

Rural residents lifted out of poverty



Wuxiang county provides new homes, fosters innovative business practices

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Wuxiang county in the east of Shanxi province used to be an important base for safeguarding the nation's security and independence some seven decades ago.

The county at the heart of Taihang Mountains was home to the headquarters of the Eighth Route Arm, the military force led by the Communist Party of China that fought against the Japanese invaders in the north of the country during the 1930s and 40s.

And today, the governments and people of Wuxiang have been devoting great efforts to winning another battle, the one against poverty.

Local statistics show that the county had 55,088 residents in 18,787 households living under the poverty line in 2014.

Over the past six years, Wuxiang has seen 51,972 of those residents lifted from poverty, almost fulfilling its target of poverty alleviation,

according to the county government.

Relocating residents to new settlements and creating new business and job opportunities are among the major means for poverty reduction, according to local authorities.

In Daizhaoling village some 20 kilometers away from the county seat, the most impressive sight is a group of well laid-out new houses.

Residents from some 40 households in the village are living in the new houses, which are equipped with modern facilities such as running water and toilets and are conveniently connected by roads, electricity and telecommunications.

Wang Yuefen, a 68-year-old woman in the village, said: "It is the biggest event in my lifetime to move into the new house. It cost only 7,500 yuan (\$1,110) for my family to own the new house, with every necessary facility in place."

According to Dou Yulong, Party secretary of the village, the construction of the houses and the cost involving the resettlement were mostly covered by the government.

"A resident needs to pay only 2,500 yuan to own a new house. And the maximum payment for a family is 10,000 yuan," Dou said.

Apart from the 40 families still living in the new village settlement, the other 81 households were relocated to settlements in the county seat.

"Our policy is flexible for the residents. Those who are willing to live



Wei Baoyu, a farmer in Lingtou village in Wuxiang county, uses his smartphone camera to demonstrate the quality of the grain at his millet farm to online customers. LI YONGJIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

a familiar, rural life could choose to stay and the settlements in the county seat were built for those who planned to find new business and job opportunities," Dou said.

Wang Caiping, another resident in the village, said the living conditions at present are much better than before.

"Some of the villagers used to live on the hilltops, and transport was a big problem. And the others, like my family, lived in the valleys, where flooding and soil erosion are the major threats during the rainy season," Wang said.

"Dirt piled up in front of our houses blocked the doors after heavy rains. And now we are freed from the labor of clearing dirt because our new settlement was built in a safer place."

During the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-20), the government of Wuxiang county has invested a total of 380 million yuan in renovating rural residences and building new settlements, according to local officials, who added that more than 1,200 impoverished households have been relocated to 23 new settlements.

In Lingtou, another village in Wuxiang county, local authorities have encouraged farmers to use e-commerce platforms to create new business opportunities.

Now when Wei Baoyu, a local farmer, goes to work on his millet farm, he brings with him a mobile phone for livestreaming.

Over the past four years, the farmer has grown into an experienced salesman, using various internet platforms to promote his produce.

"When a harvest is approaching, it's the best chance to show the quality of the millet to the buyers.

"I show them the size of the grain and the organic fertilizers piled beside the field. This is the best demonstration for those who really want to buy high-quality, organic food," Wei said.

Through livestreaming, Wei has received orders from across the country and even overseas.

And the price has increased from about 8 yuan a kilogram to nearly 40 yuan a kilo to match the product's status as organic.

"At the beginning, I was regarded an idler by other villagers as they saw me taking pictures on the farm. But when they realized I really made a fortune, they came to ask me how to sell products through e-commerce," Wei said.

Led by Wei, more villagers have tried new ways to do business. A total of 80 households have developed into online dealers, selling various local produce.

According to the local villagers' committee, total revenue generated from online sales amounted 1 million yuan last year in the village with a population of 504.

In Wuxiang county, there are 5,500 dealers doing business on various e-commerce platforms, with online transaction value totaling 280 million yuan last year. And the online businesses brought some 3.5 million yuan to more than 2,300 impoverished households, according to the county government of Wuxiang.

Xie Yan contributed to this story.

Tourism gets back on track



Pingyao, in central Shanxi and one of the top tourist destinations in the province, is known for its ancient city, old streets and time-honored firms established by the famed Shanxi merchants centuries ago. The county of Pingyao welcomed more than 300,000 visits during the eight-day National Day and Mid-Autumn Festival holidays on Oct 1-8. The figure ranks it first among all tourist attractions in Shanxi province. Shanxi province received more than 52 million visits during the period and netted a tourism revenue of 31.64 billion yuan (\$4.69 billion), according to the Shanxi Culture and Tourism Department. The department's officials said the figures — almost the same as last year — show that local tourism has recovered from the negative effects of the COVID-19 outbreak that started earlier this year. LIANG SHENGREN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Chipping away at mountains to open ancient village to the outside world

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Among the many legends related to Shanxi, *The Foolish Old Man Who Removes the Mountains* might be the most famous.

