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Public Intervention on Rural Poverty Alleviation: A Case Study Between China and India

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ABSTRACT

This paper decision analyctics the evolution of pro-poor development and research on pro-poor practices in China and India, taking rural poverty alleviation in both countries as an example. The research perspective is cast more towards the policy target groups and rural societies to gain a deeper understanding of the institutional and systemic factors that influence the choice and implementation of pro-poor policies, as well as the logic and interrelationships among different actors in the policy implementation network. The final conclusion is that the government should enter more into the life world of the poor, listen to their voices, understand at what level and to what extent their lives are affected by the implementation of pro-poor policies, and how the informal institutions of the vernacular society interact with the formal institutions in the process of policy implementation. This series of questions can help the government examine the theoretical and practical issues of rural poverty alleviation policies from a more comprehensive and historical perspective, which is important for promoting the practice of rural poverty alleviation policies.

1. Introduction

The international community has always been concerned about poverty, especially for developing countries to eradicate poverty [1]. In this regard, the social welfare of the government is an important factor that can influence poverty alleviation, mainly in terms of the distribution of economic and political rights. Therefore, an important part of the cycle of poverty alleviation in developing countries is the implementation of political, economic, and educational policies to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor [2].

From an international perspective, China and India are both economically underdeveloped agricultural countries with large populations and are also countries that have actively developed policies to promote poverty reduction, especially rural poverty alleviation programs. While China is committed to its own poverty eradication, it has always actively cooperated with other developing countries to support and help developing countries, especially underdeveloped countries, in their poverty reduction efforts, making significant contributions to the global poverty reduction cause [3].

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However, these great achievements seem to be based on the construction of urbanization, and for China, there is still a huge gap between rural and urban areas in terms of social welfare in China at this stage.

India, another large developing country in Asia, is experiencing rapid economic growth and is also committed to poverty eradication. India has a large number of poor people, mainly in the rural areas, and even in some areas, people are unable to solve the problem of food and clothing. India's economic development policies and reforms have brought economic growth to India, but at the same time, there is still a problem of uneven rural development in the formulation of anti-poverty policies [4].

Since China and India share a certain degree of similarity in terms of population and economic development, both countries have a huge share of rural population in the total population. Therefore, using these two countries, China and India, as cases to study the causes of rural poverty and government policies to alleviate poverty, can provide lessons for global poverty alleviation efforts and for reducing the global gap between rich and poor [5].

At present for there have been many scholars who have made a lot of studies on rural anti-poverty policies in India and China. However, few comparative analyses of rural anti-poverty policies in these two countries have been presented. In the following paper, we review the literature on rural poverty and pro-poor policies in China and India, respectively, and then analyze and discuss the pro-poor policies in these two countries.

Regarding rural poverty in China, according to Feng *et al.,* [6] rural poverty is often attributed to unequal land holdings and the existence of exploitative relationships. The great reason for the persistence of rural poverty after the founding of the People's Republic of China is that the collectivization system shackles the productive incentives of the peasants. In addition, they argues that factors of production technology also hinder the development of agriculture, resulting in increasing labor inputs that do not yield sufficient benefits [6]. A number of studies provide empirical evidence on poverty reduction in rural China, and Huan *et al.* [7] uses household data from rural Sichuan and Shaanxi provinces to explain that a major part of poverty reduction is economic growth. Beyond that, inclusive poverty reduction programs and improvements in public services, including the establishment of social protection systems. In addition to growth, specific patterns of growth are important. According to Ravallion and Chen [8], the impact of rural growth is about four times greater than that of non-agricultural growth. Fan *et al.* [9] used simultaneous equation modeling to estimate the direct and indirect impact of government investment on poverty reduction in rural China. The beneficial impact of government investment on poverty reduction can be attributed to growth in the agricultural sector, agricultural wages, and non-agricultural employment opportunities. Qin and Zhang [10] based their long-term policy practice and extensive empirical studies on the results of Meta-analysis to show that the Chinese government's pro-poor support has a positive effect on reducing the incidence of rural poverty.

