



Analysis on the Feasibility, Advantages and Critical Points of Involving Social Work in Rural Targeted Poverty Alleviation

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Abstract: With the aim of improving farmers’ livelihood, independence, and development of rural resources, social work is basically consistent with the strategy of rural targeted poverty alleviation, which determines that social work will play an key role in rural targeted poverty alleviation. Due to the absolute feasibility and unique advantages of social work in rural targeted poverty alleviation, many social organizations have found ways and methods for rural targeted poverty alleviation. The effective involvement of social work in rural targeted poverty alleviation needs the government’s increasing emphasis, accurate and personalized help in social work and the promotion of social workers’ capabilities.

Keywords: Social work; Targeted poverty alleviation; Rural cohesion; Basic-level governance

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At the 18th National Congress of China’s Communist Party, China officially began to implement targeted poverty alleviation. The formulation and implementation of such a strategy has greatly increased efforts for poverty alleviation and has also launched a new chance for reducing poverty in China. Targeted

poverty alleviation mainly emphasizes the precision of poverty alleviation. Because the reasons of poverty in different villages and towns are different, many unexpected challenges will occur in practice, including how to implement policies about poverty alleviation and how to guide farmers to help themselves. The aim of targeted poverty alleviation is to exploit rural resources, develop local advantages, and improve farmers’ livelihood and autonomous capabilities, consistent with related aims. The core of China’s social work is to help others and themselves^[1]. Combined with the current situation of rural poverty, we found it necessary to combine social work with targeted poverty alleviation. They complement each other. In implementing poverty alleviation, the advantages of social work and social workers’ participation should be enhanced. The joint efforts of multiple parties can make China’s poverty alleviation work go forward steadily.

1 The feasibility and advantages of social work in rural targeted poverty alleviation

1.1 The feasibility of targeted poverty alleviation in social work

The concept of targeted poverty alleviation and social work are very consistent. China’s current strategy of targeted poverty alleviation is actually innovative.

Social governance is needed in the classification and refinement of issues on poverty alleviation. In the past, the methods used for poverty alleviation were relatively extensive. Although it allowed most poor people to get away from poverty smoothly, years of experience proved that this method is limited. It did not pay special attention to special groups, but even accelerated special groups' poverty. Under the strategy of targeted poverty alleviation, some poor farmers have become the focused target. The concept of targeted poverty alleviation is put forward based on the current situation in China and the actual situation of poverty alleviation. Leaders in rural areas must pay attention to it. Many scholars discuss targeted poverty alleviation and social work in theory, hoping that social work can be used to help poor farmers achieve the targeted poverty alleviation. Therefore, the theories about involving social work in targeted poverty alleviation is still various, which can provide scientific guidance for the following work^[2].

1.2 Advantages of involving social work in targeted poverty alleviation

There are advantages in methods, theories, and roles of involving social work in targeted poverty alleviation. Social workers can develop a good relationship with poor farmers at the beginning and provide guidance based on their professional theories, which makes it more targeted and professional. Based on the development of a variety of activities in social work, poor farmers can also help themselves and help each other to improve their capabilities of planning. The advantages of involving social work are as follows: First, involving social work can increase poor farmers' consciousness of relieving poverty. Practical experience showed that the changed values and concepts are very important for poor villages. Social work can help realize this and emphasizes helping others, helping themselves and cultivating their sense of empathy, etc., which can make poor farmers realize that they need to get rid of poverty. Therefore, no matter what kind of method for poverty alleviation is adopted, we must pay attention to individualization and direction, tolerance, understanding and admission, make estimates based on poor farmers' actual situation, and design scientific and reasonable assistance. Poor farmers in different regions have different causes of poverty, which is needed to be known in targeted poverty alleviation. We must meet the poor farmers' actual needs, timely adjust and optimize major problems in the villages, and promote farmers to make positive changes^[3].

2 Practical exploration of involving social work in targeted poverty alleviation

In 2012, nineteen departments including the Central Organization Department, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and the Ministry of Education issued the Medium-to-Long Term Plan for the Development of Professionals for Social Work (2011-2020), which clearly stated that it was necessary to cultivate rural service stations for social work, professionals for social work and implement the plans of social work to serve the poor, frontiers, nationalities, and old revolutionary bases. After the 18th CPC National Congress's launch of the policy for targeted poverty alleviation in 2018, more social workers were aware of their relationship with targeted poverty alleviation, and more practical explorations of involving social work emerged, driving the process of combining them. The staff of the poverty alleviation and developing department also discussed with the staff in functional department to actively explore various methods of poverty alleviation, which have achieved satisfying results. All provinces in China have their methods for local poverty alleviation, actively involve social work in targeted poverty alleviation, and find scientific and proper rural developing references. Some social workers also personally guide poor farmers, carry out psychological counseling and improve their capacities. Taking Sichuan Province as an example, the strategy of targeted poverty alleviation was implemented earlier with many advanced and successful experiences. It not only focuses on rural poverty, but also actively involves social work to combine the local economy with targeted poverty alleviation, which has guaranteed the smooth implementation of poverty alleviation and development. In addition, special institutions have also been developed to help poor farmers, and regular assistance is organized. Guanghai Social Work Service Center in Sichuan is a representative one, with the main goals of providing social services, training talents, and conducting researches. Rural social work is one of the most important and difficult projects. The urban-rural cooperative platforms can provide special social support in poor rural areas so that farmers can learn about poverty alleviation policies as soon as possible. Guanghai's social workers pay attention to the development of vulnerable groups such as the elderly with special difficulties in rural areas, left-behind children, and the disabled in the targeted poverty alleviation work. They actively participate in rural

basic-level governance, and explore a participatory and interactive basic-level governance model “social worker + village committee + villager” that fully mobilizes local residents’ participation. For common cases, Guanghua’s social workers have also begun to analyze and explore the practical value and role of social work in targeted poverty alleviation, and put forward that empowerment for farmers is needed to bring the advantage of social work to full play. They can actively engage in poverty alleviation work, improve their livelihood capabilities, and truly achieve targeted assistance and social support. Both the theoretical and practical groups are seeking effective ways for social work to involve in targeted poverty alleviation, hoping to develop a close and scientific strategy. In recent years, a large number of social institutions, theoretical researchers and service personnel have confirmed the theoretical and practical possibility of combining them. The related theoretical results and experience have also become the basis of involving social work in targeted poverty alleviation.

