

CCTV-4

Poverty Alleviation & China's System

Robert Lawrence Kuhn, May 23, 2020



ROBERT LAWRENCE KUHN: What's fascinating at this time, when the world is focused on the coronavirus epidemic — and how China has contained the epidemic through very rigorous and strict lockdowns and procedures — is that the same system that was successful in containing the coronavirus is the system that has enabled the poverty alleviation campaign to be successful.



KUHN: The Party has a very definitive organizational structure: overall leadership by the central government, of course, and then Five Levels of local government – provincial, municipal, county, township and village.



KUHN: In addition to the organizational structure and mobilization capacity of the Party, President Xi Jinping, as the general secretary of the Party, the leader of the country, is putting his personal credibility and commitment on the line by saying that poverty alleviation is his most important task.

So that filters down to everyone else.



KUHN: Producing our international documentary on poverty alleviation has been a remarkable experience for me and really has enabled me to understand China better.

I thought I knew China. By the time I began on poverty alleviation. I'd already been working in China for very close to 30 years at that point.

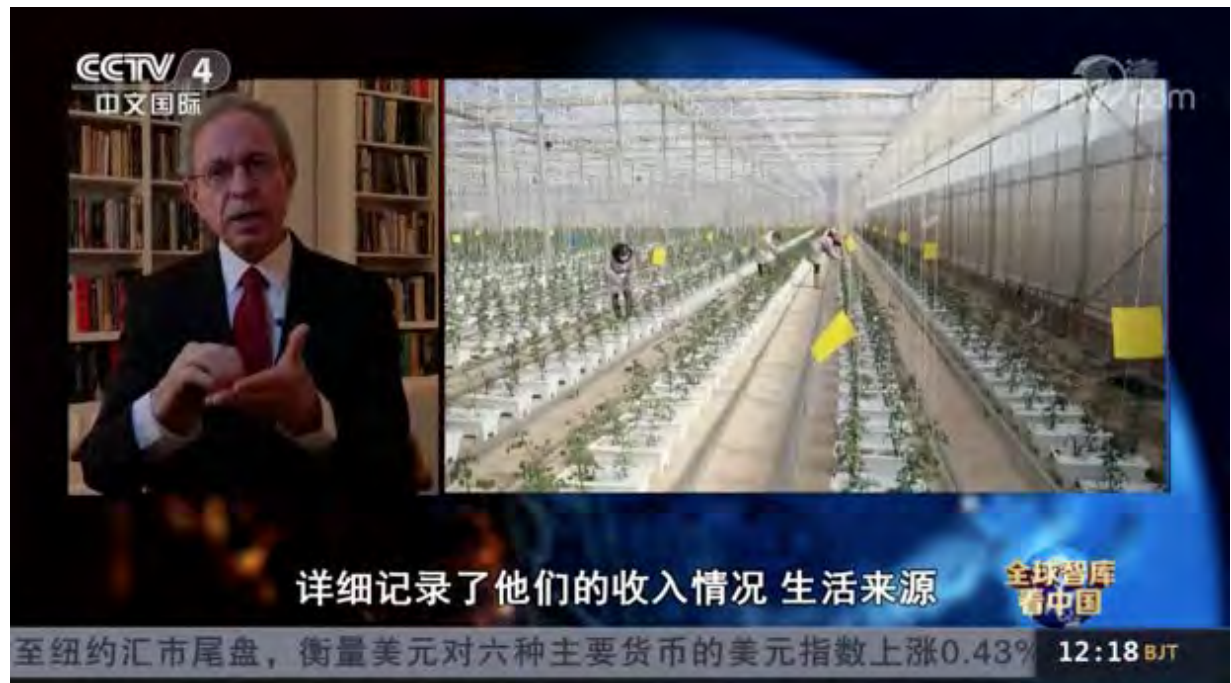


KUHN: But I learned a great deal. We went to some of the poorest areas in China, such as the mountains of Guizhou, and I was just startled by what I saw. I saw every poor family — it was tens of millions originally — with their own personalized file, with their own monthly monitoring of how they are doing in achieving an income level to bring them out of poverty.



KUHN: How are they doing it? Each family according to their customized plan. Each family had a specific targeted plan of how to bring each one out of poverty.

And responsible for each poor family was one Party official — a Party cadre — generally an individual who may be in his early thirties, who had come to villages from a from a position in the local government. But he went to these rural areas to work in villages in order to affect the poverty alleviation campaign. It's a remarkable mobilization of young resources to serve the people.



