

TIBET SPECIAL

Residents embracing new changes in life

Migmar, a community official in Layak village in Saga county, said she is happy with the fundamental changes happening in her village in recent years.

"Our village had no proper roads or safe drinking water before 2016. But now, all the families have access to running water and the village is connected by paved roads," said the 49-year-old woman.

She said the newly built roads and pipelines have helped lay the groundwork for a significant improvement in the villagers' lives.

The local government's measures to boost villagers' incomes by helping their transition from traditional herding and farming have also reaped encouraging rewards, Migmar said.

"To make the shift, village officials organized a great deal of training for residents to help them learn different skills such as cooking, welding and operating excavators and loaders," she said. "That has also helped villagers change their views on work and income."

Dadron Lhazom, an entrepreneur in Namling county, owns a company selling handicrafts with Tibetan ethnic characteristics and local specialties such as carpets, cushions, blankets, honey, leather bags and incense, helping needy residents work toward a better life.

She has a workshop in her home village in the county's Dana township that employs 12 local people, including five from formerly impoverished families and two college graduates.

Her company sells products all over the country via Taobao e-commerce platform. It also operates a business account on Douyin social media platform. It earned more than 420,000 yuan (\$61,330) from sales last year.

The county government of Namling has held up Dadron Lhazom's business as a model for poverty alleviation efforts.

Last year, with help from the government, a store selling her locally made products was set up at the county seat, with the rent waived.

"With the support of the government, my family and my friends, I could not have gone so far in my business," she said. "I feel grateful to all of them, especially the county government."

Dadron Lhazom plans to further expand her business to benefit more villagers.

"I hope to encourage more villagers to learn skills to make carpets, tapestries and blankets," she said. "I hope more college graduates will get involved in entrepreneurship and e-commerce."

Moving communities to locations with better conditions is also one of the local governments' efforts to improve people's lives.

Samdrub Tsering, from Kyilung village in Namling county in Shigatse city, said he and his fellow villagers moved to a new settlement with modern amenities and technology in 2016.

Before moving, villagers endured a harsh environment at an average altitude above 4,100 meters. Medical treatment, transportation and schools were inadequate, he said.

"Before 2016, I did not know that a mother could get subsidies and support after giving birth at the hospital. I did not know it could be safer for both mother and child," Samdrub Tsering said.

But livelihoods have improved tremendously over the years, Samdrub Tsering said.

"Before 2016, I did not plan to send my children to school because it was too far. I worried about their journey to school," he said, adding that everyone now wants to send their children to receive education "as early as possible" because the school is just in the vicinity.

In the past, villagers had to



Two herders in a husbandry cooperative in Nang county learn cattle care knowledge from a technician (centre) during an onsite training class. PALDEN NYIMA / CHINA DAILY

ride horses and yaks to go to hospital or get supplies, but now they can drive or take a bus, the 35-year-old said. "It takes only a few minutes," he added.

Similarly, information about the latest policies and job opportunities to help residents move ahead are readily available in their new neighborhoods, a far cry from the remote, mountainous areas of the past, he said.

"The local government provides free vocational training programs to us as part of a poverty alleviation program," Samdrub Tsering said. "We can learn different, useful skills that will help us get jobs, from cooking and welding to construction."

He said three villagers who took two 60-day cooking courses opened restaurants in Namling county in 2018.

"Over the past two years, their family income has been between 20,000 yuan (\$2,980) and 40,000 yuan" Samdrub Tsering said.



Jangra Yeshe, from a formerly impoverished family in Damxung county, is one of the first female helicopter pilots in Tibet after she received training by a local general aviation company. PURBU TASHI / XINHUA

He said he is learning to drive a truck at a local driving school, and has passed the first two levels of the four-level course.

"My plan is to get a driver's license as soon as possible so I can find a job driving trucks on a construction site. That way, I can get a better salary," he said.

The Tibet autonomous region has been a major venue

for China's poverty reduction since the central government began an overall poverty-relief campaign in 2016.

During a news conference held in Lhasa on Oct 15, Wu Yingjie, Party secretary of the autonomous region, said a total of 628,000 people in 74 counties and districts in Tibet have been lifted out of impoverishment since 2016.

— PALDEN NYIMA

More jobs provided with skill training

Norbu Dondrup, a resident of Gyashing township in Kongpo'gyada county in the Tibet autonomous region, became impoverished in 2012-13 after his mother contracted a serious illness.

He tried to improve his livelihood but failed because of lacking the required skills.

Learning of his situation, officials at the poverty-reduction offices of Nyingchi city, which administrates Kongpo'gyada county, offered a helping hand. They offered him an opportunity for training in Lhasa as a security guard.

