

EU-CHINA SOCIAL PROTECTION REFORM PROJECT

COMPONENT 3

**GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT PROCESSES**

VOLUME ON 2016 RESEARCH

TOPIC 3.1.2



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3.1.2 Governance Framework for Social Assistance Administration and Management Processes

Assesment report

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P.R. China*

ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| ACWF | All China Women’s Federation |
| CBSA | County Bureau of Social Assistance |
| CDPF | Chinese Disabled Persons’ Federation |
| CNPC | Chinese National People’s Congress |
| CWCA | China Working Commission on Aging |
| Dibao | Minimum Subsistence Allowance Program |
| FG | Five Guarantees Scheme |
| LTCI | Long-Term Care Insurance Program |
| MOCA | Ministry of Civil Affairs |
| MOF | Ministry of Finance |
| MOHRSS | Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security |
| MOHURC | Ministry of Housing and Urban and Rural Counstruction |
| NRMC | New Rural Medical Cooperative Program |
| SA | Social Assistance |
| SASVG | Social Assistance for Specific Vulnerable Groups |
| SVG | Specific Vulnerable Groups |
| Tekun | Chinese Pronunciation of “Specific Vulnerable Groups” |
| Three None’s | People with no ability to work, no source of income and no statutory guardians to provide for them |
| Wubao | Chines Pronunciation of “Five Guarantees” |
| RDOPRP | Rural Development Oriented Poverty Reduction Program |

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1. OVERVIEW ON STATE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

1.1 The Social Assistance Structure and Relevant Laws and Regulations

1.1.1 Basic Governance Framework of Social Assistance

Social Assistance (SA) is the foundation, and a vital component, of China's social governance system. It is the Government's responsibility to provide poor families with support in order to protect them from their life-risks and to sustain their subsistence. The implementation of SA programs in China is a complicated process, whereby hundreds of millions of beneficiaries are involved. For most of the programs, mean-testing is needed to identify the eligibility of applicants and make sure that the benefits can provide poor people with a life at a pre-determined level. In some programs, service provision is necessary.

The management and administration system of SA includes basic legislation and supervision, policy making, finance, audit and administrative management. Yet, in a country of 1.3 billion people, SA must deal with the division of power and responsibility among governments ranging from the state to provinces to municipalities to counties. More importantly, the management and administration system of SA and the optimization of the SA governance system at local and grassroots government levels are a critical and necessary process.

China has built up an open, comprehensive and diversified SA system for all its people. Since the 1990s, following the path of a socialist market economy, China has gradually constructed a new SA system covering both urban and rural residents. The core of this system is the Minimum Livelihood Guarantee for Urban and Rural Residents (Urban and Rural Dibao) and the Five Guarantees (Wubao). Medical Assistance, Housing Assistance and Education Assistance are specific programs that supplement the system. The new SA system was initially developed, regularized and systematized. The concept of SA has also evolved from "remedy" to "assistance". This lays a solid foundation for the stable and further development of China's SA. As the lowest level safety net for society, SA provides subsistence for about 100 million urban and rural people in difficulty. The amount of public investment and the coverage of benefits have both reached a peak in respect to the history of SA. SA does not only protect the basic livelihood of people in difficulty, but it also contributes to the progress and stability of the social economy.

The legislative process for SA began in 2005. Over the last decade, both the 10th and 11th Standing Committees of the National People's Congress (NPC) have put SA legislation into their plans. In 2008, the Legislation Office of the State Council publicized the "*Consultative Legislative Draft for SA*" seeking advice and comments. In late October 2012, the Minister of Civil Affairs, Li Liguo, had read the "*State Council's Report on the Work of Social Assistance*" at the meeting of the NPC Standing Committee. In this meeting, the representative from the Civil Legislation Committee of the NPC had emphasized, when responding to the discussion on SA legislation, that it was necessary to accelerate the legislation and that the State Council should submit the proposal to the NPC Standing Committee for discussion as soon as possible. Currently, the SA system is mainly running on the basis of regulations and policies made by the central and local governments. Until now, the highest legislative document of SA is the "*Interim Measures on Social Assistance*" that came into force in 2014. Before that, there had been several separate regulations on specific programs, such as rural Wubao, which had been issued by the State Council.

