

**EU-CHINA SOCIAL PROTECTION REFORM PROJECT
COMPONENT 3**

DRAFT REFORM PROPOSALS

on

2016 research topics

Social Assistance:

Governance framework for Social Assistance administration and management process

Processes and Activities of Policy Transmission and Implementation Carried Out at Central and Local Levels of Social Assistance

The Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Assistance in China



Social Protection Reform Project
中国-欧盟社会保障改革项目

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FOREWORD

Component 3 of EU-China SPRP based on the cooperation with Chinese partners mainly MoCA and EU authorities and experts is intended to provide policy reform proposals for the social assistance in China. This report covers issues related to governance framework of social assistance administration and management process; policy transmission and implementation at central and local levels; monitoring and evaluation of social assistance in China.

The policy recommendations are a final output of the research done by Component 3 and discussion from the C3 2nd Workshop held in Beijing in December 2016.

This report provides a complex policy recommendations for MoCA based on the Chinese and EU expertise after several knowledge and practices exchanges at technical level performed mainly in China.

The full output of the Component 3 research has been published in the C3 Volume on 2016 research topics: <http://www.euchinasprp.eu/index.php/en/components-en/component-3-en>

All other outputs of Component 3 are available from the Project website:

<http://www.euchinasprp.eu/index.php/en/components-en/component-3-en>

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RESULT 9: The capacity of the MoCA for promulgating and enforcing the Social Assistance Law and the regulations on rural and urban minimum standards of living are strengthened; the skills of local officials in policy transmission and implementation are upgraded.

Topic 3.1.2 Governance framework for Social Assistance administration and management process¹

- The Inter-Authority Joint Conference on SA should be institutionalized and be functional
- Standardizing the establishment of grassroots SA administration and services organization
- Optimization and Integration of Local and Grassroots SA service agencies
- Capacity building for grassroots level agencies and staff
- Improving the household economic information checking platform
- Encouraging and Supporting local governance innovation and experiences exchange
- Strengthening Research and Pilot on Innovation on SA Governance and Policies
- Enhancing and Improving the Financial Input into SA sectors

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- Increasing Participation
 - Participation of the civil society
 - Introducing new forms of participation at local level
 - Setting up mechanisms of co-operation and improvement at the county and province level
 - Increasing the participation of the individuals
 - Increasing the participation of the private sector
- Reforming the Organizational Structure of the Social Assistance
 - Creating one face of SA countrywide
 - Developing inter-departmental co-operation
 - Legitimizing Social Assistance
 - Addressing the residence rules issues from a SA perspective
- Investing in Social Assistance
 - Investing in people
 - Investing in new technologies
 - Investing in infrastructure through a holistic approach
 - Investing in education and research
- Adapting to change and improving the quality of the SA services
 - Using quasi-markets
 - Introducing Quality Registers and Quality Awards
 - Implementing innovative policies that make use of the existing institutions
 - Using clever communication campaigns
 - Developing sound monitoring mechanisms

¹ Excerpt from Zuo Ting, Professor, report, March 2017 & Adrianos - Pavlos Texas, EU-China SPRP expert, report March 2017.

According to the assessments report the policy recommendations for Chinese Governance framework for Social Assistance administration and management process have been defined as follows:

There is no doubt that social Assistance as a public service should be mainly financed by the Government. However, it does not mean that government should provide every single component of social assistance. The governance theory encourages shared responsibility between all of the stakeholders, and decentralized power and resources to the appropriate lower level. The following preliminary suggestion are raised from a governance perspective:

■ **The Inter-Authority Joint Conference on SA should be institutionalized and be functional**

The Inter-Authority Joint Conference on SA should be improved and certain functions should be attributed to this institution. Social assistance is the fundamental system for protecting poor people's basic living conditions, so there must be a coordination mechanism within SA that is directed by the government, coordinated by the MOCA authority, cooperating with other authorities and involving the participation of social forces. The Multi-Authority Conference is a mechanism that helps to solve concrete problems. It is strong and quick. The conference should be convened with the full involvement of all the member authorities or some relevant authorities for specific issues. The conference can be convened at fixed times or a flexible basis by the convener or a vice-convener entrusted by the former. Member authorities can also propose a convention. Before the meeting of the full convention or a specific meeting, there should be a meeting between contact persons, convened by the Office Director of the Conference or vice-director entrusted by the former. The meeting should discuss the items and issues to be deliberated at the Conference. The issues decided at the Conference should be recorded as official minutes then delivered to the relevant authorities and copied to the provincial governments. Important issues must be reported to the Government for approval.

■ **Standardizing the establishment of grassroots SA administration and services organization**

There should be regulation on the institution of the SA agency and the composition of SA staff. These regulations should not differ due to the different attitudes of local government leaders. The good experience for learning is that the administration authority is responsible to make policy while there is professional center responsible for operation and implementation. For inter-authority cooperation, it is suggested to issue regulations on the formal procedures on the coordination of the MOCA authority and other authorities. For example, in identifying Dibao beneficiaries, all the persons with normal labor ability must primarily be registered with the employment authority. Only after getting certificate on being unable to work could the MOCA authority intervene to conduct the identification. In addition, a one-stop coordinated mechanism also needs powerful regulation over other authorities.