When the training concluded, Norbu Dondrup found a job in the People's Hospital of Nyingchi.

"Thanks to the government, I found a good job and earned enough money to improve the financial situation for my family," Norbu Dondrup said.

Like Norbu Dondrup, more rural residents in the Tibet autonomous region are looking at vocational training as an important means to help them find new jobs and improve livelihoods.

Chogyal is a resident in Nyangdoi township in Gyalze county. He was a member of an impoverished family before 2016.

He learned from his fellow villagers that there were various training courses organized by the government of Shigatse, which administrates Gyalze county, to help rural residents to master skills for new jobs.

Chogyal recognized this was a good opportunity to change his fate and improve his livelihood. He joined a training class in Shigatse in 2017 and got a welder's license a few months ago.

He founded a small firm in 2018 offering welding services for local construction sites. Seeing revenue



Residents in Gar county work in a garment factory that was established to receive surplus rural labourers in the county and its neighbourhood. TIAN JINWEN / XINHUA

increase steadily for his firm, he encouraged more of his fellow villagers, especially those from impoverished families, to learn welding and join him.

Chogyal later put forward an application to the local government to take him off of the list of impoverished residents.

"The government helped me a lot several years ago when I was on the list. Now I have an adequate income to raise me high above the poverty line. It's my turn to help others," Chogyal said.

Namgya Tsering used to be an impoverished farmer in Nar township in Samdrubzhe district, Shigatse. With the help of the local government, he received training in operating construction machinery.

Based on his experience in the industry for several years, he later established a construction company himself. Currently his annual net profit from the business is more than 250,000 yuan a year. "Now that I am lifted out of poverty, I'm planning to create more jobs for locals, help them improve their income," Namgya Tsering said.

Chophel is the Party secretary of Burtra village in Saga county. To meet the

growing demand of the labor market, he opened a labor service company helping local residents find new jobs in and outside the county.

His company has established extensive cooperation with construction, home services and catering companies in the neighborhood. It has helped 115 people find jobs and their average per capita monthly income has surpassed 4,000 yuan.

In addition, the company has cooperated with local vocational schools to offer training to 34 residents, equipping them with such skills as cooking and construction machine operating.

To meet the demand of rural residents, local governments in Tibet have stepped up efforts in organizing training courses and helping to create job opportunities.

In Shigatse, for instance, the city's human resources and social security bureau has offered 115 training classes for residents from impoverished families. Nearly 3,000 people have received the trainings and more than 90 percent of them have found new jobs.

— YUAN SHENGGAO



A farmer works at a vineyard in Markam county. Planting grapes is major means of poverty reduction in the county. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Grape of wealth: Emerging industry boosts incomes

Planting grapes and making wine had been an exotic business for Tibetans in the past. But today, the novel industry has developed into one of the economic pillars in the countryside in the southeastern part of Tibet autonomous region.

In Markham, a county in Chamdo city, planting grapes is a major means of poverty reduction and increasing farmers' incomes.

In Mogshod township in the Lancang River valley, Yang Peizheng operates a 0.59-acre vineyard. In 2019, he earned more than 8,000 yuan (\$1,206) by selling grapes to a local winery.

"This is a sharp contrast to what we were four years ago. My family then grew corn and highland barley, and could hardly make ends meet," Yang said.

According to Yeshe Dorje, head of the Mogshod township government, there are a total of 326 acres of vineyards in the township.

Last year, Mogshod's grape output reached 350 metric tons and farmers' revenue from planting grapes totaled 1.77 million yuan.

"That means an increase of 8,400 yuan for each household on average," the official said.

Mogshod and its neighboring

townships of Naxi and Chut-sankha are located in the dry, hot valley of Lancang River.

"Plentiful sunshine and ease of irrigation with water from the Lancang make the region one of the most suitable places in Tibet for growing grapes," Yeshe Dorje said.

Also helping local farmers increase their revenue is the East Tibet Zhenbao Winery in Naxi township. Grapes from the three townships are mostly sold to the company.

"We spent more than 2 million yuan buying grapes from local growers last year," said Chogtsuo, deputy general manager of the company.

She added the company has employed 28 locals, with their average per capita monthly salary reaching 3,600 yuan.

In Chamdo city, grape planting area totaled 3,212 acres, and there are five wineries using locally grown grapes as raw materials for winemaking, according to the city's poverty-reduction office.

Local statistics show that these enterprises produced 600 tons of grape wine and reported combined revenue of 64 million yuan last year. More than 400 residents have been lifted from poverty with the help of the companies.

— YUAN SHENGGAO