The "*Interim Measures on SA*" was issued through *Order 649 of the State Council of the PRC*, on 21 February 2014. The contents include *General Regulations, Dibao, Assistance to Special Vulnerable Groups (Tekun), Assistance to Disaster Victims, Medical Assistance, Education Assistance, Housing Assistance, Employment Assistance, Temporary Assistance, Participation of NGO's, Supervision and*

Management, Legal Responsibility and Appendices. There are 13 chapters and 70 articles. It came into force on 1 May 2014. According to “*The Measures*”, the government and its subordinate authorities are responsible for the SA system. Authorities from central level to provincial level are respectively in charge of specific tasks. Following “*The Measures*”, the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MOCA) has issued a series of policies and directional opinions over the recent years specifically on Tekun Assistance, Temporary Assistance, Emergency Assistance and the participation of NGO’s. These policies have actively promoted the development of the SA system. Some provinces have also issued provincial regulations or detailed implementation regulations on specific program within their legislative competence.

According to the current Chinese administrative arrangements, the assistances stipulated in the “*Interim Measures on SA*” involve different ministries in their administration, namely: MOCA, Ministry of Human Resource and Social Security (MOHRSS), Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MOHURD). The Commission of Health and Family Planning (CHFP) is also closely inter-related to SA. Considering the fact that work related to disabled persons is a professional field, the China Disabled Persons’ Federation (CDPF) is entrusted as a social organization to take the responsibility for the administration of social assistance and welfare for disabled persons.

Among the authorities, MOCA is the primary and leading ministry of SA. As the lead Ministry, MOCA and the authorities on civil affairs (the MOCA system) are in charge of the statistics for SA. MOCA coordinates and convenes meetings with the other authorities involved with SA, for example the Inter-Ministerial/Department Conference on Social Assistance is organized by the State Council with the MOCA system functioning as the secretariat unit for the Conference.

Table 1: Social Assistance Responsibility Devision among Ministries

| Assistance | Ministry | Competent Department |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Dibao | MOCA | Department of Social Assistance |
| Wubao | MOCA | Department of Social Assistance |
| | | Department of Welfare |
| | CDPF | Department of Education and Employment |
| Assistance to Disaster Victims | MOCA | Department of Disaster Assistance |
| Medical Assistance | MOCA | Department of Social Assistance |
| Education Assistance | MOE | Department of Finance |
| Housing Assistance | MOHURC | Department of Housing Security |
| Employment Assistance | MOHRSS | Department of Employment Promotion |
| Temporary Assistance | MOCA | Department Social Assistance |

1.1.2 MOCA System: The Fundamental and Coordinative Authority for Administrative Management

As the fundamental and coordinating authority, MOCA is divided into General Office, Managerial Bureau of Social Organization, Department of Disaster Relief, Department of Grassroots Power and Community Development, Department of Social Welfare and Charity, Department of Finance and Planning, Department of Human Resource, Disciplinary Inspection Unit, Department of Policy and Regulation, Bureau of Veterans, Department of Social Assistance, Department of Administrative Division and Naming, Department of Social Affairs, Department of International Co-Operation and Department of Retired Officials. There are five departments for social assistance: the Departments of Disaster Relief, Social Assistance, Social Welfare and Charity and the Veterans Bureau.

