

The Dilemma and Countermeasures of the Realization of Rural Old-age Right in Qinba Mountain Area Against the Background of Rural Revitalization

Taking Z Village, W Town in L City, Sichuan Province as an Example*

Haibo Zhou

Sichuan Agricultural University
Ya'an, China 625014

Ying Liu

Sichuan Agricultural University
Ya'an, China 625014

Abstract—The strategy of rural revitalization put forward at the 19th CPC national congress is a major decision and arrangement made by the party for the work related to agriculture, rural areas and farmers. However, with the acceleration of the aging trend of China's population, old-age care of the rural elderly faces many difficulties. How to solve the problems facing the realization of farmers' old-age right has become an urgent issue in the current rural revitalization. This paper analyzes the main problems in the realization of the rural old-age right through the field investigation of the current situation of the old-age care in Z village, W town, L city, Sichuan province, and puts forward countermeasures based on the rural revitalization strategy and the actual situation of the village.

Keywords—*rural revitalization; Western China; farmers; old-age right; dilemma*

I. INTRODUCTION

The report of the 19th CPC national congress stressed the need to "implement the strategy of rural revitalization". It put forward the overall requirements of "industrial prosperity, ecological livability, rural civilization, effective governance, and prosperous life" and the important content of rural revitalization of doing a good job in old-age support for the rural elderly and guaranteeing the old-age rights of farmers. China's urbanization rate reached 58.52 percent at the end of 2017, according to data released by the national bureau of statistics. In spite of this, China is still a large agricultural country, with 57,661 million rural residents, accounting for more than 40% of the total population. [1] In recent years, China's population has become more aging, with an unprecedented aging rate. By the end of 2017, China had 241 million elderly people aged 60 or above, accounting for 17.3 percent of the total population, according to the national aging office. Among the 241 million elderly people, the rural elderly population accounted for a considerable proportion. China's new elderly population also exceeded 10 million for

*Fund project: Funding results of the 2017 undergraduate thesis incubation programme of Sichuan Agricultural University.

the first time in 2017. It is expected that by 2020, the number of elderly people over the age of 60 will increase to about 255 million, accounting for 17.8% of the population. The number of the eldest old will increase to about 29 million, the number of elderly people living alone or with empty nests will increase to about 118 million, and the dependency ratio of the elderly will increase to about 28%. However, the aging degree of the actual living population in rural areas may be further deepened. [2] It is predicted that by the middle of this century, China will enter a stage of deep aging, and the elderly population will reach about 480 million. [3]

With the continuous development of the society, the gap between the urban and rural dual structure is getting larger and larger and the problem of China's rural old-age care is increasingly prominent. The aging problem in rural areas is characterized by large population, high proportion, fast growth, poor economy of aged people and aging before getting rich. Taking care of and helping the elderly in rural areas, especially solving the old-age care problems of the elderly in rural areas, and guaranteeing the old-age rights of the elderly in rural areas, are of great significance to better implement the targeted poverty alleviation policy, rural revitalization strategy, and promote the coordinated development of the whole society. It is reported that more than 75% of the old people in our country live in the countryside. It has been a very difficult problem of the old-age care of rural left-behind elderly, empty nesters and the care as well as medical treatment of the oldest of the old and incapacitated elderly in rural areas who are in worse health condition. [4] To understand the implementation of old-age right situation in Qinba mountains of Sichuan province rural farmers, the authors look deeply into Z village, W town in L city, which is a county-level city in Sichuan province. This paper makes an in-depth investigation on the village's old-age care problems and the realization of the farmers' old-age care rights, profoundly analyzes the existing problems and causes, and considers the solutions from multiple perspectives in combination with the requirements of the rural revitalization strategy.