In addition to exploring the factors that contribute to rural poverty, other researchers have examined the anti-poverty policies adopted by the Indian government for rural areas. First, using state-level panel data from 1970 to 1993, Fan *et al.* [11] found that investments in rural roads and agricultural research had a greater impact on poverty reduction and productivity growth than other government investments. This implies that public spending by the Indian government has a positive impact on rural poverty alleviation in India. However, according to Breitkreuz *et al.,* [12] the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, while having an impact on income growth in the short run, has little impact on income growth of marginalized populations in the long run [12]. Singh and Chudasama [13], with the help of fuzzy cognitive map (FCM) simulations that demonstrate causal inference, find that developing countries that want to achieve better poverty alleviation

results Microcredit needs to be provided through quality organizations that can guarantee farmers' rights to continue farming and even encourage them to use microcredit to choose alternative livelihoods. They argue that an integrated multidimensional approach to poverty alleviation is needed to address poverty [13].

2. Case studies

2.1 Background on Rural Poverty Alleviation in China and India

After reviewing the literature on the factors of rural poverty and government policies to alleviate poverty in China and India, we can understand that there are significant similarities in the background of rural poverty alleviation in China and India. We can understand that there are great similarities between the background of rural poverty reduction in China and India.

First, both China and India are large agricultural countries, and according to China's census in 2021, China has a rural population of 50,979,000, or 36% of China's total population. And according to India's 2011 census, about 70% of the Indian population lives in rural areas. This means that for both countries, rural development is of great importance, and if rural areas remain behind in development and the living standards of farmers cannot be improved, this will become a major obstacle to the overall economic development of both countries.

Secondly, historically speaking, both countries inherited an economy of widespread rural poverty under the feudal labor system. China received the influence of the aggression of the then European and American countries in the budding stage of capitalism, which interrupted the development of the capital economy. For India, it was then suffering from the effects of deindustrialization under colonialism from the British. Thus, after achieving independence, both countries were deeply troubled by an agrarian system. Both countries had a huge potential for economic surplus, but both lacked the institutional framework for an effective economic mechanism to promote modern economic growth, and this imbalance also troubled both countries.

Since independence, India's government has actively promoted agricultural reform in order to alleviate its fiscal crisis, which began with a top-down restructuring of industry and trade. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, China has been implementing bottom-up reforms starting with the household joint production contracting system with the goal of achieving higher living standards for its people. After decades of development, China and India have gradually evolved from subsistence rural economies to free and open successful economies. However, while agriculture in China and India is growing at a rapid pace, it also faces many problems and challenges. For example, the gap between the rich and the poor is becoming more pronounced in both China and India, and both countries have a long way to go to reduce the number of poor people; the shortage of resources and the deterioration of the land environment caused by rapid development have become equally important issues for both countries.

3. Results

3.1 Rural poverty alleviation systems in China and India

China:

As a developing country, China had a large number of poor people in rural areas and a weak economic base during the early years of reform and opening up. In response to the widespread rural poverty, the Chinese government began a series of large-scale, planned rural poverty alleviation practices in 1986. For example, in 1952, the state completed the reform of the land system, improving land distribution, enabling farmers to acquire land ownership, and basically eliminating peasant landlessness. at the end of 1956, the state established the people's commune system in rural areas, providing social assistance, natural disaster relief, and preferential resettlement and other in-kind

relief to poor rural groups and special groups, etc. to solve their food and clothing problems, while improving public services and it also improved public services and social security systems, strengthened agricultural financial services and promoted agricultural technology services [14]. In the following decades, China has been committed to reducing rural poverty, and has achieved good results. It can even be said that China's achievements in rural poverty alleviation have made a great contribution to poverty reduction in the world [15].