The main responsibility of the Department of SA is drafting plans, policies and standards on SA, developing urban and rural SA systems, organizing the work on Dibao, Medical Assistance, Temporary Assistance, planning policies on Wubao, allocating and supervising the SA funds transferred from MOF, participating in planning measures on housing, education and legislative assistance and managing information on SA for the whole of the country. Under the Department of SA, there are the General Division, the Divisions of Dibao, Tekun Temporary Assistance, Medical Assistance and the Supervision Division. The Department of SA is the core authority on SA in China. It is responsible for managing daily affairs in the SA field, coordinating other authorities and keeping all the parts in the articulation of SA work.^[1]

The Department of Disaster Relief is responsible for drafting policies on disaster relief, organizing and coordinating disaster relief; building emergency reaction systems for natural disasters; managing the checking of, and publicizing, the current state of a disaster; managing, allocating and supervising the fund for disaster relief that is allocated by MOF; transporting and accommodating disaster victims, delivering subsidies for reconstructing disaster-damaged rural houses and disaster victims' accommodation in collaboration with relevant authorities; preparing materials and resources for disaster victims' accommodation (at national level); organizing and directing donations for disaster relief; drafting plans for disaster relief and organizing international cooperation when there is a disaster. Structurally it has the Divisions of Disaster Relief, Preparation for a Disaster, Reducing the Disaster Impact of Disasters and Donations for Disaster Relief.^[2]

The Veterans' Bureau is mainly responsible for drafting policies, standards and measures on special care for veterans; drafting policies and plans for arranging ex-service soldiers, ex-service officers, normally and honorably retired officers and retired military staffs' (without military identity) return to civilian life; drafting measures on awarding military honours; organizing special care of military staff and their families; drafting plans on establishing military supply stations; checking on and approving the application for commemorative buildings for military heroes to be listed in the national protection plan; organizing the protection overseas of commemorative buildings for Chinese military heroes and for commemorative buildings of foreign military heroes in China. Structurally there is a General Division and Divisions of Policy and Regulation (Research Unit of Policy on "Double Supports"), Special Care, Heroes Awards, Managing and Protecting Overseas Commemorative Buildings, Retired Officer, Ex-Service Soldiers, Retired Military Staff and Ex-Service Officers and a Division of Special Care Institutions.^[3]

The Department of Social Welfare and Charity is mainly responsible for drafting plans, policies and standards on social welfare; drafting policies on protecting aged, orphan and disabled persons; drafting measures on managing social welfare institutions and measures on managing the lottery for supporting social welfare; managing the social welfare lottery fund; drafting policies on fostering

^[1] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/jg/jgsj/201507/20150700847753.shtml>

^[2] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/jg/jgsj/201507/20150700847754.shtml>

^[3] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/jg/jgsj/201507/20150700847756.shtml>

social welfare enterprises; drafting policies on charities; organizing and directing donations for social welfare. Structurally there are divisions of the Welfare Lottery (General), Charity and Social Donations, Old-Age Welfare, Welfare for Persons with a Disability and Children's Welfare. ^[4]

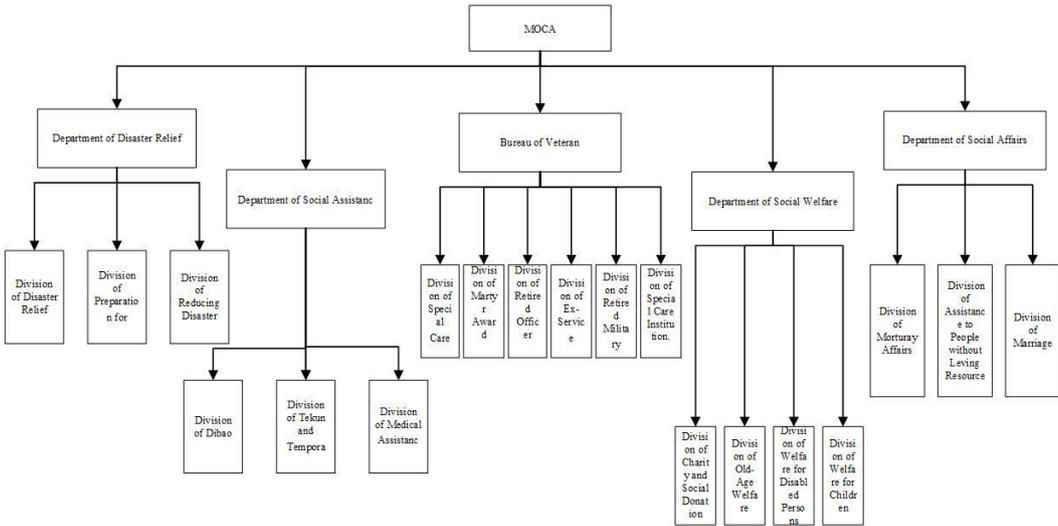
The Department of Social Affairs is mainly in charge of drafting policies on marriage, adoption and burials; directing marriage related issues for Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan residents, overseas Chinese and people living across borders; administering the coordination of inter-governmental adoption policies; coordinating inter-provincial assistance to persons without resources for living; administering the marriage register; and managing marriage, burial, adoption and assistance service institutions. Structurally there are a General Division and Divisions of Mortuary Affairs, Assistance to Persons without Resources to Live and Marriage. ^[5]

