

EAST ASIAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK



EADN WORKING PAPER No. 61 (2012)

***Building Public Service System in the People's Republic of China's
Rural Communities: A Case Study of Y County in Hunan Province***

(March 2012)

Project Supervisor: Xie Jingren, Qu Ting
**Members: Liu Yihong, Li Hanqiu, Xie Xiaojun, Liao Zhuoxian,
Chen Lv, Huang Yongzhong, Liu Xinrong**
Institute of International Issues
Hunan Academy of Social Sciences, People's Republic of China
E-mail: quting@naver.com

I. Introduction

Building public service system in the countryside is a new and innovative way of developing communities in the People's Republic of China (PRC). From 2005, both government officials and scholars have begun to attach importance to the building of public service systems in rural communities because public services in rural communities mainly result in the following benefits:

First, they improve the quantity and optimize the structure of the public service system to meet the increasingly diversified needs of rural residents, and raise the participation of rural residents in public services;

Second, they consolidate political power in the grassroots, help implement democratic management, and transform or enhance government functions; and

Third, they provide high-quality living platform for rural residents thereby unifying urban and rural development, and thus achieve social equality and justice (Feng 2011).

Generally, the public service system in rural communities includes rural infrastructure, rural health care, rural public education, rural social security, and public safety, among others. Having access to basic public services has become the most pressing expectation of rural residents in the vast rural areas of the PRC (Xia and Ma 2011). However, there is still a lack of empirical studies on what these rural communities need, and at present, few studies answer general questions such as the following:

- What are the most urgent concerns and practical public services required by rural residents?
- What are the effects of preferential agricultural policies related to basic public services in narrowing the expanding urban–rural gap?
- Are farmers satisfied with the policies implemented and performed by the government?

A deeper understanding of these questions can guide the government in providing an effective basic public service system that will cater to the needs of residents in rural communities.

This paper is primarily concerned with issues related to the public service system in the PRC's rural communities. It explores the current problems and demands since these issues

are important in the development of a public service system for rural communities. This paper addresses the above issues by using the case of Y County in Hunan Province, which is the first rural community that has established a public service system. Based on relevant theories and successful experiences from other regions both in the PRC and in other countries, this paper uses a case study to identify the achievements and look into the problems of building the public service system in rural communities such as the Y County. This paper also offers practical suggestions to solve the problems that were identified, and in conclusion, proposes a general framework for PRC's rural communities in order to improve their rural public service systems. In addition, it provides cutting-edge proposals to improve the public service system in other rural communities of the country.

This paper is organized as follows: Section II reviews the existing literature related to rural public service system; Section III provides background information on the changes before and after the construction of the public service system in Y County in 2006; Section IV introduces the methodology, characteristics of the survey data, survey findings, and related interpretations and explanations; and finally, Section V summarizes the discussions and draw some policy implications for building public service systems in the rural communities of the PRC.

II. Literature Review

Rural public services are generally used as key indicators when assessing the actual impact of rural community work. In western countries, theoretical research on public service system in rural communities has been conducted from sociological viewpoints. With the expanding scope and community service areas in western countries particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, scholars started to focus their concern on how to adapt to the needs of various population groups in rural communities.

For instance, American scholars Eddleman et al. (1974) argued that the most effective way to develop the public service system in rural communities is to meet the public service needs of residents, which results in an improvement of the environment and of the attractiveness of the community through better education facilities, health and medical services, transportation systems, tax structure, and others. Canadian scholars Forbes et al.

(2006) conducted a cross-sectional analysis to examine the use by Canadians of health care services, and the impact of the place (rural or urban) on the use of services, and recommended that publicly funded national programs should be expanded to ensure that the supportive services needed are available. British scholars Fafchamps et al. (2007) provided an overview of the issues and empirical literature on public service provision and concluded that the impact of user fees depends critically on whether the revenue from user fees is re-invested in improving supply.

Both American scholars Berkowitz et al. (2002) and Kuntz et al. (2009) focus on rural public health care policy models. Berkowitz et al. (2002) performed an empirical study and concluded that the most essential ways to improve and strengthen rural public health system are to improve information technology capacity in rural communities, develop and monitor performance standards, improve leadership and public health workforce capacity, and interact and integrate community health systems, managed care, and public health in rural communities. Kuntz et al. (2009) provided an overview of health policy in rural communities and suggested that a transparent process combined with open and frequent communication among stakeholders including community members; health care providers; researchers; educators; and local, state, and federal health officials is critical for the achievement of positive health outcomes.

In recent years, Chinese scholars have begun to conduct research on the reasons for the lag of rural public services and on the strategies for establishing and improving public service system in rural communities. Feng (2011) attributed the inadequate investment in public service system to the unformed public finance system and excessive burden made on farmers by the external supply of public service system. The absence of public service provided by the government, the irrational supply or poor targeting of public service structures, and the inadequate grass-roots public services provided to meet demands contributed to an inefficient public policy system in rural communities. Therefore, Tu (2006) suggested that infrastructure construction in rural communities be increased to improve the educational system as the central base of rural public services—to train rural community service agencies as support, and to establish complete social welfare system as guarantee, in order to improve public service system in rural communities.

III. The Construction of Public Service System in Y County

Y County is located in the southeast of Hunan Province. It is the junction of Hunan, Hubei, and Jiangxi provinces. Due to its good location and easy accessibility, Y County formed an agricultural–industrial structure that focused on grain, oil, animal husbandry, forestry, and rural enterprises. Y County has a total area of 1,797 square kilometers, and a population of 634,900 people, including 466,500 individuals who live in rural areas. Compared with other counties, Y County has been in the forefront of rural public services. Y County was the first to establish new rural communities. It established a total of 16 rural communities, including the LiyuJiangdong Road community, Xinmin community, Jinxing community, Ningxing community, Wenchangjiao community, Sandu community, and others.

Based on the actual condition of the rural community, Y County placed emphasis on establishing public service system in rural communities as the key to new rural construction and it made substantial breakthroughs. In recent years, public services in the rural communities of Y County have been enhanced at different levels while a series of preferential agricultural policies had been supported by the majority of residents. It must be noted, however, that the shortage of public services in rural communities has not yet been solved fundamentally in the system. Nevertheless, the basic needs of rural residents on education, public health, basic living allowance, and others have been effectively met. Still, a comprehensive rural reform needs to be accelerated and the establishment of public service system in rural communities should be advanced.

From 2000 to 2006, Y County had invested a lot of money, materials, and manpower in rural infrastructure construction that catered to education, employment, medical care, ecological environment, and public safety, among others, which greatly improved rural living conditions. In the process of strengthening rural infrastructure investment—by constructing village centers and making these as the carriers and integrators of the public resources in the communities—the utilization of public resources in Y County has been improved.

The following centers were achieved by the government’s policy of enhancing rural infrastructure construction:

First, the infrastructure for village centers includes two parts: outdoors and indoors. The outdoor part serves as the place for recreational and sports activities, equipped with

body-building apparatus. The indoor part includes various rooms and facilities for the residents' various activities, such as the village committee office, the family planning office, medical clinic, technology service office, legal consulting office, information service office, library, villagers' deliberation room, general function room, service station of agricultural materials, and others. The emphasis of these village centers is on educational training, science and technology information, production, communication, recreation and sports, health care, legal affairs, public security, and other services. By the end of December 2006, 72 percent of villages in Y County have established village centers with a variety of functions.

Second, the infrastructure for rural education has been improved significantly. For renovating the old school buildings, Y County has enhanced the quality of school buildings and improved school conditions. The renovation of old school buildings in rural primaries and secondary schools project started in 2004. By the end of December 2006, Y County has invested CNY4.53 million to reconstruct the old school buildings in rural schools and this laid a good foundation for the development of rural education.

Third, the health care industry in rural communities has been strengthened. In 2004, six towns in Y County have been given recognition and award as the province's demonstration places. The cooperative medical service has been managed by distributing subsidy fund according to the city's and county's finance to improve the rural coverage rate. By the end of December 2006, all the 16 towns in Y County had been covered by the national new rural cooperative medical assistance, with an enrollment rate of 98.5 percent and with 319,550 people enrolled.

Since 2007, based on current characteristics and developing trends of rural communities, Y County has actively explored a new model suitable for developing rural communities. It has also established an effective long-run mechanism with towns and enlisted the cooperation of enterprises of town and villages to speed up the construction of rural communities and improve their delivery level of public services.

These improvements are mainly reflected in the following:

First, the public service delivery level of rural communities has been improved. In Y County, one-third of the rural communities have established the voluntary association, rural professional economic association, social first-aid station, environmental and hygienic

administration station, dispute settlement station of public opinions, liaison station of recreation and sports activity, and the utility service station. Because of these initiatives, the delivery of public services such as health, culture, environment, security, and others have been significantly improved.