II. OVERVIEW OF OLD-AGE RIGHT

As for the definition of endowment right, there is no unified concept in the academic world. Some believe that the right of old-age support is the right of citizens to require their families and children to provide support and assistance when they are old, and to require the basic old-age social security of the state and society. [5] Some others believe that old-age right, as one of the basic rights of natural person, is a kind of universal birthright, which is always enjoyed by natural person whether it is used or not. [6] It is generally believed that the old-age right refers to the right of citizens to require the society and family to provide basic pension security for them when they are old, which is an important embodiment of the survival of civil society. At present, it is clearly stipulated in the constitution, the law on the protection of rights and interests of the elderly, the marriage law and the inheritance law, including the right to support their spouses and children, the right to property ownership, the right to freedom of marriage, the right to material assistance, the right to medical security, the right to social security, the right to participate in social development and litigation rights.

III. OLD-AGE CARE STATUS OF Z VILLAGE, W TOWN, L CITY

L city, located in the northeast of Sichuan basin and at the south foot of Qinba mountain, has 46 townships (towns) and 4 sub-district offices. With a total population of 859,192 people, L city is a national-level poverty-stricken county. W town is located in the east of L city, 17 kilometers away from the urban area. It has 15 villages and 1 neighborhood committee, with a total population of about 18,000 people. Z village is a natural village under the jurisdiction of W town, about 25 kilometers away from L city. Supported by the strategy of targeted poverty alleviation and rural revitalization, with the long-term efforts of the villagers in L city and Z village, the economic conditions of this village have been improved to a certain extent, and the old-age care level of the villagers has been improved to a certain extent, but the old-age security problem has not been much improved. Such condition is far from the goal of "six matters of the old have", namely, the old have somebody to support them, have their illness treated, have something to do, have something to learn, have someone to reeducate them and have something to take pleasure in". In order to have an in-depth and detailed understanding of the old-age care situation of farmers in Z village, the authors went deep into the Qinba mountain area in August 2018. 100 elderly people in Z village were selected and a survey was conducted through field visits, questionnaires, individual interviews and other methods. The respondents ranged in education from illiteracy to high school, the age of who were from 60 to 90. The content of the survey mainly includes the physical condition, living situation, inhabiting information, main economic source, old-age care mode and social participation of farmers over 60 years old in Z village.

According to the survey results, family supporting is the main way for the old-age care of residents in Z village. All the 100 old people in the survey are supported by family, and they have a low degree of participation in public affairs and

awareness of policies in the whole village. Their economic sources are mainly traditional agricultural income. Due to the poor local economic foundation, a large number of young and middle-aged labors have been out for work for a long time, and most of the people living in the village are old people, women and children. Since young and middle-aged people are absent, the working ability of the elderly is relatively low, and there is no fixed economic income, so the local elderly are supported poorly relatively.

IV. DILEMMA FACED BY THE REALIZATION OF OLD-AGE RIGHT IN Z VILLAGE, W TOWN, L CITY

A. *The Function of Family Supporting of the Old Is Gradually Weakened, and the Number of "Left-behind" Elderly People Is Gradually Increasing*

The joy of having children prattling about their knees and playing with grandchildren are people's longing for old age, but for various reasons, this situation is difficult to realize in the village. With the continuous development of social economy, the outside world has an increasing impact on the old-age care of Z village. A large number of young and middle-aged families in Z village flock to Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Chengdu, Chongqing, Urumqi and other big cities to work, which results in a large number of left-behind elderly people in the village. The family planning work in L city has been doing very well, especially those born after the late 1950s, who are now around 65 years old. As the first generation of only children is in the critical period of supporting the elderly and raising the young, a couple may have to support four or more elderly people and raise 1-2 children at the same time, which is very stressful. Among the 100 old people in the survey, 68 old people are mostly empty-nesters with children born in the 1980s all working outside. Some of them are also responsible for taking care of their grandchildren, sending them to school and fetch them. Very few elderly people even afford the tuition fees and other cost of their grandchildren.

