

Effectiveness Evaluation and Countermeasures of Hemei Rural Construction in Guangdong Province

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Abstract: Assessing Guangdong's "Hundred Counties, Thousand Towns, and Ten Thousand Villages" project, this paper evaluates beautiful village construction across four dimensions: environment, infrastructure, local industries, and grassroots governance. It identifies common shortcomings—low industrial sophistication, weak cultural resource conversion, poor facility maintenance, and inadequate governance mechanisms. Considering regional disparities in fiscal capacity and resource flows among the Pearl River Delta, eastern, western, and northern Guangdong, the study proposes targeted improvements in regional coordination, industrial chain extension, cultural exploration, long-term management systems, and governance refinement. These recommendations offer practical references for advancing rural revitalization in this coastal province.

Keywords: Beautiful countryside; Rural revitalization; Urban-rural integration; High-Quality Development Project for 100 Counties, 1,000 Towns, and 10,000 Villages; Guangdong

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1. Introduction

With the Rural Revitalization Strategy entering the stage of deepening implementation, domestic rural construction is no longer limited to simple environmental remediation, but to the comprehensive work of synchronous promotion of industry, ecology, culture, governance, and people's livelihood. Different from traditional beautiful villages, Hemei villages pay more attention to stimulating the rural self-development ability and take the path of sustainable development, which is also the focus of the implementation of Rural Revitalization work in various regions^[1]. The economic aggregate of Guangdong Province has always been in the forefront of the country, and the level of urbanization is relatively high, but the imbalance between urban and rural regional development has always been a prominent problem in the development of the province^[2]. The Pearl River Delta gathers high-quality industrial resources, capital and talent elements, and

the rural infrastructure and industrial supporting infrastructure are relatively perfect; However, the growth rate of rural development in eastern, Western and northern Guangdong is significantly lagging behind due to the constraints of mountainous terrain and the lack of county financial capacity. In order to narrow the development gap across the province, Guangdong has integrated Hemei rural construction into the overall layout of the “hundreds of thousands of villages project”, with the help of this key project to promote the sinking of various resources to the countryside and help the countryside achieve long-term and stable development. Existing studies have pointed out that regional differences, lack of mass participation, and weak industrial foundation are common problems in rural construction in the eastern region ^[3]. Combined with the research results of Hemei rural construction, the promotion work in various regions still needs to be based on reality and find the correct implementation path ^[4]. On this premise, objectively evaluating the actual effect of rural construction in Hemei, Guangdong, identifying the problems in development, and formulating solutions will help promote the coordinated development of urban and rural areas, and provide practical reference for domestic coastal provinces.

2. Overview and effect evaluation of beautiful rural areas construction in Guangdong province

2.1. Continuous optimization of living environment

To understand the effectiveness of beautiful rural areas construction, the living conditions of the villages are the most intuitive reference, and they are also the first point where villagers perceive the development changes. The environmental improvement work carried out throughout Guangdong Province focused on addressing issues such as household garbage, domestic sewage, old toilets, and illegal constructions, completely transforming the previously poor environmental conditions of the villages. According to relevant statistics in 2024, the coverage rate of hygienic household toilets in rural areas reached over 97%. At the same time, local efforts also included the renovation of rural houses, ecological greening of villages, and other related work, further strengthening the ecological foundation of the villages. Ensuring the long-term maintenance of the living environment is an important guarantee for the stable development of the villages ^[5].

2.2. Gradual improvement of infrastructure

Balanced supply of public facilities in urban and rural areas is the core to eliminating the gap between urban and rural areas and building the foundation for beautiful rural areas. With the implementation of the “Hundred Counties, Thousand Towns, Ten Thousand Villages High-Quality Development Project” throughout the province, rural infrastructure construction has continued to be improved. Now, administrative villages in Guangdong have fully connected with paved roads, ensured safe water supply and stable electricity supply, and basic communication networks and rural logistics systems have also been basically established, effectively improving the living conditions of rural residents.

