Targeted Poverty Alleviation: From China to Alabama

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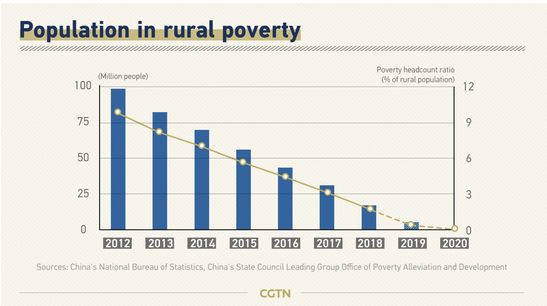
ABSTRACT

In 2013, China put forth its targeted poverty alleviation campaign in Shibadong village in the Hunan province. By 2017, the village was no longer considered “poverty stricken.” Since then, China has been able to dramatically decrease poverty and raise tens of millions of Chinese out of poverty by addressing causes at the individual and household level. In this project, I propose that China’s model be implemented in the rural areas of the United States, starting with a singular county in rural Alabama’s Black Belt, a region with high levels of poverty that disproportionately affect African Americans.

TARGETED POVERTY ALLEVIATION: CHINESE MODEL



China’s proposal for poverty reduction:

- Set clear goals (i.e. solve food security and clothing, compulsory education, housing, basic medicine by 2020)
- Register all poverty-stricken people in a database
- Targeted poverty alleviation via:
  - Education
  - Social security
  - Industrial development
  - Relocation
  - Eco-compensation
- Establish institutions for
  - Accountability
  - Investment
  - Assistance
  - Policy
  - Social mobilization
  - Assessment
  - Multi-channel supervision

Graph courtesy of https://news.cgtn.com/news/2019-10-17/Graphics-Ending-China-s-poverty-by-2020-KREfWKGkIU/index.html

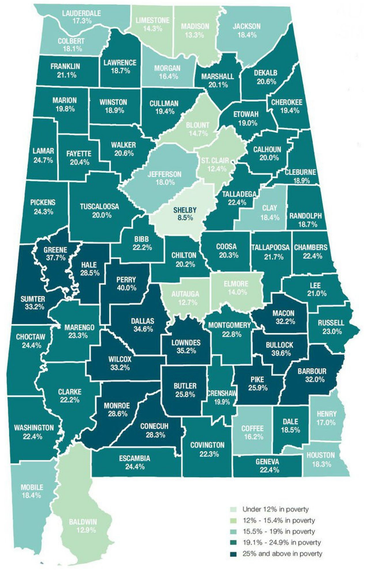
This is being implemented in the peripheral regions of China, where the majority of the country’s ethnic minorities reside. The Chinese government is paying special attention to advance minority populations while preserving their unique cultures.

ALABAMA BLACK BELT

The term “Black Belt” comes from both the dark soil of the region and the high population of African Americans.

Although African Americans control a significant portion of Alabama’s forestland, it has declined at a startling rate due to racist violence and complicated legal systems that take advantage of poor African Americans, who suffer disproportionately from severe poverty. Moreover, a history of racism and anti-communism by the federal government has disrupted efforts by the black community to improve conditions themselves through organizing.

Compared to other counties in Alabama, the population here has shorter life expectancies, lower per capita income, and lower educational attainment (Diop and Fraser, 2009).



Counties in dark blue have poverty rates >25%, and are all located in the Black Belt

Courtesy of https://www.al.com/news/2017/07/alabama_is_6th_poorest_state_i.html

BUTLER COUNTY

Population: 20,000
Households: 6700
Poverty rate: 24.5%
African American: 45%
Per Capita income: $20,430
Timberland acreage: 411,034

According to the United Nations, Butler County is home to the worst sewage disposal crisis in any developed nation.

TARGETED POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN BUTLER COUNTY, AL

1. Adequate sanitation system and providing quality accessible healthcare
2. Developing industry
   - Invest in forestry
   - Protect & expand remaining black land ownings
   - Free vocational training and legal assistance
3. Reparations
   - Strengthen local governments
   - Increase representation of black americans
   - Community distribution of reparations
4. Establish institutional systems like those In China
   - Ensure poverty goals are being met and funds are being allocated appropriately
   - Third party evaluation by United Nations

Image courtesy of

https://www.al.com/news/2017/12/un_poverty_official_touring_al.html

CONCLUSIONS

China’s targeted poverty alleviation strategy has been extremely successful in its impoverished rural regions, and it provides a model which can be used in other areas of the world, whether in developed or developing countries. Though the United States is considered a developed country, there are areas such as the Black Belt that, due to the harsh and unforgiving history of slavery and racial capitalism, share more of the characteristics of a developing nation. The conditions in areas such as Butler county, Alabama, could be significantly improved using China’s targeted poverty alleviation model, tailored to address American society.

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