

Relocated residents embrace life with greater opportunities

Remote rural villagers lifted out of poverty with improved living conditions, employment



By YUAN SHENGGAO

On the production line of a garment company in the Donghui Poverty-Reduction Industrial Park in Yushe county in the east of Shanxi province, employees keep busy sorting fabric and working on sewing machines

The workers hail from nearby mountainous, poverty-stricken villages, but have now relocated to new settlements in Donghui village to take on employment at the industrial park.

“It’s more comfortable to live in the new houses and more convenient to work in the neighborhood,” said Li Yanxia, an employee at the garment company. “While earning salaries from the company, we can still make money from the rental of farmland in our old village.”

According to the Shanxi Poverty-Reduction Office, a total of 362,000 impoverished people in Shanxi have benefitted from a poverty-relief relocation campaign in the province. They moved from their old communities in underdeveloped mountainous areas to 1,502 new settlements with better living conditions, more complete infrastructure and better job and business opportunities.

The relocation campaign began in 2016, after the provincial government of Shanxi issued the 13th five-year plan (2016-20) on relocation for poverty reduction.

Shanxi’s impoverished populations were mostly located in the regions in



New houses have been built in Houshimen village for residents moving from their old residences in Shanghuliang village in the same county. BAI XUPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

the Taihang and Lyuliang mountains as well as high-altitude, cold areas in the north of the province.

According to the plan, the relocation program would require a total investment of 20.8 billion yuan (\$2.99 billion). It was implemented in 71 counties in 11 cities.

Construction on the province’s first new settlement for poverty alleviation began in Xiaxian county on Oct 7, 2016, and the last of the 1,502 settlements was completed on Sept 30, 2019.

Residents in Qingxingtou village in Pingshun county were among the first to move to their new settlement.

When recalling the living environment of their old community, Guo Xianzhong, Party secretary of the village, said: “There was no flat and fertile land for farming and road connectivity was poor. Villagers could not find opportunities to make more money.”

In December 2016, the residents

moved to their new settlement in the nearby plain area. Paved roads were built and every household had access to running water. There was a school for children and a medical clinic for local patients.

Ruan Hanxin, a 70-year-old farmer from Shanghuliang village in Xingxian county, said he was satisfied with his new residence in the new settlement in nearby Houshimen village.

His family spent only 8,000 yuan on moving into the new house in Houshimen, which is equipped with running water, electricity and central heating.

“I never expected to live in a new house with the same facilities as those in big cities,” Ruan said.

For the authorities in Shanxi, the relocation program is not a simple project of building houses.

According to the province’s poverty-reduction office, the campaign involves the construction of sup-

porting facilities; the creation of job and business opportunities; community management; ecological recovery and farmland reclamation in the old villages.

“The relocation for poverty reduction also aims to achieve balanced socioeconomic and ecological development,” said one local official.

Xinyuan village in Fansi county reclaimed about 4 hectares of new farmland from the removed old residences after all its villagers moved to a new settlement. All the 90 hectares of farmland was leased to a farming company that pays rent to villagers on an annual basis.

“We now make more money by working for companies in the neighborhood and receiving rent from the farming company,” said Yang Bingyi, a local resident.

Liu Caixia, a farmer who moved from Jingzi village in Heshun county to a new settlement in the county seat last year, said she is satisfied with the convenience of the community and its more complete facilities.

“We have a clinic and a primary school in the community to meet our needs in health care and children’s education. We can also buy everything here with a couple of shopping facilities in the neighborhood,” Liu said, adding that she is even happier to be employed by a local company where she is decently paid.

According to the provincial poverty-reduction office, the relocated residents are offered better business and job opportunities with the development of industries with local characteristics, including manufacturing, modern farming, rural tourism and handicraft production.

Li Quanhong contributed to this story.



Staff members at Shanxi Culture and Tourism Group work on the Travel in Shanxi app. WANG SHAOFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Half a million people use province’s tourism app

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The number of users of the Travel in Shanxi app passed 500,000 on Aug 3, showing that the platform designed to improve services for tourists has gained wider recognition.

The app was developed by Shanxi Culture and Tourism Group, assigned by the Shanxi Culture and Tourism Department.

Tourists can use the app to book tickets to scenic areas and reserve hotel rooms. They can also discover the latest information and policies of provincial destinations.

“The app is a useful tool for tourists to make holiday plans,” said Li Chaoyi, a high school graduate in Taiyuan, capital city of the province.

Li was admitted to a university outside Shanxi, so he plans to “tour as many destinations in Shanxi as possible” before he leaves.

He made the decision after he read a document on the app issued by the Shanxi Culture and Tourism Group on July 22. It requires all 126 major tourism destinations to receive first-time visitors for free.

“I was relieved when I was admitted to the university I applied for. So I decided to have a thorough tour of Shanxi given that

almost all the destinations are free,” Li said.

Shanxi’s tourism authorities issued the decree in a bid to boost the tourism industry and offset the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other policies for the industry include online ticket reservations in a bid to control tourist numbers and meet the requirements of local epidemic prevention and control.

According to Shanxi Culture and Tourism Group, online ticket booking is possible through the app. Once the reservation is completed, a QR code is generated on the app. The users can then be let through a scenic area’s entrance by having their QR scanned.

The company said the app has other functions to help tourism operators better run their destinations.

For instance, the app is connected to local firefighting departments, allowing a quick response in case of emergency.

Shanxi is said to have the largest number of ancient buildings in China. Fire prevention is of great significance to the tourism industry because most of these buildings are wooden.

Li Yali contributed to this story.