Second, the various and increasing needs of residents in rural communities have been satisfied. Of the rural communities in Y County, 90 percent have set up small shops, kindergarten schools, clinics, libraries, agricultural stations, and other service facilities in succession, which have solved many problems and brought greater convenience to the residents.

Third, the rural community management system has started to be streamlined. Y County had set up community councils on the basis of administrative villages and natural villages as a unit. This is to fully coordinate and manage the promotion of policies and regulations, promote health care and education, maintain social stability, coordinate civil dispute, and help the poor and disadvantaged sectors to manage their community affairs so as to create democratic autonomy for villagers and to support the new rural autonomous system.

Fourth, agricultural production in rural communities had been enhanced and offered better services. Rural communities in Y County have set up special service agencies to provide agricultural technologies and extend technical support and other related knowledge for the use of farmers. These agencies have increased their training programs and funds for training to meet the employment demands and to create re-employment opportunities for residents in the rural communities.

IV. Empirical Study

Data and Methodology

In this paper, we have applied the sampling method, qualitative analysis, quantitative analysis, and combination of theoretic analysis with countermeasure research. To further understand the condition of public service system in the rural communities of Y County in Hunan Province and to find out the degree of satisfaction of the rural residents with the government's preferential agricultural policies as these relate to public service functions, we

conducted a field investigation on the basis of random sampling. Based on the data from the survey questionnaires used in Y County, this paper uses the statistics method to conduct quantitative analysis on the influence of rural public service system development on Y County. Qualitative analysis is derived by using the method of deductive inference, through which this paper reconstructs the general model for building a public service system in rural communities. A typical example is set up as a reference point in developing a public service system in rural communities with the view of building a new socialist countryside.

The establishment and improvement of public service system in rural communities have brought to the fore many rural realities in the effort to construct a more harmonious community, such as lifestyle, educational level, living environment, entertainment needs, and consumption patterns, among others. A theoretical analysis of the problems and difficulties created by the development of public service system in rural communities of Y County is also presented, while putting forward some proposed countermeasures for both the government and the rural residents, in order to provide a complete and practical development model for rural community construction.

The major goals of the new rural construction are to provide the basic and required public products and services for the rural residents and to speed up efforts to narrow the gap in services that are provided between urban and rural areas. However, the demands for rural public services are also changing in the course of different development periods. Thus, 20 economists and 20 sociologists from the Hunan Academy of Social Sciences (HNASS) were chosen to develop a listing of rural, basic, and secured public services and other items for each service.

Based on the actual condition of rural communities in Y County, and by using the Delphi technique, 40 experts summarized (with the majority of them agreeing) that the overriding concern and most-needed basic public services in rural communities are basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, ecological environment, public safety, and public culture facilities (Table 1). These same experts also listed the most important issues and questions that they think were needed to be solved for rural residents in each public service.

Table 1. Basic Public Services Most Needed by Rural Communities in Y County, Hunan Province (n = 40 experts)

Type of Public Service	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Basic health care	39	97.5
Public education	37	92.5
Public infrastructure	36	90.0
Social security	32	80.0
Employment services	30	75.0
Public safety	28	70.0
Environment protection	25	62.5
Public culture facilities	21	52.5
Financial support	19	47.5
Legal aid	15	37.5
Information support	10	25.0
Marketing supervision	6	15.0
Others	2	5.0
Total	300	

Source: Delphi Method survey results, conducted for the project, March 2010.

Based on the experts' suggestions, two questionnaires were designed to investigate the research questions. The first questionnaire sought to find out the public services most needed by rural residents, and what kinds of problems exist in rural communities. The second questionnaire is a satisfaction survey, probing into the issue of how well the government implemented and performed the preferential agricultural policies related to basic public services, and looking into the effects of improving the residents' income in rural communities.

The survey, which was conducted from June 2010 to August 2010, collected responses from 579 rural residents of 16 communities in Y County. The rural residents are randomly selected from the residents' roster of each community committee. Except for 11 incomplete questionnaires, 568 questionnaires were used and the total response rate is 94.6 percent, of which 131 questionnaires are from migrant workers. Almost half of the respondents are women. The average age of the respondents is 39.6 years. Meanwhile 17.1 percent of the respondents are between 18 and 30 years old, 39.6 percent are between 31 and 40 years old, 25.2 percent are between 41 and 50 years old, 10.7 percent are between 51 and

60 years old, and 7.4 percent are over 60 years old.

On their educational background, 17.1 percent of them had primary school education, 22.9 percent had middle school education, 54.8 percent had high school education, and 5.2 percent had college and university education. More than 70 percent of them are farmers, 7.9 percent are party and government agency staff members, 7.6 percent are students, 5.6 percent are enterprise and institution staff members, and 4.6 percent are private business owners.

In terms of annual average income, 23.1 percent of the respondents earn below CNY3,000, 33.8 percent earn between CNY3,000 and CNY6,000, 22.9 percent earn between CNY6,000 and CNY9,000, and 20.2 percent earn over CNY9,000. Agriculture is the main income source of more than 70 percent of the respondents, and more than 10 percent live on income from out-immigration work. Side jobs and collective income distribution from local villages also count for 7.6 percent and 5.5 percent, respectively.

Survey Findings

Most-Needed Basic Public Services in Rural Communities

Survey results revealed that the public services most needed by residents in rural communities are as follows:

- public education,
- social security,
- basic health care,
- employment services for migrant workers,
- basic infrastructure,
- public safety,
- environment protection and,
- public culture facilities, among others.

According to the survey, getting medical treatment and education easily and cheaply are the basic public services that the residents in rural communities hope to be offered, and the degree of recognition of this need has been more than 60 percent. The demand for pension,

employment, roads, irrigation construction, and other basic public services is also high (Table 2). Therefore, it can be concluded that the basic public services most needed by rural residents are education, health, employment, and social security; and those needed to support agricultural production such as roads and farm irrigation facilities. Survey results also showed the residents' strong demand for facilities related to entertainment, public safety, environmental protection, and other public services.

Table 2. Basic Public Services Most Needed By Rural Residents of Y County, Hunan Province (n = 568 rural residents)

Type of Public Service	Proportion (%)
Basic health care	72.6
Public education	65.7
Pension	48.7
Employment and vocational training	42.6
Farm irrigation facility	35.6
Public safety	30.5
Road	25.0
Environmental protection	19.2
Minimum living standard security system	17.8
Public place of entertainment	13.6
Legal aid	13.5
Others	9.8

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June–August 2010.

Current condition of public service system in rural communities

(1) Public Education

Compulsory education is very important for the rural residents. According to the survey, the rural residents placed their highest demand on compulsory education (85.2%), followed by agricultural technology training (43.8%), training of migrant workers (26.4%), and vocational education (12.4%). It is noteworthy that nearly 40 percent of the rural residents showed relatively robust demand for agricultural and technical training, indicating that the diffusion of modern agricultural technology and training for educated, skilled, and operation-oriented

rural residents have played a very important role in the development of rural communities.

On the rural residents' satisfaction with the current condition of compulsory education, survey results showed an overall satisfaction rating of just 49.4 percent or less than half of the rural residents are not satisfied with it (Table 3). Thus, improving the poor quality of education and teachers had become the primary concern of residents in rural communities. The loss of good teachers and the backward facilities for basic teaching in rural areas are the main causes for the poor quality of education (Table 4).

Table 3. Satisfaction Rating of Compulsory Education by Rural Residents (%)
(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Very satisfied	Relatively satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Unclear
5.2	38.3	40.6	8.8	7.1

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June–August 2010

Table 4. Challenging Problems of Rural Compulsory Education (%)
(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Poor teaching conditions	Poor quality of teachers	School too far away from home	Spending too much in schooling	Others
40.3	28.6	12.6	15.3	3.2

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June–August 2010.

The perceived heavy burden of education can be reflected in two aspects: actual family expenditure and psychological burden. Survey results showed that 66.8 percent of residents in rural communities believe that, compared with the condition five years ago, education spending as a proportion of household income has increased significantly with 35 percent of households claiming that expenditure on education accounts for more than half of a household's annual income. As to education being a psychological burden, 81.5 percent of rural residents think that the burden of putting their children to school is very heavy and relatively heavy; only 7.2 percent of the residents do not think that the burden of education is heavy.

(2) Basic Health Care

When rural community residents get sick, buying by themselves and taking some medicine is the preferred treatment method. As can be seen from Table 5, when rural residents and their families (54.3%) get sick, their main treatment is to "buy some medicine," those who go to the hospital to see the doctor account for only 29.4 percent, while 16.3 percent take no treatment,

Table 5. Treatment Residents Taken When Getting Sick (%)
(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Take no treatment	Buy some medicine	Go to the hospital
16.3	54.3	29.4

Source: Findings of a survey made for this project, June–August 2010.