2.3. Steady development of rural industries

The sustainable development level of rural industries directly determines whether the construction of beautiful rural areas can be continuously advanced and is also the core element to activate the internal development vitality of the villages. Guangdong has implemented the “One Village, One Product, One Town, One Industry” industrial cultivation model based on local resource endowments, relying on local agricultural

resources to develop characteristic planting and livestock breeding industries. Local areas have also successively developed characteristic products such as lychees, citrus fruits, and tea, forming representative Lingnan agricultural products. In addition, local areas have developed new rural tourism, high-quality inns, and leisure agricultural activities based on rural landscapes, ancient village cultural heritage, and coastal natural resources, continuously enriching the types of rural industries.

3. The practical challenges of rural construction in Guangdong province

3.1. Imbalanced regional development

The development levels of rural areas within Guangdong Province vary greatly, which is the most prominent obstacle hindering the promotion of rural harmony in the province at present. Rural areas in the Pearl River Delta are located within the radiation circle of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and can receive resource spillovers from surrounding cities. In contrast, rural areas in the eastern, western, and northern parts of Guangdong Province are mostly located in remote areas with inconvenient transportation. Local finances can only invest a limited amount in rural construction. Moreover, cities have a stronger appeal, and the young and skilled labor force, as well as high-quality capital, are constantly flowing out of the villages. The problem of population hollowing out in rural areas is quite common. Currently, these regions have mostly completed basic tasks such as road hardening, garbage removal, and toilet renovations. In terms of industry cultivation, cultural development, and other in-depth construction, they still progress slowly. The one-way flow of urban-rural resources, uneven distribution of local finances, and differences in inherent conditions ultimately lead to the polarization of rural development within the province. Uneven regional resource allocation is also a long-standing practical problem in the development of rural areas in Guangdong ^[6].

3.2. Low industrial development level

There are many types of rural industries in Guangdong, but the overall development level is not high, making it difficult to drive sustained income growth for villagers. First, the agricultural industrial chain is relatively short. Most rural areas only engage in agricultural product cultivation and simple processing, lacking processing links, and the terminal income space of agricultural products is narrow. The regional agricultural development has not yet established a standardized production system and has not formed a complete industry system with local characteristics and brand operation. Second, the development ideas in various regions are similar, and there is a widespread phenomenon of repeated construction of industries, making it difficult to create industries with local characteristics. Third, the combination of agriculture and emerging industries such as tourism, e-commerce, and cultural and creative industries is not close enough, and the scale of new business models is small, with limited driving capacity. Industry homogeneity is also a common problem faced by many rural areas in China ^[7]. Overall, the development capacity of rural areas themselves is weak and unable to support the long-term construction of rural harmony.

3.3. Insufficient cultural construction

Rural construction harmony is not only about improving the village appearance but also about creating a distinctive local cultural system. Guangdong has multiple regional cultures such as Hakka, Chaoshan, overseas Chinese, and red history, and it still retains a considerable number of traditional ancient villages

and intangible cultural heritage resources. However, most rural areas have not established systematic cultural management and tourism transformation mechanisms. Some rural areas, when conducting human settlements renovations and tourism development, directly replicate construction models from other places and blindly pursue commercial economic benefits, which to some extent damages the local traditional dwellings and original folk culture, ultimately leading to the homogenization of rural landscapes and the loss of local characteristics. At the same time, cultural activities such as folk performance and intangible cultural heritage experience are not frequently held, and high-quality local cultural resources are difficult to be transformed into internal driving forces for rural quality improvement. The continuous loss of local cultural heritage is a practical problem that Guangdong needs to pay close attention to in the current rural construction harmony ^[8].

