



International Development Cooperation: China's Practice

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Evaluation of the East Asia Poverty Reduction Cooperation Pilot Project



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Poverty eradication is the common mission of mankind. While committed to eradicating its own poverty, China has also been actively engaged in South-South cooperation and, to the best of its ability, providing assistance to other developing countries without any political strings attached, to support and assist the developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, in eradicating poverty. In 2014, the Chinese government proposed poverty eradication as a priority area of cooperation among ASEAN plus China, Japan and the Republic of Korea (10+3), and raised the East Asia Poverty Reduction Cooperation Initiative. China committed to provide RMB100 million in assistance to strengthen poverty reduction cooperation with less developed countries in East Asia, aiming to advance rural poverty reduction, establish pilot zones for poverty reduction cooperation, help address development bottlenecks, and provide examples for poverty reduction and development in East Asian countries.

In 2015, the Chinese Government implemented the first phase of the East Asia Poverty Reduction Cooperation Pilot Project (hereinafter referred to as the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project) in Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. The East Asia Poverty Reduction Project focuses on cooperation in poverty reduction and rural development among developing countries and is the first village-level poverty reduction assistance project implemented by the Chinese government. Through continuous efforts, the project villages of the three countries have undergone great changes and taken on a new look, and the project has achieved positive results.

In 2022, China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) conducted a systematic and comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project. This report is to explain the evaluation process, showcase the results of the Chinese government's foreign aid, and sort out the lessons and experience of international cooperation in poverty reduction.

01

Overview of the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project

The East Asia Poverty Reduction Project has been implemented in six villages in Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar since 2017, and was completed successively from 2020 to 2021. The project draws on China's practical experience in "promoting whole village development", "targeted poverty alleviation", and "the fight against poverty", takes into account the different conditions of

the project villages in the recipient countries as well as the actual needs of the local people, and has designed and implemented a series of comprehensive poverty reduction assistance measures, covering rural infrastructure, rural public services, and livelihood development and capacity building of rural households.

Geographic distribution of the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project



On December 7, 2016, the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project was launched in Laos.



On February 1, 2018, the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project was launched in Myanmar.



On December 21, 2017, the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project was launched in Cambodia.

1 Rural Infrastructure Construction

Drinking water projects were implemented in the project villages. Toilets, roads, bridges, power supply and other infrastructure facilities were built to help solve the villagers' living difficulties.

In Cambodia, a rural drinking water project has been completed to address the long-term lack of access to drinking water of nearly 4,000 people of the project villages. New houses have been constructed for 71 extremely poor households, old houses of 190 rural households have been renovated, new toilets for 132 poor households have been built, 82 poor households have been granted access to lighting, and 500 villagers

have been provided with energy-saving stoves.

In Laos, the "drinking water to households" project has enabled every household of the village to have access to tap water. Roads have been repaired and bridges have been built to facilitate the travel of 2,891 villagers from 624 households.

In Myanmar, projects related to drinking water, public lighting, road repair, river bank protection, and rural household power supply have been implemented to comprehensively improve rural basic living conditions.



Old and new bridges in Laotian project village.



The main tower of the water supply project constructed by the Cambodian Project.



Rural roads repaired by the Myanmar Project.

2 Rural Public Services

To improve rural public services, the project helped build community activity centers, clinics, schools and other public service facilities.

In Cambodia, a new 400m² community activity center has been built to serve as the venue for group activities, trainings and exchanges at the project village. It has gradually developed into an all-rounded and one-stop public service platform of the village. Meanwhile, local primary schools have been renovated and the safety facilities have been reinforced.



Villagers of the Cambodia project village receive skills training at the newly built community activity center.

In Laos, the project built a new village activity center and a clinic, implemented a lighting project, constructed teachers' and students' dormitories, public toilets and basketball courts for local schools, and put in place teaching equipment and supplies.

In Myanmar, the project built school buildings and playgrounds to improve teaching facilities, new community centers, clinics and sports grounds, and properly disposed public waste to improve the environment of the village.



A new basketball court for the Ban Xienglorm Village School is built by the Laos Project.

A new classroom for the Aye Chan Thar village school built by the Myanmar Project.



3 Household Livelihood Development

The East Asia Poverty Reduction Project helped the villagers develop sustainable industries based on local conditions, and enabled them to increase income.

In Cambodia, the project implemented cattle raising demonstration, high-temperature mushroom cultivation, courtyard economy,

and detergent processing projects. Two hundred households were engaged in pot vegetable planting, 80 in pot millet pepper planting, 28 in high-temperature mushroom planting, and 40 in cattle fodder grass planting. The project also helped build two new detergent processing factories.



A cow raising demonstration household of the Cambodia project gets the fertile cow that "spreads hope".



Poor households at the Cambodia project village participating in high-temperature mushroom planting.



The Cambodia project built new detergent processing factories for the project village to create job opportunities nearby.

In Laos, the project helped develop a number of industries, including weaving, cattle/buffalo raising, corn planting, chicken raising, vegetable planting and rural tourism, set up villagers' production groups, and integrate industrial development with the development of farmers' cooperative organizations.

The Myanmar project promoted farming

technologies of livestock such as free-range chickens and breeding pigs, and demonstrated the cultivation of high and stable yield crops such as rice, sesame, peanut, mung bean and sunflower. The project also helped set up plant nurseries on vacant grounds, and led more than 130 households to engage in courtyard economy activities.

4 Capacity Building

Through skills and management trainings, study tours and training trips to China, the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project helped the villagers boost self-development capacities.

One management training session, 3 job skills training sessions, 6 technical training sessions and 3 study tours were organized in Cambodia, and 2 training sessions were held in China.

In Laos, technical trainings were conducted with project village production teams to improve their farming skills; livelihood project management trainings were provided to the village management committees to enhance their self-management capability. To improve the Lao side's management capacity of poverty reduction cooperation projects, the project held three training sessions



Vegetable planting skills training conducted in Laos project villages.



Cambodian officials training in China.



Villagers of Laos project showcases their products.



Bamboo weaving group established in Myanmar project village.



Vegetable planting skills training in Laos project village.

in China on poverty alleviation through industrial development, establishment and management of farmers' professional cooperatives, and policy experience and development model for poverty alleviation. In addition, "friendly villages" exchange visits were organized between the Laos project villages and China's exemplary villages for poverty alleviation through tourism to enhance the sharing of experiences in rural poverty alleviation.

The Myanmar project provided 16 training sessions on planting, breeding and handicraft technology, and 5 training sessions on project management, bidding and financial management. It organized 2 training tours to China. It also set up bamboo weaving cooperatives and textile cooperatives, mobilized villagers to jointly participate in drawing up the cooperative articles of association, and raised the level of agricultural production organization.

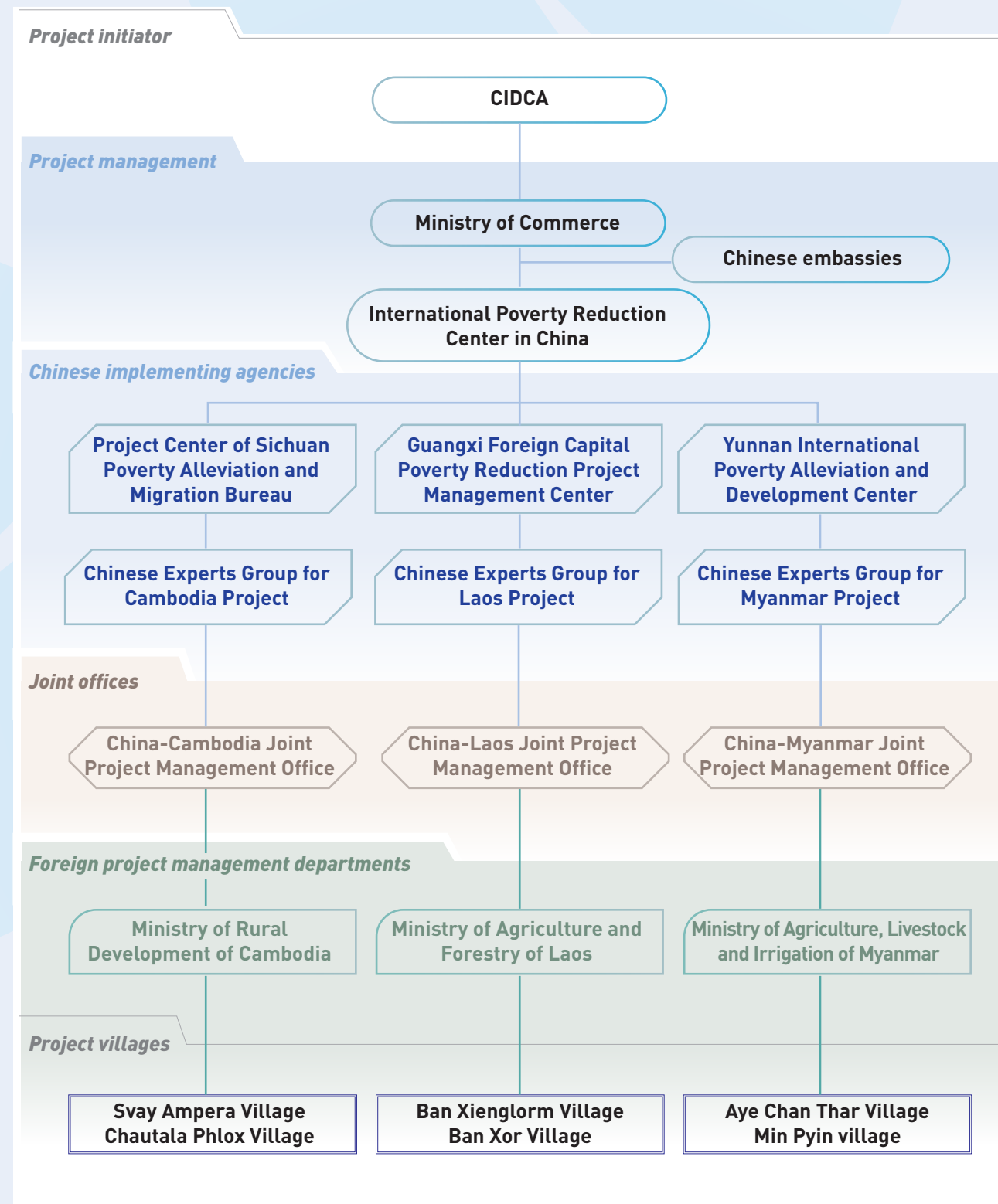


The Director of the Rural Development Department of Myanmar visited China for training and exchanges.