The story goes that an old man called Yugong pledged to remove the mountains that isolated his village on the border of today's Shanxi and Henan provinces.

Despite the hectic efforts needed for the mission and jibes from others, the old man said: "I will do my part as long as I live and when I die, my sons will carry on; when they die, there will be my grandsons, and then their sons and grandsons, and so on to infinity.

"High as they are, the mountains cannot grow any higher and with every bit we dig, they will be that much lower. Why can't we clear them away?"

Over thousands of years, the legend has become a precious cultural legacy among Shanxi residents. Similar attempts at improving access to isolated villages have frequently occurred in the province. One such project took place in Lingchuan county.

Lingchuan is located in a region bordering Henan province, at the junction of the Wangwu and Taihang mountains. Road connectivity had been the biggest challenge for many villages in the heart of the mountains.

This was the case of Xiyagou village, where people lived a self-reliant life because they had been isolated from the outside world for centuries.

A change took place in the early 1980s when local officials and residents agreed to build a road to link it to the outside world.

Song Zhilong, 65, was the former



The 7.5-kilometer road to Xiyagou, which cuts through cliffs, is regarded as an engineering miracle. MA XIAOTIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Party secretary of the village. He recalled how the road was built.

"We had mobilized almost all the resources of the village. In addition to investment from the county government, many families contributed their savings to the project.

"The job to build a road on and through the cliffs was by no means easy. As the natural conditions didn't allow the use of explosives, we cut through the cliffs inch by inch.

"The total length of the road is only 7.5 kilometers but it took us about 10 years to complete," Song said.

After its completion in 1991, the road was listed as one of China's top 60 new landmarks by the then National Administration of Tourism.

The road immediately turned the village into a tourist destination in Shanxi.

"Many tourists came to see the new engineering miracle. When they ventured far into the valleys and mountains of Xiyagou village, however, they would be offered additional excitement," Song said.

The village, consisting of several valleys with a total area of 15 sq km, is surrounded by cliffs as high as 1,000 meters.

A number of streams, waterfalls, deep ponds and caves can be seen in the valleys.

"This is a peach blossom stream-style village as it has been isolated for hundreds of years. It offers a typical scenery recited by ancient poets as a seclusive habitat, with features including ancient stone houses, stone bridges, flagstone pavements and traditions that have disappeared in many parts of the country," Song said.

Li Yali contributed to this story.

Shanxi technology sector gearing up to supply consumer goods of future

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Taiyuan-based Semicore Crystal recently completed a new plant for the production of advanced 6-inch silicon carbide chips.

The plant is located in the Shanxi Transformation and Comprehensive Reform Demonstration Zone in Taiyuan, capital of Shanxi province.

"With the new plant in place, we are expected to become the world's third-largest producer of the chips," said Li Bin, general manager of the company.

With the properties of high-temperature resistance and high-power efficiency, the silicon carbide chips can be used in the production of

high-capacity semiconductor components.

Li said the chips, especially the 6-inch version, is crucial for new communication technology like 5G.

"The silicon carbide chips are a must for 5G base stations, which are designed for high-speed and high-capacity transmission," the executive explained.

Li said Semicore Crystal began mass production of the chips in 2018 after 11 years of research and development. His company is currently one of the largest suppliers in domestic market.

"China used to heavily rely on supplies from foreign silicon carbide chip producers for a long time and the launch of Semicore chips has

freed the country from that," Li said.

Wei Rusheng, deputy general manager of the company, said the chips are also used in electronic components like triodes for electric vehicles.

"A battery equipped with silicon carbide chips features better energy efficiency, which can help the vehicle extend its single-charge mileage by about 10 percent," Wei said.

The executive predicted that the production of silicon carbide chips could grow into a large industry with a market value surpassing 100 billion (\$14.8 billion) in China, given that sales of electric vehicles have increased by more than 70 percent annually in recent years.



A staff member of Semicore Crystal shows the company's cutting-edge 6-inch silicon carbide chip. ZHONG QING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Semicore is only one example of the rapid development of Shanxi's chip and semiconductor industry.

Local players, such as Fenghua

Information Equipment and the No 2 Institute of China Electronics Technology Group, have established nationally advanced semiconductor

and display plants in Shanxi.

China Crystal Technologies and BW38 IC Manufacturing have built their plants in Shanxi to produce globally leading microwave power amplifiers and wave filters. Meanwhile, Shanxi-based Zhongke Lu'an has developed into the world's largest ultraviolet LED chip producer, according to the Shanxi Department of Industry and Information Technology.

The department recently released an action plan for the digital and information industries that are aiming to make breakthroughs in the internet, artificial intelligence, digital, semiconductor and chip sectors.

According to the plan, cities such as Taiyuan, Xinzhou and Changzhi, which have sound industrial foundations, will be the province's major bases for the chip and semiconductor business.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.