According to the survey, 86 out of 100 elderly people are mainly supported by their families. However, the economic conditions of children who are migrant workers or the first generation to go to cities are relatively limited. In addition, with a large number of young and middle-aged people moving to cities and increasing family divorce, single-parent families gradually increase, further increasing the economic pressure on rural families to provide for the aged. The investigation found that several cases in which daughter-in-law runaway because of poor family economic conditions. Therefore it is indeed difficult to rely on children for support. In addition, the level of family support for the elderly is very low, most of which is limited to guaranteeing the basic life of the elderly, leaving many rural elderly without proper care. At the same time, these families face other problems as the rural revitalization strategy is pushed deeper. As the family labor force aging, the subsequent labor is in shortage. These families cannot meet the needs of modern agricultural development because they have little knowledge of new agricultural technologies and equipment. And due to the relatively insufficient investment in labor force, technology

and capital, a large area of paddy field in Z village was laid waste for lack of labor force. Under such condition, it is difficult for the elderly to realize their material safeguard right and development right.

B. With Incomplete Social Security System, the Right to Social Security Is Difficult to Realize

At present, the state has provided the most basic social security for farmers, such as subsistence allowance and old-age insurance for new rural residents. However, the new rural endowment insurance fund is mainly composed of individual contributions, collective subsidies and government subsidies. But since the local farmer has very limited individual contribution payment ability with low they income, the implementation of collective economy subsidy is also quite difficult. Many people can only receive the basic pension provided by the central government for each old person. The amount is low and it is difficult to meet the needs of the elderly. As there is no fixed source of income, the cost of treatment for serious diseases and chronic diseases is still beyond the affordability of most farmers. Difficult and expensive medical services still exist in a certain range. In the survey, it was found that more than 50% of the elderly had chronic diseases. They generally reflected the new rural cooperative medical care reimbursement threshold is high, and the procedure is complex and so on. So the village old people also generally hold the concept of "enduring minor illness and dragging serious illness", leading to the phenomena of minor illness worsening to serious illness, falling into poverty because of illnesses, returning to poverty because of illness etc.

C. With Insufficient Supply of Professional Old-age Care Services, It Is Difficult to Implement the Right of Material Assistance

The elderly have been living in the rural acquaintance society for a long time and expect to be supported locally. However, due to the limitations of location, transportation and economic conditions, there is no old-age care institution at the village level. At present, except for a clinic with one doctor in Z village, which provides some basic drugs and diagnosis and treatment for the elderly, there is no specialized medical and old-age care institution. The doctor in the clinic can treat a simple cold, and the villagers who have a bit serious cold are willing to go to the clinic in W town for examination and treatment. There is a nursing home in W town, which is far away from Z village, and there are even fewer nursing service professionals. The overall quality of the management personnel and service personnel of this nursing home is generally not high. The service for the elderly can hardly meet the needs of the elderly, and there is still a large room for improvement.

D. With a Lack of Spiritual Care, It Is Difficult for the Elderly to Realize the Spiritual and Cultural Rights

In traditional villages, the extended family lives within a village, with frequent interactions between brothers and sisters, and children are usually able to provide daily care for their parents. When problems arise, family members consult

together, in which parents in the family enjoy higher status and have very substantial spiritual life. Such process contains a wealth of material exchange, ritual exchange, emotional exchange, cultural capital exchange, symbolic exchange, and the beautiful emotional exchange full of human touch, in which love and filial piety is an important part of the parent-child relationship to give and get. [7]

However, currently the values of the traditional big family have been impacted. As the family model has gradually changed from the traditional big family to the 4-2-1 or 4-2-2 model, the only child and child have gradually become the family center, and the spiritual care for the elderly has been ignored. In 2013, "go home often" was written into the law when the law on the protection of the rights and interests of the elderly was amended. But since this article is of low operability, it doesn't ideal effect. In the survey, some elderly people said that because their children were too busy to communicate with them, they would only come back home on Chinese New Year and festivals when the family could gather together and children can have some chat with them. Some young people only call old people every half or whole year, and some even come home once a couple of years. Under such situation, the elderly tend to spend their leisure time on activities of being sleeping, chatting, playing cards or watching TV. Due to the dilution of rural interpersonal relationship and the imbalance in the allocation of resources such as poverty alleviation and subsistence allowance, the interpersonal relationship of rural elderly people is getting worse and worse, and the civilized and simple folk customs are gradually are gradually disappearing.