The Chinese government mobilized the participation of central and local forces to promote the implementation of poverty reduction projects in East Asia. CIDCA and the Ministry of Commerce were responsible for project initiation and implementation management respectively. The International Poverty Reduction Center in China (IPRCC) undertook feasibility study and facilitated project implementation management.

The Project Center of Sichuan Poverty Alleviation and Migration Bureau, the Guangxi Foreign Capital Poverty Reduction Project Management Center and the Yunnan International Poverty Alleviation and Development Center implemented the projects in Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar respectively. Joint project management offices were established with partner countries to manage the projects.

East Asia Poverty Reduction Project Implementation Structure

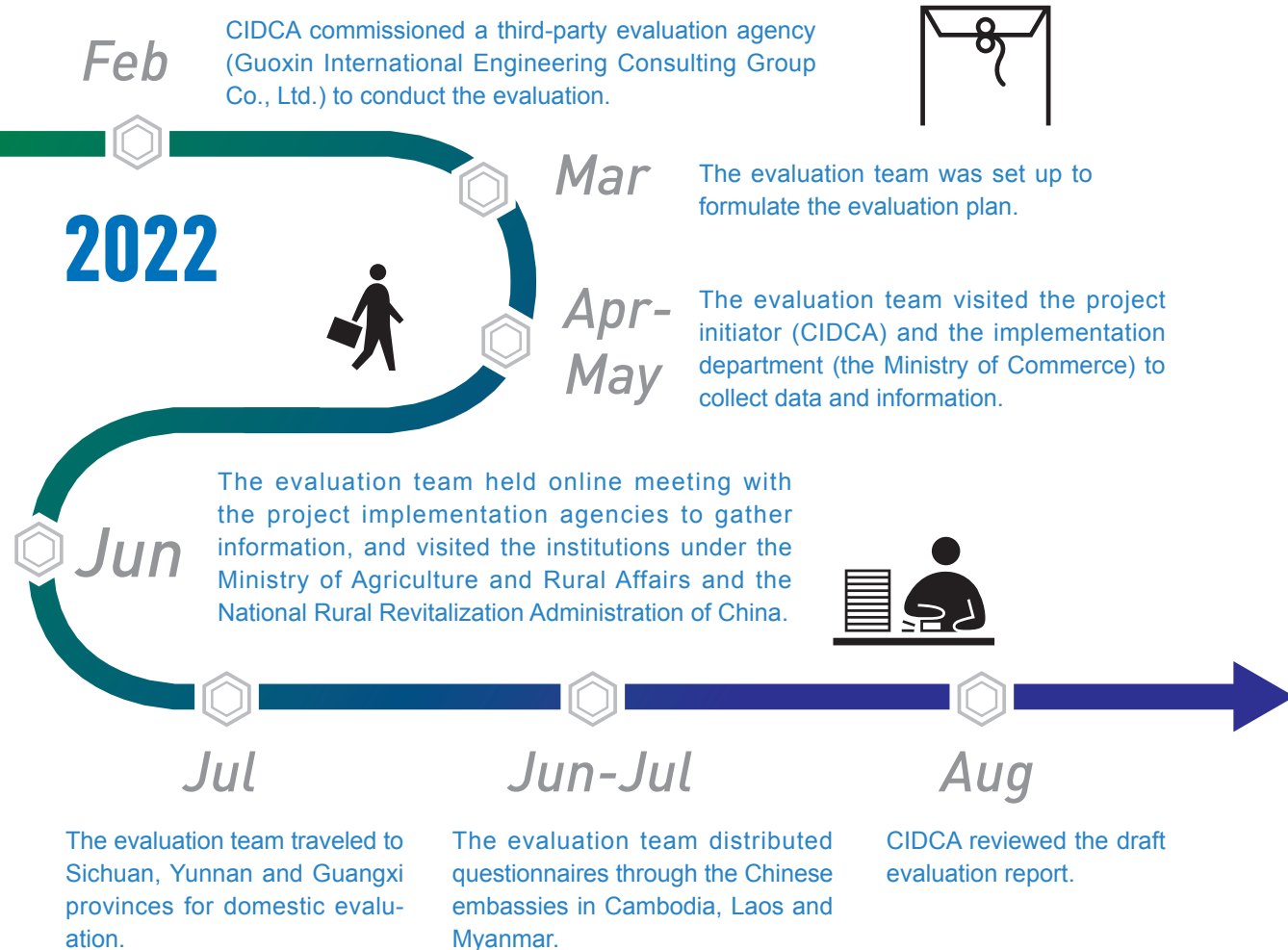


02

Implementation of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to: first, comprehensively review the implementation of the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project; second, objectively evaluate the actual effects of the project; and third, summarize the lessons and experience of China’s foreign aid for international poverty reduction cooperation.

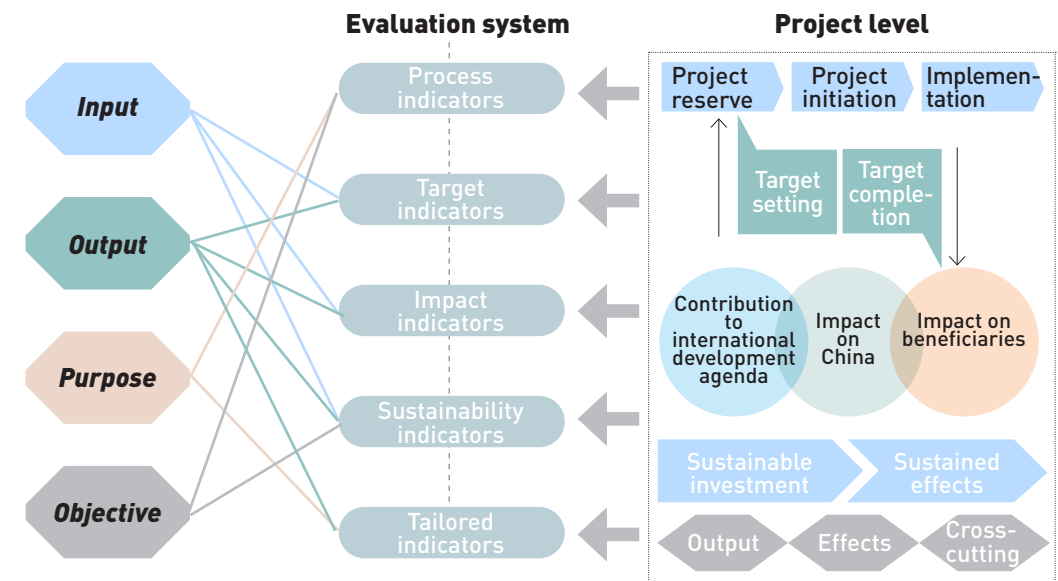
1 Evaluation Process



2 Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework and indicator system were constructed following the logic of “input-output-purpose-target” (See the appendix).