Historically, SA in China has functioned as temporary work for “supplementing the main affairs, such as economic development”. As SA developed, its management faced challenges that must be institutionalized over the long run. Besides its administration, the professionalism of SA is becoming a more pressing problem. MOCA's “*Notice on Establishing and Accomplishing A Long-term Supervisory and Checking Mechanism for Social Assistance, 2013*”, requires local authorities to set up a specific agency for supervising and checking SA work and building a long-term mechanism for this work. According to the Notice, local authorities must define the principal components of SA supervision and checking. They must increase the ways and methods for SA supervision and checking and establish mechanisms for both encouraging and regulating its supervision and checking. A long-term mechanism for daily management is also needed to be set up. Supervision before, and in the course of, SA work is required to be reinforced and the management of SA supervision must be regularized. Meanwhile, institutions that facilitate the ability for people to make complaints and for the checking of their complaints also need to be established. This means that there must be a telephone line established in each province for making a complaint. The channel for complaints by people must not be blocked. MOCA has ordered that local authorities must issue measures on rectifying the faults that occur in SA work. These are more stringent than before. Those who do this work must be responsible for their work. In cases where serious problems arise on account of unclear responsibility, weak supervision and which create unexpected social influences, the agency or the individual who committed the fault must be charged according to the disciplinary rules of CPC and the Government. The competent authority will carry out the investigation. If the fault leads to conviction as a crime, the person committing the fault must be penally punished.

Figure 1: Structure of MOCA

^[4] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/jg/jgsj/201507/20150700847593.shtml>

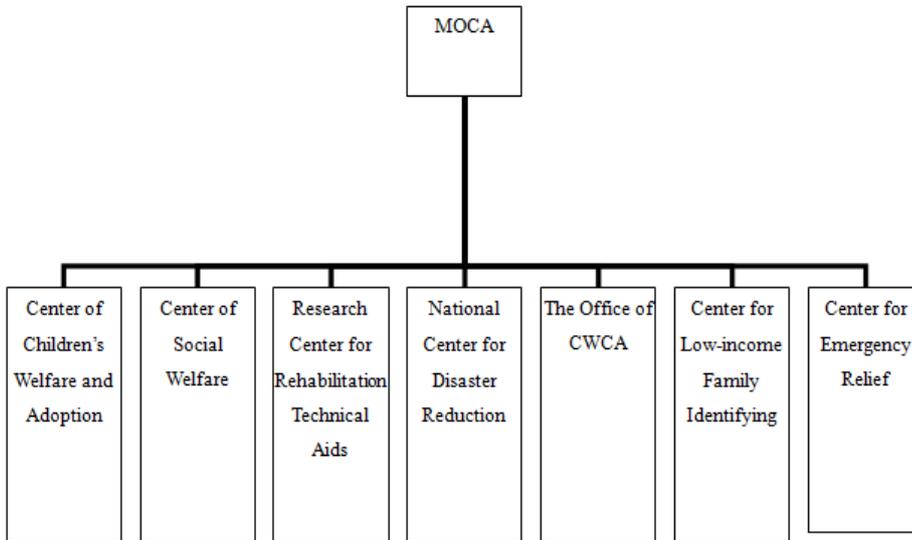
^[5] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/jg/jgsj/201507/20150700847590.shtml>



Source: Data from MOCA.

