

Forum: Citizen forum on inequalities

Theme: How to reduce inequalities at different scales?

Name of citizen: Li Hua

Marital status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Married/in a relationship<input checked="" type="radio"/> Widow<input type="radio"/> With children, if so, how many	Level of education <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input checked="" type="radio"/> Primary<input type="radio"/> Secondary<input type="radio"/> University
---	--

Personal information

I am a 78 year-old woman from a small farming village in the southwest of China, in Yunnan Province. Widowed for several years, I have spent my whole life working in the rice terraces and in fields of maize, potatoes and vegetables. My schooling ended after primary level since my parents needed my hands on the land. Women like me have always worked hard, but our lives remain insecure.

How does the theme of inequalities concern you?

Inequality is something I have to face every day. In my village, incomes are much lower than in the cities, and this affects everything in my life: education, health and even safety. When my husband fell ill during the harvest, we had to travel for two hours on a dangerous and muddy road to therefore reach the nearest hospital. By the time we arrived, his condition had worsened plus the medical bill was higher than our income for several months.

This also holds true for education. My granddaughter walks forty minutes to school each day, crossing a wooden bridge over the river. Sometimes it rains and the bridge becomes slippery and unsafe. The school has only three classrooms and no computers, yet she is expected to compete with children in the cities. Many young people leave the countryside because they feel they have no future in our villages and that leaves behind mostly the elderly and the very young.

For my family and those who live in these conditions, inequality isn't only just statistics, it is about whether families like mine can either access healthcare, education and dignity.

What solutions would be helpful for you?

First, fairer redistribution through pensions, healthcare coverage, and social support for the poorest would reduce the daily struggles of rural families. At the moment, many elderly villagers receive a very small pension, sometimes less than the cost of a single doctor's visit. A more equal redistribution would give us the opportunity to have security and dignity.

Secondly, the creation of a minimum wage or at least a guaranteed minimal income would be essential. In rural provinces like mine, families live from one harvest to the next, and unexpected expenses such as illness or a bad crop can push us back into poverty very quickly. With a minimal income, we could access basic infrastructure such as safe roads, reliable healthcare, and proper education for our children.

Third, better infrastructure such as safe roads, bridges, clinics and schools would change our lives more than any single policy. A hospital located two hours away on a dangerous pathway is not a real access to healthcare. Neither a school without computers can prepare our children to compete in today's world.

Finally, projects should involve local people. In my village, a grain storage facility was built on a steep hill far from the fields. Because nobody asked our opinion, it is rarely used. It is essential to listen to communities if solutions are to be effective.

My hope is simple: that before I leave this world, children in my village will have the same chances as children in the cities. To study, to live safely and to build a future in their own communities with dignity. This is how we can truly reduce inequalities, from the local level to the national scale.