The reform and opening up of China's rural poverty alleviation work took as a turning point the abolition of the people's communes, the establishment of a two-tier management system based on joint family production contracting, the liberalization of agricultural prices and markets, and the rapid development of township enterprises, which greatly liberated and developed the productive forces and alleviated rural poverty on a large scale, while laying the foundation for solving the rural poverty problem. The government adopted a series of measures to alleviate poverty, including in 1980, the central government set up "funds to support the development of economically underdeveloped areas", and in 1982, the most impoverished inland areas such as Gansu Province and Ningxia Province were included in the national plan as special construction to carry out regional special poverty alleviation work. In 1984, 18 concentrated contiguous poverty areas were designated for key support. The targeting of the poverty alleviation system and policies at this stage focused on rural areas with universal poverty characteristics, as well as on contiguous poverty areas where extreme poverty was concentrated, with obvious regional overtones. The poverty alleviation method of direct transfer of funds is adopted, with relief characteristics. For those rural areas with inferior natural conditions, geographical environment and infrastructure, economic take-off is still far from them. The regional targeting and relief approach to poverty alleviation is far from being able to help them out of their economic and cultural backwardness.

China's poverty alleviation and development has gradually entered into precision poverty alleviation in the context of the goal of being able to achieve a moderately prosperous society across the board. As the overall macroeconomic environment changes, severe income inequality and regional development imbalances have led to the ineffectiveness of poverty alleviation policies that were commonly used to provide funds after the reform and opening up. In this context, it is increasingly important to implement more targeted poverty alleviation policies to directly support the poor. In this regard, the first step is to improve rural infrastructure to raise people's living standards. The Chinese government has invested in the construction of roads, transportation, drinking water, and communication in rural areas. In 2018, the proportion of rural households with roads outside their residences being cement or tarred, piped water supply to households, centralized garbage disposal, centralized purification and treatment of drinking water, and use of sanitary toilets were 75.4%, 79.7%, 83.6%, 65.3%, and 56.0%, respectively, and the number of poor areas with electricity The proportion of natural villages with electricity coverage in poor areas is close to full coverage, and the proportion of natural villages with telephone, cable TV signal and broadband access is 99.2%, 88.1 % and 81.9 %, respectively. The second is about basic public services and social security in rural areas. The Chinese government has focused its attention on rural education in poor areas and is committed to improving the level of education and cultural quality in rural areas; improving rural medical facilities and the pension service system; and in order to reduce the medical expenses of rural residents, the Chinese government has introduced a new rural cooperative medical [16].

Thus, since China's reform and opening up, China's poverty alleviation policies have changed in two main ways: first, changes in the way the targets of poverty alleviation policies are targeted; and second, changes in the policy content of poverty alleviation policies. From 1978, when the widespread poverty in the countryside was addressed, then focusing on the poverty-stricken

contiguous areas, identifying poverty-alleviation counties, then poor villages, and finally emphasizing the poor households with established cards, the structure of China's rural poverty governance system has shown a trend of gradually moving toward precision. Policy content has also shifted from the earlier developmental poverty alleviation, which focused on economic development, to a multidimensional approach to poverty alleviation, complemented by bottom-up village-wide promotion and guaranteed poverty alleviation. These changes were not formed spontaneously, but in the context of national and rural economic and social development, the poverty alleviation system was constantly embedded in the macro-institutional context of national development, and problems were identified and solved in the process of policy practice.

China's rural public service system includes rural education services, health services, cultural services, social security, employment services infrastructure, environmental management, and many other aspects. Compared with India, China's rural public service system has a broader coverage and more public services related to farmers' production and life [17]. In the construction of the public service system for rural areas, due to the comprehensiveness of the public service system structure, the relevant policies are formulated to cover many aspects of rural social life. In the 21st century, the Chinese government has started to actively promote the transformation of poverty alleviation policies, which combine the rights of the state with the collective actions of villagers. This has led to the further development of rural poverty alleviation [15].