The evaluation framework



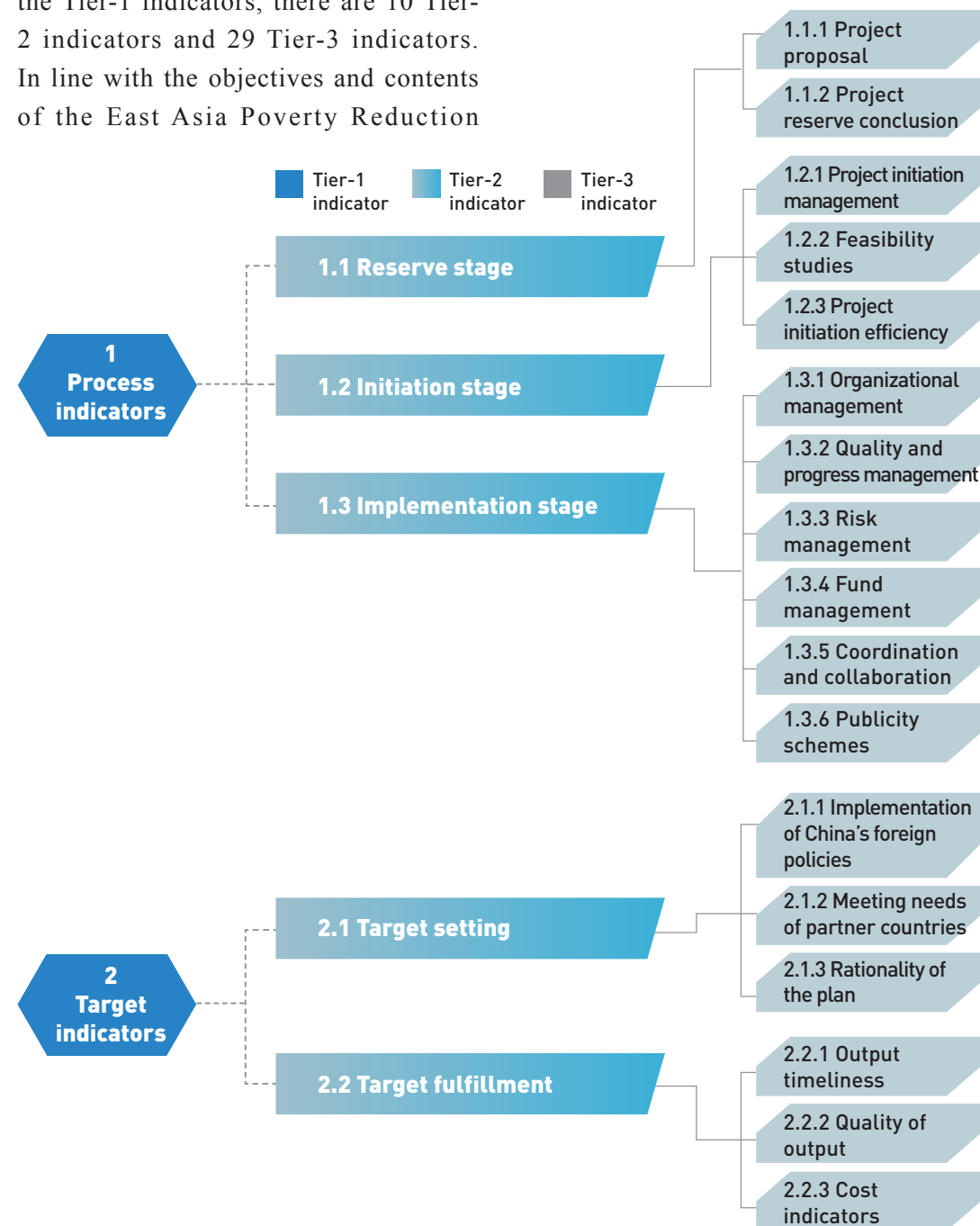
The evaluation team developed a system of evaluation indicators applicable to international cooperation projects for poverty reduction by looking into the evaluation index system for foreign aid projects¹, taking into consideration the features of international cooperation in poverty reduction and the reality of the poverty reduction demonstration projects

in East Asia, and referencing to the county-level evaluation criteria for poverty eradication in China. In terms of the overall structure, the indicator system includes two main categories: the general and tailored indicators. Specifically, the system has 5 Tier-1 indicators, 13 Tier-2 indicators and 36 Tier-3 indicators; altogether it has 96 indicators.

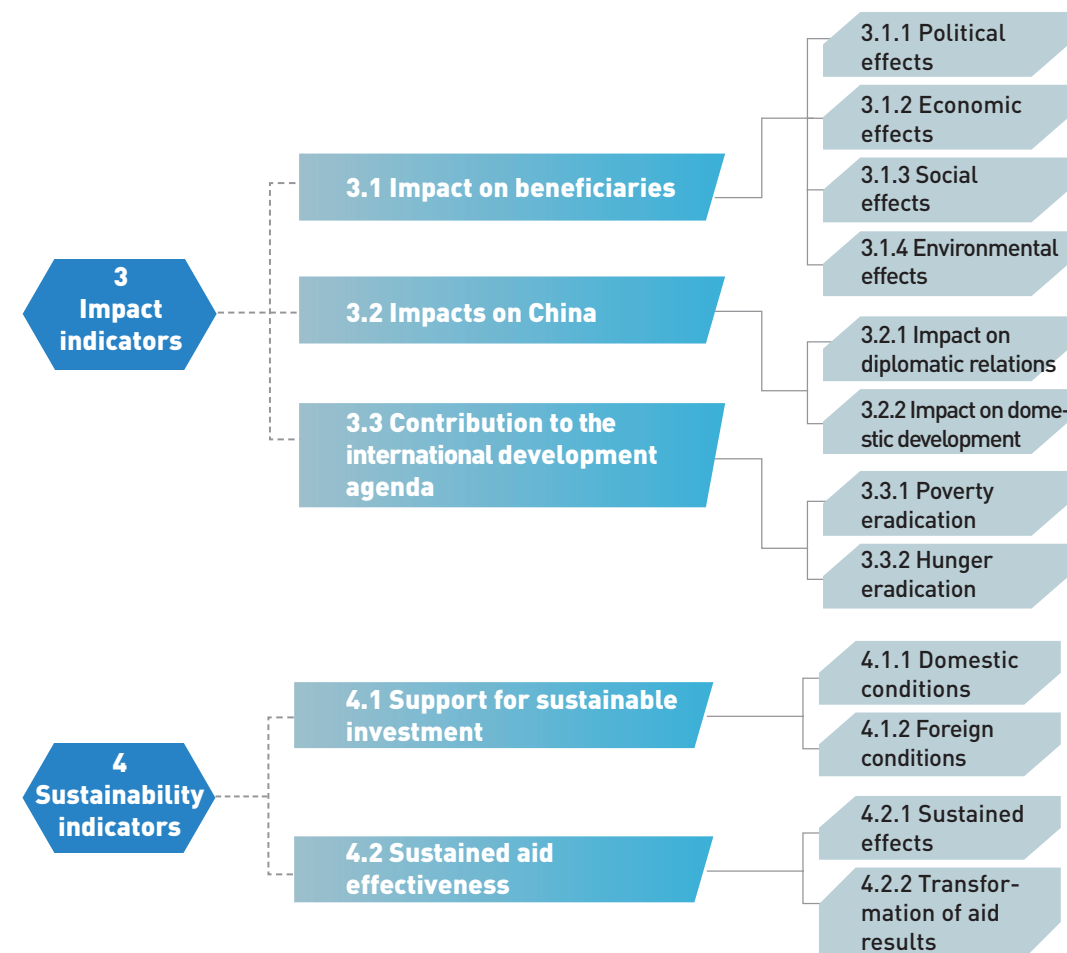
1. The evaluation indicator system developed by CIDCA includes three categories of indicators: general, specialized, and tailored. The system is based on general indicators which are supplemented by specialized and tailored indicators, and these indicators are used in combination. The general and specialized indicators constitute a three-tier system, with several evaluation indicators under them. The indicators are mandatory or optional; the mandatory indicators are mainly quantitative. The specialized evaluation indicators cover 10 fields, including education, health, culture and sports, public management, transportation, energy, communication, agriculture, environmental protection, and humanitarian affairs (see China Practice in International Development Cooperation: China’s Foreign Aid Project Evaluation System for details).

1. General indicators

The general indicators include the 4 Tier-1 indicators about the process, target, impact and sustainability; under the Tier-1 indicators, there are 10 Tier-2 indicators and 29 Tier-3 indicators. In line with the objectives and contents of the East Asia Poverty Reduction



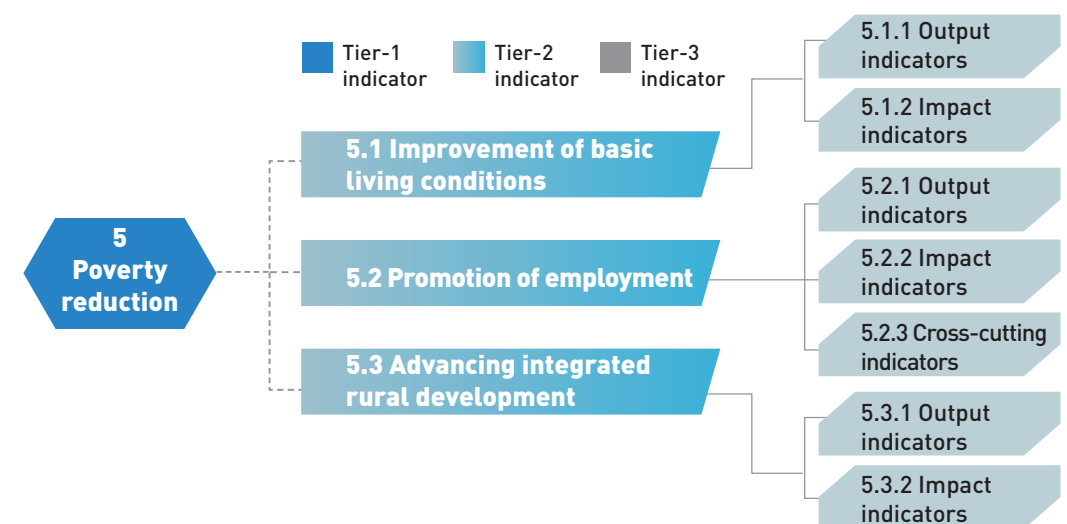
Project, the 2 Tier-3 indicators, “poverty eradication” and “ending hunger” are selected from “contributions to advancing the international development agenda” under the impact indicators.