Besides departments inside MOCA, there are other 7 authorities directly subordinate to or managed by MOCA that are related to SA.

Figure 2: Authorities Directly Subordinate to MOCA



Source: Data from MOCA official website.

The MOCA Center for Identifying Low-income Families is entrusted by MOCA to build and maintain a national database on the economic situation of low-income families. It is also responsible for

searching and checking information and researching policies on low-income families as well as other tasks, such as public education, international exchanges and training. ^[6]

The China Center for Children’s Welfare and Adoption is entrusted by the Government to manage affairs related to international adoption, adoption within Chinese territory and child raising in social welfare agencies. ^[7]

The MOCA Center for Social Welfare is mainly responsible for participating in investigations and discussions on policies, regulations, plans, round-tables on social welfare and evaluating standards of various service institutions; managing the China Social Welfare website, collecting and processing information about social welfare and providing consultancy services; supporting social welfare training, coordinating and organizing managerial staff of social welfare institutions to participate in international studies, visits and exchanges; supporting international programs of social welfare and developing co-operation projects within Chinese territory; running social welfare service institutions that can be models for other institutions in China; administering meetings of the MOCA system, managing the Zhongmin Mansion (entrusted by the ministry) and providing relevant service based on the mansion and administering other tasks assigned by MOCA. ^[8]

The MOCA Research Center for Rehabilitation Technical Aids is the former Research Center for Prosthetics. It was established in May 1979. Following the progress of China’s economy and technology and the population’s view on health, the center aims to develop rehabilitation technical aids to protect the rights of disabled persons (generally disabled persons, aged persons, injured persons and patients with this concept corresponding to the definition of “disability” as defined by WHO). ^[9]

The Office of the China Working Commission on Aging (CWCA) is the office of the commission set up under MOCA whose basic work is carried out by the China Association of Ageing. The office is responsible for implementing the CWCA decisions; researching and proposing policies and plans concerning aging issues and drafting implementation measures; supervising and checking the implementation of CWCA’s decisions by the different authorities in the different regions, and reporting the results; contacting and coordinating member authorities; conducting research, collecting and processing information on ageing, and promoting good experiences and carrying out other tasks assigned by CWCA. ^[10]

The National Center for Disaster Reduction is responsible for collecting, processing and analysing information of disasters, assessing the risks of disasters and warning the public; participating in research on political strategies, policies, laws, regulations, plans, reaction strategies for natural disaster and social reaction policies etc. ^[11]

The MOCA Center for Emergency Relief is in charge of conducting investigations and analysis on emergency relief: developing market, business and technological services for emergency relief and holding international exchanges and cooperation. ^[12]

1.1.3 Responsibilities of Other Ministries (including CDPF) –A multi-sectoral administrative system

^[6] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/jg/zsdw/201507/20150700847766.shtml>

^[7] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/jg/zsdw/201507/20150700847766.shtml>

^[8] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/jg/zsdw/201507/20150700847802.shtml>

^[9] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/jg/zsdw/201507/20150700847786.shtml>

^[10] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/jg/dgdw/201507/20150700847513.shtml>

^[11] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/jg/zsdw/201507/20150700847794.shtml>

^[12] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/jg/zsdw/201507/20150700847769.shtml>

According to the “*Interim Measures*” the work of SA does not only involve MOCA. There are also other ministries specifically in charge of different programs and entrusted with administrative functions. These include MOHRSS, MOE, MOHURD and CDPF.