■ **Optimization and Integration of Local and Grassroots SA service agencies**

It is suggested to optimize and integrate old-age nursing homes, honorable veterans' nursing homes and welfare homes. For an integrated welfare district, there should be prescribed a director, staff and a medical doctor. Beneficiaries should wear an identical badge and receive identical clothes, blankets etc. Management of the welfare district should be the responsibility of the director, while the staff should be employed under labor contracts. The work of staff should be subject to performance evaluation. A Welfare District could be established as a public body but it could be managed as a private organization with a public subsidy. This could ensure the development of the three types of welfare organizations in the district. This arrangement can not only meet the need of those needing old age care, but can also change the previous dispersal of staff and low level management.

■ Capacity building for grassroots level agencies and staff

It is suggested to build social organization support center and develop social organizations in communities. With intensified and regularized management, there can be a platform for constructing and running social organization in communities. Funding of the support center can predominantly be supported by the regional financial authorities. Enterprises and society should be encouraged to make donations. Other legal approaches can also be introduced, so that there is sufficient financial support to sustain the development of the support centre. There are several ways of managing the social organization support center. Mature centres can be managed by professional organizations whose service is purchased by the government, for example, supportive social organizations and local associations for promoting social organizations. Immature centres can be managed primarily by the MOCA authority and then, when it is mature management can be transferred to a professional agency.

■ Improving the household economic information checking platform

It is suggested to improve the household economic information checking platform. The construction of an information and checking platform for communication, information sharing and coordination is the core problem in means-testing. The first step for this should be to improve the information at district level and direct local authorities to maintain and utilize their own database. The second step should be to improve the coordination of MOCA and provinces, by which the data center of MOCA and that of the provinces can be connected and the problems of exchange between provinces can be overcome. Finally, based on normal functions, the platform should be connected to data of Dibao, Tekun, Temporary Assistance and the Poverty Reduction archive program.

■ Encouraging and Supporting local governance innovation and experiences exchange

It is suggested to improve the stability and professionalism of grassroots work staff. SA is a policy, which requires that staff to be familiar with its operation after a certain period of work. Therefore it is important to have stable team of professional staff.

The education of staff should be high. Currently, in many regions, graduate college students are employed as civil affairs assistants. This represents an enhancement of the quality of the grassroots workforce. It is suggested to use professional staff to deal with specific SA issues. It is better not to involve staff engaged in other affairs or use part-time officials. Periodical training should be held to improve the staff's knowledge of SA policies.

It is suggested to encourage optimization and innovation of the local SA management. According to our investigation, many grassroots authorities can adapt their management to local features and even introduce many innovations in terms of the category of the institution, the nature of the workforce and the delivery of service. Government should create good conditions for the exchange of local experiences and encourage more innovations. Currently, innovations are mainly needed in the fields of integration and articulation of services, participation of social organizations, government purchasing of SA services, sub-contracting community services and developing social enterprises, etc.

■ Strengthening Research and Pilot on Innovation on SA Governance and Policies

Social assistance in China is still in its developmental phase. It needs more designated policy research and practical pilots. The areas for research and piloting include: coordination and articulation between the different sectors, stakeholders and programs; developing different modes of service provision, e.g. community embedded service, one-stop service; infrastructure facility sharing and integration, such as various kind of nursing facilities for elders; the role of business and private sectors (such as PPP, government procurement from companies, third-party nursing etc.); the roles of social organizations and community organizations in SA. There is also a need to develop new SA programs, such as developmental or activation social assistance programs, conditional cash assistance programs.

■ Enhancing and Improving the Financial Input into SA sectors

On the one hand in an era of social transformation, there will be more vulnerable groups needing support from SA sectors. This will lead to a need for increased financial support from government at all levels. Those budgets should consider both the needs of the beneficiaries and the cost of administration and its operation. The Government's investment in social assistance should be encouraged and be requested to meet the increase in social needs. On the other hand the structure of the Government's investment in social assistance should be improved according to local situations. More discretionary capacity and responsibility should be built in for local authorities in the financial allocation of specific SA programs.

Considering the EU experiences following recommendations have been proposed for reforming the legal framework of social assistance in China:

■ Increasing Participation

In order to expand the reach of the SA policy, it is crucial that the participation of additional actors, at all levels, is promoted. Increasing participation can take various forms, at institutional level, at personal level, at corporate level. In order to achieve broader participation of society in the SA policy, a number of reforms could be introduced and a holistic approach employed.

It should become clear that while local authorities, central administration and NGOs / private sector may not share the same values, may have distinct roles to fulfill and could compete on a number of issues, they may co-operate harmoniously, just like gears, in order to keep the wheel of SA spinning, as the figure suggests. Participation can diminish administration costs, activate human resources and solve the problems.

□ Participation of the civil society

First of all, at institutional level, participation of civil society in the delivery of SA should be further promoted and incentivized. The Charity Law of the PRC is a good start, however even more types of NGOs could be included and incentivized, such as associations of people, social enterprises and social co-operatives. There is also a large number of foreign NGOs that have a lot of experience in social work, alleviating poverty programs etc. Should the legislation allow for the activation of these NGOs in the PRC, they could be employed by the state through partnerships, legal tenders and contracts. Since there is a large number of schooled and qualified social workers that seek employment in other fields on the one hand and there are shortages of skilled staff at local level on the other hand, the NGOs, being flexible and elaborate, could attract young social workers and perform the tasks that the state structure is reluctant or unable to perform.

□ Introducing new forms of participation at local level

At local level, participation could be reinforced by adapting features from the Dutch example of the Social Community Teams or from the Belgian example of the Public Centers for Social Welfare. In the first case, social community teams could provide solutions for the households with multiple issues, but they could also increase the synergies from the co-operation of various professionals, as well as regular citizens in order to solve serious problems. In the second case, the emulation of the Belgian tradition of OCMWs, should also be coupled with developing a culture of dialogue and commitment at local/village level. This case would also require the deployment of a well-defined communication campaign, in order to inform the local civil servants, the NGOs and the households of their rights to dialogue and consulting and of their commitments.