The high expense involved in seeing the doctor and the low level of medical services available are the most prominent issues when it comes to rural basic medical services. Hence, it can be inferred that implementing the new cooperative medical care in the rural area, to some extent, reduces the medical burden of rural residents. Among the residents, 35.2 percent think that it is cheaper than before to see a doctor. For example, there are more pregnant women giving birth to children in rural hospitals (46.3%) or in the county hospital (40.1%). But there are still 78.2 percent of rural residents who do not undergo needed medical treatment because of the high cost. Residents say they do not seek treatment during their illness due to the low level of available local health care, some medical expenses are not reimbursed, and because accessing medical care is inconvenient (Table 6).

Table 6. Reasons for Not Going to the Hospital When Family Members Get Sick (%)
(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Local medical standards are too low, may be unable to cure serious diseases	Unaffordable medical costs	Some medical expenses cannot be reimbursed	Level of doctors' skills is too low	Hospital location is not convenient	Others
45.5	78.2	30.4	15.8	28.2	5.6

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June–August 2010.

The in-depth analysis shows that high drug prices (98.7%) and arbitrary charges by the medical institutions (51.3%) are the main factors that cause high expense when seeing a doctor. The other reasons are too many items that required medical checkup (37.6%), low income of rural community residents (29%), and a high proportion of individual payment (15.2%) also contribute to the expensive medical treatment.

The enrollment rate among the residents in the new rural cooperative medical care system is high; however, the low reimbursement range is a major issue. Survey results show that 68 percent of residents in rural communities enrolled in the new rural cooperative medical care system, but satisfaction with the system (47.2%) is not high. Reasons for the dissatisfaction are as follows: reimbursement is too low (68.3%), the medical care system only covers critical illnesses (25.4%), and accredited hospitals charge too high (22.3%). In addition, the high cost of seeking medical treatment (19.4%), less number of accredited hospitals, inconvenience when seeking medical treatment (15.8%), poor medical standards in accredited hospitals (14.3%), and difficulties when availing of reimbursement (12.1%) are the other reasons why residents of rural communities are not satisfied with the new rural cooperative medical care system.

On the new rural cooperative medical insurance, 31.5 percent of residents of rural communities think that the insurance should cover the costs of serious illnesses or should cover hospitalization; 35.6 percent think that it should cover minor illnesses or clinic procedures; still 21.9 percent think that it should cover the above two aspects. When asked if they are “willing to pay more money according to the proportion in the premise that the government increases investment,” 77.8 percent of residents of rural communities do not want to answer this question, indicating that the majority do not want to pay more money.

(3) Social Security

The ratio of the residents in rural communities covered by the minimum living standard security system is low at 23.5 percent, but the system plays a significant role in improving their living standard. Survey results show that the residents believe that the system plays a great role in improving their living standard (63.8%).

The rural social pension insurance is of relatively narrower coverage and lower

insurance rates. The traditional value of raising children to ensure that someone will take care of them in their senior years is still the main practice in rural communities. Thus, survey results show that 56.5 percent of residents of rural communities are not enrolled in pension insurance. The majority of rural community residents who are over 60 years old never received pension (72.4%). In addition, social welfare service delivery in rural communities is lagging behind, and 38.6 percent of the towns still have no nursing homes for the aged. On the issue of old age security, 43.7 percent of residents of rural communities still choose the traditional way of "raising children to ensure one's own senior life" while 43.4 percent prefer to "being independent" during old age. On sources of old-age pension, 33.6 percent of the rural community residents rely on their pension from the government; 26.9% rely on the land as a source of maintenance or pension during old age; only 18.7 percent chose to buy insurance for their senior years; while 17.7 percent do not know whom to rely on when they get old. The low rate of insured residents in rural communities is mainly attributed to the fact that (i) the government does not organize residents of rural communities to get enrolled in pension insurance (84.3%), (ii) the insurance fee is very high (65.3%), and (iii) 7.3 percent think that the pension offered is too little and is not worth the effort. These results show that the organization of the social pension insurance by the government has lagged behind for a long time. It also shows that the government does not conduct enough advocacies to increase the residents' knowledge of the need to have pension insurance; many rural residents simply do not understand what "rural social pension insurance" is and thus the awareness of pension enrollment is not strong.

Basic social security coverage for migrant workers in rural communities is low. Survey results show that, compared with urban residents, the enrollment ratio of migrant workers in terms of pension insurance, medical insurance and industrial injury insurance is low. Although migrant workers in cities and towns do the dirty, tiring, and dangerous work, they still do not enjoy the basic public services enjoyed by urban residents (Table 7).

Table 7. Enrollment of Migrant Workers in Pension Insurance (%)
(n = 131 Y County migrant workers)

Items	Enrolled	Not enrolled	Unclear
Pension insurance	15.0	75.3	9.7
Medical insurance	20.8	63.8	15.4
Injury insurance	27.7	57.3	15.0

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June–August 2010.

(4) Employment Services for Migrant Workers

Most migrant workers wish that the government could provide employment services. According to the survey, migrant workers expect the government to provide employment services such as free vocational training (89.8%), an organized way to deploy exported labor (55.7%), to directly provide jobs (67.2%), and to provide health care and endowment insurance services for migrant workers (33.5%). Other public services that migrant workers expect include the provision of legal assistance (32.4%), low-cost housing (23.5%), and other related services for migrant workers.

The major channel for securing jobs among migrant workers is through introduction by their friends and relatives. Survey results show that 55.6 percent of migrant workers manage to find a job through the introduction by their friends and relatives; and migrant workers who succeed in finding jobs through programs organized by the government comprise only 23 percent; the other nearly 20 percent look for jobs by venturing into these as careers (Table 8).

Table 8. Channels for Migrant Workers to Hunt a Job (%)
(n = 131 Y County migrant workers)

Introduced by friends and relatives	Organized by the government	Venturing out by myself	Others
55.6	23	19.6	1.4

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June–August 2010.

The proportion of migrant workers who have received skills training and safety training is lower. Survey results show that 88.6 percent of the migrant workers have not received any skills training; even 73.4 percent of them who have received skills training still

realize that the effect (for finding a job and increasing the income) is not obvious. Survey results also show that 30.5 percent of the migrant workers have not received safety training, resulting in high possibility of work-related injuries since many migrant workers are engaged in high-risk occupations.

The most prominent problems of migrant workers are low wages and wages that are in arrears. Survey results indicate that 68.2 percent of rural residents believe that the biggest problem of migrant workers is the low wage. In addition to low wages, 39.3 percent of these migrant workers are still victims of late payment of wages or arrears. When a wage is in arrear, 55.3 percent of the migrant workers choose to be acquiescent; when it cannot be tolerated any more, 45.8 percent of the migrant workers will seek help from government agencies to be able to collect their wages. Negotiation with the employer in private (39.2%) is also commonly used by migrant workers to be able to collect their delayed wages. If the above measures are not effective, the migrant workers will be forced to resort to violence and to threaten the employers to be able to collect their delayed wages (26.2%), or to turn to collection companies for help (22.1%). Less than 25 percent of the migrant workers will take the case to the courts or file a lawsuit to get back their wages.

(5) Public Infrastructure

On the issue of prioritizing the infrastructure needs of residents in rural communities, survey results suggest that the infrastructures that most residents expect the government to provide are roads (73.5%), electric power facilities (66.4%), safe drinking water facilities (54.8%), and farmland irrigation (33.5%).

In recent years, the government has increased its investment in rural infrastructures, which have since then significantly improved. Thus, the residents' evaluation of the government's work in rural communities is relatively high at 65.3%, which means that residents are quite satisfied or relatively satisfied (Table 9).

**Table 9. Satisfaction of Residents with the Role of Government
in the Supply of Infrastructures (%)**
(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Very satisfied	Relatively satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Unclear
35.8	29.5	19.8	8.9	5.8

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June–August 2010.

The residents of rural communities show ambivalence with regard to participation in infrastructure construction. For residents of rural communities to get involved in infrastructure construction, the key approach is through the rural system called Discussion over Each Specific Matter.¹ Seen from statistical viewpoint, the actual times in which respondents participated in this system averaged at 1.82 times per year. According to the interviews, the residents were not so interested in the One Discussion over Each Matter system. One important reason given is that they always engage in endless discussions without making any decision, and taking no action after decisions were made; as a result, they gradually lose their enthusiasm. When asked if they are willing to pay if the village invests in infrastructure construction, 48.5 percent of residents in rural communities said yes. The main reason why they are unwilling to pay for infrastructure construction is that many infrastructures do not meet their needs (53.7%). Hence, it can be inferred that the reason why the rural system of Discussion over Each Specific Matter is difficult to carry out is because of the heterogeneity of their demands (i.e., the proposed infrastructures do not meet the varied expectations of the residents in rural communities), resulting in a "dilemma" for collective choice. In addition, 34.2 percent of the rural residents believe that the construction of rural infrastructure is the business of government; hence, the government should pay for it. The issue that needed to be resolved in order to improve rural infrastructure construction is how to establish a government-led social participation system based on the actual conditions of the rural areas, which vary from place to place.