India:

As a predominantly agricultural developing country, India has always attached great importance to rural poverty alleviation, as demonstrated by its progressive improvement of its social security system. In order to ensure the basic livelihood of farmers, the government has formulated a series of welfare policies for farmers. For example, farmers who have lost their labor force can directly receive government subsidies to meet their basic needs; farmers who do not have a home can receive government subsidies to build a home to get a basic place to live [18]. Other farmers have access to government micro-grants for housing rehabilitation through the Credit and Subsidy Program. Farmers with an annual income of less than Rs. 3 · 20,000 can receive a grant of Rs. 10,000 and a loan of up to Rs. 40,000 for housing construction. Older farmers who are incapacitated can receive a government stipend. The Indian government has also implemented a low price food policy for the poor. The poor do not need to buy food at the market price and can buy food at a state-specified price below the market price. These measures have been implemented to a certain extent to ensure the basic needs of farmers [19].

In addition to this, the Indian government is actively engaged in agricultural informatics in order to be able to promote the development of rural areas. In recent years, India has become the fastest growing software industry in the world, and with funding from the World Bank, India has begun to form a regional and national network of agricultural informatics technologies. India's agricultural informatization revolution began in 1988 with the aim of narrowing the urban-rural gap. The Indian government has developed a series of policies to promote rural informatization. On the IT side, the telecom sector has increased the level of Internet site construction; expanded broadband, vigorously developed Internet cafes in rural areas, and reduced personal income tax for farmers who purchase computers and software. On the telecommunications side, the government has established call centers, radio and television channels. Generally speaking, telephone consultation by farmers is free of charge. The Indian government has also developed, through international exchange and cooperation, an agricultural wireless network program, which provides agricultural and weather information to farmers at least twice a day via buses that travel to rural areas. In addition, the National Information Centre of India has established several specialized agricultural information

database systems to help farmers understand market information, prevent natural disasters, and provide agricultural credit services.

The Indian government is committed to the formation of agricultural industrial agricultural cooperatives, mainly agricultural cooperatives. India has the largest system of agricultural cooperatives in the world and has a high market share in many fields. The various cooperatives in the production and distribution fields in rural India have played a role in developing agricultural production, strengthening the economic power of villages, enhancing the distribution of goods and improving the living standards of farmers. Basically, every farmer in India is a member of an agricultural cooperative and receives a certain amount of income through it. Indian agricultural cooperatives have formed a close connection between the supply of agricultural production materials, agricultural production, agricultural product processing, marketing, storage and transportation, with agricultural product processing as the core feature. The development of agro-processing industry has promoted the development of rural industrialization and achieved good economic and social benefits. However, Indian rural industry still suffers from low capital and technical investment, small scale, labor-intensive, and ungraded agricultural products.

Leaving aside the agricultural production issues mentioned above, India has a serious social stratification, and the reason for this is the caste system mentioned in the previous article. The purpose of the caste system is to promote the identity of different social groups according to their skill levels. Over time, however, some social groups gained power over others, creating a basis for social discrimination. Over time, caste-based stratification has become the determining factor of an individual's position in the social hierarchy. Although caste-based discrimination is illegal in India, there are still significant "social" differences between "higher" and "lower" castes. In response to this, the Indian government has made active policies to protect the lower caste groups. Since 1999, the Indian government has been implementing self-employment training for rural youth and development programs for women and children in rural areas. The support to poor families is mainly done through a combination of commercial credit and government funded loans. Community self-employment committees and village self-governance committees select or develop market-competitive labor-intensive industries to be given to the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries of the self-employment program are mainly the lower caste groups, tribes and women. 50% of the beneficiary quota is reserved for lower caste groups and tribes 40% for women 3% for disabled groups [20].

This is why India has been able to maintain a great degree of social harmony and stability despite the disparity between the rich and the poor in rural and urban areas. Since the 1980s, India has been committed to the construction of the rural medical system, forming a three-tier medical service network with health posts, primary health centers and community health centers, and implementing the policy of free medical care for all citizens. To a certain extent, the Indian rural health care system has reduced the financial burden of farmers' families, ensured the basic medical needs of the nationals while taking into account the medical needs of the underprivileged and the affluent, thus reflecting social equity. Under the protection of these policies, the Indian government has guaranteed the basic rights of farmers in the areas of medical care, pension and employment.

