

Project Title: Production of Public Good and Recasting Rural Community: A Case Study of Collective Action in a Village of Yunnan Province, PRC

Project Summary:

Rural China is experiencing great transformation. In China's villages, there is a crisis of community norms and a concomitant crisis in local institutions and governance, devolution of public policy programs might not have the intended positive impacts. Thus, understanding the dynamics between community, self-governance, and sustainable development is critically important in times of rapid devolution of public policies concerning social development. To understand this nexus between community and development, using Yunnan as case, this project intends to study how villages supply and maintain essential public goods and services (health, education, village water and sanitation, village roads, collectively caring for village elderly, or providing for the very poor) on their own, or in collaboration with local governments (township and county). Moreover, what factors enable or undermine the provision of these public goods, and the ways in which they impact community well being? Based on our finding, we concluded that local government has lost its function in providing public good and social services and faced legitimacy crisis. Due to dysfunction of local government, local communities need to self-govern and organize to engage in collective action for the production of essential public goods and services. Rural social work or NGOs' intervention are critical in mobilization the local communities and building up the local capacity in the production of critical public goods. The engagement of rural social work also affects local governance and state-citizen collaboration.