3 The critical points of involving social work in rural targeted poverty alleviation

3.1 Governmental departments pay more attention to involving social work in rural targeted poverty alleviation

Governmental departments’ direction is the key to the smooth involvement of social work in targeted poverty alleviation. To improve the effectiveness of poverty alleviation, the government needs to encourage the implementation of related projects and provide social service agency for bidding. These social service agencies must be provided with necessary support, supervision and guidance. In addition, social service agencies can be given full responsibility, so that they can implement independent design in various projects, and integrate service concepts and advanced methods into targeted poverty alleviation work^[4].

Specifically, the government should develop service sites in poor areas in accordance to China’s social workers’ developing plans, attract social professionals to these poor areas to participate in targeted poverty alleviation, provide professional guidance for local poverty alleviation, and fully stimulate farmers’ awareness of poverty alleviation. In addition, the model of targeted poverty alleviation must be further improved. Social workers can provide material

assistance and spiritual support. Social workers in poverty alleviation can provide professional knowledge and guidance to poor farmers through the Internet. They make use of local resources to achieve poverty alleviation. In spiritual poverty alleviation, social workers need to take the initiative to communicate with poor farmers, improve confidence in poverty alleviation, and stimulate their enthusiasm and initiative for personal involvement. Secondly, social work involved in targeted poverty alleviation require social workers to play a key role. In the early period of poverty alleviation, social workers will visit local poor farmers to understand the actual situation of each person and family in detail and make records to evaluate the actual situation of each family, and fully understand the local situation before formulating targeted assistance. So social workers are the main force to successfully implement the service, support the government to use empowerment and employment to give themselves power and responsibilities to ensure the smooth progress of involving social work in targeted poverty alleviation.

3.2 Achieve precise and personalized assistance for social work

Poor people in rural areas have needs for survival and considerable potential. Social workers must always help others as self-help during their daily work. First, we need to assess the needs of the poor people, fully involve the people-oriented concept in the evaluation, pay attention to farmers’ actual situation, observe the changes in demand from a dynamic perspective, and enhance the accuracy and scientific nature of the assessment. Second, we need to classify the poor people, including left-behind children, lonely elderly, etc. Taking left-behind children as an example, this group of people is in need of help. When providing assistance, we must not only give guidance on knowledge and skills, but also understand what the left-behind children need most in detail. Communication, interviews and other methods can be used to collect valuable data to assist the formulation of strategies^[5].

In addition, appropriate involving methods should be chosen when conducting involvement work. Social workers carry out group work, case work, community work, etc. according to the actual situation, and fully find out the resources in poor areas. These resources should be paid social attention to help the poor build confidence and believe that they can solve practical

problems and help themselves. Finally, the construction of social supporting networks is also important. The combination of community work and targeted poverty alleviation can stimulate villagers' cohesion and energy. We must be aware that poverty alleviation work cannot be achieved without the villagers' collective efforts. Choosing appropriate methods in accordance to modern information technology can promote further development of the work. For example, the establishment of WeChat groups and the WeChat public accounts can attract social groups' help and supports.

3.3 Improve social workers' ability of involvement

Social workers are the main force in targeted poverty alleviation. In order to improve the effectiveness of poverty alleviation, social workers' professional capabilities and skills must be improved. One of the main advantages of involving social work in targeted poverty alleviation is the ability to carry out professional work on reducing poverty in a certain area. Therefore, the relevant workers' ability has an important impact on poverty alleviation projects. With the closer integration of them, the government has also realized this and recruited a considerable number of social workers for rural areas, including many highly educated and professionally trained personnel, aiming to alleviate targeted poverty^[6]. Specifically, we must first focus on the students' professional training and set up courses related to rural social work. More attention can be paid to students in the countryside because they can maximize their knowledge about their village, which helps understand and then strengthen the social workers' education and training. The content of the training must be professional and targeted. The more accurate the methods are, the deeper these social workers will know about the targeted poverty alleviation.

Targeted poverty alleviation in rural areas is a long-term and difficult process, and the improvement of farmers' capabilities cannot be achieved in one day. Therefore, a good and timely feedback mechanism must be established throughout the poverty alleviation process to help relevant institutions better understand

the current progress of poverty alleviation and enhance sustainability, which will not only help find problems in each period and adjust poverty alleviation projects, but also prevent the poor people who have got rid of poverty from being poor again, strengthen poor farmers' livelihood and truly achieve poverty alleviation.

4 Conclusion

Involving social work in targeted poverty alleviation is a very effective means of alleviating poverty, which can alleviate the current poverty in rural areas. Social workers can provide support to poor farmers and improve their confidence in poverty alleviation through specialized involving methods and strategies of targeted poverty alleviation. Assessing the poor people's actual needs and formulating individualized involving projects will promote the poverty alleviation. In addition, the use of social resources and information technology to the actual work of alleviating poverty can provide more local resources, which helps to achieve the ultimate goal of targeted poverty alleviation.

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