4. Evaluation

Based on the analysis in the above article, it can be found that the success of rural poverty alleviation in both countries is largely due to the government's commitment to creating a relatively equal growth path. This is evidenced by the expansion of non-farm employment opportunities in rural areas that provide productive employment for farmers. While China and India have played a positive role in rural development in terms of poverty reduction and overall economic growth, there are many areas of agricultural and rural development in both countries that need to be addressed and improved.

For example, the Indian government has problems with incomplete economic reforms and weak concessions to the rural poor. The Indian government's land reform has not achieved absolute results because the political, economic and social structure of the countryside has not undergone fundamental changes [21]. Although the post-independence Indian government has taken measures such as the development of cooperatives and village development programs, the incomplete nature of the reform means that the lower social strata still need to rely on opportunities brought by external economic development in order to benefit from economic development. Suicide due to poverty is still common even in rural India. Media coverage of India reflects its hopeful side: rapid economic growth has lifted tens of millions of people out of poverty and strengthened the middle class. But for many poor farmers, the economic boom has not benefited them. And farmers make up two-thirds of India's workforce. India's income disparity is huge, and there are now many billionaires, but at the same time, about 800 million people live on less than $2 a day, and many poor farmers are even heavily indebted, a huge debt burden that causes many farmers to commit suicide each year.

For China, the international experience of poverty alleviation emphasizes the participation of the poor and the enhancement of understanding and confidence in the poor, rather than viewing them as mere targets of anti-poverty interventions. In China's poverty alleviation practices, the participation of the poor in the policy process is very low, and the information and power to dispose of poverty alleviation resources is mostly in the hands of grassroots bureaucrats and township elites. The local knowledge system, subjective initiative and development decision-making power of the poor are not sufficiently valued and explored, and poverty alleviation in China often becomes a seemingly one-way government action, which reduces the adaptability and effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs, and even leads to reverse welfare in some places. Precise poverty alleviation requires "precise identification and household-based policies", which connotes empowering the identified poor and finding poverty alleviation tools that meet their characteristics according to their own wishes and causes of poverty, reflecting the requirements of participatory poverty alleviation. However, in the process of policy implementation, it is difficult to implement this policy concept. How to find an implementation tool that fits the characteristics of the rural informal system, form a "bottom-up" policy decision, and stimulate the enthusiasm, initiative and participation of the policy targets is also an important challenge for the implementation of the policy of precise poverty alleviation. In addition, there is still a huge gap between rural and urban areas in terms of social welfare. For example, rural residents are not guaranteed retirement and medical care. At the same time, China's policy of poverty alleviation and development has led to a significant reduction in rural poverty. Farmers have been given the right to farm freely and to move freely. But "freedom" is only a formal benefit that does not necessarily lead to a higher standard of living and security [22].

This means that economic development by itself does not automatically solve the problem of poverty, and high economic growth may even be accompanied by a decline in poverty reduction rates. Economic growth may not be accompanied by a corresponding industrial restructuring, for example, while the share of agriculture in GDP decreases, the share of the secondary sector does not increase much [23]. This leads to a lack of appropriate changes in the distribution of the labor force,

and the poor are more likely to be excluded from economic development. Therefore, it is important to keep optimizing the industrial structure while the economy is developing, so that the number of people in the secondary sector can grow up while the proportion of people in the primary sector is reduced.

5. Conclusion

The study of rural poverty alleviation in China and India is largely a review of past policies and the lessons learned from them, so that future policies on rural poverty alleviation can avoid the mistakes made in the past. As mentioned earlier, if China and India, as two countries with large populations, can achieve success in rural poverty alleviation, it will not only benefit their own economic development, but also be a significant event for the world economy.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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