□ Setting up mechanisms of co-operation and improvement at the county and province level

Further, participation at county and province level could be reinforced through setting up fora of inter-county and inter-province dialogue and exchange of experiences, where peer reviews are conducted on specific issues in social assistance and published and also certain benchmarks are set. The EU's experience of the Open Method of Co-ordination, as well as the practice in Sweden and the Netherlands are useful guides for the promotion of these tools.

□ Increasing the participation of the individuals

Thirdly, participation should be promoted at individual level and not only through campaigning for volunteering. Taking as an example the Dutch case, the able to work recipients of certain benefits could be asked to provide voluntary work for SA purposes, e.g. through their participations in social community teams.

□ Increasing the participation of the private sector

Further, participation at the corporate level could be incentivized and guided, through tax breaks and funds e.g. donations to SA from corporations in areas with serious problems could get generous tax-breaks. Or the state could provide partial funding and tax-breaks for investment in infrastructure in areas with serious deficiencies e.g. in areas where there's a shortage of office space, the provision of public support offices or public support centres by NGOs or by the private sector with state support could provide a viable solution. Public and social support centres are advantageous, in the way that they may be deployed, through generous funding by the state, in difficult areas where private enterprises and individuals would be reluctant to invest; moreover, grassroots volunteering may be enhanced.

■ Reforming the Organizational Structure of the Social Assistance

Restructuring the SA can diffuse the central policy message to the lowest layer of administration, can increase effectiveness of the policy, increase the efficiency of the resources and assist in better and more accurate planning. Moreover, consistency of the policy can be achieved. There are certain advantages deriving from the public administration structure at central level and from the Chinese political system. In order to re-organize the services provided by the civil affairs department or in order to introduce new agencies in the field, a simple decision at the State Council and in some cases at ministerial level is needed. On the other hand political stability means that organizational changes in the SA are not periled by frequent political changes. In order to emphasize the importance of SA and in order to promote the desired structural change in SA countrywide, the utmost legitimacy must be secured.

□ Creating one face of SA countrywide

The promotion of uniformity in the face of SA across the country for all citizens and of consistency in policy delivery could be achieved through one-stop-shops run by a specialized government agency at the central level with the co-operation of the local authorities, as it is the case of the Norway's NAV. Alternatively, concise legislation setting up clear responsibilities and procedures between the various actors at local and central level on certain aspects of SA policies (e.g. a certain benefit), coupled with the development of e-Government and the interoperability of the various IT systems and databases used in the civil service, could also create one single face of the SA for all the citizens, standardize procedures and human resources and overcome some tiáo/kuài guanshi (条块关系) issues. Finally, setting a few basic common rules and procedures, (e.g. logos, uniforms etc.) will also enforce the image of a uniform SA across the country.

□ Developing inter-departmental co-operation

On the one hand SA issues, in order to be properly addressed at the policy formulation level, require the contribution not only of MOCA but also of other departments at central level. Apart from the obvious institution of the State Council, inter-departmental co-ordination at national level could be set either at an ad-hoc level or on a more permanent basis, as it is illustrated by the figure below. Strengthening the formal and informal ties between the various actors horizontally (at all levels) in social assistance is desirable in order to avoid overlapping errors and departmental sclerosis; the case of Joint Conferences on SA as well as of similar structures, may prove beneficial in dealing with the complexity of the issues of SA.

□ Legitimizing Social Assistance

Certainly, another major issue refers to the fact that currently, the most comprehensive piece of legislation at national level so far as regards SA is the "Interim Measures for Social Assistance" decree, which was promulgated by the State Council in February 2014. However, this decree does

not constitute a permanent law per se, nor does it substitute for the legislation passed by the National People's Congress. One comprehensive piece of legislation on SA should be debated and passed at the NPC level, and promoted accordingly. Legislation should also clearly set the responsibilities of each involved actor, at central and local level, as we saw was the case of the French and Greek best practices.

❑ **Addressing the residence rules issues from a SA perspective**

Finally, managing the residence rules ('hukou' 户口) with a long-term perspective, given the vast numbers of citizens seeking work in the large cities at least temporarily and taking into account the unverified number of unregistered rural migrants, should be coupled with the improvement in the data provided for social assistance purposes. The use of the Resident Identity Number for SA purposes at a national level or the development of a National Insurance Number at a national level could definitely facilitate the governance of SA. Ultimately, the development of a central IT agency or body that co-ordinates e-government for SA purposes, ideally able to access other available databases, could enhance supervision at all the levels of the administration of SA.

■ **Investing in Social Assistance**

As with any other policy that has long-term effects, it is imperative that only through putting money or effort into SA, can results be achieved. Therefore investment for the future is needed.

While the economic progress in the PRC has been coupled with the eradication of almost all the extreme forms of poverty, it is also a fact that economic success has been coupled by income inequality at a very high level, as the GINI index illustrates. It is, therefore, highly likely that some parts of the population still experience high levels of relative poverty. Thus, the provision of a future SA policy is instrumental, in order to achieve a harmonious society.

❑ **Investing in people**

Incentivizing young skilled social workers from urban areas through pay to staff problematic SA providers or alternative SA providers, such as NGOs or private providers should be prioritized. They are the backbone of social assistance in the PRC and they have been specifically trained for this purpose. Further, training carers and improving the career prospects of young professionals is another must do. On the other hand, a clear guideline should be set at national level for the professionalization of the staff that provide SA services to the general public. On-the-job training and re-training schemes should be provided to the unskilled staff by educational institutions and by training professionals.

