

The Chinese war on poverty and its effects.

This scheme is the world's biggest in terms of scope and effect for targeted poverty reduction. As a targeted approach it only focuses on those living in absolute poverty, those with incomes below the 2,300 yuan per annum income level [1] (national poverty line) or its regional equivalent, for instance Fuping has its set at 3,500 [2], or those who fall below the average development levels which include adequate food, clothing, compulsory education, housing and healthcare. Those involved have set their scopes on the 832 counties that have a population in poverty of more than 3%, 2% [3] in western regions, these are mostly western or between provinces in old revolutionary hideouts or inhospitable regions with the most heavily afflicted being: Tibet, Hotan, Aksu, Kashi prefecture, Kizilu Kirgiz autonomous prefecture, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunan. Of the households afflicted 20% lack an income from labour, (as of October 2017) 44% because of an illness, and 92% have no current family members who have attended higher school or higher.[4]

To determine who is poor or not is based on experimental methods with no universal one yet established, however the most common one used is the "100 point score quantitative method" which is based on 5 categories: income, housing education, medical care, social welfare. With income worth 50 points total, housing 20, education 10, medical care 15, and social welfare 5 those families under the poverty line (national or local) cannot exceed a score of 30 in the income category and with a total score across all categories is less than 60 then the household is identified as poor [5]. This method consults the community on the families situation and requires annual reviews of all families in the poverty stricken county . So with the poor identified how does it work? A program that has mobilized the nation and the party with huge commitments in terms of manpower and resources works in two ways: on an interpersonal level and on a governmental level. The first on the interpersonal level involves one of the (as of 2016) 1,266 officials mobilized from 320 departments [6] in central and local government who are assigned to the poverty stricken regions with their job being to identify the families under the poverty line, to keep records for each family and to discuss ways in which to bolster incomes for the family and then creating a tailored poverty relief plan along with keeping track on their progress. According to Su Guoxia (spokesperson for the State Council leading group office of Poverty Alleviation and Development) these methods usually fall under 4 categories of established methods. 1. industrial poverty alleviation- whereby the official helps the family to establish and further develop farming, cultivation, cottage industries and better exploitation of local tourism. With the funds for this coming from low interest loans of up to 50,000 yuan from the local governments special transfer payments to individual households, or subsidization of farms. 2. labour export- whereby the officials help migrant workers to find job opportunities within cities by helping with applications etc. Or they apply for tuition free secondary vocational education for their children or free skills training to help them seek employment and garner an income for the household. 3. relocating poor households- those in inhospitable regions are relocated to human friendly locations (like Tibet where those who live in mountainous villages are moved to lower altitudes) or to small cities/ towns whereby they can find work, 2.8 million have been relocated so far [7]. 4. the social security net- the officials help with applying for dibao and other subsequent benefits from housing assistance, medical assistance, and educational assistance [8]. On the Governmental level each province gets a specialized poverty relief fund, which has a total pledge of 106.1 billion RMB for 2018,[9] from the annual central government fiscal budget and the State council leading group office of poverty alleviation and development, which is then given in the form of both general transfer payments and the aforementioned special transfer payments to the individual counties. The general transfer payments are there to cover the salaries of social workers, to improve the fiscal budget of the county government to go towards further development, and to cover the costs of welfare like dibao, subsistence allowances, healthcare budgets to finance the better nutrition program (free school meals). If the county budget cant cover these than the general transfer payments from the province kicks in. whereas the special transfer payments exist purely

for poverty relief efforts they manifest in the form of credit support, importation of local medical staff to remote villages, loans and financing the officials that produce and guide the poverty reduction plans, they also contribute to improving infrastructure.

Furthermore these counties also receive preferential treatment in policy making with the ministry of land and resources pledging 600 extra acres of land to the 832 impoverished counties, and to encourage further transport infrastructure development these identified counties receive an extra 400,000 yuan per km of road built than the other 576 counties [10]. This is all encompassing work with the State council for poverty alleviation and development now enveloping 26 ministries benefitting from the assistance of the State medical insurance administration, the China Handong and insurance regulatory commission, the State market regulatory administration, the National health and family planning commission, and the Ministry of land and resources. This is separate to the 1.8 trillion yuan [11] social security reserve which foots the bill for the policies that are meant to keep once poor families from sliding into poverty or to look after at risk groups such as pensioners, the sick or the urban poor. These policies include minimum living allowances, medical insurance, major disease insurance, housing security measures and employment assistance policies and as of 2017 80 million people have had their housing needs met through development, relocation and the transformation of shanty towns. [12]

The effects of this effort have been huge, in 1978 10.2% of the total population (that's 97.5 million people) was suffering from absolute poverty, whereas today it sits at 3.1% or 30 million people, so since 1953 that's 700 million people [13]. The aim is to uplift the remainder of those in absolute poverty by 2020. Since 2013 68 million people had been alleviated with the remainder as mentioned previously mostly being concentrated in remote regions or the western provinces, this effort is clearly monstrous, more than 70% of global poverty reduction, even drawing praise from the international community- on the 14th December 2017 Achim Steiner, the United nations development programme administrator praised China "the achievement China made is outstanding in both scale and time. No other country has done it before"[14]. Of course this impact cannot just be explored through the numbers for that removes those uplifted and those still suffering from their humanity, this program has improved communities via the large amount of volunteers and party members visiting these areas.

1.Xinhua "China vows increased efforts in poverty alleviation" 07-03-18

2. CGTN R.L.Kuhn Closer to China: Precision poverty reduction, 17-09-16
3. CGTN R.L.Kuhn Closer to China: Precision poverty reduction, 17-09-16
4. SCIO briefing on China's poverty reduction progress since 2012 http://english.scio.gov.cn/2017-10/12/content_41721521.htm, 2016
5. CGTN R.L.Kuhn Closer to China: Precision poverty reduction, 17-09-16
6. CGTN R.L.Kuhn Closer to China: Precision poverty reduction, 17-09-16
7. Xinhua "China continues largest poverty alleviation campaign in history" 05-03-18
8. CGTN R.L.Kuhn Closer to China: Precision poverty reduction, 17-09-16
9. Xinhua "China vows increased efforts in poverty alleviation" 07-03-18
10. CGTN R.L.Kuhn Closer to China: Precision poverty reduction, 17-09-16
11. Xinhua "China able to pay old-age pension in time, in full: Premier LI" 20-03-18
12. SCIO briefing on China's poverty reduction progress since 2012 http://english.scio.gov.cn/2017-10/12/content_41721521.htm, 2016
13. Xinhua "China continues largest poverty alleviation campaign in history" 05-03-18
14. Xinhua "UNDP administrator praises China's poverty reduction experience" 14-12-2017