2. Tailored indicators

As the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project contains a wide range of activities, this evaluation references the evaluation index system for foreign aid projects and utilizes

relevant elements from it to develop tailored indicators for evaluating poverty reduction. The tailored indicators include 3 Tier-2 indicators on improving basic living conditions, promoting employment and advancing overall rural development, and 7 Tier-3 indicators.



3 Evaluation Methods

The evaluation mainly uses interviews and discussions, literature and data review, questionnaire surveys and comparative studies for analysis.

- ◆ Hold discussions and in-depth interviews with the project initiation department, implementation department, management institutions, supporting management organizations, implementation organizations and the Chinese expert group

- ◆ Review policy documents and management regulations related to the project
- ◆ Extensively collect and review the documents and data regarding the whole process of the project, including preparation, feasibility study and project initiation, organization and implementation, and implementation management, etc.
- ◆ Refer to case reports and publicity materials related to the project

Discussions and interviews

Document review

Evaluation methods

Group discussions and expert seminars

Questionnaire survey

- ◆ Set up the work team, formulate work plan, and hold group discussion meeting every two weeks
- ◆ Regularly report on the evaluation work to the Department of Supervision and Evaluation of CIDCA
- ◆ Organize expert discussions in the middle and ending stages of the evaluation

- ◆ Formulate questionnaires for Chinese embassies and consulates in the recipient countries
- ◆ Design and develop questionnaires targeting the competent departments in charge of the project in the recipient countries, foreign project implementation organizations, and beneficiary townships / villages / households respectively

1. Discussions and interviews

Through discussions and interviews with the project initiation, management and implementation agencies, the Chinese embassies in the three countries, project management departments of the recipient country governments, foreign project implementation organizations, and beneficiary township / village / households, the evaluation team gained extensive understanding about the whole



The evaluation team sits with the project feasibility study and supporting management organization.



The evaluation team studies China's experience in poverty alleviation and rural development.

process of the project, including initiation, management, implementation, acceptance and handover, assessment, use and

operation management, and the opinions and suggestions of relevant organizations on each stage of the project.



Discussion is held between the evaluation team and the Chinese implementation organization of the Cambodia project.



Discussion is held between the evaluation team and the Chinese implementation organization of the Laos project.

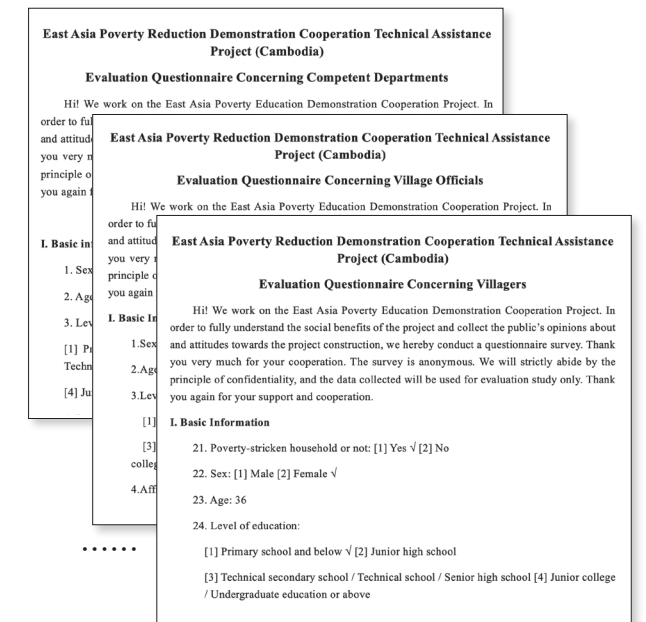
2. Document collection

Through CIDAC, the Ministry of Commerce and other relevant departments, the evaluation team collected and reviewed relevant policy documents, laws, regulations

and management guidelines. Questionnaires were distributed to relevant agencies to extensively collect the whole-process management materials and to sort out case reports and publicity materials related to the project.

3. Questionnaire survey

The evaluation team solicited comments and recommendations from the Chinese embassies in Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar regarding the initiation and preliminary preparation, implementation and supervision, effectiveness and impact as well as sustainability. On this basis, the evaluation team designed and distributed questionnaires targeting the project management departments, village officials, and villagers of the project villages in Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.



Sample Questionnaires

4. Seminars and exchanges

At the different stages of the evaluation, the evaluation team held internal meetings to discuss the work on a regular basis, and organized several seminars and webinars with external experts to obtain professional opinions and suggestions.

This evaluation is subject to the following limitations: first, due to the changes in the political situation in Myanmar, the evaluation team was not able to obtain comprehensive information on the project sites and data for the Myanmar part; second, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation team could not carry out overseas field visits as planned, and as such some indicators could only be verified with existing documents; third, to examine sustainability requires continuous monitoring and long-term evaluation of the subsequent operations.



The evaluation team shares preliminary findings with the CIDAC.



Online seminar with professional experts on evaluation.

03

Evaluation Findings

Through quantitative and qualitative analysis, the evaluation finds that the project has significantly reduced poverty and improved people’s well-being, promoted the development of agriculture and rural areas, and increased farmers’

income in the project villages of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. It has achieved the project objectives and accumulated new experience for China’s international development cooperation on poverty reduction.




1 Significant and Comprehensive Benefits

1. Considerable increase in the income of poor households

The implementation of the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project has laid a solid foundation for the livelihood development

of the project villages, effectively expanded the income-increasing channels of the villagers, and generated considerable cash income for the poor households. The long-term, stable and sustained income-increasing industries established for the

Table 1 Implementation of “livelihood improvement” sub-projects by the countries concerned

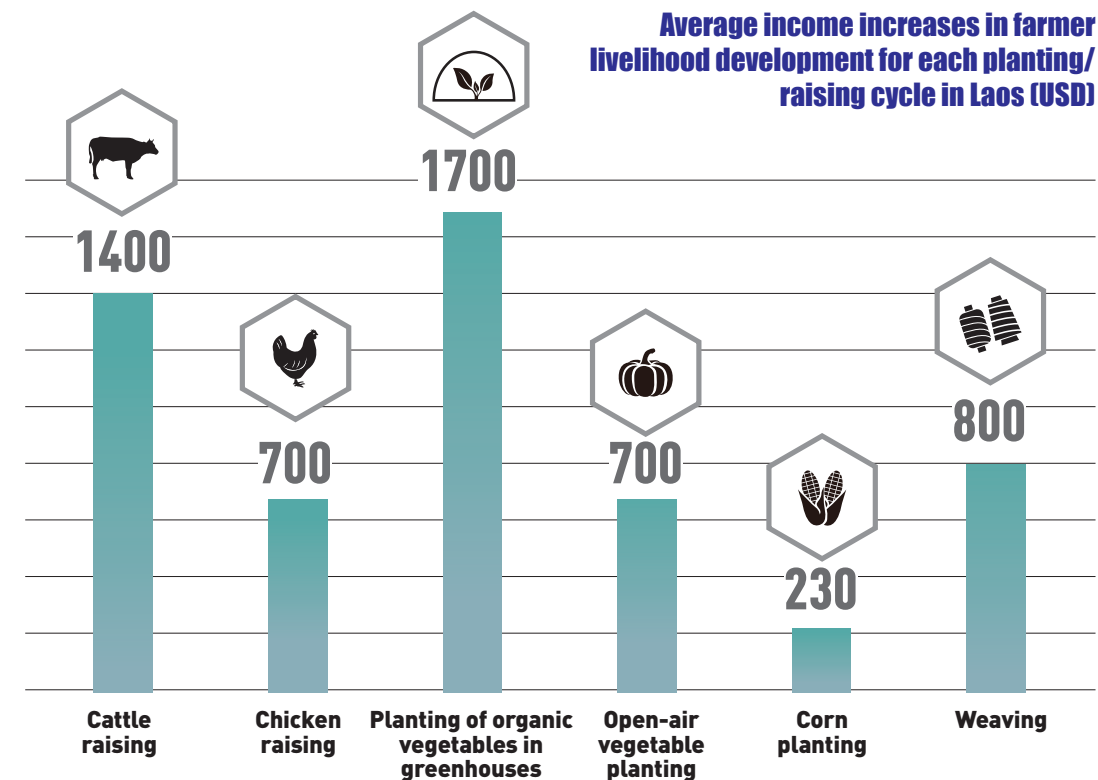
Country	Planting	Livestock farming	Other industries
 Cambodia	High-temperature mushroom planting, millet pepper planting	cattle-raising	Small-scale processing
 Laos	Greenhouse vegetable planting, open-air vegetable planting, corn planting	Cattle- and chicken raising	Weaving, countryside tourism
 Myanmar	Rice, peanut, sesame, mung bean, sunflower and other major cash crop cultivation	Pigs and chicken raising	

project villages have injected passion and hope among the local villagers and especially the poor households, and greatly improved their self-development capacity and willingness. The project has effectively reduced the incidence of poverty in the project villages and enabled the recipient countries to narrow the gap between urban and rural areas and realize the vision of sustainable rural development. As such, it sets an example of poverty reduction to the benefit of the people of East Asian countries.

