

## Researches on poverty alleviation of Wuling Mountain area



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The support of poverty alleviation of central contiguous destitute region is a new strategy of China. “*China’s Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development Program (2011 – 2020)*” divides the poverty population concentration regions into 14 areas, Wuling Mountain area is one of them. Wuling Mountain area includes 71 counties (cities, districts) at the border areas of Hubei, Hunan, Chongqing, and Guizhou. Among them, 37 counties, cities and districts are in Hunan province, 11 counties and cities are in Hubei province, 7 counties and districts are in Chongqing, and 16 counties and cities are in Guizhou province. The total land area is 171,800 square kilometers. By the end of 2010, the total population of these areas is 36.45 million people, the urban population is 8.53 million people, and the rural population is 27.92 million people. There are 9 kinds of traditional homelands of ethnic minorities in these areas, such as Tujia, Miao, Dong, Bai, Hui and Gelao.

### I. Main Features of the Poverty in Wuling Mountain Area

As one of the concentrated and contiguous areas with special financial difficulties which are mainly supported by the country, Wuling Mountain area will be the main battlefield of the national poverty alleviation and development in the next 10 years. Located in the crossroad of the Prachuab culture, the

Chu culture, the Central Plains culture and the Yunnan-Guizhou culture, it is the forefront of the western development in China and an important link between the Central Plains and the Southwest of China.

1. *The poverty is still relatively wide.* Most of the poor people of Wuling Mountain area lived in remote highland and cold areas, karst and arid areas, and reservoir inundation areas with poor living conditions. There are 42 key counties for national poverty alleviation and development, and 13 provincial key counties in these 71 counties (cities, districts). During the implementation of “Chinese Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development Program (2001 – 2010)”, Wuling Mountain area identified a total of 11,303 poor villages, accounting for 7.64% of the whole country. In 2010, the per capita GDP and per capita net income of farmers in this area were 33.76% and 59.1% of the whole country respectively, with the gap further widened in comparison to 37.3% and 62.68% in 2001. In 2010, the urban-rural income ratio in this area was 3.04 : 1, with an obvious gap between urban and rural areas. Taking Xiangxi Autonomous Prefecture in Hunan Province as an example, by the end of 2010, it had had 1051 poor national villages with 1.22 million poor people, accounting for 75.4% of the total rural population.

2. *The poverty level is relatively low.* The natural conditions of Wuling Mountain area is featured with few resources, poor infrastructure, low level of social development, and extremely difficult poverty alleviation. The per capita income in this area is lower than the national level and the level of the whole province, the income gap among the residents in this area is obvious, the income in the developed regions such as Qianjiang in Chongqing, Zhangjiajie and Huaihua in Hunan is relatively high, and the income in Tongren in Guizhou, and Enshi in Hubei is lower. According to statistics, in 2010, the farmers' per capita net income in Wuling Mountain area was only 3499 Yuan, which was equivalent to only 59.1% of the national average level. According to the calculation results from the National Bureau of Statistics, in 2009, there were 3.018 million rural poor people with rural per capita net income of less than 1196 Yuan, and the incidence of poverty was 11.21%, which was 7.41% higher than the national level.

3. *The poverty-returning phenomenon is prominent.* Most counties in Wuling Mountain area are the national key poverty-stricken counties and the provincial key poverty-stricken counties. Due to the special geographical and economic conditions and other reasons, a part of poor families and people have been in poverty for a long time, and the poverty alleviation for them is difficult. With fragile survival basis for the rural poverty alleviation population, it is easy to cause poverty-returning in the event of natural disasters, market fluctuations, disease and other factors, or school entering of their children. From the situation of Anhua in Hunan Province, this county is located in Hunan rainstorm centers and drought corridors, suffering huge space time difference during precipitation and torrential rains, flash floods, drought, low temperature, frozen and other inclement weather year after year, which results in the serious poverty-causing and poverty-returning phenomenon. This county experienced a total of 14 major floods,

mudslides, frozen, hail and other natural disasters in 2008-2010, which resulted in the direct economic losses of more than 50 billion Yuan with the poverty-returning population of 35,800 people.