¹ Discussion over Each Specific Matter System is a discussion system that referring to the rural important events such as public facilities construction, land development and occupation, the distribution of relief funds and materials, major civil dispute mediation and so on, for each event, it should be discussed and decided by villager delegates through collective discussion finally.

(6) Public Safety

Public safety has been improved significantly, and as a result, the satisfaction rating for this item (to maintain public safety) for government is relatively high. Survey results show that 64.8 percent of the residents of rural communities believe that rural public safety is significantly better or relatively good (compared with that of a decade ago), and only 12.5 percent believe that rural public safety is relatively poor or significantly worse. The main reason why people's perception on rural public safety has been improved enormously is that the government has strengthened its efforts to maintain it, and 83.5 percent of rural residents are satisfied with the work of the government (Table 10).

**Table 10. Satisfaction of Residents with the Role of Government
in the Public Safety Compared with 10 Years Ago (%)**
(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Very satisfied	Relatively satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Unclear
33	60.5	8.8	6.9	0.8

Source of data: Findings of survey made for this project, June-August 2010.

In rural areas, the proportion of forged and fake consumer goods is relatively low, while that of forged and fake agricultural products is relatively high. Survey results show that 62.4 percent of residents of rural communities have never bought forged and fake consumer goods (cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, etc.) in the communities, but 32.5 percent still have such experience. In sharp contrast, the proportion of residents in rural communities who once bought forged and fake agricultural products is relatively high with 79.6% having once bought fake fertilizers, fake pesticides, fake seeds, and other fake agricultural products. It also indicates that government efforts of banning forged and fake agricultural products are not enough. Survey results also indicate that only 13.2 percent of residents of rural communities who have bought forged and fake goods will resort to resolving the issue with relevant government agencies.

(7) Environmental Protection

The natural resource protection of communities had been improved significantly. Survey

results show that when compared with the situation three years ago, 92.7 percent of residents of rural communities believe that environmental protection had become better and is relatively good, with only 1.7 percent perceiving it to have gotten worse or is significantly poor.

Residents’ awareness for the need to protect land and water resources is relatively strong, while that of protecting forest resources is relatively weak. According to survey results, rural residents believe that the ecological resources that need to be protected primarily are land resources (61.2%) and water resources (51.5%). Since their awareness to protect forest resources is not strong enough, only 3.1 percent believe that such ecological resource need to be protected (Table 11).

Table 11. Ecological Resources in Most Need of Ecological Protection (%)
(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Land	Water	Forest	Others
61.2	51.5	3.1	1.4

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June–August 2010.

(8) Public Culture Facilities

The quantity and quality of public culture facilities have increased significantly. According to the survey, 43.5 percent residents of rural communities think that the higher coverage rate of broadcast and TV services, free libraries and sports facilities, cinemas, internet cafe, and others have changed their lifestyle, and 62.1 percent of the residents think the enhanced public culture facilities make their life more convenient and healthy than ever before.

However, lack of a systematic and an effective public cultural service system also lead to some unhealthy trends, which seriously affected local public safety and social stability. Through this survey, it was found out that 32.8 percent of rural residents admitted that they have participated in gambling, underground lotteries, or superstitious activities for at least one time. Of the residents, 59.6 percent think that the government should invest more money and attach more importance to cultural construction instead of considering it as a “soft task.” These problems attribute to the backward beliefs or poor understanding of a rural public

cultural service system, and the lack of an effective investment mechanism and management system (Table 12).

Table 12. The Role of the Government in Rural Culture Construction (%)
(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Invest more money and attach more importance to cultural construction	Not necessary to attach much attention to cultural construction	Unclear
59.6	21.3	19.1

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June–August 2010.

Satisfaction Survey of Preferential Agricultural Policies Related to the Basic Public Services Provided by All Levels of Government

In order to support the development of agriculture, raise farmers' income and living standards, and promote sustainable rural development, the PRC government since 2000 has made a series of preferential agricultural policies as follows:

- (i) To formulate a series of effective and feasible policies and measures;
- (ii) To increase input into the construction of water conservation works and rural infrastructure;
- (iii) To promote agricultural and rural economic restructuring, accelerate agricultural markets and the modernization process;
- (iv) To look into the surplus rural labor and for relevant departments to formulate a series of policies and measures to promote the multi-channel transfer of rural surplus labor;
- (v) To put rural education as a top priority based on the implementation of "two basics" (basic 9-year compulsory education and basic elimination of illiteracy), and accelerate the comprehensive development of rural education; and
- (vi) To strengthen the rural grassroots organizations.

According to the survey, residents in rural communities have a higher satisfaction rating for the policy to support and benefit agriculture in basic public services, which were issued and implemented by all levels of governments and related administrations. Through vertical comparison, data also showed that the satisfaction of rural residents for all levels of governments progressively decreased from the Central Government to the local government. It can be inferred that the residents in rural communities are satisfied with the policy to support and benefit the agriculture that was promoted by the Central Government, however, the distortion problems became more obvious as these policies were implemented at the grassroots level, hence, the satisfaction rating decreased at this level (Table 13).

Table 13. Satisfaction Survey of Preferential Agricultural Policies Related to the Basic Public Services of All Levels of Government (%)
(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Level	Satisfied	Relatively satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Central Government	25.6	58.0	13.5	3.9
Provincial and municipal government	15.8	48.4	30.0	5.9
County and township government	10.6	41.2	37.9	10.2
Stations and offices in villages & towns Organization self-governed by the rural residents	13.7	42.5	36.1	7.8
Nongovernment organization of the rural residents	13.7	48.3	31.3	7.5
Rural Women's Federation	15.2	47.7	31.1	6.0
	19.8	50.2	28.2	7.6

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June-August 2010.

4) The Effect of Increasing Farmers' Income by Preferential Agricultural Policies Related to the Basic Public Services Provided by the Central Government

Survey results show that these policies have played a certain role in improving the net income of rural residents, but due to the price rise of other non-agricultural and agricultural materials, the income in rural communities increases slowly; there is a considerable proportion of the rural residents who believe that these policies to improve income in rural communities are not effective, or even indicates a declining trend (Table 14). Thus, to realize the real increase of the income in rural communities, the central government needs to put more efforts to support and benefit agriculture.

Table 14. The Effect of Increasing Farmers' Income by Preferential Agricultural Policies Related to the Basic Public Services Provided by the Central Government
(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Responses	Proportion (%)
Effects of increasing farmers' net income	
The effect is obvious with great increase in farmers' net income	10.6
It has effect, but due to the price rise of other non-agricultural and agricultural materials, the income in rural communities increases slowly	66.5
The effect is not obvious because farmers' net income does not increase greatly	22.9

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June-August 2010.

5) Longitudinal Evaluation of Most-Needed Basic Public Services in Rural Communities

(1) Pairwise Comparison

Based on different family annual incomes, we divided rural residents into four groups, and then aggregated into low (<CNY3,000), medium (CNY3,000–CNY9,000), and high (>CNY9,000) levels. Pairwise comparison is used to show the results of income level groupings against income sources; income level groupings against occupation, and income

sources against occupation. From Tables 15, 16 and 17, we find the following:

- The poorest groups comprise farmers or people who derive incomes from agriculture, and among all occupations, more than 60 percent of the residents who are farmers could not reach a high level of income.
- Migrant workers do better. Most of the migrant workers who work for enterprises have already reached a high level of income.
- Most party and government agency staff and private business owners have already reached relatively medium and high level of income, while most people who live by collective income distribution are still experiencing difficulties or having a hard life.

Table 15. Income Groupings vis-a-vis Income Sources (%)
(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Income Source	Income Level		
	Low	Medium	High
Agriculture	20.2	43.7	8.1
Side Jobs	1.5	4.2	1.9
Out-immigration work	0.1	2.2	9.1
Collective income distribution	2.7	1.3	0.5

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June-August 2010

Table 16. Income Groupings vis-a-vis Occupations (%)
(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Occupation	Income Level		
	Low	Medium	High
Farmer	20.6	43.6	4.1
Enterprise and institution staff	1.5	2.1	7.0
Party and government agency staff	0.1	3.6	4.2
Private business owner	0.2	1.3	4.1
Student	N/A	N/A	N/A

N/A = not applicable.

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June-August 2010

Table 17. Income Sources vis-a-vis Occupations (%)
(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Occupation	Income Source			
	Agriculture	Side jobs	Out-immigration work	Collective income distribution
Farmer	65.5	2.2	0.3	5.4
Enterprise and institution staff	2.1	0.2	8.4	0.5
Party and government agency staff	0.5	0	0	0
Private business owner	0.7	4.3	2.1	0.5
Student	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

N/A = not applicable.

