

Event Highlights
The 9th ASEAN +3 Village Exchange Programme
7 September 2021
Online

On 7 September 2021, the 9th ASEAN+3 Village Exchange Programme themed “Eliminating Absolute Poverty and Promoting Rural Revitalization” was organized by International Poverty Reduction Center in China (IPRCC). Over 30 representatives from ASEAN-China Center; Dan Church Aid; China Agricultural University; World Food Programme; Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development, Myanmar; Embassy of Myanmar; Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore; Ministry of Interior, Thailand; Department of Community Development, Thailand; Zhejiang Province, and ADB-PRC RKSI, attended the event.

The programme is organized annually to share knowledge and good practices on rural development and poverty alleviation among grassroot village officials from ASEAN and East Asian countries. It is unique in combining classroom discussions with site visits of successful poverty reduction villages. This year’s event was held online following last year’s postponement and due to the sporadic COVID-19 outbreaks in the PRC.

Highlights

Below are key highlights of the forum:

- Good farming techniques, inputs, and market information are key to raise farmers’ livelihood. Dan Church Aid has helped farmers in Cambodia along the entire agricultural value chain. It trains farmers to plant market driven produces; and link-up farmers and their cooperatives to input suppliers, processors, local and international buyers, and certification bodies. In 2020, over 3,000 farmers earned close to \$3 million selling their produce at premium prices.
- Good infrastructure and access to public services are important to reducing rural poverty. The PRC has provided over CNY30 million (\$4.6 million) in grants to two villages in Myanmar to build roads, electricity grids, sanitation system, schools, community development centers, and improve farmers’ skills. These saw poverty in the two villages reduced by 20%.
- Rural tourism is effective in revitalizing the rural economy. The experience of a Yao ethnic-minority village in Yunnan Province supports this. Before, it was another poor village hidden among the rainforests. With the government’s support, villagers renovated traditional Yao houses with guestrooms, and offered unique cultural and sightseeing experiences. As a result, the villagers’ income has improved.
- Educational tourism—embedding learning experience in traveling—is helpful to rural development. Some villages in Thailand have developed tourism by offering classes in cooking, farming, and making local handcraft. Urban tourists are attracted to the villages by such hands-on and novelty experiences.
- Industry diversification helps ensure poverty alleviation is sustained. Hesilu Village in Yiwu City, Zhejiang Province, is famous because of its lavender orchards. Lavender is non-native to

the PRC but is planted widely in the village as a tourist attraction, especially for young women. Hesilu Village has since diversified into other related sectors such as vineyard, real-estate, cultural, and film.

- Singapore has strengthened its social service provisions to support vulnerable families amid an aging and declining size of household population. These cover housing, healthcare, employment, education, and retirement to help the vulnerable people cope with income insecurity and lack of care assistance. For example, its social assistance is now decentralized in 24 offices, frontline staff are trained to better identify clients' needs, and a case management system has been established.

Next Steps:

- Good practices and knowledge shared in the programme will be included as inputs to the ASEAN Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication.
- Conditions permitting, next year's event will be held on-site.

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