4. *It is more difficult for poverty alleviation and development.* With the deepening of poverty alleviation and development, the poverty alleviation in poor rural areas becomes more and more difficult. First, the factors affecting and restricting the stable income of farmers are increasing, causing the difficulties in poverty alleviation of farmers. The reasons not only include the deterioration of the natural environment and the occurrence of the frequent natural disasters, but also include the impact of macro-economic environment in market or at home and abroad. Such factors as fluctuations in hog prices, global financial crisis and other external shocks, poor sales farm products and livestock, price fall, home returning of migrant workers, and difficulties in export of labour lead to the drop in operating income of poor households and labour income growth. Moreover, with the high production prices, the cost of agricultural and livestock production is rising, which increases the expenses of farmers, offsets the benefits of the policy, dampens the enthusiasm of farmers, and significantly affects the farmers' incomes.

Second, the cost of poverty alleviation is rising. Currently, the poor people are basically concentrated in the mountains and the plateau cold areas, such conditions as the harsh natural environment, poor infrastructure, single industrial structure, inconvenient traffic information, low population quality, and lagging culture and education are extremely difficult for poverty alleviation and development. The demand for capital investment in solving the problems of the poor villages and poor people is growing. The cost of poverty alleviation is much higher than that in the past, and the difficulties in implementation of the promotion in the whole village is also increasing.

Third, the implementation effects of part of poverty alleviation and development measures are not obvious. At present, most of the poor people have diseases or disability, or mental retardation, or grown old and infirm with outstanding capacity poverty. Due to their own poverty, it is very difficult for them to enjoy some direct-to-home anti-poverty measures without start-up capitals or labours, which leads to the difficult poverty alleviation and increased poverty-returning probability.

For example, in some poor villages, the low quality of poor households or the lack of labours results in the lack of effective implementation carrier in poverty alleviation policies of “developing agriculture through science and technology”. Additionally, it is also difficult for the measures of “workforce training transfer” implemented by the government to play the desired effect due to people’s lack of knowledge or other reasons.

Last but not the least, the rural material condition in this area is extremely scarce, the road traffic is extremely bad, and people’s level of education is low, and the cultural life is monotonous. 47 towns in this area do not have the asphalt (cement) road, accounting for 3.41% of the total number of townships; 9271 administrative villages do not have asphalt (cement) road, accounting for 40.25% of the total number of administrative villages; 7790 villages do not complete the rural grid network reconstruction, accounting for 33.82% of the total number of administrative villages. Some poor people still have difficulties in medical treatment, school entering, and low social security.

## II. Development Concept of Poverty Alleviation in Wuling Mountain Area

1. *The persistence in combination of regional acceleration development and poverty alleviation reinforcement.* In 14 key concentrated and contiguous areas determined by China’s new round of poverty alleviation and development, there are 11 regions crossing two or more than

two provincial-level administrative regions, among them, Wuling Mountain area crosses four provinces. To achieve the poverty reduction throughout the area, the regional development must be organically combined with the poverty alleviation reinforcement, the protection and improvement of people’s livelihood shall be taken as the starting point and goal of development, and the better external conditions shall be created for the poverty alleviation reinforcement through regional development, to effectively improve the level of the overall work of poverty alleviation reinforcement. At the same time, the poverty population shall be reduced, the people’s living standard shall be continuously improved, and the economic growth in the municipal area shall be effectively promoted and accelerated through the poverty alleviation reinforcement.

2. *The persistence in combination of spanning development and acceleration of reform and innovation.* Taking the mind emancipation, idea change, bold exploration and innovation as powerful driving forces to promote the urban economic development and poverty alleviation reinforcement, we shall deepen the reform of the focus areas and key links and conduct the trial to highlighting areas first as to promote the spanning development. The scientific and technological progress and innovation shall be taken as the important support to accelerate the transformation of the area development mode as to improve the capability of independent innovation, promote the structure adjustment with the technological innovation, lead the industrial upgrading with the science and technology, enhance the regional development with the innovation and achieve the overall poverty alleviation with the regional development.