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June-August 2010

The different responses of the rural residents as to their preferences for each public service were also investigated, by income source and income level. Particular attention was given to the disadvantaged groups, such as people whose incomes come from agriculture and out-immigration work, and low-income groups as well.

(2) Demand Preferences for Public Service by Different Income Groups in Rural Communities

From Table 18, we note the following preferences:

- All of the three groups pay most attention to medical services, pension and children's education, while the low-income and middle-income groups both have a strong preference for government's provision of a minimum living standard security.
- The different income groups differ in their preferences of demands on public services. The overall trend is that as income increases, the demand on public services for production diminishes while the demand for public services related to well-being increases.
- With development that comes with the urbanization process, rural high-income groups have stronger demand for public safety, public culture facilities, and environmental protection.

Table 18. Demand Preferences of Residents from Different Income Groups (%)

(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Item	Income Level		
	Low	Medium	High
Minimum living standard security system	54.7	31.5	16.8
Basic health care	52.8	67.6	66.5
Pension	46.1	47.3	39.8
Public education	39.2	58.3	61.7
Road	26.4	24	18.1
Public safety	24.7	27.9	41.2
Employment and vocational training	20.1	17.2	8.4
Environmental protection	18.6	33.3	42.9
Farm irrigation facility	17.2	10.6	6.8
Public place of entertainment	17.6	22	38.7
Legal aid	13.3	16.6	12.9
Others	9.4	8.7	2.9

Note: 1 refers to low-income level; 2 refers to middle-income level; 3 refers to high-income level

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June–August 2010.

(3) The Demand Preferences with Different Income Sources in Rural Communities

From Table 19, we can find the following:

- All of the four groups have strong demands on minimum living standard security, medical services, pension, and children’s education.
- Different income groups have different preferences of demands on public services; rural residents whose incomes come from agriculture tend to focus on agriculture-related infrastructures such as road and farm irrigation facilities; people who earn their incomes through side jobs pay more attention to public services that focus on human well-being such as public safety, environmental protection, and entertainment; and people who earn their incomes from out-immigration work have a stronger demand for employment and vocational training that could be helpful for getting jobs.

Table 19. Demand Preferences of Residents with Different Income Sources (%)
(n = 568 Y County rural residents)

Item	1	2	3	4
Minimum living standard security system	57.3	35.8	25.7	44.1
Basic health care	47.1	52.2	45.5	57.3
Pension	48.8	40.3	39.7	52.3
Public education	34.6	52.4	44.4	43.6
Road	31.5	12.9	18.6	15.1
Public safety	13.9	38.6	24.5	12.7
Employment and vocational training	13.4	20.1	49.7	15.5
Environmental protection	11.9	36.4	25.8	13.4
Farm irrigation facility	35.4	7.1	5	20.2
Public place of entertainment	11	31.5	29.8	15.3
Legal aid	11.9	17.8	21.9	12.9
Others	4.3	7.1	6.3	1.6

Note: 1 refers to rural residents who earn by agriculture; 2 refers to side jobs; 3 refers to out-immigration work; and 4 refers to collective income distribution

Source: Findings of the survey made for this project, June-August 2010

V. Discussion and Conclusions

Different Viewpoints among the Economists and Sociologists

Because the experts—20 economists and 20 sociologists—have different academic backgrounds, their viewpoints on public service system are also different. Their educational attainments also differ—ranging from bachelor degrees to doctorates; and are holding positions as varied as professors, researchers, and others. It is therefore understandable that some experts focused on their immediate interests, some focused on long-term interests, and still others focused on practical problems. As noted, economists focused on rural community economic development, while sociologists focused on the establishment of a sound rural social security mechanism. For example, it had been proposed that the government should focus on enhancing the investment level in rural roads, increase the construction of safe drinking water projects, strengthen health care work in rural areas, and increase rural latrines construction projects, among others.

Despite the different views on the issues, the essence is the same, which is to find

innovative ways and means of improving public services in rural communities in order to improve the rural community well-being index. The recurring proposals are for the government to strengthen its program for rural infrastructure construction; improve the construction of rural eco-villages, especially for ecological model villages; increase the investment in the cultural facilities for rural communities, especially for rural community schools; find innovative ways to improve the supply mechanism of public goods; broaden the sources of social security funds in rural areas; implement innovative ways and means to manage the rural society, and many others. Hence, to achieve the sustainable development of rural communities, the content and methods of government management mechanism and rural public service supply mechanism should be improved and innovated. These issues, which were raised by the experts, match the answers of the majority of the survey respondents.

Policy Implications and Conclusions

Through the survey results, it becomes evident that—whether the ultimate objective is to increase new rural construction or improve the current economic development level—the government should provide most direct and basic public services since these things are what residents of rural communities are concerned most. These concerns include basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, ecological environment, public safety, and public culture facilities. To achieve this aim, the government should improve its corresponding policies that will increase rural public service system supply, accelerate rural public infrastructure construction, and enhance enthusiasm and advocate the participation of rural community residents, among others.

Specifically, the government should undertake the following:

- 1) Focus on increasing the investment for basic public services in rural communities. The government is the main supplier of public services, which is determined by its functions, thus it should concentrate on the construction of public service system in rural communities as well as that of urban communities. The government needs to specify the responsibilities of provinces, cities, counties, and townships for the construction of rural public service facilities,

and gradually shift financial investment toward supporting infrastructure construction and rural public services, to make sure that construction funds for rural public services can increase along with economic growth. Meanwhile, local governments should also adopt measures to give financial support and preferential policy to counties with poor rural economic conditions. This will facilitate the overall promotion and coordinated development of public services in rural communities, and ultimately achieving the growth of farmers' income.

2) Focus on increasing the satisfaction and participation levels of community residents in public services provided by the government, particularly the grassroots governments.

(i) Change the old ways of project arrangements and material allocation as done in the past. Instead, the government should fully motivate the active participation of community residents. The community commission should organize residents to discuss and decide their own most-needed public services, rather than allow political performance or the will of the leaders to dictate their needs. This way, the rural residents can become the actual promoters of the reforms wherein they will end of as the biggest beneficiaries. This process can also reduce decision-making errors and save on construction costs.

(ii) Establish and improve performance evaluation and incentive mechanism for the government's public service supply. Use the government's management capabilities on public services, satisfaction rating from rural residents, and others as indicators, and incorporate them into the performance evaluation and incentive system. Meanwhile, establish governmental public service accountability mechanism; increase the weight of impact evaluation by the public on government's services so that the public's social evaluation on public services could affect the reward and punishment, appointment, and removal of officials in relevant government agencies.

3) Focus on strengthening the delivery of basic public health, public education; provision of social security; employment of migrant workers; and improvement of public cultural facilities, all of which rural residents have strong demand for but not adequately satisfied.

- (i) Improve the quality and quantity of the New Rural Cooperative Medical Care System. Central and provincial governments should gradually increase the proportion of investment, issue preferential policies to remit enrollment fee of new rural cooperative medical care system for particularly poor households. Establish medical assistance operational mechanisms as soon as possible, increase the financial input, and reasonably determine the relief target to improve aid effectiveness. Further improve basic health care security, taking into account the prevention and treatment of common and frequently encountered diseases while paying attention to serious illnesses. Gradually expand the list of accredited medical institutions so that insured residents can be given more choices. Enhance the capability of rural basic health services and provide assistance to health care organizations so they could improve their services with better quality and lower prices.
- (ii) Improve the teaching quality in rural areas, effectively reducing the education burden for farmers. Further clarify the funding responsibility of governments at all levels in the rural compulsory education, and convert the original tuition fee into the central, provincial, municipal and county-level governmental investment. Through the additional funding from the central and provincial governments, gradually narrow the quality gap of compulsory education conditions between urban and rural areas. To ensure the quality of school teachers in rural areas, the allowances of teachers in rural areas shall be covered by the government's budget and must be timely and fully paid to the teachers.
- (iii) Strengthen social security in rural communities. Step up advocacy efforts to increase the coverage rate of the minimum living standard security and pension for community residents. In particular, strengthen the basic social security for migrant workers and the pension insurance for the poor senior residents and

"empty nest" senior citizens. For rural senior residents with different economic conditions, the government should implement a different assistance and service mechanism such as economic assistance, centralized support, community home care and so on. Facilities for various support services for all rural seniors should also be provided.

