



From left: Medics from a local medical institution conduct a health check for rural residents in Tibet's Nyingchi city. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY A Tibetan woman works in a clothing plant in Shigatse's Samdrubtse district. The plant has been supported by the local government as a part of its poverty-alleviation project. PALDEN NYIMA / CHINA DAILY Two villagers work in a tea farm in Tibet's Metok county. The tea industry provides jobs and income for local impoverished residents. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Tibet continues poverty-relieving efforts

Officials, residents say COVID-19 epidemic did not slow local progress, **Daqiong** and **Palden Nyima** reports.

China's Tibet autonomous region worked to successfully defeat poverty despite the influence of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, according to the regional poverty alleviation office.

The office said Tibet has been one of China's main battlefields against poverty for its geographical and historical reasons ever since the central government launched a nationwide poverty-reduction campaign in 2016 to improve the lives of the poor.

Pu Zhengxue, head of the policy and regulations department of Tibet's Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation, said to date, Tibet's last group of 150,000 impoverished people in 19 counties and districts have already been freed from poverty.

"As of now, the region's 628,000 formerly impoverished people have all been relieved of that label," he said. "We're also marking the overall victory of poverty-reduction in all of the region's 74 counties and districts."

Pu's office said despite the COVID-19 pandemic's influence on various aspects of social life during the past few months, the autonomous region has been strong in achieving a victory in the hard-fought battle over poverty relief.

Overcoming challenges

"We are facing new challenges due to COVID-19. However, with our effective policy measures and the strong foundation we laid to alleviate poverty, we have not encountered any new instances of poverty as a result of the virus outbreak," Pu said.

Between Jan 23 and May 10, the impact of COVID-19 was obvious in the autonomous region. Many highways and roads were blocked, causing restrictions in the flow of people and commodities.

"Tourism, transportation, logistics, catering and accommodation businesses were suspended during the period," Pu said. "Some company employees had to temporarily give up their jobs and some companies that produced Tibet's local products and handicrafts saw a halt in their sales and business."

Despite the overall impact of the epidemic on the region's socioeconomic development and other aspects of people's lives,



Tibetans in Sanyou village in Chushur county celebrate their traditional New Year in their new settlement in February 2020. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

rural residents remain confident and determined to overcome poverty along with the rest of the country.

Dadron Lhazom, an e-commerce entrepreneur in the region's Namling county, one of the last 19 counties to become poverty-free in 2019, said she had to close her business for almost three months after the COVID-19 outbreak.

However, she said the impact on her business was minimal.

"There was a shortage of supplies for some time," she said, adding she used the time away from work to spend with her family.

Established in 2018, Dadron Lhazom's company sells Tibetan ethnical handicrafts and local special products such as Tibetan carpets, cushions, blankets, honey, leather bags and Tibetan incense.

She has a production factory based in her home village in the county's Dana township that employs 12 people, including five people from the formerly impoverished families and two college graduates. Her company sells products across China via her business accounts on the Taobao and Douyin platforms.

In 2019, her total business revenues hit more than 420,000

(54,770 euros) yuan, with monthly net profit surpassing 15,000 yuan.

The local county government has regarded her business a role model in the county's fight against poverty. In 2019, the businesswoman opened a brick-and-mortar store in the county seat, using business space the county government leased to her for free.

"Without the support of the government, my family and my friends, I could not have gone so far. I feel grateful for all of them, especially the county government," she said, adding she expects to benefit more of her fellow villagers as her business expands.

"I hope to encourage more villagers to learn the skills of making carpets, tapestry and blankets, and I hope more college graduates get involved in e-commerce business instead of only seeking government jobs."

Witness to changes

Migmar, director of Layak, a village in Saga county which is also one of the region's last 19 counties removed from the poverty list, said 100 people in 33 village households recently found themselves lifted out of poverty, thanks to various local projects.

A local official who witnessed the changes of the village due to

the government's poverty alleviation projects, Migmar has a lot to say.

"Our village had no proper roads or safe drinking water before 2016. Villagers had to travel 30 minutes by tractor or motorbike to carry water, and the road was terrible," she said.

Migmar said all of the families in the village now have access to tap water, and the village has paved roads. The creation of three cooperatives in the village has also been instrumental in the effort to improve residents' quality of life.

One such cooperative is a textile factory producing quilts, blankets and other handicrafts using locally sourced wool.

Most of the formerly poverty-stricken families were encouraged to invest in the factory, Migmar said.

"The village officials have organized a great deal of training for residents to help them learn skills and find employment," Migmar said. "This has also really helped villagers change their views on work and making money."

Relocation projects

While dealing with poverty alleviation, the autonomous region has always regarded reloca-

tion projects as an efficient measure. A total investment of 18.92 billion yuan has been put into use for Tibet's relocation projects.

As a result, more than 260,000 people have moved to their new homes in areas with lower altitude and better living conditions, according to the autonomous region's poverty alleviation office.

Samdrub Tsering, a resident in Kyilung village in Namling county, said living in the new settlements has given him access to better resources in business, employment, education and medical services.

Before moving to their new settlements in 2016, his fellow villagers lived in a harsh environment, especially in terms of medical care, transport and schooling.

"Before 2016, I did not know that a mother would get a subsidy when giving birth to her child in a hospital, and I did not know hospitalization was safer both for mothers and infants," said Samdrub Tsering.

He said before 2016 it was not convenient for villagers to travel to the township center, as the nearest household was about 10 kilometers away. He added that there were no telecommunication signals and the roads were hardly functional in the village. Locals had to ride horses and yaks to go to the hospitals and the shopping facilities in the township center.

"I planned not to send my kids to school because it was too far, and I worried about my kids in the school and on the way there," Samdrub Tsering said.

"Thanks to the government, our lives have undergone tremendous change over the years," he added.

In 2019, the village was qualified for removal from the poverty list.

"Now my kids go to kindergarten and school, which are near the new settlement where we live. It's very safe here and everybody wants their kids to receive education as early as possible," Samdrub Tsering said. "Meanwhile, here we get more information about business and job opportunities and it's easier to find work here than in the remote mountainous areas. We can go to vocational schools and learn different skills such as cooking, and operating excavators."