V. ANALYSIS ON THE DILEMMA OF THE REALIZATION OF OLD-AGE RIGHT IN Z VILLAGE, W TOWN, L CITY

A. Poor Infrastructure Construction and Weak Economic Foundation

Because the local rural economic foundation is poor, in order to improve economic conditions, a large number of young adults can only go out to work. There is mainly one road from Z village to L city via W town. According to the investigation, this road is still a dirt road at present, with mud all over in rain and ashes all over in fine weather, making it extremely inconvenient for villagers to travel. At present, except for agriculture, Z village does not have any economic income other than temporary work. Agriculture is mainly in traditional mode in which plowshare is used for planting, so the production efficiency is very low with no added value. For the development of agricultural industrialization, because there is no policy support, the lack of technology and funds, local farmers have the concerns about technology, sales, operating risks etc. In addition, the village committee not only does not support, still make trouble from ceaselessly. Therefore, at present, there is no agricultural industrialization project. For farmers that cannot have basic living security and support their children's education, to talk about old-age care is a kind of extravagant demand to them undoubtedly.

B. The Ability of Grassroots Party Organizations to Promote Rural Old-age Care Needs to Be Improved

The party holds the key to the revitalization of rural areas and the development of old-age care. Grass-roots party organizations are the pillar and backbone of rural revitalization. A strong party organization is an important guarantee for promoting rural revitalization. The central government's opinions on strengthening the construction of service-oriented party organizations at the grassroots level pointed out that to strengthen the service function of party organizations in rural areas, focus should be put on promoting scientific development, leading farmers to get rich, keeping close contact with the masses, and maintaining rural stability and providing good services.; farmers should be guided to carry out cooperative operation and joint household operation; house-to-house visits should be conducted and assistance to households should be provided; the feedback of the masses' demands should be dealt with in a timely manner to help the masses and party members in difficulty solve the practical problems in production and living, increasing income and getting rich. This has provided the basic standards for the work of guiding rural party construction with the construction of service-oriented party organizations. However, farmers in this village have very low satisfaction with the village committee, and the majority of villagers think that the village committee has not played a role in guiding farmers to carry out cooperative operation, joint household operation, and house-to-house visits and provide assistance for individual households. Farmers even complain a lot about party branches, believing that they are unfair in terms of subsistence allowances and the allocation of funds for poverty alleviation.

However, for the town and city governments, Z village has a large number of elderly people with low payment ability and living in scattered places. To promote old-age care in rural areas, a large proportion of personnel, money and material resources need to be invested, which increases the financial pressure on L city and W town governments. In particular, L city is a national poverty-stricken county. With limited financial resources, the government puts more funds into urban construction to promote the development of tourism cities. Therefore, it is more difficult to carry out old-age care in rural areas.

C. The Relevant Legal System Is Not Perfect and Farmers' Legal Awareness Is Not High

Insufficient attention has been paid to the old-age right of farmers and the construction of rural social security system, the system is incomplete. At present, China has no formal social endowment insurance laws and regulations to guide the rural social endowment system, which makes it difficult to realize the constraints on the rights and obligations of the government and farmers, and also makes farmers worry about the consistency and stability of the implementation of the system. At the same time, there are still some problems, such as the incomplete old legal system, poor operability and inadequate law enforcement etc. Furthermore, the system of laws and regulations lags behind the development of economy and society; the rules and regulations for the aged

are highly policy-oriented; the legislation for the aged is scattered; there is a lack of overall planning and coordination and the key issue of old-age care lacks legal norms. [8] However, due to the limitation of their own cultural quality, vision and thinking, farmers seldom think of protecting their own rights and interests through legal system.