- (iv) Strengthen the employment services for migrant workers. Employment services are an important function of the community public service. Establish an employment information dissemination platform; offer a targeted job training, order-based training, orientation training, consigned training, and others to improve the employment skills of rural residents according to the demands of the market. In addition, the government can increase the employment opportunities for rural residents through creating new government jobs, developing rural community service jobs and other forms. For example, the government could create new jobs by offering environment and sanitation jobs, by co-managing the jobs of rural communities, by co-managing the jobs of rural trade markets, and through other public welfare assistance jobs for disadvantaged groups in rural communities. Encourage farmers to start their own businesses by offering technical guidance, tax incentives, policy support, and other means.
- (v) Strengthen cultural services in rural communities. Establish and improve a rural cultural service system in which every community has a cultural station, every village has a cultural center, and every group has a rural library. Establish a variety of culture, education, sports facilities and activity venues including farmers' centers, school for seniors, library, sports and fitness activity facility; encourage the conversion of deserted schools, old halls, old temples, and other unused places into cultural activity rooms for rural communities; set up fitness paths, basketball courts, and table tennis tables so that the community residents can enjoy the fun and environment of a healthy culture. Meanwhile, encourage farmers to organize various cultural associations, and protect inherited folk cultures and arts to enrich the spiritual and cultural life of rural residents.

4) Promote information sharing of public services in rural communities via information-based facilities. Gradually establish a comprehensive community information service network covering the urban and rural areas. This will help in establishing local e-government system in rural communities. The Civil Administration and Information Industry Office should jointly develop and establish the public service information network in rural communities; integrate public and social service resources in communities into one platform; organize governmental service information resources including employment services, vocational training, social security, special care of civil affairs, and others; promote the development of social information resources such as legal services, domestic property, goods distribution, culture, education, and entertainment, among others; and attract social enterprises to join rural public service system for the development of rural community services.

5) From a macro perspective, only the achievement of equilibrium between public product supply and demand could maximize the effectiveness to consumers. In the PRC, at the time this study was conducted, the total supply of rural public services is still inadequate. In order to simultaneously increase the efficiency and satisfaction to the public service provided by the government, both the quality and quantity of public services provided must be improved in a way that these meet the demands of the different income groups. However, the government must give priority to the needs and demands of the low-income groups to increase public satisfaction with public services in rural communities.

3. Limitations

The implementation of public service system in rural communities in the Y County in Hunan Province has made significant achievements when compared to the other counties in the People's Republic of China (PRC). However, it is just one of the numerous counties in the PRC. The Y County case analysis yielded important data as basis for policy reforms, however, a study with a larger sample collected from a wider range may better reflect the overall status of current public service system in the PRC's rural communities. It will also help to more fully and accurately identify problems in the construction process of rural public service

system, as well as recommend solutions to existing and anticipated issues. However, exploring a study with a larger sample is beyond the scope of this current work, and will need further research.

References

- Feng, YaQun. 2011. An Empirical Study of Public Service System Construction in Rural Communities in China (In Chinese). *Journal of ShanXi Normal University (Social Sciences Edition)*. 37: 1–6.
- Xia Feng and Zhentao Ma. 2011. China Twelfth-five Reform: Trends and Breakthroughs in Rural China (In Chinese). *Journal of China Rural Economic Issues*. (1): 73–80.
- Eddleman, B.R. 1974. Financing Public Services in Rural Areas: A Synthesis. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*. (565): 959–970.
- Forbes, D. A., D. Morgan, and L. B. Janzen. 2006. Rural and Urban Canadians with Dementia: Use of Health Care Services. *Canadian Journal on Aging*. 25(3): 321–330.
- Fafchamps, M. and B. Minten. 2007. Public Service Provision, User Fees and Political Turmoil. *Journal of African Economies*. 16(3): 485–518.
- Berkowitz, B., R. N. Egan, J. Ivory, and M.L. Tom Morris. 2002. Rural Public Health: Policy and Research Opportunities. *The Journal of Rural Health*. 28(S): 186–196.
- Kuntz, S.W., C. A. Winters, W.G. Hill, C. Weinert, K. Rowse, T. Hernandez, and B. Black. 2009. Rural Public Health Policy Models to Address an Evolving Environmental Asbestos Disaster. *Journal of Public Health Nursing* 26(1): 70–78.
- Tu, Wenjing. 2007. Improving Rural Public Service System to Build a New Socialist Countryside (In Chinese). *Journal of GuangXi University for Nationalities (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*. 29(z1): 90–92.

APPENDICES

Appendix A.1: The Final Version of Experts' Comments Using the Delphi Technique

(Comments from 20 Economists)

Name	Sex	Position	Most-Needed Basic Public Services	Most Important Issues
Kejun Yi	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety financial support, marketing supervision	To play the important role of township enterprises, increase private capital investment.
Keren Li	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety and public culture facilities, financial support, information support, land compensation	To improve rural public infrastructure construction, increase investment on rural community facilities.
Yongliang Zhang	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety and public culture facilities, financial support information support, marketing supervision	Rural community should undertake sustainable development ways and employ diverse ways of financial funding to meet public service investment.
Jinao Wang	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety and public culture facilities, financial support	Rural public facilities need stable long-term investment of government rather than just sporadic investments.
Xiangyan Huang	Female	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety, financial support, legal aid, marketing supervision, land	Further efforts are needed to perfecting rural public security system and widening the sources of rural public security funds.

			compensation	
Houqing Wu	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety, financial support	Improve rural water safety projects, especially by increasing government investment to ensure that 100% of rural community residents drink safe water.
Wanchun Xiao	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety, financial support, legal aid	Increase works on rural dilapidated house modifications; take advantage of the demonstration role of the model village in new rural construction.
Maoqun Wu	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety, financial support, legal aid	The government should sustain investments on rural road construction; especially increase the level of government investment.
Laichun Zhang	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety, legal aid	The government should increase investments in rural communities to make difficult life better for rural residents and enable them to have at least a minimum living standard security
Xinru Li	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety and public culture facilities	The government should increase investment in biogas in order to achieve energy diversification and modernization.
Lizhi Lou	Female	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety and public culture facilities	Improve rural ecological village construction, especially for the model village construction.
Yufei Zhou	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety and public culture facilities	Increase investment in cultural development in rural communities and also pay special attention to the rural community school building.
Changsong Mo	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public	Improve rural public health and sickness prevention work; strengthen efforts on toilet installation work in

			safety, legal aid	poor rural areas.
Renqing Wang	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety, legal aid	The government should improve investment in rural community infrastructure construction especially in poor rural areas.
Manxiong Chen	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety, financial support, legal aid	Due to the lag in social security provision and economic development, both need financial support from the government and the extensive participation of rural society.
Guangxi Peng	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety and public culture facilities, financial support, marketing supervision	Public security work in rural communities needs strong supports and active cooperation from the finance department; innovative methods and styles of managing society and government administration are also required.
Xianfeng Liu	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety and public culture facilities, information support, marketing supervision	The supply of public products and services in rural communities still exist based on a planned economy, which may not be in accordance with the current needs of a market economy. Thus, the rural public products and services supply mechanism need to be innovated by the government.
Nina Hu	Female	Associate Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety, legal aid, information support	The guarantee of rural teachers' wages is the basic premise of rural community education, and also an important condition to motivate teachers' initiatives.
Xiaoqing Cai	Male	Associate Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety	The guarantee of rural schools' operating expenses is the premise in which all rural schools operate. This also enables the provision of a good study

				environment for rural school students.
Aimin Kuang	Male	Associate Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety and public culture facilities, legal aid, information support	There is a lag in the use or application of innovative management styles or methods among rural social organizations and in developing the rural economy, which also hinders the health development of rural communities. Thus, the social management mechanism should be innovated by the government.

Comments from 20 Socialists

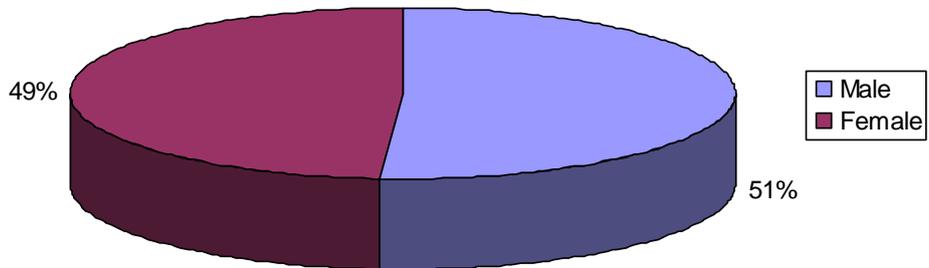
Name	Sex	Position	Most-needed Basic Public Services	Most Important Issues
Kangle Wang	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety and public culture facilities, information supporting	Encourage citizens to fully play the role of rural volunteers; expand the channels of becoming rural community volunteers.
Longde He	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety and public culture facilities, legal aid, information support	Complete rural community education as a social responsibility and as one of the fundamental principles for supporting public services to rural residents.
Zhigang Ou	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety and public culture facilities	Encourage college students to go to rural communities as council members; especially encourage undergraduates with medical backgrounds to work for rural community health centers.
Shengzu Zhang	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety and public culture facilities, legal aid	Try to develop rural community industries in order to achieve industry diversification.