❑ **Investing in new technologies**

Taking as an ultimate benchmark the case of the Swedish "free choice" of elderly care and also taking into account the fact that a great deal of commercial IT products are produced in the PRC, investing in the assisting technologies could prove beneficial in order to overcome geographical barriers, infrastructure deficiencies and staff shortages and in order to significantly improve the quality of life of the elderly. Moreover, partnerships and the funding of private IT companies could be enhanced.

❑ **Investing in infrastructure through a holistic approach**

Since the SA infrastructure is weak in certain areas of the country, the Chinese government should invest in the SA facilities through partnerships with the local authorities, the civil society and the private sector, setting high quality standards as well as clearly defined rules. Investment should also be directed towards prevention, instead of a *posteriori* (rear) dealing with issues. In this spirit, elderly care provisions could be integrated in other policies, such as the housing policy, by making sure that the allocated housing for the elderly prevents a number of known health issues.

❑ **Investing in education and research**

Investing in research and education in the area of social assistance is paramount in order to ensure that the growing need for social assistance will be met in the future. Educational centers, such as universities and other tertiary education institutions should adjust their curricula and include more courses related to SA. Research in social sciences and especially in social policy, healthcare and

social work should also be promoted, through the provision of more grants to new researchers, through partnerships of Chinese research institutes with foreign research bodies and through funding of research projects on SA subjects.

■ **Adapting to change and improving the quality of the SA services**

As it is the case with delivering results, performance can be enhanced through competition and through innovation. In our case, Chinese society is experiencing rapid transformation, as high levels of economic growth over a thirty-year period have been coupled with the transition from a planned socialist economy to a socialist market economy and with accelerating levels of urbanization. Social phenomena, previously unknown in the PRC, have occurred, such as the development of various subcultures, the rise of income inequality and of new regional disparities, the widespread use of the communication technologies and the importance of environmental protection. It is, therefore, necessary for the SA services to adapt quickly to the societal norms and find innovative ways to deliver better results.

□ **Using quasi-markets**

The introduction of quasi-markets in the procurement of services, not only in the area of elderly care, as it is the case in Sweden's SA, but also in a number of other SA services that could be open to the market, in order to be provided by private or non-profit actors, should enhance competition, and incentivize the provision of better quality services to the citizens. Childcare could set another example. In such instances, the competition among the providers would be just on their quality of service, as the price of the service would be set a priori at the prefecture or the county level.

□ **Introducing Quality Registers and Quality Awards**

Another best practice that could be introduced and adapted for elderly care, but also possibly in the other areas of SA, is the "Quality Register". Quality indicators could be used in order to assess the level of funding, but could also be coupled with the publication of the most important set of data and put pressure on the laggards, by naming and shaming. Conversely, Quality Awards could be introduced, in order to reward excellent performance in providing SA services.

□ **Implementing innovative policies that make use of the existing institutions**

It is obvious that apart from emulating the EU best practices, innovative methods based on the unique characteristics of Chinese society could be employed in order to deal with the challenges facing SA. One such example could be the advancement of local networks of assistance initiated by political organizations, as a means of strengthening local political participation, through vehicles similar to the Belgian Public Centers for Social Welfare. Likewise, MOCA or an authority at the province level could co-operate with a bank in order to issue a special benefit card to be distributed and used by the beneficiaries of certain subsidies (like food subsidies or Dibao), in order to better and more accurately monitor the process on the one hand and in order to offer the benefit of greater choice to the beneficiaries on the other hand.

□ **Using clever communication campaigns**

As large parts of the population in the PRC, especially in the urban areas, have significantly improved their income levels and living conditions, more and more people may be motivated to give up part of their spare time and part of their resources in order to address their own urban problems and at the same time assist people in need. Delivering the message that by helping the SA through volunteering, one is helping herself (or himself) may increase the number of volunteers.

□ **Developing sound monitoring mechanisms**

In order to increase the effectiveness of SA policies and make sure that the available funds reach those most in need of assistance, corruption and mismanagement of funds at all the levels of the administration must be contained and addressed properly.

3.1.3 Processes and Activities of Policy Transmission and Implementation Carried Out at Central and Local Levels of Social Assistance²

- **A Holistic Governance Framework Should be Built to Improve the Policy Making Process**
 - **Simplify Multi-level Government Policy Transfer and the Implementation Process**
 - **Improve the Consistency of Policy Objectives Between the Central and Local Governments**
 - **Solve the Challenges Caused by Frequent Policy Changes**
 - **Build a Comprehensive Legal Framework**
 - **Enhance Civil Affairs' Function and Power in the Social Assistance System**
 - **Capacity building: Provide More Funding and Human Resources**
 - **Strengthen Grass-roots Information Construction**
- *
- **Invest in Knowledge About the Minimum Income System**
 - **Invest in a Bottom-Up Approach**
 - **Invest in Professionalization and Capacity Building at All Levels**
 - **Be Audacious in Innovation but Humble in Planning**
 - **Develop a Common Socle, a Minimal Floor or Minimal Standards**
 - **Look for Opportunities to Value the Instruments and Results of Your Policy Implementation in Collaboration with Other Government Departments**

² Excerpt from Guo Yu report, Associate Professor, March 2017 & Josee Goris, EU-China SPRP expert report, March 2017.