D. The Society Pays Little Attention to the Elderly Care in Rural Areas

At present, the government has made a lot of efforts in promoting urban construction, economic development and residents' security. However, due to insufficient attention to rural issues and inadequate policies and guidance, rural investment is limited. Z city has invested a large amount of construction funds in urban construction and tourism development, and the investment in rural construction needs to be strengthened urgently. Some governments have put some investment in the countryside, but more in infrastructure like agricultural industrialization and basic education and medical care. They hold that it is the children's duty and responsibility to provide for the aged and have no clear understanding of the role of the government in providing for the aged and put no investment.

VI. RECONSIDERING THE REALIZATION OF RURAL OLD-AGE RIGHT

A. Giving Full Play to the Role of Grassroots Party Organizations as Battle Fortresses, Guided by Party Building

The village branch is the leading core of all rural work and the "engine" of rural revitalization. Whether this "engine" is strong or not directly affects the development of the village, the progress of rural revitalization and the realization of the villagers' right to provide for the aged. The village party branches must actively lead, set a good example, and take the initiative to act as community-level party organizations. To achieve this, they should become the core that unites broad party members and masses, the fortress that overcome difficulties, at the same time should implement the responsibility of party organization education, management, supervisions party member and organization, publicize, agglomerate, serve masses strictly, arouse the endogenous motive force of the broad party member masses to build beautiful new countryside ceaselessly. They should give full play to their role of radiating and gathering strength. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the cultivation of professional farmers through the use of skilled craftsmen and to pool strength by improving the quality of party members and cadres, as to promote industrial development and social governance, improve conditions, and successfully accomplish various tasks for the revitalization of rural areas.

B. Vigorously Developing the Rural Economy on the Basis of Thriving Industries

The government should take the supply-side structural reform of agriculture as the goal, strengthen training and education, and strive to improve farmers' ability to apply advanced agricultural equipment in a scientific way to

conduct scientific farming. It is necessary to help farmers understand and accept the market, give top priority to "efficiency" and "market needs"; and pursue cooperative management and industrialized development. In this way the level of agricultural income will be raised, and the attractiveness of agriculture will be enhanced, so that farmers will be encouraged to find jobs in nearby areas and increase their incomes. This is also conducive to guiding young adults working outside to obtain employment back in their hometown. Efforts should be made to improve the structure of the agricultural industry, through improving the quality of agricultural products; increase agricultural investment, accelerate the integrated development of primary, secondary and tertiary industries in rural areas; focus on upgrading the agricultural sector; improve the quality and efficiency of agriculture and enhance its competitiveness; and promote the development of provincial-level industries to achieve industrial revitalization. All this will lay an industrial foundation for the realization of old-age right.

C. Remodeling of Traditional Rural Civilization Based on Rural Civilization Construction

"Respecting for the aged, providing for the aged and respecting the aged" is a traditional virtue of the Chinese nation and the concept of family supporting of the elderly is deep-rooted. The preface to *The Classic of Filial Piety* written by Yang Qiyuan in Ming dynasty expounds on the function of "filial piety": "The grounds on which the emperor keeps the world, vassals protect the world, bureaucrats and scholars retain the ancestor temple and official rank and salary, and the common people maintain the lives and possessions of their families and provide for their parents, are never separated from filial piety. It is uneasy to conduct all the good deeds, enjoy all the blessings and gain a good reputation except that one has filial piety." "Filial piety" has become the ethical basis of traditional rural society. Under the condition of market economy, people's values and ideology have changed due to the impact of various aspects. But at present, for a period of time in the future, family supporting is still the main way to solve the problem of rural old-age care in most rural areas, especially in mountainous areas like Z village. In order to do this, efforts should be made to strengthen the ideological and moral construction, fully explore our traditional farming culture, and give play to the advantages of traditional culture and moral concepts close to the reality of rural life. It is necessary to reshape good family traditions and simple folk customs, and give full play to the important role of family and local customs in providing for the aged in rural areas. Efforts should be made to gradually establish a system of care and assistance for rural left-behind elderly people, with the focus on helping the extremely poor and elderly left-behind elderly people. Also, it is needed to take the natural group as the unit, organize the elderly to take care of each other, build a harmonious neighborhood relationship, help each other, huddle together for warmth, and enhance the ability of self-care.