In Cambodia, pot vegetable and millet pepper cultivation helped villagers to save money and increase income at their doorstep. 20% of the farmers not only achieved self-sufficiency, but also sold their

produces to nearby villagers or markets. Each household saved about USD180 to USD250 each year. High-temperature mushroom cultivation generated an annual income of USD3,370 for each household, realizing the target that income shall be earned in the year when the shelter is built. The output value of 40 cattle-raising households reached USD52,000, accumulating funds for further expanding the farming scale of the project village. Each detergent processing factory can produce 50,000 bottles of detergent annually, with an annual output value of USD15,000.

In Laos, the annual output of the 27 households in the open-air vegetable cultivation group reached 5 to 6 tons per hectare. The annual net income of each hectare reached 80 to 90 million Lao kip



Income increase brought by farmers' livelihood development in Cambodia



Garden economy: Potted vegetables

Each household saves spending ranging from USD10 to USD15 a month on groceries.



High-temperature mushroom

Each shed produces 2,250 kilograms of mushrooms a year, earning an annual income of USD3,370.



Cattle-raising demonstration

In one year, 20 cows give birth to 20 calves, and 40 cattle-rearing households get an output value of USD52,000.



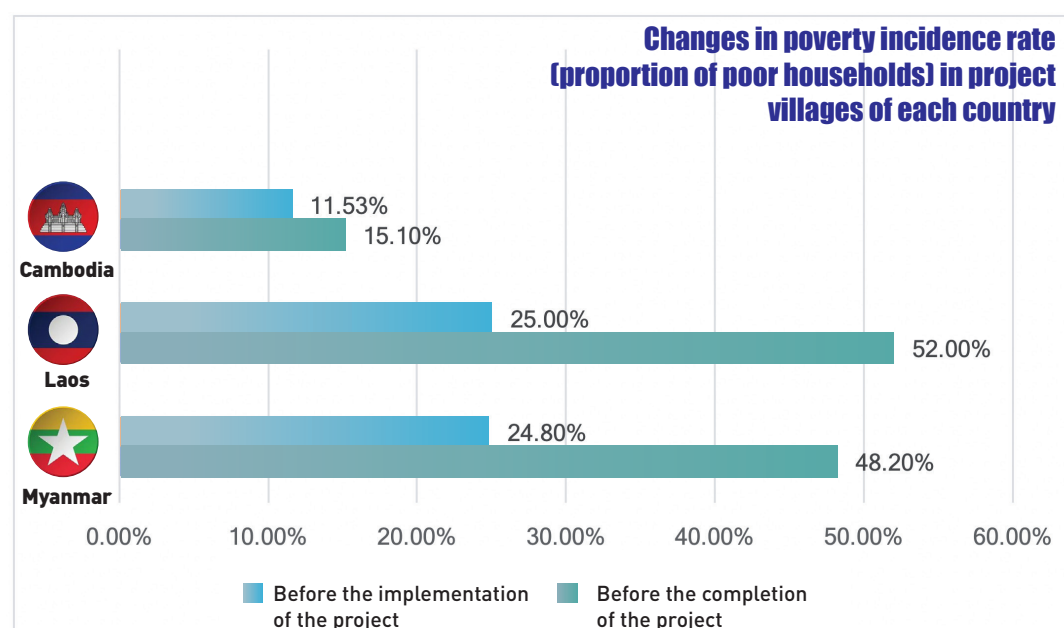
Detergent processing plant

Each processing plant produces 50,000 bottles per year, with an annual production value of USD5,000.

(about RMB70,000). The breeding cows purchased and the vegetable greenhouses built with the aid of the project were used as the collective assets of the project village, which created village collective income to provide sustained support for future village construction and public service improvement. The implementation of the project has also driven the development of the local engineering consultation industry, the engineering contracting market, and the construction material and equipment market, and has increased income and job opportunities for people in these businesses.

In Myanmar, the demonstration promotion of cash crops implemented by the project has not only helped the villagers to cut expenses and increase income at their doorsteps, and also established a number of long-term, stable and sustainable income-increasing industries for the project village.

The East Asia Poverty Reduction Project has effectively reduced the incidence of poverty in the project villages. The poverty incidence rate of the project villages in Cambodia decreased by 3.57 percentage points, with the annual per capita net income rising from USD242.75 in 2017 to USD277.48 in 2020, up by 14.31% or USD34.73, USD12.25 higher than the increase of the reference village. The proportion of poor families in the Laos project villages decreased from 52% in 2017 to 25% in 2020, and the annual per capita income of households in the project villages has increased by 14.40% from USD965 to USD1104, representing an increase of USD139, USD104 higher than that of the reference village. The poverty-stricken population ratio of the project villages in Myanmar has decreased from 48.2% to 24.8%.



2. Substantial improvement of production and living conditions

The production and living conditions of the project villages, including housing, access to drinking water, transportation, healthcare and schooling, have been remarkably improved.

The rural drinking water sub-project in Cambodia has provided sanitary tap water for nearly 4,000 people, including those living or working in the two project villages, township governments, township hospitals and two

nearby primary schools. It completely solved the long-standing drinking water difficulty and reduced the transmission of diseases caused by unclean drinking water. The project built new houses for 71 extremely poor households, renovated old houses of 190 rural households, built toilets for 132 poor households, brought access to lighting to 82 poor households, and provided 500 villagers with energy-saving stoves. As such, it has made substantial contributions to improving the living environment and the quality of life of the villagers.



Old and new houses of poor households in the Cambodia project village.

The roads built in the Lao project villages have solved the difficulties in travel and transportation for 2,891 people. In particular, the road to the clinic built in Ban Xienglorm village made it easier for villagers to get medical treatment, and the bridge of the Ban Xor village and the culvert bridge leading to the production area completely solved the transportation difficulties of the two natural villages of Ban Xor.



Before and after road hardening in Ban Xienglorm Village, Laos.

Improvement of teaching conditions in Laos project village

In Laos project villages, 4 school dormitories, 2 school playgrounds and 2 restrooms were built (the restroom in Ban Xor Village has a shower room), and teaching equipment was provided for the schools. With the project completed, teachers

and students were provided with accommodation, and the teaching facilities have been improved, which benefited 829 students and 77 teachers and attracted more school-age children from nearby villages. In the 2017-2018 school year, 137

of the 247 pupils studying at Ban Xor village school came from nearby villages such as Kouay and Mangma. By the 2019-20 school year, 180 of the 310 students in school came from nearby villages.

The Myanmar project completed the 495-foot flood dike in Min Pyin village as well as the drinking water, public lighting (solar street lamps) and road repair projects in

both project villages, which effectively improved the production and living conditions of the villagers.



Local students studying in new classrooms built by the Myanmar project.

3. Contribution to multiple Sustainable Development Goals

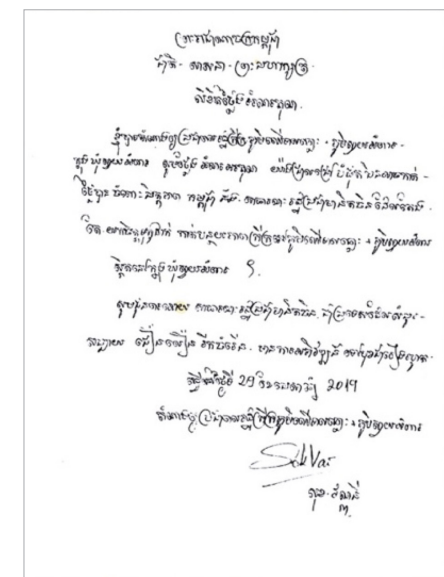
China's "whole village development" poverty reduction experience and comprehensive poverty reduction measures demonstrated by the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project made positive contributions to the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. The East Asia Poverty Reduction Project helped reduce poverty through a series of poverty alleviation initiatives, and measures such as agricultural production training, livelihood development and infrastructure construction made positive impacts on the progress of many goals, including zero hunger (SDG2), good health and well-being (SDG3), quality education (SDG4), gender equality (SDG5), clean water and sanitation (SDG6), affordable and clean energy (SDG7), and decent work and economic growth (SDG8).



East Asia Poverty Reduction Project contributes to multiple SDGs

4. Positive international feedbacks

The East Asia Poverty Reduction Project has brought great economic and social benefits, which has been highly recognized by the local governments and people of the project villages. The governments of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar as well as the villagers appreciated China's principle of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness, and have praised the project and expressed their gratitude to China for



The thank-you letter from Cambodian villager to the Chinese government.

its poverty reduction assistance.

Ouk Rabun, Minister of Rural Development of Cambodia, expressed his gratitude to the Chinese government and people for their strong support to the cause of poverty reduction and rural development in Cambodia. The villagers of the project village wrote to the Chinese government to express their gratitude.

Lao President Thongloun Sisoulith, Chairman Khamchen of the Laos-China Cooperation Committee, and other high-level government officials made special visits to the project villages and highly commended the great significance of the project for rural development and poverty alleviation in Laos. In an article published in People's Daily on October 17, 2020,

Thongphat Vongmany, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forestry of Laos, pointed out, "the demonstration project villages represent a successful case of China helping Lao people out of poverty... this is China's vivid practice of building of a community with a shared future for mankind. It is also a concrete manifestation of the maintenance and development of the profound friendship between Laos and China. We believe that poverty reduction cooperation between the two countries will continue to develop and achieve new and greater results. Laos is willing to strengthen communication with China in policy, capital, marketing and industrial connection, and further strengthen poverty reduction cooperation to usher in a better tomorrow". Marcus, a German who has lived in the Laos project village of Ban

Xienglorm for more than 20 years, has witnessed various changes brought to the village by this project. "Chinese experts have improved schools and village health centers as well as roads, and all these are what I've seen with my own eyes," he said².

