, tea frying, tea-leaves picking, as well as local desert making.

The poor areas usually have encountered some common challenges in development. The first one is inconvenient traffic. Most of the poorest counties are in the mountain areas where the roads are twisted, and far from transport hub. The second one is the shortage of capital. The third one is the shortage of labor. Women, the elders and children are the main labor in these poor areas. Most of the young adult males have moved to the city to work.

The Hanglai Village fellows have been groping and striving for the village's sustainable development, and tried to figure out some solutions. They have cooperated with local bus fleets to pick up tourists from stations to our village, raised fund from the society and

government with SFC's help, and tried to make full use of local labor's experience and talents. For instance, there is a woman who is good at Miao Embroidery, and two elders who are experts in drumming, bamboo weaving and honey making. They are all contributing to the project with their talents.

The village has gained some start-up capital. However, the shortage of capital will come up again as the project develops. For now, this project has been facing severe pressure of money issues, and also how to make their cultural products become competitive in a bigger market.

In culture-orientated Poverty Alleviation, Cultural product is one of the most income resources that are potential and beyond limit of time and space. There are various kinds of cultural products in the market, such as stationery, furnishings and apparel, with various themes and styles.

Hanglai Village has launched a series of cultural products based on the local culture which has been preserved to today. The first serious is stationery, such as craft dip-dye post card, Miao-style notepaper and pen bag. The second serious is apparel, such as dip-dye and tie-dye scarves, flower bag, canvas bag and Miao-silver jewelry. The third serious is furnishing, such as embroidered-dye pillow and vegetation-dye coaster. Moreover, Hanglai Village has a 100 years-history distillery that makes local corn liquor. The fellows redesigned and repackaged its corn liquor. Also, they collaborated with a chocolatier and launched liquor chocolate using this corn liquor. All these cultural products are made by the women of Hanglai Village and require skilled handicraft and long working hours. Every product is concentrated with goodwill, insistence and hope of the local women.

The development of culture-orientated poverty alleviation needs not only the support of market, but also the participant of capable companies. To participate in culture-orientated poverty alleviation, first, it requires the sense of social responsibility. It will impel the companies themselves to make full use of their resources to participate in this challenging issue which is costly in resources and time with uncertain returns. Secondly, culture industry promoting companies are welcome. They are more scaled and experienced in this field. If they participate in culture-orientated poverty alleviation and make full use of their resources, their professional will help to improve the efficiency and bring better outcome. Other companies can also participate by investing the culture industry of poor area. The effect of company's participant is giving capital resources, human resources and skill resources, and making culture-orientated poverty alleviation more efficient and professional. The fellows encourage government, enterprises and each person to participate in poverty alleviation in various ways.