According to the assessments report the policy recommendations for Chinese Social Assistance Policy Transmission and Implementation have been defined as follows:

■ **A Holistic Governance Framework Should be Built to Improve the Policy Making Process**

Appropriate countermeasures must be taken to tackle the risk factors arising in the execution of social assistance policies. In specific, so as to enhance the risk awareness of policy implementation, reduce policy execution risks and improve the efficiency of policy implementation, major policy suggestions include enhancing the policy design and effects and strengthening the supervision of public policy implementation.

■ **Simplify Multi-level Government Policy Transfer and the Implementation Process**

As China's administrative system is huge and hierarchical, public policy delivery tends to be a bureaucratic hierarchy based propulsion mode, generally in the form of documents, phone calls, meetings and other top-down sequential transmissions. The public policy delivery channel is single, one-directional, narrow and lacks feedback. It might lead to overloading of policy, the policy of monopoly and policy lag.

Specifically, on the one hand, multi-level public policy delivery channel exacerbates the "Branch Loss" of policy transmission. In terms of government structure setting, the majority of countries have three levels of government. In contrast, the organizational structure of the Chinese government is multi-level. Between the five levels of the central government, provincial government, prefecture-level government, county government and township government, there are vice provincial, prefecture-level deputy, deputy multiple levels at the county level, which together form a large, complex, hierarchical system that makes policy transfer difficult. This multi-level nature is exacerbated by "bureaucracy loss of" public policy delivery.

■ **Improve the Consistency of Policy Objectives Between the Central and Local Governments**

It is suggested that on the one hand, the central government, especially the Ministry of Civil Affairs, needs to consider the development goals, priorities and capacity bases of local governments in the policy formulation stage; on the other hand, central government should also strengthen the role and position of social assistance among the local governments' incentives and policy agenda, thereby reducing the difficulty of policy implementation faced by the local civil affair departments.

■ **Solve the Challenges Caused by Frequent Policy Changes**

Rapid development policy is reflected not only in the accelerated speed at which the central government and the Ministry of Civil Affairs issue new policies, but also in the pressure on provincial and municipal governments to transfer and implement those policies quickly.

It is recommended that in the system of Civil Affairs, more policy explanation and training could be provided to the local officials who should transfer and implement policies, meanwhile, it would be better for the policy makers to attach some operational codes along with the regulations.

■ **Build a Comprehensive Legal Framework**

It is suggested that, a comprehensive social assistance law is greatly needed to resolve social assistance policy transfer and implementation issues at the top level. With a comprehensive legal framework, the principles and basic rules of social assistance will be more explicit. The central government would basically stick to the social assistance law, but not to formulate plenty of regulations and normative documents, then the local governments would have less pressures and workload accordingly.

■ **Enhance Civil Affairs' Function and Power in the Social Assistance System**

The government should integrate the functions of the different sectors and organizations, coordinate the benefits and interests among various sectors and, in particular, strengthen the role of the Civil Affairs sector in the social assistance system as well as promoting cooperation between the Civil Affairs Department and other sectors. Furthermore, the Government should use modern information systems, through the dissemination of government information to build a high-tech and efficient

information platform, and to solve government information distortion problems. This will effectively enhance the functions of the different government sectors in social assistance system.

■ **Capacity building: Provide More Funding and Human Resources**

Social assistance policy implementation needs administrative costs and adequate human resources. Grassroots organizations covering social assistance work are subject to great work pressure with limited resources. There is a mismatch between their workload and their resources. Public policy is essentially a kind of social behavior to make selective institutional arrangements. Therefore, it is necessary to provide human resources, facilities and budget to deliver and execute policies effectively. However, sometimes, the central government introduces a new policy without supporting resources. The cost of policy implementation is transferred to local governments which is a "Central Government orders - Grassroots pays" situation.

As a consequence, due to personnel and financial restriction in the course of policy transfer, local government selectively passes, transfers and amends central policies. This may cause social policy transfer distortion. Accordingly, in order to improve the effectiveness of social assistance, we must strengthen grassroots capacity building, in particular to provide support resources for implementation.

■ **Strengthen Grass-roots Information Construction**

First of all, it is suggested that MOCA should further develop the family economic situation check center information platform. This will greatly standardize and scientifically improve social assistance work (in particular means-testing). Secondly, social assistance work should have a national network of information system to disseminate policy notices and data. Such a system could be China's external social assistance network or an internal information platform like a wechat. At present, the release of relief policy information is relatively good and timely, but it is largely fragmented, with a large number of localized (local government websites) and unofficial information platforms (wechat public account, etc.) co-existing at the same time. The system needs further integration to provide authoritative policy interpretation for civil affairs staff and the public.

Considering the EU experiences following recommendations have been proposed for reforming the policy transmission and implementation:

■ **Invest in Knowledge About the Minimum Income System**

It is important to invest in knowledge about your own minimum income system. Knowledge gathering refers not only to collecting figures, numbers and data but also experiences of the users. Users are not only the applicants but also the professional workers and civil servants at all governmental levels. Their knowledge on the actual way the system is functioning will be invaluable for the further development of the system.

■ **Invest in a Bottom-Up Approach**

This pays itself off in more to the local level and reality adapted and supported regulation. And it smoothens the effective implementation. Since the implementation is done primarily at the local level, it is important to develop an effective legal framework which seeks a balance between a clear legal framework with clear rules and legal guarantees for all and the need for local discretion in implementation. Discussion, dialogue and debate between the different policy levels and the different stakeholders as the professional staff and the people who are entitled on a minimum income gives a clearer view of the necessary legal framework and what can be left to local discretion.