Myanmar's Minister of Cooperatives and Rural Development said that thanks to the assistance of the Chinese government, Myanmar's vision of narrowing the gap between urban and rural areas and achieving sustainable rural development was no longer out of reach. On November 7, 2019, more than 90 people, including representatives of the 11th ASEAN

Ministers Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication and representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other international organizations, made a field visit to Aye Chan Thar Village, a project village in Myanmar, and highly praised the implementation of the project.

The East Asia Poverty Reduction Project was also widely reported by the media in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and the ASEAN region and was considered a "benchmark" for poverty reduction cooperation by ASEAN countries and international institutions.



In November 2019, the 11th ASEAN Ministers Conference on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication was held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. Ninety-one delegates from the 10 ASEAN countries and international organizations such as the FAO visited the Aye Chan Thar village.



Laotian media's report on the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project.



Myanmar media's report on the handover ceremony of the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project.

2.Source: *Selected Tales of East Asia Poverty Reduction Demonstration Cooperation Technical Assistance*, edited by International Poverty Reduction Center in China, Enterprise Management Publishing House, p.92.

2 Effective and Efficient Management

The East Asia Poverty Reduction Project covers three different countries, with a wide range of activities and extensive grassroots benefits. To ensure smooth progress of the project, the Chinese government fully mobilized active participation of all related and responsible departments in foreign aid, poverty alleviation and other relevant local specialized poverty alleviation institutions in the process of project preparation and implementation. The Chinese government also adopted joint management and other methods to strengthen coordination, with a view of continuously enhancing effective and efficient management of the project.

First, establishing a bilateral coordination and communication mechanism and a joint management mechanism. During the preliminary preparation and implementation process of the project, the responsible departments at all levels of the Chinese and foreign governments established coordination mechanisms to fully communicate the needs and strengthen policy connectivity. The design and implementation of the project fully respects the actual conditions and opinions of the recipient country, and adopts the mode of joint office between China and recipient countries to advance the implementation. Joint management offices consisted of the Chinese resident expert group of each

country's project implementing agencies and relevant staff of the foreign implementing agencies. The daily management of the project, under the guidance of the Chinese expert group, was implemented through sound cooperation of the staff from both sides. This has not only stimulated the enthusiasm of the staff of the recipient country, but also improved their capacity.

Second, innovating project management methods. The management department guided the implementing agencies to develop the "Project Management Manual for the East Asia Poverty Reduction Cooperation Pilot Project" and "The Implementation Rules for the Management of the East Asia Poverty Reduction Cooperation Pilot Project". These documents clarified the accounting and procurement management procedures and provided, among other practical management documents, the procurement plan templates, the training and inspection plan templates, and the community participatory procurement supplies acceptance sheet. Moreover, a series of rules and regulations, including the provincial-level project management measures, the village-level aid implementation plan and follow-up infrastructure management measures, were designed according to the needs of different projects of the countries.

Third, emphasizing monitoring and evaluation of the entire process. A monitoring and evaluation system covering the entire process of project implementation was established and implemented. Real-time monitoring of the procurement, finance and construction progress to support the development and adjustment of the project implementation plan was conducted. The project implementation effect was regularly monitored and assessed to provide basis for performance evaluation and financial analysis of the

project. From project design to project implementation, substantial written and image data has been collected, which provides sufficient materials for follow-up evaluation of the project. Communication and coordination with the recipients were strengthened through joint monitoring and evaluation and the recipients were updated on the progress of the project and the implementation of the Chinese organization in a timely manner. This has also further enhanced the transparency of the Chinese government's aid projects.

Table 2 Project Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism

Monitoring indicators	Testing object and method	Frequency of monitoring	Responsible unit
Project output indicators	Combination of MIS system data and field investigation	Once every half a year	<i>Joint Project Office</i>
Project impact indicators	The project villages and the reference villages were investigated, and the investigation was divided into baseline monitoring and investigation during the implementation period	Once a year during the implementation period	<i>The third-party monitoring institution</i>
People's satisfaction survey	Sampling survey of the project village and relevant administrative departments	Within 3 months after completion of the project	<i>The third-party monitoring institution</i>

Source: International Poverty Reduction Center in China, *Operational Guidelines for China's Foreign Aid Projects in Rural Poverty Reduction*, Enterprise Management Publishing House, 2021.

3 Extensive Practical Experience

Table 3 Joint Project Office Reporting System

Serial No.	Report title	Time of submission	Responsible unit
1	Baseline monitoring and evaluation report	Within the first year after the launch of the project	<i>Third-party monitoring institution submits the report to the Joint Project Office</i>
2	Monthly progress report	Within 10 days after the end of each month	<i>Joint Project Office</i>
3	Semi-annual financial report	Within 30 days after the end of each half year	<i>Joint Project Office</i>
4	Semi-annual report / annual progress report	By July 31 and January 31 of each year	<i>Joint Project Office</i>
5	Project monitoring and evaluation report	By the end of February each year	<i>The third-party monitoring institution</i>
6	Project completion report	Within 3 months after completion of the project	<i>Joint Project Office</i>

Source: Ibid.

Table 4 Report System of Chinese Project Implementation Unit

Serial No.	Report title	Time of submission
1	Technical assistance implementation program	Before project implementation
2	Annual implementation plan	By December 31 of each year
3	Briefing on monthly progress of the project	Within 10 days after the end of each month
4	Semi-annual/Annual progress report	Within 45 days after the end of each half year
5	Semi-annual/Annual financial report	Within 45 days after the end of each half year
6	Project completion report	Within 3 months after completion of the project

Source: Ibid.

The East Asia Poverty Reduction Project has accumulated a series of good practices and experience, made positive contributions to enhancing the effectiveness of international cooperation in poverty reduction, and enriched the concept and practice of global cooperation in poverty reduction. The successful implementation of the project has greatly enhanced the willingness and confidence of developing countries to work together to reduce poverty and advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

1. Insisting on mutual respect and emphasizing the roles of local entities

The project was advanced with joint consultations and based on the actual conditions of the recipient country. In the process of project initiation, design and implementation, China has always adhered to the principles of mutual respect, equality, fairness and justice, and win-win cooperation. China has improved and adjusted some project contents according to the actual conditions of the recipients and the project villages while focusing on the project objectives. From feasibility study, project design to concrete planning and implementation, the project has taken the participatory approach as an important tool, organized and encouraged villagers to participate in project planning,

implementation and decision-making, and respected their voices and opinions, so as to guarantee their supervision right and the smooth advancement of the project.

2. Insisting on tailoring measures to local conditions and emphasizing targeted assistance and inclusive development

The East Asia Poverty Reduction Project, based on the local conditions of the recipient countries, has been implementing targeted measures and refining management in terms of program design, organization and implementation, fund supervision, impact evaluation as well as risk prevention and control. The Chinese expert team dispatched to the project villages has drawn on China's model of targeted poverty alleviation, conducted a thorough survey of the project villages, designed questionnaires concerning rural households in the project area in line with the policies of the recipient country, worked out the actual poverty base of the poor villages, conducted precise analysis upon the causes of poverty, and designed and implemented poverty reduction assistance in a targeted manner. The implementation of the project has successfully demonstrated how China's targeted poverty alleviation could help

solve the questions of “whom to help, who to help and how to help”, thus shedding light on eradicating poverty and improving people’s livelihood in the project villages.

The East Asia Poverty Reduction Project, focusing on village construction, drew on China’s early experience of advancing the whole village poverty reduction in rural areas and designed different village assistance programs to promote the integrated development of rural infrastructure, public services, featured industries, and capacity enhancement. The project helped local villagers gain access to roads, drinking water, medical care and education, and earn a livelihood. The assistance covers environmental improvement, increase of production and income, community services and other aspects closely related to the daily production and life of villagers, to bring actual benefits to the people. The project also emphasized empowering vulnerable groups, such as women and children, by providing them with targeted assistance through multiple channels. For example, in the Cambodia project, the participation rate of poor women stands at 95%³; in the Laos project, among the 40 weaving demonstration households, 18 are poor and the weavers are all local women. Through joining these projects, women have increased their income, subsidized their families and raised their social status.

3. Insisting on sustainable development and emphasizing the self-development capacity of recipient countries

The East Asia Poverty Reduction Project firmly holds that poverty alleviation through industrial development is the key and sustainable development is the root. It focuses on the sustainability and actual effects of assistance, and pays a lot of attention to improving the self-development capacity and the income-increasing skills of farmers. By transforming the unique resources of the recipient countries into the advantages of “viable, replicable and sustainable” industrial development on the spot, supporting the establishment of local distinctive industries, and actively anticipating the problem of relapse into poverty that might happen after the withdrawal of aid, the project greatly enhanced the development potential of the recipient countries.