Anping Song	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety and public culture facilities, information support	To develop rural community culture, both community workers and community volunteers should play important roles.
Faren Luo	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety, information support	Focus on rural community ecological construction, and especially strengthen the building of rural ecological villages.
Quansheng He	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety, financial support, legal aid, information support	Strengthen the advocacy and popularization of rural health knowledge; complete major diseases safeguard measures.
Zhongming Tang	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety , financial support, legal aid	Improve the quality of rural social assistance work especially in building social assistance centers in rural communities.
Shouyong Hu	Male	Associate Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety, legal aid	Reinforce rural social welfare work especially in strengthening the financial allowance for low-income families.
Ji Li	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety and public culture facilities, financial support, marketing supervision	Enhance rural social relief work and expand the government's support.
Jisheng He	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety, financial support	Strengthen rural endowment insurance in order to provide elders with a sense of security, belonging, and happiness.
Yufei Zhou	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety and public culture facilities, financial support, marketing supervision	Innovate the styles and methods of rural community management especially focused on the content of rural community management.
Junwu Chen	Male	Associate Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety and public culture	The supply of public services in rural communities should achieve institutionalization and normalization.

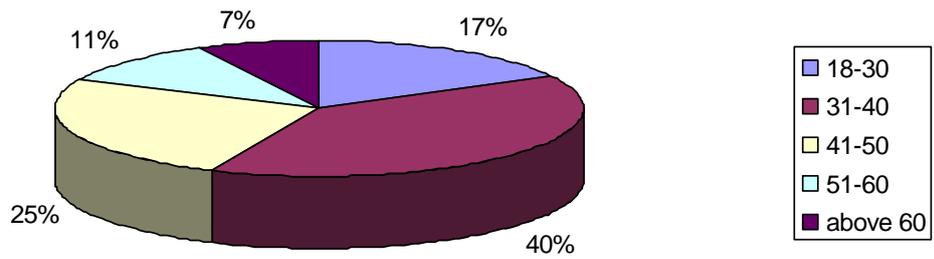
			facilities	
Kewen Chen	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety, legal aid	Enhance rural community security work especially in mitigating all kinds of crime and social evils such as pornography, gambling and drug abuse, and human trafficking to ensure rural social stability.
Wei Wang	Female	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety and public culture facilities, information support	Public health knowledge should be popularized in rural communities; emergency management knowledge and awareness need to be enhanced.
Yi Liu	Female	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety, financial support	The government should increase living fee subsidy for poor students, especially students from the poor areas and from old revolutionary base areas.
Fei Liu	Male	Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety and public culture facilities, financial support	The government should make great efforts to improve rural community cultural undertakings; especially in community leisure and entertainment.
Yunhong Tan	Male	Associate Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety, financial support	Pay more attention to the rural school building repair and transformation especially to the transformation of rural school sports facilities.
Jianmin Zhang	Male	Associate Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, environmental protection, public safety	The government should focus on the rural society preferential treatment policy work; it should offer more jobs and opportunities to military veterans.
Zhigui Long	Male	Associate Professor	Basic health care, public education, public infrastructure, social security, employment service, public safety and public culture facilities, financial support	Improve public road investment in poor areas of rural communities, and encourage more entrepreneurs to support rural community public projects.

Appendix B: Distribution of Demographic, Social, and Economic Variables
(Based on a sample of 568 respondents)

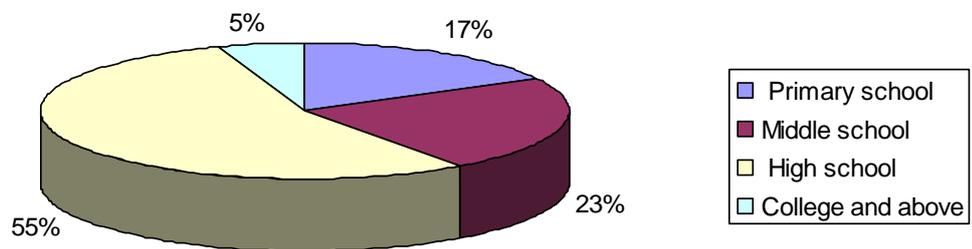
Gender Distribution



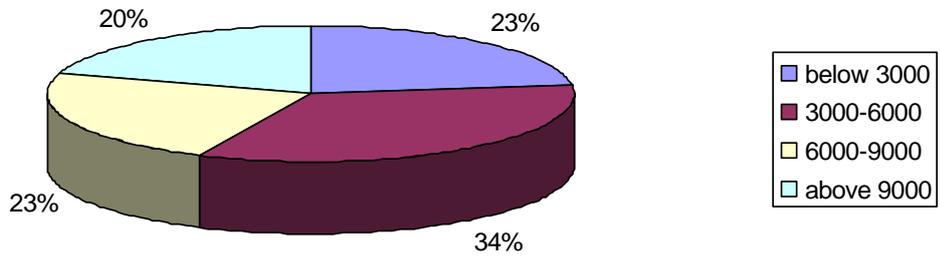
Age Distribution



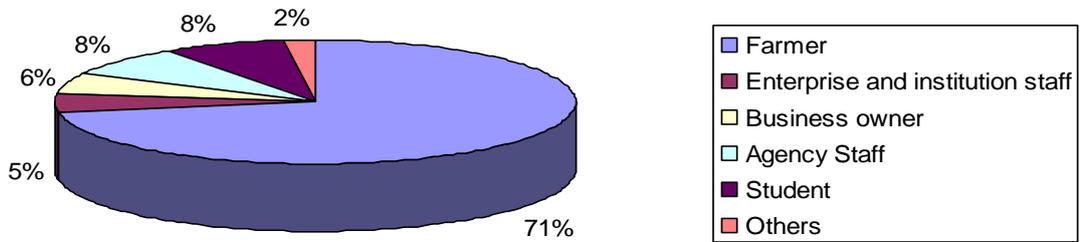
Education Distribution



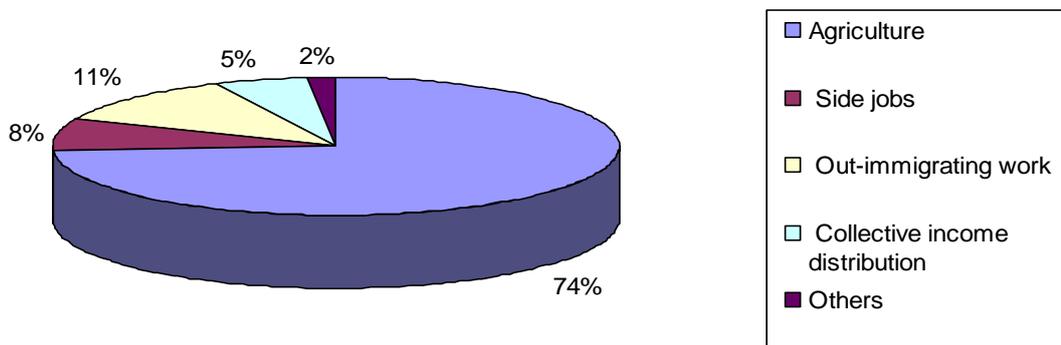
Annual Income Distribution



Occupation Distribution



Main Income Source Distribution



Appendix C.1: The Survey Questionnaires

On Construction of Public Service System for Rural Communities

You are kindly asked to check the following questions. Please circle the number that reflects your opinion.

I. Demographic Information

1. Gender: A. Male B. Female
2. Age: _____
A. 18-30 B. 31-40 C. 41-50 D. 51-60 E. Above 60
3. Educational background:
A. Primary and below
B. Junior middle school
C. Senior middle school (including technical secondary school)
D. College and above
4. Occupation: _____
A. Farmer
B. Enterprise and institution staff
C. Party and government agency staff
D. Private business owner
E. Student
F. Others
5. Annual average income per person:
A. Below CNY3,000
B. CNY3,000–CNY6,000
C. CNY6,000–CNY9,000
D. Above CNY9,000
6. Main income sources in your family: _____
A. Agriculture
B. Side Jobs
C. Out-immigrating work
D. Collective income distribution of the local village
F. Others
7. Address: _____
A. This city
B. This city and county (city)
C. Off-town

II. Survey on Public Education

1. The current education most needed in rural regions is:
A. Compulsory education
B. Agricultural and technical training
C. Employment training

