

## 《改造项目提升农场地区生活水平》

More than 1,400 families now have new homes as a result of a policy to rehouse people living in impoverished areas, as Hou Liqiang and Li Yingqing report from Binchuan county, Yunnan province.

Jinhua Buwei used to dread rainstorms because the water leaked into her house and even washed the soil off the interior cob walls, made from a rough mix of water, mud and straw.

"We couldn't sleep, and we had to cover the bedding with plastic sheets so it wouldn't get soaked. Sometimes, we didn't manage to do it in time," said the 46-year-old from Lijiao village, Binchuan county, in the southwestern province of Yunnan.

As a result of a local government program to renovate dilapidated houses in rural areas, especially those occupied by impoverished families, Jinhua's family of three no longer has to worry during the monsoon season, which lasts from May to October.

"I never expected my house to be rebuilt so well and with so much natural light because my family depends on the dibao (a poverty-alleviation program that guarantees a minimum standard of living) for our livelihood," said Jinhua, from the Yi ethnic group.

No member of the family is fit to work: Jinhua has rheumatism, which makes it difficult for her to walk; her husband was born with a mental impairment; and, at age 67, her mother-in-law is too old to labor in the fields.

Renovation work on the 60-square-meter house was completed in late September, at a cost of 71,000 yuan (\$10,300), as part of a government campaign to eradicate poverty by 2020.

In rural Yunnan, people earning 2,800 yuan a year or less are officially designated as living in poverty.

The family only had to contribute 3,000 yuan of the cost, while the government paid the remainder. Jinhua also received 2,000 yuan to buy basic necessities so the family could start its new life as soon as possible.

Zhu Lin, a fellow Lijiao resident, lived with his family of six in a house that had cracked and leaning cob walls. His bedroom had no window, so it was just a dark cell.

"I wanted to renovate the house, but we didn't have enough money," said the 55-year-old farmer, who used to depend on just 2 mu (0.13 hectares) of farmland to make a living.

Zhu received the same benefits as Jinhua, and also obtained a low-interest loan of 40,000 yuan from the local government. He used the money to buy two oxen for his plowing business, and also rented extra 2 mu of farmland

to grow grapes.

During the planting season, he can make 200 to 300 yuan a day plowing fields for his neighbors. He is hopeful that his investment in land will pay off: "If the price of grapes is good this year, I am confident I will rise above the poverty line."

Renovation model

The Binchuan government said the program has seen the homes of 1,443 poverty-stricken families rebuilt.

Last year, local governments renovated or rebuilt the homes of more than 1.5 million families, according to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics.

Cao Yuanwen, deputy director of housing and urban-rural development in Binchuan, said all the houses have been renovated to the same standard and design. The process focused on impoverished families who were unable to rebuild their houses themselves.

He said the government has also been relocating people who live in areas prone to natural disasters. Poverty-stricken families can claim a one-time government subsidy of 60,000 yuan to build houses in safer locations, while those in better financial circumstances are eligible for a subsidy of 15,000 yuan. Both groups can obtain a 20-year interest-free loan of 60,000 yuan.

Last year, 1,381 families in the county benefited from the policy.

NBS data show that 2.49 million residents of poverty-stricken regions nationwide are being relocated to better-developed areas.

Xionglumo is a mountain-encompassed village in Binchuan, with a population of 1,765. about 27 percent of the residents live below the poverty line. The government's policy has seen 54 families, about 260 people who live in areas prone to landslides, move into new houses in safer areas.

An Yuhua's family of six used to squeeze into a tiny, two-bedroom house. When relatives came to stay, the family had to rely on neighbors to provide lodgings.

"For many years, we longed to relocate to a safe area. However, in 2013, we spent all our savings and ran up debts of more than 30,000 yuan after my wife was hospitalized for two months with a persistent fever caused by a viral infection," the 31-year-old said.

Initially, An was doubtful about the government's financial support, so he declined offers of help. Later he changed his mind, and the family has now moved into a new, four-bedroom house.

"The 54 families in the village selected five residents, including me, as representatives to communicate with the designers and builders. For people like us, from the Yi ethnic group, it's essential to have a special place to worship our gods and ancestors. When we communicated that to the authorities, the designers changed their blueprints and added a special worship room," he said.

"Great changes have happened in my hometown thanks to the government's work. We used to have to ride 27 kilometers on motorbikes along a rough road to Qiaodian, the nearest township, to buy daily necessities. Often when it rained, we were isolated from the outside world for many days as it was too dangerous to ride on the muddy road," he added.

"Now the old road has been replaced with a tarmac one, so we can go to the township anytime we want. I never dared to think about owning such a good house. We believe our lives will be much better, thanks to the government's support and our own efforts."