The project aimed to advance both poverty alleviation and capacity building and helped the agricultural development departments of the recipient countries to increase their governance capacity. The project has organized five-level officials from ministries, provinces, counties, townships and villages to come and exchange views with China, to truly feel China’s achievements in poverty reduction, and to help the officials from the recipient

countries understand China’s poverty reduction and development. Through activities such as training in China, project management training, and inspection and guidance by the Chinese side, the project helped improve the management skills of the local personnel. In addition, Chinese expert also communicated with local staff on working methodology and management measures and helped train a team of local experts in poverty alleviation project management, which provides organizational guarantee for the implementation and management of the projects at the grass-roots level in the recipient countries. The project has helped the recipient countries become self-reliant and sustainable through sharing China’s experiences in poverty alleviation and governance as well as ideas on agricultural and rural development through lectures on raising incomes, hands-on technology transfer, and customized workshops on poverty alleviation experience dissemination and management upgrading.

4. Insisting on multi-party participation and emphasizing synergy

The East Asia Poverty Reduction Project draws on China’s organizational model for poverty alleviation, mobilizes resources from aid agencies, agriculture and poverty alleviation agencies and local poverty alleviation institutions, gathered central aid funds and local funds for joint investment, and

established a one-to-one coordination and joint management mechanism with the recipient at the government, local and project levels to pool the efforts of all parties and create strong synergy. China’s poverty alleviation departments at all levels participated in the preparation and management of the project, providing professional guidance for the project. As it is the first overseas aid project implemented by China’s poverty alleviation system, the former Poverty Alleviation Office of the State Council attached great importance to the implementation of this project, and had established an inter-ministerial coordination mechanism at the early stage of the project implementation. The IPRCC with experiences in international poverty reduction cooperation was recommended to participate in the project coordination and management. The IPRCC participated in the whole process of project preparation, design, procurement, management, inspection and acceptance; organized and guided the implementation agencies; and assisted the Ministry of Commerce in project management, to ensure the orderly advancement of the project. China’s frontline poverty alleviation agencies and experts directly participated in project management, ensuring the professional implementation of the project.

The governments of Sichuan, Guangxi and Yunnan pooled local resources to vigorously push forward the

3.Source: Based on the interview with Yuan Gang, leader of the expert group of the Cambodia project.

implementation of the East Asia Poverty Reduction Project. the respective poverty alleviation agencies made the implementation of the project a priority and provided great support. Various organizations made special visits to recipient countries for consultation and guidance, laying a solid foundation for the smooth implementation of the project. The implementing agencies in Sichuan, Guangxi and Yunnan, drawing on China's special poverty alleviation and social poverty alleviation mechanisms, allocated supporting funds from provincial budgets, increased aid funds, and enhanced the effectiveness of aid. Local implementing agencies organized local enterprises to donate cash and goods, to spread the concept of China's poverty reduction assistance and demonstrate the friendship

between China and recipient countries. The Cambodia project mobilized the Cambodian Chamber of Commerce and local Chinese enterprises to donate 780 sets of daily necessities to the farmers in the project villages, cooperated with Sichuan Poverty Alleviation Foundation, Sichuan Poverty Alleviation and Development Association and domestic enterprises to donate supplies worth more than RMB1,000,000 to the project villages and the Cambodian government, and helped solve the problem of no lighting and electricity in public places of the project villages. This is also the first time China's social poverty alleviation forces formally participated in China's international poverty alleviation assistance projects.

04

Conclusion and Outlook

Poverty eradication remains one of the greatest global challenges today. In order to build a world of common prosperity and free from poverty, all countries should work together to create favorable conditions for the common development of mankind, eliminate poverty and backwardness that is still faced by the people of many countries, and make the fruits of development benefit all countries and all people.

As the largest developing country in the world, China has always been an active advocate and capable promoter of poverty reduction in the world. The East Asia Poverty Reduction Project attaches great importance to conceptual guidance, targeted implementation, extensive mobilization, and implementation of multi-pronged measures. It sticks to consultation and discussion among all parties concerned and offers assistance in a comprehensive manner. It emphasizes rural governance and people's livelihood, while keeps advancing in accordance with local conditions and providing the means for independent development. As such, it sets an example for global poverty reduction governance and provides Chinese experience, wisdom and solutions for the sustained advancement of international poverty reduction. It also holds great significance to enhancing the development capacity of less developed countries, addressing global development challenges, and accelerating the implementation of the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development. Subsequent poverty alleviation cooperation projects have been included in the list of practical cooperation deliverables of the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation held in October 2023.

The Global Development Initiative, proposed by the Chinese government, puts poverty reduction as its first priority area and shows a new way forward for global governance on poverty reduction. Looking into the future, China will

continue to prioritize poverty reduction assistance, strengthen exchanges and cooperation with developing countries and international institutions in poverty reduction, continue to improve poverty reduction assistance projects, and keep up the efforts to promote the community with a shared future for global development.

First, to strengthen the coordination of development strategies. Taking into account the actual needs of recipient countries, China will systematically summarize the experience in poverty reduction assistance demonstration cooperation, develop medium- and long-term poverty reduction cooperation plans for technical support to the recipient countries, and align the plans with global development cooperation mechanisms such as the Global Development Initiative and the Belt and Road Initiative. China will also make good use of project and fund pools under the framework of the Global Development Initiative, strengthen the integration of projects in agriculture, education, health, environmental protection and green energy, and continue to enrich the content of poverty reduction assistance.

Second, to innovate the methods of aid for poverty reduction. Learning from China's domestic targeted poverty alleviation practice such as the "10,000 enterprises helping 10,000 villages", China will build a batch of "small yet smart" model villages, communities and brands in poverty alleviation on the basis of demonstration of the applicability and effectiveness of China's poverty alleviation experience. China will further strengthen technological and knowledge assistance to enhance the recipient countries' own sustainable development. China will continue to delve into the agricultural sector, guide the extension of assistance from the production end to the entire industrial chain, absorb multiple capital injections, and drive the transformation from poverty alleviation through industrial development to development-oriented poverty alleviation.

Third, to strengthen professional support. China will give full play to the professional roles of its agriculture, rural areas and rural revitalization departments in poverty reduction assistance, make good use of the wealth of practical management experience accumulated in China's "agriculture, rural areas and farmers" and poverty reduction work, and actively mobilize and support professional departments, local governments, excellent enterprises and institutions as well as other sectors to participate in poverty reduction assistance. China will also nurture a professional team for international cooperation in poverty reduction, so as to create strong poverty reduction synergy.

Fourth, to diversify modalities for poverty reduction cooperation. China will continue to expand the circle of friends for cooperation and enrich the resource pool. China will actively carry out triangular cooperation and multilateral cooperation and continue to deepen exchanges and mutual learning in poverty reduction. With an open mind, China will further innovate the modalities of cooperation with countries, regional and international organizations, enrich cooperation platforms, fully pool the advantages of multiple resources, encourage the participation of different parties in fundraising, and promote the development of international cooperation in poverty reduction, to empower global poverty reduction.

Annex: Evaluation Indicators for East Asia Poverty Reduction Project

	Tier-1 indicators	Tier-2 indicators	Tier-3 indicators	Specific Indicators	
General indicators	1 Process indicators	1.1 Reserve stage	1.1.1 Project proposal	① Whether the recipient or partner has provided the corresponding project proposal;	
				② Whether the recipient or partner has clearly specified its needs;	
				③ Whether the needs of the recipient or partner are basically reasonable: For example, whether they align with the recipient's development plans and China's foreign aid plans, or whether they follow the initiatives proposed by China's leadership;	
			1.1.2 Project reserve conclusion	① Whether the corresponding embassy or consulate of China has provided advice on the reserved project;	
				② Whether the advice is reasonable;	
				③ Whether the approval of the project reserve follows the complete procedure and complies with the relevant rules and regulations;	
		* ④ <i>Whether the technical study on the preparedness of the project has been conducted;</i>			
		1.2 Initiation stage	1.2.1 Project initiation management	① Whether the project is a reserved project;	
				② Whether the feasibility study and feasibility assessment conducted by the competent department for the initiation of the project comply with the relevant rules and regulations;	
				③ Whether the task plans for the feasibility study are clearly specified;	
				④ Whether the approval of the feasibility study documents meets the relevant requirements;	
				⑤ Whether the project initiation has followed the corresponding approval procedure in a complete and standard manner, and complied with the relevant rules and regulations;	
⑥ Whether the content of the signed project initiation agreement is complete, and whether the division of responsibilities between China and the foreign party prescribed therein is reasonable;					
* ⑦ <i>Whether the competent department for the initiation of the project and the relevant embassy or consulate of China have provided timely and effective guidance, as well as support for, the on-site tasks (if any) of the feasibility studies;</i>					