■ **Invest in Professionalization and Capacity Building at All Levels**

As an example, the latest research of the Belgian PPS Social Integration was on the ways by which applicants for social assistance are received at the local centers. One of the most central conclusions was that it is important to invest in the training the staff who are working at the reception desks. Training on knowledge about the social services that the local centers organise but also training on

behavioural competencies, as an example kindness or how to behave in aggressive situations, is needed.

■ **Be Audacious in Innovation but Humble in Planning**

The objective of the EU-SPRP is to inspire the PRC to the further development of its social assistance scheme by putting forward the best practices in the EU Member States. The long experiences that the EU Member States have and their continuous improvement by new initiatives are a good source of inspiration to develop innovative projects in the PRC. But the European practices show also that implementing changes demands good and detailed planning, developed together with the most important stakeholders and a regular review to see and correct problems on time.

■ **Develop a Common Socle, a Minimal Floor or Minimal Standards**

that are applicable over all of the PRC. The ways by which European minimum income schemes are elaborated shows a kaleidoscope of practices. But in a comprehensive and sustainable legal framework it is probably not possible to determine the same amount of the minimum income for the whole of the PRC, but it can be stated on how it has to be calculated, taking some minimum requirements in account. The same can be done can be done for example for the means test, the application procedure or the way to appeal a decision.

■ **Look for Opportunities to Value the Instruments and Results of Your Policy Implementation in Collaboration with Other Government Departments**

Social assistance is granted only after a means test. This means test, if qualitatively executed and acknowledged, can be a valuable indicator or instrument for other governmental agencies to be used in the implementation of their policy. It saves others having to develop and execute the same test.

3.1.4 Policy Suggestions for the Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Assistance in China³

- **Promote the Institutional Transition of Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance**
 - **Further Expand the Scope for Monitoring and Evaluating Social assistance**
 - **Promote the Transition of Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance from Internal Evaluation to External Third-party Evaluation**
 - **Promote Institutionalized Arrangements for Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance**
 - **Further Improve the System for Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance**
 - **Reinforce Top-level Design of Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance**
 - **Improve the Level of Informatization in Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance**
 - **Programs Should be Integrated to Establish a Unified, Open Monitoring and Evaluation of the Social Assistance System Sharing Information and Resources**
 - **Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Assistance should be more Scientific and Effective**
 - **Further Improve the Scientificity of Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance**
 - **The Indicators Based System of Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Assistance should be Improved**
 - **Local Reporting Station should be Established to Collect Information on the Implementation of Social Assistance**
 - **Improving Utilization of the Results of Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance**
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- **Implement a monitoring and evaluation system as a part of social policy management**
 - **Develop a national strategy and set of indicators via inter and intra-levels of cooperation**
 - **Introduce a regular updating and an indicators' development process**
 - **Benchmarking as a key element of monitoring and evaluation process**
 - **Developing data sources and cross data platforms**
 - **Skilled evaluation staff**
 - **Increase data availability for academic evaluations**
 - **Develop intra and external evaluation settings**

³ Excerpt from Gang Shuge report, Professor, March 2017 & Jean-Yves Hocquet, EU-China SPRP expert report, March 2017.

According to the assessments report the policy recommendations monitoring and evaluation in social assistance have been defined as follows:

■ **Promote the Institutional Transition of Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance**

As an important part of China's social assistance policy monitoring and evaluation of social assistance is a new policy practice in contemporary China. However due to the differences and diversity of the environment for the implementation of social assistance policy, the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance still face some new situations and new problems. There is a need to focus on the overall transformation of the social assistance system to bring about adaptive changes and adjustments and to promote the development of the transformation of the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance. In other words, as the institutional arrangement that ensures the implementation of social assistance policy, the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance should adapt to the institutional transition of the Chinese social assistance program and develop it through innovative approaches.

□ **Further Expand the Scope for Monitoring and Evaluating Social assistance**

It is necessary to promote the move of the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance from the single evaluation of the Dibao system to a comprehensive evaluation of the whole social assistance program in which the Dibao system is just one component. Therefore the role of joint conference on social assistance should function efficiently. Based on the Interim Measures of Social Assistance, the joint conference on social assistance should coordinate the various governmental departments responsible for social assistance and solve the problems derived from the diversification and fragmentation between the authorities. The scope of monitoring and evaluation of social assistance should be extended and a unified, open, sharing and comprehensive system of monitoring and evaluation of social assistance should be established.

□ **Promote the Transition of Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance from Internal Evaluation to External Third-party Evaluation**

In order to put in place an objective evaluation of social assistance, social forces should be involved. An expert committee for the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance and a committee for the decision-consultation of social assistance should be duly set up. Governmental officials, experts and scholars, representatives of the People's Congress, members of the People's Political Consultative Conference and representatives of residents should all be invited in an appropriate manner or employed in the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance. They can provide monitoring and evaluation of social assistance with intelligent support and make the procedures more scientific, open and effective. All these can promote the institutional transition of monitoring and evaluation of social assistance.

It is important to improve the third-party assessment of social assistance. In order to achieve the scientificity and the effectiveness of the third-party evaluation of social assistance, it is important to strengthen the third-party assessment for performance management. The monitoring and evaluation of social assistance should include an ex-ante evaluation, a mid-term evaluation and an ex-post evaluation. Therefore further improving the external-evaluation is of great importance. Therefore it is necessary to introduce the ex-ante evaluation for the third-party evaluation including a rigorous scientific assessment and analysis concerning the methodology of the evaluation, the assessment methods, the processes, the goals and the results in order to ensure the scientificity and reliability of the conclusions of the third-party evaluation.

