

Exercise 2

She told me she used to work in a nearby hotel, but left last year because she was unable to survive on her monthly salary of 1,000 yuan – that's less than 100 pounds. The 41-year-old now sells hot snacks from a mobile stall she places every morning at 5 a.m. next to a rubbish dump. She earns nearly double her previous wage, but she can still only afford to rent a small single room, which she shares with her husband. The couple's two children don't live with them – they're back in Henan, being brought up by their grandparents. Liu Mei believes she'll never be able to afford one of the luxury apartments just down the road. She told me that they simply don't have enough money to rent a place down there. Her only option is to stay where she is and try to make ends meet.

Exercise 3

I'm here in a stunning bar on the 80th floor of Beijing's tallest building, the China World Tower, in the Central Business District – home to luxury hotels and the plush offices of wealthy multinational companies, yet as I look down – just a few hundred metres away – there's a totally different world of crowded run-down low-rise slum housing, with thousands of people jostling for space and trying to eke out a living. There are dirty tumble-down shops selling tatty clothes and shoes, rickety roadside food stalls and cheap low-grade accommodation.

These two neighbouring areas show the triumphs and failures of China's current five-year economic plan. There has been unprecedented growth – growth much of the western world is undoubtedly envious of – but it's clear that not everyone has benefitted from the success. The figures do look good, though. Officials expected annual growth of 7.5% in this current five-year plan, but they easily managed to beat that goal. Growth in fact averaged just over 11% in the first four years of the plan – that's according to figures supplied by the bank UBS. They also did better than expected in other areas; more Chinese people now benefit from pensions and basic healthcare insurance.

But some economists, such as Derek Adams, managing director of the research firm Sinoptics, believe Chinese officials might have become too confident due to the success achieved over the last five years. He told me that the leadership may be looking at the recent performance and over-estimating its success. They might also be under-estimating the need for structural reforms that will generate growth in the future. Many experts believe China has to increase domestic consumption, rather than relying on investment in infrastructure projects and exports to fuel growth. And the people who live in the slum I'm looking at near the Central Business District will almost certainly be hoping that they get a bigger share of the economic pie. I hope so too – they certainly could use it. So let's take the lift down now eighty floors to street level to meet some of them.

For over two decades, over 8 million people a year have left their homes and families in rural China in search of better-paid work in the country's booming cities. This is probably the biggest movement of people ever in the history of the world and I've just been speaking to Liu Mei, one of those migrants originally from Henan Province, who now lives and works in the narrow, dirty lanes that make up this area.

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China knows that it will have to improve the life of the millions of people like Liu Mei during the next five-year period if it is to rebalance its economy – and make its poorest people, whether in the villages or in the cities, happier.