			1.2.2 Feasibility studies	① Whether the institution in charge of the feasibility study and that in charge of the feasibility assessment qualify for engaging in foreign aid;			
				② Whether the institution in charge of the feasibility study and that in charge of the feasibility assessment have sufficient experience in the relevant industry or are professionally relevant to the project;			
				③ Whether the composition and professional structure of the personnel are reasonable, and whether the due investments in all relevant aspects are in place;			
				④ Whether the conclusions of, as well as recommendations from, the feasibility study are reasonable and feasible, and whether there are any major omissions or deviations;			
				* ⑤ <i>Whether there are sufficient overseas on-site tasks (if any) of the feasibility study;</i>			
				1.2.3 Project initiation efficiency	① Whether the speed of project initiation meets the anticipation and the expectations of the recipient, and the needs of foreign affairs work of China;		
		1.3 Implementation stage	1.3.1 Organizational management		① Whether the executive agency of the project, the management authority, and the implementation organization have corresponding management systems;		
				② Whether the systems are instructive and targeted enough to ensure the implementation of project management;			
				③ Whether the methods, content and conditions of bidding and procurement of the management authority comply with relevant regulations;			
				④ Whether the text of the project contract is standardized, legal, precise and complete, and whether the terms prescribed therein meet the requirements of the relevant policies of China and the recipient, and have not provoked any disputes during contract execution;			
			1.3.2 Quality and progress management	① Whether the professional titles and qualifications of the dispatched technical experts are managed in a standard manner;			
				② Whether the personnel are remunerated in a due and timely manner;			

				<p>③ Whether the check and acceptance and routine inspections of the project are conducted in a timely and effective manner, and whether the problems identified have been timely resolved;</p> <p>④ Whether all project documents that shall be transferred are standardized and complete, and whether the transfer procedures comply with relevant regulations;</p> <p>* ⑤ <i>Whether the incidental works and material management measures related to the project are compliant with all relevant regulations and effective;</i></p>
			1.3.3 Risk management	<p>① Whether a focus has been placed on risks related to security situation of the recipient country, and to the personnel, materials, and financial safety of the project, and whether the corresponding emergency response plans have been formulated;</p> <p>② Whether the management and control measures for risks to the project have taken all due aspects into consideration and are effective;</p> <p>③ Whether the emergency response is conducted in an agile and appropriate manner, and whether any safety incidents occur that entail heavy casualties or property losses;</p> <p>④ Whether rules on overseas anti-corruption, integrity and self-discipline have been formulated to effectively prevent integrity risks;</p>
			1.3.4 Fund management	<p>① Whether the budget funds are allocated through the prescribed channels in a due and timely manner;</p> <p>② Whether the fund management is conducted in a standard manner: For example, whether special accounts are set up for earmarked funds, and whether the funds are embezzled or misappropriated;</p>
			1.3.5 Coordination and collaboration	<p>① Whether there is a contact mechanism with relevant departments and authorities of the recipient, and whether the communication and coordination with the recipient are conducted in a timely and effective manner;</p> <p>② Whether the recipient has timely fulfilled the obligations raised in the agreement or contract and ensured the progress of the project;</p> <p>* ③ <i>Whether the recipient has provided other counterpart support;</i></p>

				<p>* ④ <i>Whether the Chinese side has taken effective measures to ensure the progress of the project if the recipient fails to execute the agreement;</i></p>
			1.3.6 Publicity plans	<p>① Whether the aid logo and emblems are used as prescribed to effectively showcase the image of China Aid;</p> <p>② Whether relevant publicity events have been held;</p>
			2.1.1 Implementation of China's foreign policies	<p>① Whether the objectives of the project meet the development strategies, foreign strategies, requirements for the development of the relevant industries and international cooperation, and other policies of China;</p> <p>② Whether they meet the medium- and long-term plans for foreign aid, instructions on country aid, and other relevant requirements of China;</p> <p>③ Whether they have followed the public commitments made by China's leadership in major diplomatic occasions on aid and development measures;</p>
			2.1.2 Meeting needs of partner countries	<p>① Whether the objectives of the project are in line with the plans and priorities of the recipient concerning economic and social development;</p> <p>② Whether they meet the actual demand of the intended recipient;</p>
			2.1.3 Rationality of the plan	<p>① Whether the implementation plans, implementation methods, implementation periods, division of labor between China and the recipient, and estimated investment of the project meet the relevant standards and criteria of the recipient or China, incorporate sufficient proof, have undergone scientific demonstration steps, and are feasible;</p>
			2.2.1 Output timeliness	<p>① Whether the starting time of the project meets the relevant requirements, and whether the project has been timely and completely transferred to the recipient upon completion;</p>
			2.2.2 Quality of output	<p>① Whether the outputs quality, such as the percent of excellence in project quality assessment and the percent of pass of trainees, of the project meets the relevant requirements;</p>
			2.2.3 Cost indicators	<p>① Whether the scale and portfolio of project investment are reasonable;</p> <p>② The budget completion rate;</p>
		2 Target indicators	2.1 Target setting	
			2.2 Target fulfillment	

				③ Whether the integrated unit price of engineering and infrastructure projects, large renovation projects and their supply procurement is within a reasonable range;	
3 Impact indicators	3.1 Impacts on	3.1.1 Political effects	① Satisfaction and recognition of the government of the recipient concerning the project;		
			* ② Whether the project conduces to the development of the governance system and capabilities of the recipient;		
		3.1.2 Economic effects	① Whether the project has driven the economic and industrial development of the surrounding areas of the project;		
			* ② Whether the project has improved the capabilities of the recipient for independent development;		
		3.1.3 Social effects	① Satisfaction and recognition of the local beneficiary groups;		
			② Whether the project has brought more employment opportunities for the recipient, alleviated the poverty of its people, and improved their livelihood;		
			* ③ Whether the project coexists harmoniously with local residents, and whether problems such as the relocation of the migrants are properly dealt with;		
		3.1.4 Environmental effects	① Whether the local natural, historical and cultural environments are properly protected, and whether there is any adverse effect on local environment and the health of local people;		
		3.2 Impact on China	3.2.1 Impact on diplomatic relations	① Whether the project conduces to the friendship between China and the recipient;	
				② Whether it has improved China's international image and influence;	
* ③ Whether the project helps promote major initiatives or strategies of China, such as the joint building of the "Belt and Road" or international cooperation in industrial capacity and equipment manufacturing;					
* ④ Whether it conduces to the people-to-people exchanges between China and the recipient, and makes the public attitude and opinions of the recipient towards China more friendly;					

			3.2.2 Impact on domestic development	① Whether the project has promoted the integration of China's standards, technical specifications and products with those of the recipient, and whether it has driven the technological innovation in relevant industries of China; * ② Whether it has facilitated the economic and trade cooperation between China and the recipient, and whether it has driven the overseas market expansion of the relevant entities;
4 Sustainability indicators	3.3 Contributions to advancing international development agenda	* 3.3.1 No poverty (SDG1)	* ① Whether the project helps end poverty;	
			* 3.3.2 Zero hunger (SDG2)	* ② Whether the project helps end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture;
	4.1 Support for sustainable investment	4.1.1 China's conditions	① Whether the project implementation organization has provided the corresponding quality guarantees and the relevant services as prescribed in the contract;	
			② Whether China has provided necessary policy support, funds, support in kind and human resources for the operation of the project;	
			③ Whether the maintenance and use of the project, or the post-training status of the trainees, have been followed up;	
			* ④ Whether the long-term cooperation plan for the project has provided effective guarantees for its continuous operation;	
		4.1.2 Foreign conditions	① Whether the recipient or any other stakeholder has provided necessary policy support, funds, support in kind and human resources for the operation of the project;	
			② Whether the legal, policy, economic, and social environments of the country and the region where the project has been implemented meet the requirements of the sustainable development of the project;	
	4.2 Sustained aid effectiveness	4.2.1 Sustained effects	① Whether the project has been put into long-term and full use, for which the annual utilization rate and the annual vacancy rate shall be stated;	
			② Whether the expected benefits of the project has been achieved;	
* ③ Whether it has achieved adhesion effect or spillover effect with other projects;				

			4.2.2 Transformation of aid results	① Whether the technologies, standards or intellectual products used in the project have been localized and disseminated for local development.
Tailored Indicators				
Tailored Indicators	5 Poverty reduction	5.1 Improvement of basic living conditions	5.1.1 Output indicators	① Number of beneficiaries from the project (coverage rate);
				② The proportion of poor households among all beneficiaries (degree of targetedness);
			5.1.2 Impact indicators	① Whether the basic living conditions of the poverty-stricken population have been improved concerning food, clothing, nutrition intake, drinking water supply, water safety, access to water, housing safety, electricity and lighting, and access to traffic;
				② Whether the social security situation of the poverty-stricken population has been improved, covering basic medical security and basic education security for school-age children;
		5.2 Promotion of employment	5.2.1 Output indicators	① Number of persons provided with employment guidance or training;
				② The number of beneficiaries who have received help for employment, entrepreneurship and other means of livelihood;
			5.2.2 Impact indicators	① Whether the income level of the poverty-stricken population has been raised;
				② Whether the employment opportunities of the poor population have been increased and whether their means of livelihood have been improved;
				③ Whether efforts are made to help the poverty-stricken people earn sustainable and stable income;
		5.2.3 Cross-cutting indicators	① Participation of female poverty-stricken people in projects and their benefits;	
5.3 Advancing integrated rural development	5.3.1 Output indicators	① The number of relevant officials, rural administrative personnel and agricultural technical personnel who have received guidance and training;		
		② The number of agricultural technology demonstration projects;		

			5.3.2 Impact indicators	① Incidence of poverty or changes in poverty-stricken population;
				② Whether the public infrastructure like the water, electricity and road network of the village where the project is located has been improved;
				③ Whether efforts have been made to help establish or upgrade rural industries;
				④ Whether efforts have been made to improve the public management and service ability of the village where the project is located.

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