Employment Assistance is the responsibility of the Division of Employment under MOHRSS. The division’s daily function is drafting the strategy and annual plan for employment; drafting policies on equal employment, transfers of the rural labor force and the circulation of labor; developing the public employment service system; directing and regulating public employment service information; participating in drafting measures on managing the specific fund for employment; directing the drafting of employment policies on college graduate students; drafting employment aid measures and employment policies relating to special groups; drafting employment policies on foreigners (except experts).^[13]

The Division of Housing Security under MOHURD is mainly responsible for ensuring housing for low-income families; drafting policies on housing security and directing their implementation; drafting plans and policies on low-rent housing; managing the low-rent housing fund that is provided by MOF in collaboration with relevant authorities; supervising local implementation of the policies. In addition, the division is also responsible for producing the development plan and the annual plan for housing security and supervising its implementation.^[14]

The Division of Finance under MOE participates in drafting policies on collecting and delivering education funds and providing subsidies to eligible students. It also manages state-owned assets, the budgeting, finance and internal audit of universities and agencies directly subordinated to MOE and participating in the management of reserves for the obligatory education and education-related funds. In addition, its responsibility also covers the international education loan program in China, conducted by international financial organizations.^[15]

The Department of Education and Employment under CDPF is responsible for social security including welfare and assistance to disabled persons, insurance for disabled persons and the care of disabled persons. This includes conducting research on the welfare of disabled persons in order to provide the State with scientific advice on developing policy on this issue (one of the effects is the establishment of allowances and home care subsidies for disabled persons). Assistance to disabled persons means supporting authorities to make relevant policies and implement them; to promote the implementation of Dibao for special families with a seriously disabled person, multi-disability persons and aged persons with a disability. CDPF helps perfect policies on protecting the basic livelihood of seriously disabled persons’ families; to provide assistance to low-income disabled persons; to direct reciprocal assistance between disabled persons; to direct local authorities to conduct specific programs for disabled persons; providing insurance for disabled persons so they can participate in social insurance; to guide local authorities to conduct incentive policies for disabled persons to participate in Rural and Urban Medical Insurance etc.

Caring for the Disabled means researching policies and plans on these issues; managing and guiding local authorities to conduct the “Sunshine Homeland Project” for disabled persons; coordinating employment with the human resource and social security authorities; finance, taxation, civil affairs, education and poverty reduction to develop employment policies for persons with a disability; implementing the policies; reviewing and promoting good experiences on the employment of disabled persons; guiding local government to conduct work on the employment of disabled persons; promoting disabled persons to be employed in non-profit organisations, their community, home etc. Poverty reduction: organizing the poverty reduction program for persons with a disability and supporting authorities to provide social security for persons with a disability. Education: supporting

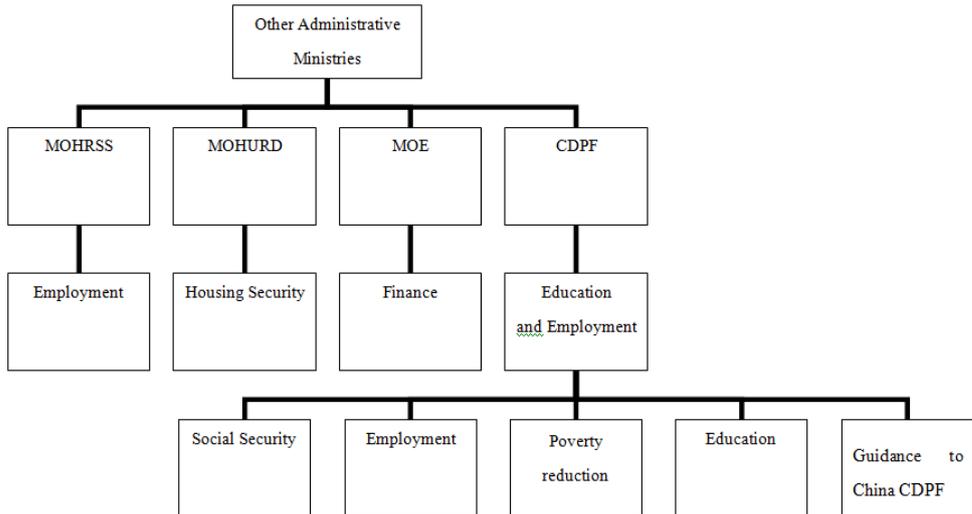
^[13] Data from MOHRSS <http://www.mohrss.gov.cn/jycjs/>

^[14] Data from MOHURD <http://www.mohurd.gov.cn/gjysb/jjgj/index.html>

^[15] Data from MOE http://www.moe.gov.cn/s78/A05/moe_893/201001/t20100131_82414.html

relevant authorities to make and implement education plans for persons with a disability, promoting education and training for them and researching and promoting sign language and braille.^[16]

Figure 3: Other Authorities Relevant to SA



Source: Data from the office website of government ministry.