□ **Promote Institutionalized Arrangements for Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance**

The monitoring and evaluation of social assistance in some areas is just temporary and the situation should be improved and changed further. The monitoring and evaluation of social assistance should adopt a strategic and forward-looking position, so that it can help social assistance to develop in a fair, orderly and sustainable path.

■ Further Improve the System for Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance**□ Reinforce Top-level Design of Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance**

Top-level design is absolutely crucial for the construction of a system to monitor and evaluate social assistance. Therefore, the relationship between central government and local governments should be effectively coordinated. National guidance should be issued under which the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance can be conducted in an orderly and extensive manner. According to the current situation for the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance, the characteristics of the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance include a diversity of subjects that conduct the evaluations, the decentralization of the contents of evaluation and a fragmentation of policies and localization of the management of evaluation. In order for the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance to be more regularized and scientific, it is necessary to reinforce the unified leadership of the central government in directing and designing the policies on monitoring and evaluation of social assistance. The central government should play the leading, directional and coordinative roles in the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance. In the 13th Five Year Plan and thereafter, there should be a large scale questionnaire survey on Dibao households and on the progress of social assistance across the country every two years. This would actually correspond to the trend of legalization and the need for targeted poverty alleviation. This sort of survey should be institutionalized so that the real needs of Dibao households, the main problems in social assistance and the progress of the policies can be clearly understood. Thus the social assistance system can function better as the last safety net of the society and the central government and local governments can also obtain sufficient data support and foundation for policy making.

□ Improve the Level of Informatization in Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance

The institutionalization and normalization of the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance should be built up in the basis of adopting IT technology. The monitoring and evaluation of social assistance should be implemented throughout the management of social assistance and the implementation of its policies. During this process, what will be important is to have a firm technological foundation for the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance. For this, it is important to adopt IT technology to establish a universal verification system for the economic conditions of low-income residents' families. Therefore the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance can be more scientific and accurate. This will help the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance to develop into a technological and intelligent procedure.

□ Programs Should be Integrated to Establish a Unified, Open Monitoring and Evaluation of the Social Assistance System Sharing Information and Resources

The first step is to establish a unified, coordinated, open and regularized management system for social assistance through the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance. The function of the joint conference of social assistance coordinating social forces to communicate and coordinate policies should be better utilized to solve the problem of policy fragmentation and policy close to the circle that is derived from the administrative system. Coordination and unification should be enhanced in the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance to solve problems such as fragmentation between authorities, diversification of the competent subjects and the weak circulation of information. The sharing of information and resources should be improved to establish a monitoring and evaluation of the social assistance system of connected policies, integrated management, resource sharing and coordinated forces. In this way, the problem of fragmentation and diversification can be solved and a new environment that is comprehensive, integrated and orderly will be created for the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance.

The second step is to establish an risk warning mechanism for social assistance through its monitoring and evaluation. The real environment and conditions for the running of social assistance can be analyzed in real time through the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance. This can provide an effective guarantee to ensure the social assistance system is scientific and regularized. In

terms of the relationship between social assistance and the labor market, social assistance is an important indicator that reflects the situation of of labor market. Therefore, it is very important to strengthen the assessment of the monitoring of unemployment and the capabilities of social assistance. There should be a social risk warning mechanism set into the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance, including relative reporting and contacting institutions so as to really improve the procedures and prevent the social risks so as to finally contribute to the creation of social harmony.

■ **Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Assistance should be more Scientific and Effective**

□ **Further Improve the Scientificity of Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance**

Strengthening the research on social assistance can provide the management of monitoring and evaluation of social assistance with a theoretical foundation and scientific support. In particular, the current measures for monitoring and evaluating social assistance should be perfected, including the performance evaluation system and third party evaluations etc.

The first is the objective and fair principle. Ex-ante evaluations should take relevant laws, regulations and rules as well as the relevant documents from the Ministry of Finance and do the ex-ante evaluation according to the principle of "openness, fairness and justice".

The second is the scientific and standardized principle. Ex-ante evaluation work should be carried out through standardized procedures combining the qualitative evaluation and the quantitative evaluation by a scientific and reasonable method;

The third is the principle of fully evidence. In the process of evaluation, an ex-ante evaluation should collect enough relevant documents and materials and through field investigations provide a sufficient basis for evaluating its conclusion.

The fourth is the cost-benefit principle. Ex-ante evaluations should focus on the rationality of the project application and the accuracy of the budget application. In the process of ex-ante evaluation, attention should be paid to controlling costs, saving money and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the ex-ante evaluation.

□ **The Indicators Based System of Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Assistance should be Improved**

Regarding the development of an indicators system for social assistance, it is necessary to insist on the principle of being comprehensive, objective, evidence-based and having an open principle. This will allow the evaluation indicator system of social assistance to reflect the actual situation of social assistance as well as the operation and the implementation of social assistance policies comprehensively, scientifically and objectively in different areas.

Further the indicators of the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance should be improved scientifically. Establishing an indicators system for the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance is an development for the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance in China. The indicators system can play an important role in promoting the balanced development of China's social assistance system and realizing the effective delivery of rural-urban social assistance policy and the governance of poverty. The indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance not only play a role of its monitoring and evaluation, but also play a leading role in policy orientation. As as a result, the design of the indicators system for the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance become important factors affecting the work of social assistance. For example, on the standard of Dibao, the setting of the Dibao benchmark should be closely combined with the differences and diversity in the economic development in the different regions in China. It is important to push forward on the construction of an adjustment mechanism for the Dibao standard. The Dibao standard should guarantee the rights of poor families to survival and development but the Dibao standards should also be consistent with the level of economic development and financial capacity in the different areas. The Dibao standard needs to reflect the essential requirements of promoting the development of social assistance in a sustainable and fair way and avoiding simply

linking the Dibao standard only with a single economic indicator and thus artificially raising the social assistance standards in a rigid growth through institutional arrangements.

