

Program Highlights

Program: 8th ASEAN+3 Village Leaders Exchange Program
Venue: Hebian Village, Yunnan Province, the People's Republic of China (PRC)
Dates: 5-11 May 2019

Since its establishment in 1997, ASEAN+3 has been the main channel of ASEAN and East Asian cooperation. And poverty reduction and rural development is one of more than 20 pragmatic cooperation programs that has been carried out.

At the 3rd and 7th ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication, Malaysia proposed on behalf of ASEAN members that they would like to exchange experience and best practices of poverty reduction with the PRC. And that it would be done at the grassroots level through enhancing capacity building of ASEAN village leaders. In response, the International Poverty Reduction Center in China (IPRCC) cooperated with the ASEAN Secretariat and some ASEAN countries to launch the “ASEAN+3 Village Leaders Exchange Program” for village officials and practitioners in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, the PRC in April 2013. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang highlighted this program when he attended the 16th ASEAN+3 Summit in October 2013. Since then, the program has become an institutionalized annual event among ASEAN+3 countries.

The 8th ASEAN+3 Village Leaders Exchange Programme was held during 5-11 May, 2019 in Hebian Village, Yunnan Province. The topic was rural vitalization and integrated governance of poverty reduction. Participants gained tangible knowledge from PRC's poverty reduction and rural development experiences, including lessons, challenges and collaborative opportunities. More than 80 participants comprising ASEAN+3 government officials and village leaders, ASEAN secretariat representatives, independent consultants, scholars and PRC media personnel joined the event. It was sponsored by IPRCC and hosted by China Institute for South-South Cooperation in Agriculture (CISSCA). ASEAN Secretariat and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Regional Knowledge Sharing Initiative (RCSI) also supported the event.

The event comprised the following main activities:

- Speeches on PRC's poverty reduction and rural development policies, experiences and practices, PRC's rural revitalization strategy and rural governance, an in-depth case analysis on the integrated poverty reduction approach of Hebian Village.
- Each country presented its poverty reduction experience and challenges at the village-level.
- Field trips to villages near Hebian to have a first-hand look at rural governance and farmers' livelihood.
- Group discussions on potential collaborative areas and challenges on poverty reduction and rural development among ASEAN+3 countries.

Key Takeaways

- PRC's experience in poverty reduction and rural development lie in its political stability, strong government commitment and extensive social participation. The diversity/divergence in approaches adopted by different areas within PRC have been remarkable.

- The ASEAN+3 countries all face similar challenges of rural development like aging society, youth drain, feminization of agriculture, and contradiction between traditional and modern lifestyles. As such, a major challenge remains on how to vitalize rural area and achieve sustainable development.
- And the ASEAN+3 cooperation remains a useful platform to mobilize resources for knowledge sharing to develop the rural areas.

Areas for Further Studies

- It is not certain ASEAN countries can replicate PRC's approach to poverty reduction and rural development. Participants admit that while PRC's approach has been effective, it might be difficult to replicate in their countries as the governments might not have the capacity to undertake for example infrastructure investments.
- Some other issues like cultural and gender elements of poverty reduction need to be studied or discussed further.

Post-Event Evaluation

The average score of the event is 4.406 (5 excellent, 1 not good) suggesting that the event was well very received. Below are the scores of key questions:

Questions	Score
To what extent did the program improve your understanding about poverty alleviation and rural development in each country?	4.742
To what extent did the program improve your knowledge about China's poverty alleviation and rural development at the grassroots level?	4.710
To what extent would the program enhance your work capacity in the future?	4.161
To what extent did the program help to expand your global professional network?	4.387
To what extent can the program provide guidance for the poverty alleviation and rural development in your country?	4.032
Average	4.406

Next Steps

- A booklet on country case studies will be drafted and a photo report will be submitted to IPRCC and RKSJ.

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