1.2 Inter-Ministry Coordination Mechanism

Since SA work involves many authorities, irrespective of SA content or implementation, a mechanism through which the authorities can be coordinated is critical. There is a basic coordination mechanism of SA authorities in all of China’s regions. By the end of 2014, each province had set up a leading group on SA or inter-authority coordination mechanism, 256 municipalities (regions, lands) and 1869 counties (cities, districts and banners) had set up a relevant coordination mechanism. All these led to the more efficient and effective coordination among SA authorities.

1.2.1 Multi-Authority Conference on Social Assistance

The Multi-Authority Conference on SA is a specific form of inter-authority coordination mechanism. The State Council approved the proposal to set up the Inter-Authority Conference on Social Assistance under document No.77[2013]SC. This conference helps to reinforce the organization and management of SA work across the country, strengthen the cooperation between authorities, solve important issues occurring in SA work and promote the development of the Chinese SA system.

The function of the Multi-Authority Conference on SA varies by region. The conference is viewed by some people as a typical example of institutionalization. One representative example is found in the Lüyuan district of Changchun city. The authority of this district initiated the institution of Multi-authorities Conference on SA, under which 21 authorities such as the District Bureau of Civil Affairs and the District Bureau for Complaints are convened. The District Bureau of Civil Affairs is the leading authority and is responsible for convening the Conference. This way, the coordination of special SA issues and cases can be conducted by a higher level power and authorities can collectively study how to solve the problem. In case of normal issues, the grassroots authority can solve the problem; while in the case of a major issue, the problem can be solved by deliberation at the

^[16] Data from CDPF <http://www.cdpc.org.cn/ywzz/jyjb/>

Conference. Besides devising a solution, the Conference also provides opportunity to discuss the allocations from the SA fund.

1.2.2 Institution of Trans-Authority Joint Policy Making and Notification

The *raison d'être* for the Institution of Joint Document Issuing is the fact that SA work involves various authorities. Therefore the different authorities usually issue documents jointly to promote the implementation of certain policies. Under this procedure, MOCA is usually the core authority and coordinator. Important documents that have jointly been issued include the *"Notice on Implementing the State Council's Opinion on Establishing a Comprehensive System for Subsidizing both Disabled Person in Adversity and Care for Seriously Disabled Persons"*. This was jointly issued by MOCA and CDPF (No.274[2015]MOCA); *"Notice of MOCA and MOF on Pilot for Emergencies across the Country"* (12th March, 2015); *"Opinion on Developing Medical Assistance and Conducting Medical Assistance for Deadly Diseases"* (21st April 2015), jointly issued by MOCA, MOF, MOHRSS, CHFP and the China Insurance Regulatory Commission (CIRC); *"Opinion on Reinforcing Social Assistance to Disabled Persons"* (17th August, 2016), jointly issued by MOE, CDPF, MOCA, MOF, MORHSS, MOHURD and CHFP; and *"Opinion on Reinforcing and Identifying and Taking Care of Urban Beggars"* (No.158[2015]MOCA), jointly issued by MOCA and the Ministry of Public Security.

The *"Notice on Implementing the State Council's Opinion on Establishing a Comprehensive System for Subsidizing both Disabled Persons in Adversity and Caring for Seriously Disabled Persons"*^[17] requires local authorities to establish the subsidy system ("Two Subsidies for Disabled Persons"). It is the first time the a welfare subsidy system is specifically established for disabled persons across the country. The system will provide a benefit to 10 million disabled persons in adversity and 10 million seriously disabled persons. This will make it part of the social security system that provides subsistence to the beneficiaries. The notice requires local governments to adopt "one-stop" procedures for SA and deliver benefits through NGO's in order to facilitate disabled persons receiving the subsidies. Meanwhile the State Council will organize specific supervision over the work.

