



**HU JIHUA**, head of Lequn village, surveys the land worked by members of the local cooperative. This year, the village has lost crops worth tens of thousands of yuan as a result of disease and abnormally hot weather. LIU HAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Village beats poverty, disabilities

By **CHEN MENGWEI** in Liupanshui, Guizhou  
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Lequn, a poor, remote settlement tucked away in the mountains surrounding Liupanshui in Guizhou province, has about 4,000 residents, nearly 10 percent of whom have physical disabilities — almost double the national average.

The village, however, has tried to eliminate poverty by establishing a cooperative under the leadership of village head Hu Jihua.

Hu, 38, stopped growing at 1.4 meters tall as a result of a rare, congenital spinal disorder.

About half the residents are members of ethnic groups, mostly the Hui, Buyi and Yi peoples. In previous generations, most of the groups forbade cross-ethnic marriage, resulting in marriages between close blood relatives — and congenital problems for their descendants. The local government has tempered that tendency in recent years, according to Hu, himself of Yi origin.

Two decades ago, younger residents,

mainly men, began to leave the isolated village, heading to coastal cities where wages were about 10 times higher. Most of them ended up on unregulated, dangerous construction sites with little protection. Inevitably, many returned home with permanent physical damage.

When he was elected village head six years ago, Hu vowed to lift everyone out of poverty. His idea was simple: Gather all available resources and focus on one thing at a time. He established the cooperative and invited every resident to invest money or land.

The cooperative operates like a regular company, but with a twist. It sells farm produce and other local goods, and the villagers take a cut of the profits.

Hu's plan has raised the family's above the national poverty line of 2,800 yuan (\$406; 377 euros; £327) per person per year.

As a result of a work injury, Fang Jiaping's left leg has withered to the point that the muscles are barely visible. The 47-year-old had to lean against a wall for support as he spoke.

Fang acts as a casual laborer for the company, packing bags with grain, earning 90 yuan (\$13) a day. He is also a shareholder in the cooperative, having invested 5,000 yuan. He can pull out anytime and get a refund.

Cai Xingxue's urinary tract was damaged in a farming accident and he has to wear a diaper in bed. He is 52. His wife has a serious spinal condition that prevents her from working. The couple have three daughters and a young son to support.

Before Hu established the cooperative, a family such as Cai's would have been reliant on limited government subsidies.

"Since joining the cooperative, I do whatever I am able to do, such as spraying pesticides, watering the plants and weeding. Every year, I work for five or six months and earn about 10,000 yuan," he says.

Villagers whose land falls within Hu's area of activity have an extra option. They can invest their land in exchange for shares in the cooperative. Every mu (0.066 hectare) they allow the cooperative to use brings in a fixed sum of 600 yuan per year.

## Community finds success in e-commerce

By **MAO WEIHUA** and **PENG YINING**  
in Xinjiang

Remote Aksupa village — on the edge of the Taklimakan Desert in Beyinguoleng Mongolian autonomous prefecture in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region — has gone through great changes with the introduction of e-commerce.

Since 2014, the local government has been collecting the villagers' products, including bread, eggs and honey, to sell through an online store it founded and operates. Although revenue was small at first, it has grown and is now a major provider for local families that once lived below the poverty line of 2,600 yuan per year.



**AKSUPA VILLAGER** Awahan Osman prepares flatbread.

When Awahan Osman's carpenter husband fell sick around 2011, the family lost its sole means of support. E-commerce has helped change the family's condition.

"I used to sell my bread in our village to make a living," the 49-year-old Aksupa resident says. "But now it's sold in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai."

She now sells more than 3,000 *nang*, a classic flatbread of Xinjiang, across the country every month — 10 times the number sold before 2014 — and she can make 2,000 to 3,000 yuan a month.

According to Zhu Ren, director of the government of Aksupa township, the area's arid environment and remote

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## 'Golden crops' set to help county in Jiangxi prosper

By **SUN XIAOCHEN** in Huichang, Jiangxi  
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Boasting a mild, subtropical climate and relatively acidic soil, Huichang county in Eastern China's Jiangxi province — whose population of 520,000 mostly comprises members of the Hakka ethnic group — has developed more than 16,000 hectares of hillside citrus orchards. The fruit has allowed many residents to escape the poverty trap.

In the 1990s, Zhonggui village, which is home to 2,780 people, was impoverished as a result of a dwindling labor force, lack of commercial crops and poor transportation infrastructure that left roads impassable at times. Almost half its families lived below the poverty line.

Now, the village, one of 19 rural townships in Huichang, lies at the heart of a 666-hectare farm where the locals grow tangelos, a hybrid of tangerine and pomelo, or grapefruit.

The shift to fruit cultivation happened after an experiment in the small orchard of farmer Rao Mingrong in the late 1990s. Along with a few other residents, Rao tried grafting grapefruit branches onto a couple of tangerine trees in his yard. To his delight, the crossbreeds bore delicious hybrid fruit with bright yellow skins far sooner than expected.

Based on the first few hybrids and with help from village cadres and agronomists, Rao — now the biggest grower of tangelos in Huichang — mastered grafting techniques and learned how to fertilize the trees and adjust soil acidity. Since 2011, he has inspired 386 local households to plant the fruit.

Ma Yuncai is one of the people Rao helped. The 58-year-old began cultivating tangelos in 2013 as a way of repaying heavy debts incurred for expensive medical treatments for his son, who is partially paralyzed by severe inflammation of the vertebrae.

"All the money the family made and saved by planting rice was consumed by the medical bills. My life really was hopeless," Ma says.

In 2013, Ma's plight was noticed by the local government's poverty alleviation campaigners, who offered him a one-time subsidy of 300 yuan (\$43) per mu to buy pesticides and fertilizers.

Now nursing more than 260 grafted tangelo trees, Ma expects to earn 110,000 yuan this season.

"Even if it remains extremely hard to labor in the orchard at my age, I don't feel the effects of the toil because I can see hope once again," he said.

Thanks to the government's push and with guidance from Rao, the area of tangelo orchards has expanded to 300 hectares. With a further 200 hectares devoted to navel oranges, fruit cultivation has contributed more than 64 million yuan (\$9.3 million; 8.7 million euros; £7.6 million) to the village since 2014, generating an average net gain of 10,000 yuan for each resident.

About 400 villagers who lived below the national poverty line have shed their impoverished status through the cultivation and sale of the citrus.

Since farmers from surrounding townships, such as Junmenling and Gaopai, joined the Huichang collective, the total area devoted to the cultivation of tangelos has surpassed 2,600 hectares, and the farmers plan to expand to more than 6,600 hectares by 2020.

In that same year, poverty should have been eradicated for the 12,000 households that plant tangelos in Huichang, though about one in 10 remain below the poverty line at the moment, according to Wen Fanghua, deputy director of the Huichang Fruit Industry Administration.



**ZHOU RENSHENG** (left) and his son-in-law Zeng Bingyan pick tangelos at an orchard in a mountainous area of Huichang county, Jiangxi province. YUAN QINGPAN / FOR CHINA DAILY