3.4. Incomplete management mechanism

At present, various renovation projects in rural areas of Guangdong Province are mainly coordinated and promoted by the government and funded by the government. The overall situation presents a state of insufficient initial construction investment and weak long-term maintenance and operation support. During the project construction stage, rural roads, sewage treatment equipment, sanitation facilities, and green landscapes can all meet the construction standards, but after completion, there are no fixed maintenance personnel, special funds, and clear management systems. Over time, problems such as aging facilities and environmental rebound frequently occur, and the initial construction achievements gradually lose their value. Meanwhile, the permanent resident population in the village is relatively small, and the villagers' willingness to actively maintain the village's appearance is not strong. Enterprises and social organizations rarely participate in it. The situation of multi-party collaborative management has not been formed. The absence of various participating entities is the main reason why the management mechanism cannot be implemented, and there are obvious shortcomings in the long-term operation mechanism of the countryside ^[9-10].

4. Optimization countermeasures for rural construction in Guangdong province

4.1. Implement differentiated policies

In response to the development disparities among different regions, it is not feasible to uniformly build all rural areas with a single standard. We must distinguish situations and implement measures in a categorized manner. The rural areas in the Pearl River Delta region have advantages in terms of location, funds, and market, and should focus on quality improvement efforts. They should vigorously develop tourism, health care and wellness industries, rural service industries, and other business models to create replicable and promotable demonstration models. The rural areas in the eastern, western, and northern parts of Guangdong Province should prioritize the completion of basic infrastructure, address shortcomings in environmental conditions, roads, water supply, and public services, and develop characteristic agriculture, ecological tourism, and other industries based on ecological and cultural resources. They should not blindly launch large-scale commercial projects.

4.2. Upgrade the rural industrial system

Based on the provincial-level "one village, one product, one town, one industry" characteristic cultivation layout, fill in the weak links in the industrial chain and extend the agricultural value chain. First, establish a brand system for characteristic agricultural products of Lingnan style, standardize regional agricultural

product production, cultivate local distinctive brands with regional identification, and enhance the market competitiveness of agricultural products. Second, coordinate the layout of storage and cold storage facilities, processing workshops, urban-rural logistics outlets, etc., to expand the value-added space of agricultural products. Third, promote the deep integration of traditional breeding and farming industries with rural sightseeing, e-commerce retail, and folk experience, and revitalize idle farmland and residential buildings in the village. Local areas can simultaneously support the development of new agricultural business entities such as family farms, farmers' cooperatives, and professional farmers, enabling villagers to share the benefits of industrial development and steadily expand the scale of village-level collective economies.

4.3. Deeply explore local cultural resources

Follow the basic principles of prioritizing protection and moderate utilization, fully releasing the resource advantages of diverse local cultures in Guangdong. Conduct a comprehensive investigation and registration of ancient villages, ancient buildings, intangible cultural heritage projects, and folk culture, delineate protection areas, and prevent excessive commercial development. Based on the cultural characteristics of each village, create distinctive landscapes and cultural activity venues, highlighting the unique features of Hakka, Chaoshan, overseas Chinese hometowns, and red rural areas, and changing the homogenized situation of rural landscapes. Regularly organize folk performances, intangible cultural heritage study tours, and cultural and sports activities for the masses, revitalize various cultural public facilities in the village, and cultivate civilized village customs by leveraging local cultural inheritance. Utilize cultural soft power to promote the long-term and steady development of rural areas.

4.4. Improve the long-term management and maintenance mechanism

Change the model where only the government independently undertakes maintenance work, and establish a long-term management and maintenance system involving government, market, and villagers. On one hand, refine classification management norms, formulate differentiated maintenance standards for village roads, sewage treatment facilities, sanitation support, and landscape greening, clearly define the job responsibilities of maintenance personnel, stabilize funding sources, and provide a complete assessment and restraint mechanism. On the other hand, expand the channels for rural maintenance funds, introduce supporting policies to attract local enterprises, local celebrities, and social organizations to invest in rural facility maintenance. Relying on various forms such as village regulations, point-based incentives, and volunteer services, mobilize villagers' initiative to participate actively, guide them to consciously maintain the village environment and watch over village public facilities, and create an atmosphere of all citizens jointly building, managing, and protecting the achievements of rural construction.

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