- D. Vocational education
 - E. Others_____
2. Is there any child in your family at school or receiving compulsory education?
- A. None
 - B. One
 - C. Two
 - D. More
3. What do you think about comprehensive evaluation of current compulsory education in your county? _____
- A. Very satisfied
 - B. Relatively satisfied
 - C. Dissatisfied
 - D. Very dissatisfied
 - E. It is difficult to explain
4. The main problems in current compulsory education in rural regions are:
- _____
- A. The basic teaching facilities are backwards.
 - B. The teachers' qualities are not high
 - C. Schools are too far from home
 - D. Too much cost involved in getting an education
 - E. Others
5. Do you think it is a heavy family burden to send your children to school?
- A. Very heavy
 - B. Relatively heavy
 - C. Not heavy
6. Compared with that of five years ago, the annual expenditure on education accounting for the total household income is_____
- A. More than a half
 - B. One-third
 - C. One-fourth
 - D. Less than one-fourth
7. In your opinion, the main points needed to improve current compulsory education in rural regions are (multiple choices): _____
- A. Strengthen the functions of education operated by government and improve the backward conditions of education in rural regions
 - B. The government should increase planning and investment in rural compulsory education and enhance school support to construction and management of the 9-year compulsory education system.
 - C. Reasonably adjust the education layout and vigorously develop vocational education for rural regions
 - D. Improve the quality of teachers and teaching
 - E. Focus on poor students and left-behind children in rural regions

III. Survey on Basic Health Care

1. The main treatment method you had when any one of your family gets sick is: _____
 - A. Take some drugs you bought yourself
 - B. Go to hospital
 - C. Did not take any measures
2. The main reasons why you did not go to hospital for treatment are: _____
 - A. The local medical treatment level is poor. Minor ailments can be treated by taking drugs and serious illness cannot be treated by the local hospital
 - B. The medical treatment costs are not affordable.
 - C. Part of the medical expenses is not reimbursed
 - D. The quality of available doctors is too bad
 - E. Medical treatment is not convenient
 - F. Others
3. In your opinion, the main reasons for expensive medical treatment in the hospital are: _____
 - A. High prices of medicines
 - B. Unreasonable charges in medical institutions
 - C. Too many items requiring medical checkup
 - D. Low individual or family income
 - E. High proportion of individual payment
4. If there is a pregnant woman in your family who is scheduled to give birth, your family will take her to: _____
 - A. Township hospitals
 - B. County-level hospitals
 - C. Municipal hospitals
 - D. Others
5. Are you satisfied with the implementation of the current new rural cooperative medical service? _____
 - A. Very satisfied
 - B. Relatively satisfied
 - C. Dissatisfied
 - D. Very dissatisfied
 - E. It is difficult to explain
6. In your opinion, the problem in the current new rural cooperative medical service: _____
 - A. Reimbursement rate is too low.
 - B. It only covers serious illness and does not consider minor ailments.
 - C. High charges in designated hospitals
 - D. The number of designated hospitals is too few and not convenient for residents who seek medical treatment.
 - E. High threshold cost
 - F. The level of medical treatment received from designated hospitals is very low
 - G. Procedures for reimbursement is too complicated.
7. The guarantees that you think the new rural cooperative medical service

should provide are: _____

- A. Guarantee for serious illness or full hospitalization costs
- B. Guarantee for minor ailments or outpatient cases
- C. Both A and B

8. Are you willing to pay much more if the government is to increase its medical investment? _____

- A. Yes
- B. No

IV. Survey on Social Security

1. Are you covered by the endowment insurance? _____

- A. Yes
- B. No

2. Are you given the national minimum living allowance? _____

- A. Yes
- B. No

3. How do you evaluate the implementation of living allowance system?

- A. Obvious effect
- B. Common
- C. No effect
- D. Not clear

4. Do senior citizens over 60 in your family receive pensions? _____

- A. Yes
- B. No

5. In your opinion, the main reasons for the low rate of purchasing insurance in rural regions are: _____

- A. The government has not organized rural community residents to purchase the endowment insurance
- B. The fee of insurance is too high
- C. The pension for people under the age limit is too little and not worth doing it.
- D. Others

6. Are there nursing homes for the aged built by the residential committee of rural community where you live? _____

- A. Yes
- B. No

7. When you reach senior years, how do you plan for your life? _____

- A. Raise children who can take care of me in my senior years
- B. Rely on oneself
- C. Rely on government
- D. Rely on land farming
- E. Buy insurance
- F. Not clear

8. As an immigrant worker, do you purchase social endowment insurance ()

Medical insurance () Work-related injury insurance ()
(Please tick , optional for non-immigrant workers)

V. Survey on Employment Service for Immigrant Workers (to be filled only by immigrant workers)

1. As an immigrant worker, which aspects of employment service do you want most to be provided by government? _____

- A. Free training for employment
- B. Organize export of labor forces
- C. Directly provide jobs
- D. Medical, endowment insurance services
- E. Others

2. Which channel do you usually use to find a job? _____

- A. Introduction by relatives
- B. Arranged by government
- C. Rely on yourself
- D. Others

3. Have you ever received any training on working skills or safety training?

- _____
- A. Only received skills training
 - B. Only received safety training
 - C. Both A and B
 - D. Neither A nor B

4. Do you think that effect of labor skills and safety training is obvious on finding jobs and increasing income? _____

- A. Obvious
- B. Not obvious
- C. Not clear

5. What is the biggest problem you encountered as an immigrant worker?

- _____
- A. Low wage
 - B. Wage arrear
 - C. High living cost
 - D. Others

6. What if you encounter the problem of wage arrears from your employer?

- _____
- A. Take it on
 - B. Consult with your employer
 - C. Adopt violent means to threaten your employer for unpaid wages
 - D. Approach the government agencies for help
 - E. Resort to debt collection companies
 - F. Lodge a complaint in courts

VI. Survey on Public Infrastructure

1. The sequence of infrastructure you want most to be provided by government is (from important ones to unimportant ones): _____

- A. Road
- B. Electric power facility
- C. Safe drinking water facilities
- D. Irrigation

2. Are you satisfied with the government work for rural infrastructure ?

- A. Very satisfied
- B. Relatively satisfied
- C. Dissatisfied
- D. Very dissatisfied
- E. It is difficult to explain

3. The times you participate in the “Discussion over Each Specific Matter System” are: _____

- A. Once or twice
- B. Three times
- C. Over 4 times
- E. Few or none

4. Are you willing to pay for infrastructure construction in your village? _____

- A. Willing
- B. Unwilling
- C. Don't care

5. If you don't want to pay for construction in your village, the reasons include:

- A. A lot of infrastructure do not meet the needs of residents in rural communities
- B. The construction of rural infrastructure is a matter for the government
- C. No extra money
- D. Others _____

VII. Survey on Public Safety

1. Compared with 10 years ago, do you think there is a change in the social order? _____

- A. Significantly better
- B. Better
- C. Worse
- D. Significantly worse
- E. It is difficult to explain

2. Are you satisfied with the work on improving public security by the government? _____

- A. Very satisfied
- B. Relatively satisfied
- C. Dissatisfied
- D. Very dissatisfied
- E. It is difficult to explain

3. Have you bought any fake and forged commodities in village? _____
- A. Yes
- B. No
4. If so, what fake and forged commodities have you bought? (Multiple choices)

- _____
- A. Fake cigarettes
- B. Fake wine
- C. Fake drug
- D. Fake seeds
- E. Fake fertilizer
- F. Fake pesticides
5. What if you have bought fake and forged commodities? _____
- A. Report to relevant government agencies
- B. Do nothing
- C. Not clear

VIII. Survey on Environmental Protection

1. Compared with three years ago, do you think there is any change in the appearance of your village? _____
- A. Significantly better
- B. Better
- C. Worse
- D. Significant deterioration
- E. It is difficult to explain
2. What do you think are the ecological resources most needed to be protected (Multiple choices): _____
- A. Arable land resource
- B. Water resource
- C. Forest resource
- D. Other resources _____
3. Who do you think should be responsible for rural pollution problem?
- A. The farmers
- B. The government
- C. Both but led by the government
- D. Both but led by the farmers

IX. Survey on Public Culture

1. Have you ever participated in unhealthy culture-based activities? _____
- A. Yes
- B. No
2. If so, which unhealthy culture-based activities have you participated in? (Multiple choices) _____
- A. Gambling
- B. Covered bets and lottery business

C. Superstitious activities

D. Others

3. Do you think the popularity of public cultural facilities in rural communities is changing your life?

A. It changed the way of life

B. It made life more convenient and healthier

C. Almost made no change

D. Not clear

4. Do you think it is necessary for the government to increase investment in the construction of public cultural services? _____

A. Yes, because culture construction is very important

B. Not necessary; the investment should be made in the place where it is needed

C. Not clear

X. Satisfaction Survey on Basic Public Service Policies

1. Are you satisfied with preferential agricultural policies related to the basic public services provided by all levels of government (Please tick ✓)

Level	Satisfied	Relatively satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Central Government				
Provincial and municipal government				
County and township government				
Stations and offices in villages and towns				
Organizations self-governed by the rural residents				
Nongovernment organizations of the rural residents				
Rural Women's Federation				

2. Do you think preferential agricultural policies related to the basic public services have increased your net income?

A. Yes, the effect is obvious with great increase in my net income.

B. It has effects, but due to the price rise of other non-agricultural and

agricultural materials, the net income increases slowly.

C. The effect is not obvious because my net income does not increase greatly.

D. Not clear.

Thank You for Your Cooperation!