D. Improving the Policies and Laws for Rural Endowment Based on Effective Governance

Efforts should be made to resolutely follow the path of rural rule of law, strengthen and improve rural governance, establish a modern rural social governance system so as to improve the rural governance system that combines the rule of law with the rule of virtue. Relevant departments should organize professional teams of agriculture, rule of law and social security to conduct field investigation and research in rural areas, fully listen to opinions and suggestions, and formulate policies and regulations to fully protect the rights and interests of the elderly in rural areas based on highlight of the emotional needs of the elderly. They should make clear the principle that rural endowment should follow and related pension benefits, ensure that there are laws and regulations governing old-age insurance in rural areas, in order to enhance the stability, standardization and authority of the system. At the same time, the publicity and education of the rule of law should be strengthened through a variety of ways, so as to enhance the elderly people's awareness of their rights and the young people's legal obligations to support the elderly, and improve the degree of the realization of the rule of law.

E. Increasing Financial Input Based on a Well-off Life

The government should actively establish and improve the financial comprehensive poverty alleviation policy system, increase the special financial funds for poverty alleviation, and promote the formation of an old-age care mode with village organizations as the core, families as the unit, and regional elderly families helping each other. The radiation role of old-age care service institutions and medical institutions should be given into full play and their door-to-door visits to villagers' families need to be strengthened so as to ease the difficulty of getting medical treatment for the elderly in rural areas. The medical and nursing functions of township clinics and village clinics should be strengthened, so that they can provide patrol services for nursing homes or elderly care centers within the jurisdictions. This can not only reduce the cost of medical care for the elderly and their families, but also facilitate the elderly, reflecting the people-oriented principle and pursuit. The government should focus on providing some recreational facilities and fitness equipment to provide the elderly with a place of their own suitable for recreation and fitness.

VII. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the old-age right, as a basic right of citizens, is not only a basic need of people's livelihood, but also an important content of rural revitalization and an important symbol of social civilization, which should be protected by law. But at present, there are many difficulties and challenges in the realization of the right of old-age care for farmers in some rural areas of China. Therefore efforts need to be made to give full play to the role of the bastion of grassroots party organizations based on party construction; vigorously develop the rural economy on the basis of thriving industries; reshape the traditional rural civilization based on the rural civilization; improve the rural pension

policies and laws based on effective governance; increase financial input based on a well-off life so as to ensure that rural elderly people live a happy life in their old age.

REFERENCES

- [1] National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China. The 2017 economic operation is stability good, better than expected" [EB/OL]. http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/zxfb/201801/t20180118_1574917.html, on January 18, 2018.
- [2] Jia Ting. Investigation and research on rural pension in Baoji city [J]. *Reform & Opening*, no.13, 2018.
- [3] Comprehensive of Human Resources News. "What's the solution for Chinese-style old-age care?" [N]. *Human Resources News*, first edition, July 16, 2018.
- [4] Du Peng. Exploring the rural old-age care model of "combining medical care with nursing care" [N]. *Nanfang Metropolis Daily*, February 19, 2017.
- [5] Chen Yan. Establishing the pension legal system centering on pension vouchers [J]. *Citizen Guide*, the 11th issue, 2015.
- [6] Wang Jinling. Endowment: from welfare to rights — on people's livelihood and politics [J]. *Zhejiang Academic Journal*, the 6th issue, 2016.
- [7] Guo Yuhua. The fair logic in the intergenerational relationship and its vicissitude — an analysis of the rural old-age care events in Hebei [J]. *Academic Journal*, 2001, 4 (1).
- [8] Li Tao. On the improvement of pension legal system under the background of aging population [J]. *Jiangnan Tribune*, 12th issue, 2015.