Mountain homes offer fantasy vision



After a recent heavy rain, the renowned tourist attraction of Wanghuagou village in Ningwu county takes on the appearance of a fairyland shrouded in mist. Wanghuagou is also called the “hanging village”. It is located on the Taihang Mountain cliffs, which stand about 2,300 meters above sea level. The residences are mostly two-story buildings with their fronts supported by exposed wooden columns. The houses are connected to the only road in the village, which is made of wooden planks and is less than 1 kilometer long. Wanghuagou was listed as nationally renowned historical and cultural village in 2010. CAO JIANGUO/ FOR CHINA DAILY

Picture-perfect beauty spot brings focus on tourism

By YUAN SHENGGAO

When the Yellow River flows out the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, it forms a long, deep gorge that serves as the border of Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces.

In the gorge, the water flows in a roughly north-to-south course. However, when it arrives at Majiapan village in Shilou county, the river forms a huge circled bend of 8 kilometers.

Thanks to online publicity by local photographers and travelers, the bend recently became a major tourist attraction in the county.

Zheng Huimin, a local photographer and an official at the county’s bureau of education, was the first to publish impressive photos of the river on the internet.

Zheng, an enthusiast of taking pictures of the local landscape, had been longing to take a panoramic photo of the bend, which he knew from the map should be the largest in the Shanxi-Shaanxi Grand Gorge.

In April 2005, when climbing onto the top of a nearby mountain, Zheng found the best spot to take a picture.

His photos of the bend quickly became a hit on the internet. Photographers and tourists from all over the country now flock to see the largest and most spectacular feature of the Yellow River gorge.

Local tourism authorities have

noticed the visitors’ enthusiasm at the site. As a result, they invited tourism industry experts to conduct further research into the site and draw up detailed plans for the development and promotion of the attraction.

The Cultural Resources Research Center of the Shanxi Academy of Social Sciences granted a certificate to the attraction in 2007. It recogniz-

es it as “the most impressive bend of the Yellow River” after it received a report from its expert research team.

Ren Zixuan, an official of Shilou county’s tourism bureau, described the uniqueness of the bend: “After flowing from the north to south, the Yellow River begins to turn to the east near Majiapan village. It forms an almost perfect 8-km circle with a diameter of 2 km. When the river is about to finish its circular course, it’s only 700 meters from where it starts.”

To improve access to the viewpoint where Zheng took his pictures, the county built a 3.8-km road to the top of the mountain.

Zheng, a veteran photographer with a tanned face, is still busy exploring new attractions along the river. Sometimes lucky tourists can meet him at the grand bend viewpoint, who is always willing to share his stories.

Li Yali contributed to this story.



In the shape of an almost perfect circle, the 8-kilometer bend in Majiapan village in Shilou county is one of the most spectacular bends of the Yellow River. WANG YONGPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Armenian student falls for Shanxi’s ‘infinite scenery’

By ANI HARUTYUNYAN

In the eyes of Armenians, China is a magical country. Many friends from around the world come to China to explore the ancient legends. As I have been in Shanxi for almost 10 years, I can tell you that the mountains and rivers in Shanxi have infinite scenery, and visitors must come to Shanxi when they travel in China.

When I came to China 10 years ago, I think I was so lucky. I was admitted to Shanxi University and I started to learn Chinese there. After finishing my courses, I didn’t want to leave. I continued to study for a master’s degree at Shanxi University. After graduation, I started studying for a doctorate there.

Shanxi became my second home. I married a Shanxi man. Now that we have two beautiful Chinese-Armenian babies, my blood is truly integrated into China. This is another deeper relationship between me and Shanxi.

If I want to talk about Shanxi, I have to talk about the people first. Shanxi people are enthusiastic, sincere, kind and hardworking. Shanxi men take care of their families and love their wives and children. Because of this, my life in Shanxi is more at ease and comfortable.

Shanxi has given me many opportunities to make my life much more interesting and much more exciting. I had the honor of hosting Shanxi University’s 110th anniversary with famous hosts Sun Zhengping, Lei Lu and Ye Peilong. I also had chance to take part in movies and TV programs, as well as publish articles and participate in other interesting activities.

With regard to food, I need to say you will get used to the local food very fast because the food here is like the mix of Asian and Western food. I thought that I would not get used to China before I came here. However, I gained 5 kg in a month after arriving in Shanxi.

Shanxi people love adding vinegar to their food. It tastes sour, but it’s really delicious to eat dumplings, buns and noodles with a lit-



Ani Harutyunyan PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

tle vinegar. In fact, Shanxi people like to eat noodles, pancakes and buns.

My husband is from Yuncheng, Shanxi. People there love to eat noodles, and I learned that Shanxi has the most types of noodles in the whole country. The most famous of them is called *daoxiao-mian*, or knife-cut noodles. There is a saying that the world’s best noodles are in China, and the best of them all are in Shanxi.

One of the first folk songs I heard when I came to Shanxi was called *People Say That Shanxi Has Good Scenery*. I have been to many places here and found that Shanxi does have a lot of good scenic sites. For example, there are three world cultural heritage sites in Shanxi — Pingyao Ancient City, Yungang Grottoes and Wutai Mountain.

Yuncheng is a city you must visit if you come to Shanxi. It is one of the most amazing places to learn about Chinese history. One Chinese historical celebrity is Guan Yu, also known as the God of Wealth. He is famous because people believe that he can guarantee safety and bring wealth.

Shanxi is also the place where the Yellow River — the mother river of China — runs through. The magnificent Yellow River can be seen in scenic spots such as the Hukou Waterfall in Jixian county, the ancient town of Qikou in Linxian county and Qiankun Bay in Yonghe county.

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