KUHN: China's poverty alleviation campaign is the most remarkable in human history. Of the broad poverty alleviation goals that the United Nations put forth, two-thirds of that success has come from China.

China has brought some 800 million people out of poverty. The last 100 million being through targeted poverty alleviation. These were the intractably poor.

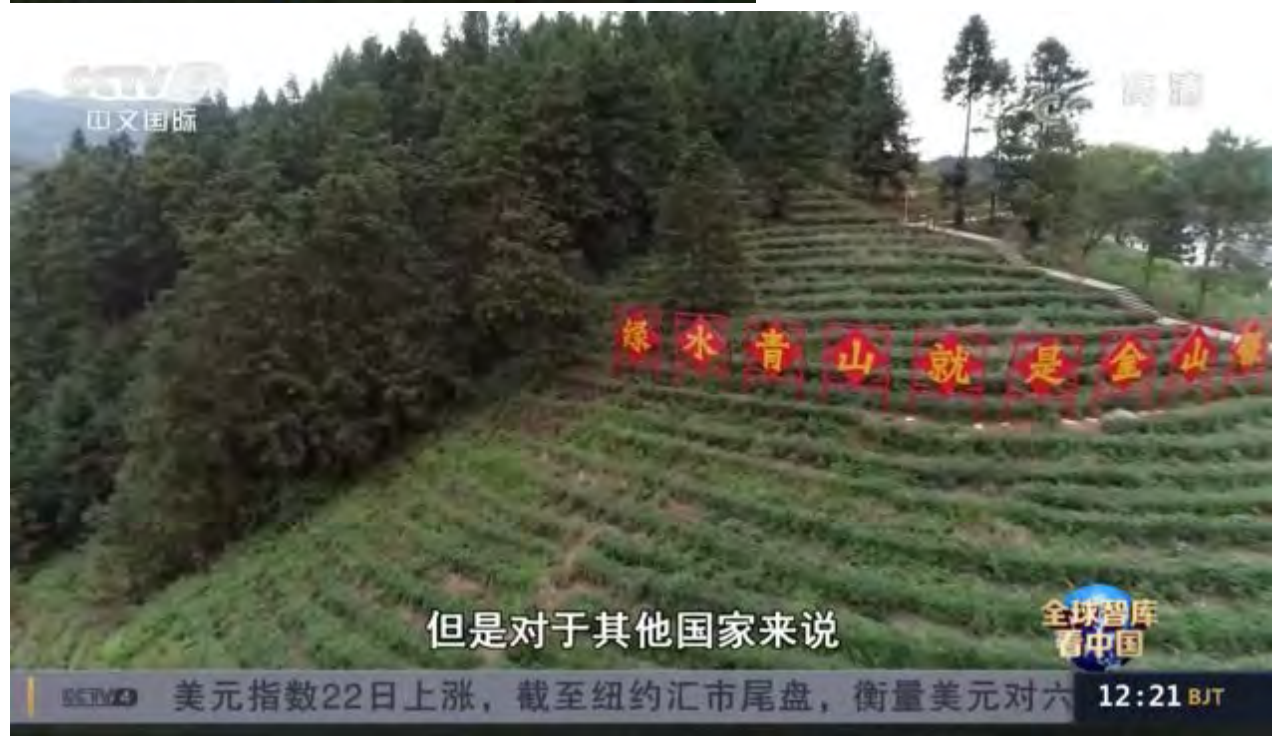


KUHN: So, what can the world learn from this? Well, the first principle is to be sure that everyone understands that each country is different. Each culture has a different history, a different nature of its population. And what we cannot do is to take literal programs from one and impose them on another country.



KUHN: However, the principles are what's important. And China's principles of the success of its poverty alleviation are very clear. Number one is the absolute commitment of the leadership of the country. President Xi Jinping has said, I have spent more energy and time on poverty alleviation than on anything else, and that sends a message to the country.

So that's the first lesson to learn, that the senior leader of the country needs to make the mission of poverty alleviation a priority as well as the specific aspects of the poverty programs.



KUHN: We often think of the poverty programs in terms of what has to happen. And China has pioneered mechanisms and measures like micro businesses, education, relocating whole villages, eco-compensation, social security.

But what's critically important for other countries to recognize is the motivation of the officials in making poverty alleviation a priority.

