

Editor's Note:

Chinese President Xi Jinping solemnly declared “complete victory” in eradicating absolute poverty during a conference in Beijing on Thursday. China has lifted all rural poor people out of extreme poverty under the current standard, with 832 counties, 128,000 villages, and nearly 100 million impoverished people shaking off poverty. How did China make it? What does the role of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) play during the arduous process? Four foreign experts shared their views with the Global Times on China's successful poverty alleviation.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn, chairman of The Kuhn Foundation and recipient of the China Reform Friendship Medal (2018)

China's success in eradicating extreme poverty is founded on three powerful principles: CPC leadership, General Secretary Xi's commitment, and CPC mobilization.

First, the operational leadership of the CPC is not just about giving directives and pronouncements but actually implementing programs and projects through the CPC organizational structure – central government and five levels of local government (provincial, municipal, county, township, village).

Second, the commitment of Xi, who by voicing his personal leadership repeatedly and by allocating his personal time overtly, sets an example that leaders and officials must follow.

Visiting poor villages has been a key part of Xi's more than 80 domestic inspections since he was elected general secretary of the CPC Central Committee in late 2012. Similarly, during the coronavirus epidemic, when Xi visited hospitals and spoke with frontline workers, the whole country got the message. Almost everywhere Xi goes, he stresses poverty alleviation and encourages Party cadres to visit impoverished areas regularly and interact with local people directly.

Third, the mobilization capacity of the CPC and the ability to command the country's resources in personnel and materials. For example, during the pandemic, assigning “sister” relationships between strong provinces and specific cities in Hubei, a strategy long employed in poverty alleviation between eastern and west-

ern provinces and cities.

For a country to make a success of poverty alleviation, the No.1 criterion is that the leadership of the country must make an absolute and resolute commitment to accomplish it.

So, this is the big lesson to learn: the senior leader of the country needs to make the overall mission of poverty alleviation a high priority for the nation. Nothing less will do.

Jorge Heine, former Chilean ambassador to China and a research professor at the Pardee School of Global Studies, Boston University

Humanity has made enormous progress in reducing poverty and extreme poverty in the past 40 years – notably in the current phase of globalization that started in 1980.

China's role in poverty reduction is especially noteworthy, and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were achieved in large part because China lifted some 800 million people out of poverty since it kicked off reform and opening-up. This has changed the face of China, and with a \$10,000 per capita GDP, China today is a very different country from what it was in 1980.

To an important degree, this is a consequence of sheer economic growth. By growing at an average of 10 percent a year for 30 years in a row, something no economist thought was possible for any country, let alone one the size of China, enormous wealth has been created. The Chinese people are so much better off as a result. Yes, this growth has not been equally spread across all of China. City dwellers earn, on average, three times as much as their rural counterparts; the coastal areas are better off than the interior; and the South and the East do much better than the North and the West.

Yet, over the past few years, an effort has been made to address this issue, and provinces like landlocked Guizhou, which had been especially affected by high poverty rates, have managed to eradicate extreme poverty, as measured by Chinese standards. The point is that, far from relying solely on economic growth by itself to

reduce poverty, public policies targeted the counties mostly affected by it.

This meant investing in infrastructure like water supply, roads, and networks, as well as equipping educational, health and cultural facilities, above and beyond normal budgetary allocations.

A key point to keep in mind here is the issue of physical and digital connectivity. As the world moves toward a service economy, being connected is of the essence. And this is where China's Belt and Road Initiative comes in. Although it started as a project to recreate Eurasia, it soon evolved into something much more ambitious. What China is saying to countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America is: railways, mobile telephones and broadband access worked for us. Perhaps they will work for you as well.

John Ross, a senior fellow at Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China and former director of Economic and Business Policy for the Mayor of London

President Xi hailed the country's achievement of eradicating extreme poverty as a miracle that shall “go down in history.” That is totally, literally true. This is mainly because it's a socialist country. This is the biggest achievement in poverty reduction in the whole of human history. It was done by the CPC and the government of China. It was done by enormous, hard work, and by having a correct social and economic system. It shows that socialism is something which delivers for people. Now it's the same as the way that China has been protected in COVID-19.

I wouldn't call it a miracle. I would say that it shows the correctness of the policies which have been pursued. I think it's just very inspiring. It's the biggest contribution to human rights made by any country in the world.

Some Western media said it remains to be seen whether China's work on poverty relief can continue. This is very funny. Many books from the West have predicted that China is about to collapse for decades, but it would not happen. China has done poverty reduction by enabling people to produce.

What China has done is more sustainable because it's been done

by creating infrastructure. It's been mainly done by greatly improving their actual conditions of life, their housing and their ability to make a living. That means it's much more sustainable.

Ei Sun OH, a senior fellow at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs

In general, China's successful eradication of extreme poverty is indeed a very laudable achievement. I think the main motivation, and the main reasons, were perhaps a sort of collective determination as well as the resolute focus by means of a very systematic effort over recent years to eradicate this poverty.

I heard, for example, government officials and from different levels of government were tasked with this poverty eradication effort. They're politically accountable and responsible for the success of poverty eradication efforts in their respective jurisdiction.

Another reason was the willingness of those who used to live in extreme poverty to seek to eradicate themselves from the level of extreme poverty. I think in a lot of Western countries, the mentality depends on government largesse and government handout is very strong; therefore the willingness to extricate yourself out of poverty is awfully absent from a lot of these countries, unfortunately.

China's lessons to the world in terms of poverty eradication are indeed the combination of the government's willingness, determination and focus and accountability of various officials. This combined with creative solutions by various corporations and organizations in conjunction with the willingness of those who live in poverty to pull themselves up.

We look forward to sharing some of China's lessons in this respect, especially with other developing countries.

China's victory offers clues to global campaign against poverty



The picture, taken on September 7, 2020, shows the allocation areas for locals in a village in Yuexi county, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture of Southwest China's Sichuan Province. Photo: Xinhua