□ Local Reporting Station should be Established to Collect Information on the Implementation of Social Assistance

It will be of benefit to selectively establish an information reporting station in the 31 provincial level units across China. A network of monitoring and evaluation of social assistance can be established to cover the regions across the country.

In the process of achieving the goal of sustainable development and fair development of the social assistance system and based on the fact that there are many new situations and problems in social assistance, it is necessary to further realize the standardization of social assistance in the process of policy implementation. It is very important to timely get to know the information from the local governments and the masses so as to know what happened at the grass-roots level on a timely basis and what the demands of the masses are. To timely understand the governance of poverty of social assistance it is necessary to understand the daily situation as well as the major events in the social assistance system at the lower levels of the government. It is especially to know on time the new experiences and practices from the grassroots level in order to promote innovation in the social assistance policy.

□ Improving Utilization of the Results of Monitoring and Evaluating Social Assistance

The development of monitoring and evaluation of social assistance is very unbalanced across China, particularly as the results of the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance are not adequately or efficiently used. Thus the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance has not played the desired role in controlling the running of social assistance and its function of directing and promoting the development of social assistance does not give full play to the social assistance system. Therefore, the monitoring and evaluation of social assistance must continue to be improved in order to achieve the objectives of the social assistance policies.

Considering the EU experiences following recommendation have been proposed for monitoring and evaluation of social assistance system in China:

■ Implement a monitoring and evaluation system as a part of social policy management

The implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system cannot be separated from the management of social policies. Even in the cases where they are mostly State funded and nationally designed, social assistance policies rely upon the empowerment of local authorities to deliver the benefits and the accompanying measures.

Since the Chinese landscape appears to be largely decentralized, the role of the State administration is to design the national rules and to ensure that the citizen receives the benefits they are entitled to.

■ Develop a national strategy and set of indicators via inter and intra-levels of cooperation

National indicators are needed but a top down strategy would surely miss the point. The design of these indicators should be through the consensus of local authorities in charge of the daily management of policy and if possible with the participation of all the stake holders e.g. the recipients seem to be the most efficient way of achieving sustainability and adequacy. It is recommended to launch a working group associating MoCA and the local authorities to design the indicators. As a launch pad MoCA could order preliminary work with proposals of a set of indicators from the academic side c.f. the work performed by the Social Protection Council with the Open Method of Coordination inclusion.

■ Introduce a regular updating and an indicators' development process

Such a strategy must be operative. The making of sound indicators will always be work in progress to encompass qualitative dimensions and outcomes. It is better to foresee a first layer of basic indicators and to enrich them continuously so that results could be seen by the partners as soon as

possible and submitted to the policymakers and to the representatives of stake holders as NGO recipients.

■ **Benchmarking as a key element of monitoring and evaluation process**

A cooperative benchmarking about benefit spending, management costs could introduce a major drive to reach the best results. This a major cultural change for the central administration and for State civil servants with the help of training, moving from a hierarchical authority to a new kind of legitimacy based on technical expertise and ability to develop team working. Scoreboard and recommendations are a useful tool of convergence of local administrations.

■ **Developing data sources and cross data platforms**

Data should be produced in the simplest way and as much as possible be issued by the administrative system. Production of data has a cost but it must be rewarding for the employee in charge of collecting them. On the one hand monitoring data must be a side -product of management, on the other hand they must have a direct effect on the visibility of social assistance. Clerks must be convinced that monitoring will make them more efficient and the customer more satisfied. In a first step, as in the Belgian model of social security crossroad bank, it seems more accurate to share the information without a central storage of the data. A strong political will is required but it will save energy which would be otherwise wasted and make the system open enough to welcome new partners or fields.

■ **Skilled evaluation staff**

The desire of the higher civil servants for evaluation must be improved by developing its training in administrative academies. As much as possible data must be circulated to allow all the stakeholders to deliver their own analysis. Regular contacts must be developed between the civil servants and the academic world to increase cross-fertilization between the administrative knowledge and the academic experience of methodology. The introduction of the obligation of an evaluation ex ante for all social assistance policies could induce a change in the management of social assistance even if in social policies, unlike environmental policies, the needs seem less important for policymakers because the consequences looks more reversible. It is important to coordinate the political agenda and the evaluation time. There is clearly huge value in anticipating demand in advance even if the methodology is not as perfect randomized control trial (RCT).

■ **Increase data availability for academic evaluations**

Open data procedures are interesting for the academic research but it could be costly and not beneficial. Nominative data could be made available to research through secure IT systems to meet both the needs of evaluation and protect personal data.

■ **Develop intra and external evaluation settings**

Globally it is important to begin an ambitious process of monitoring even if all the prerequisites of a state of the art organization are not met, especially for evaluation. The evaluator could be internal but independent; there could be statutory rules but also informal ways. The various evaluators in France are mostly administrative bodies but with a sufficient level of autonomy. The National Audit Office in France is very keen on writing its reports so that they could be directly used by the journalists and raise awareness of the opinion. Finally, it could seem a contradiction but perhaps there are too many evaluations redundant on the same subjects. Beside the question of schedule, it is a real necessary to coordinate the evaluations and to make them more available for all the stake holders.