3. *The persistence in combination of government guidance and market regulation.* Governments shall play dominant roles in regional development and poverty alleviation reinforcement, strengthen the market for the

deployment of production factors and resources and promote the inclination of a variety of resources to the most difficult and the poorest areas as to ensure the priority benefits of disadvantaged groups.

4. *The persistence in combination of self-reliance and policy support strengthening.* We shall persist in self-improvement and hard work, and constantly enhance self-development capacity. The opportunities of poverty policy in contiguous destitute areas shall be fully utilized, the investment shall be further increased, and the participation of all sectors of the community in poverty alleviation and development shall be extensively mobilized so as to fully solve the special difficulties of the poor people development

5. *The persistence in combination of green development and optimization of ecological environment.* With the forest coverage rate of 53%, the area is an important subtropical forest core area of China and an important basin water conservation district and ecological barrier of the Yangtze River. There are diverse biological species in the area, which is known as “a central plant and animal gene pool”. The incorporation of Wuling Mountain area into “the national pilot ecological compensation area” and “the transfer payment range of national ecological function zone”, and pilot establishment of the ecological environment compensation mechanism are beneficial to enhance the carrying capacity, ecological and environmental capacity, intensify the economical use of resources, continuously optimize the industrial structure and the distribution of productive forces and promote the win-win of economic development and ecological construction.

### III. Poverty Alleviation and Development Countermeasures of Wuling Mountain Area

The acceleration of regional development and poverty alleviation reinforcement in Wuling Mountain area is a major strategy of regional development and poverty alleviation

reinforcement in China, and is beneficial to explore the narrow regional development disparities and the new mode for poverty reduction of overall poverty population; to explore the promotion of coordinated regional economic development, and promote the construction of ecological civilization and sustainable development of new mechanisms in the poverty-stricken areas, and provide a model for the poverty alleviation reinforcement of a new stage of national centralized contiguous areas with special difficulties; to explore the new ways of accelerating development gap narrowing and poverty eradication of national economic development in cross-chief edge regions.

1. *The regional collaboration must be strengthened by the poverty alleviation and development of Wuling Mountain area.* Regional collaboration is a scientific approach to the sustainable development in China’s Minority Areas. For the innovation of the poverty alleviation and development system and mechanism in centralized and contiguous ethnic minority areas, we should break through the administrative division to highlight the cross-administrative regional cooperation, develop comparative advantages, realize the resource sharing, and adhere to the new way of regional cooperation, coordinated improvement and green development. With the regional development as the premise of sustainable poverty alleviation, a solid foundation can be provided for the poverty reduction of ethnic minorities only through the realization of regional development.

2. *Poverty alleviation and development of Wuling Mountain area must give full play to the role of government guidance.* With a weak foundation for the development of the centralized and contiguous ethnic minority areas and the inadequate market system, the guiding role of the government policies must be played to accelerate the pace of regional economic development, and vigorously promote the

population inclination of a variety of resources to the most difficult and the poorest areas, and the planning guidance and policy guidance must be strengthened for the special difficulties in area development.

*3. Poverty alleviation and development of Wuling Mountain area must insistently take the breakthrough point as the important development.* As the development of the centralized and contiguous ethnic minority areas is a systematic project, the key regions, links and fields must be seized while the comprehensive promotion is conducted, to make breakthroughs in some key fields and links of the poverty alleviation reinforcement, the long-term solid foundation for the development must be laid and the outstanding issues must be solved in the comprehensive promotion of poverty

alleviation; the overall regional development must be coordinated, and the breakthrough of the weakest link must be realized; the overall planning must be taken into consideration, which must be implemented and promoted steadily.

*4. Poverty alleviation and development of Wuling Mountain area must be supported by the differentiated policy.* Wuling Mountain area is integrated with old revolutionary base areas, ethnic minority accumulation areas, poverty-stricken areas, and border areas, where it is difficult to develop. Therefore, we should implement the differentiated development policy, support and under the same conditions give priority to the poverty alleviation of ethnic minorities, poor people, women, children and persons with disabilities.