The objective of the Notice of MOCA and MOF on *"Pilot Assistance for Emergencies across the Country"* is to protect the basic rights of people in economic poverty in an effective way and prevent social incidents that could increase moral and psychological poverty. The SA system can keep playing important role in constructing a safety net for people's basic livelihood, maintaining stability and justice for society and deepening the reform. (12th March, 2015)

The *"Opinion on Developing Medical Assistance and Conducting Medical Assistance for Deadly Diseases"* ^[18](21st April 2015) requires local authorities to define the target group for Medical Assistance in a reasonable way. Members of Dibao families and Tekun beneficiaries are the core group for medical assistance. People like aged and juvenile members of Dibao families, seriously disabled persons and patients with a serious disease as well as other special group defined by the Government living above county level must be covered by Medical Assistance. Coverage of this Assistance to Patient with a Deadly Disastrous Disease should also be in place. The Opinion also requires local governments to devise more ways to provide assistance to patient of deadly diseases whose family falls in adversity due to excessively expensive medical cost that the family cannot afford. Children suffering serious disease and disabilities are the key target of medical assistance.

The *"Opinion on Reinforcing Social Assistance to Disabled Persons"* (17th August, 2015), jointly issued by 7 ministries, is aimed at protecting and improving the basic living of persons with a disability in adversity, promoting equal participation and the full development of disabled persons in the society and helping them disabled to progress in, and enjoy the moderate prosperity of, society.

^[17] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/mzyw/201509/20150900875276.shtml>

^[18] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/fvfg/zdshbz/201504/20150400809653.shtml>

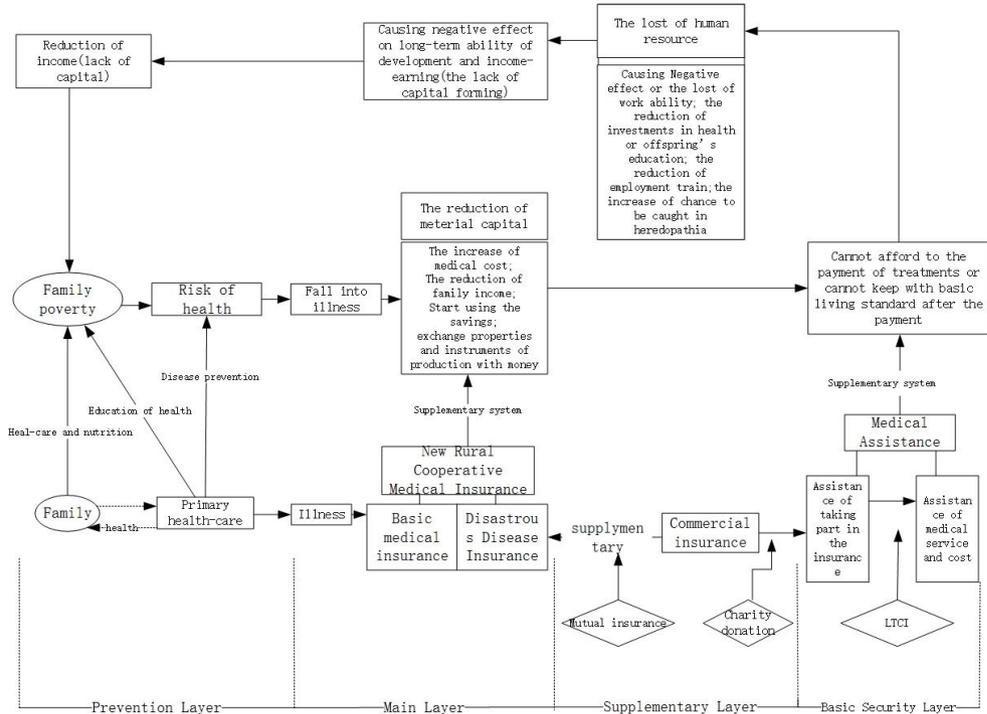
The “Opinion on Reinforcing, Identifying and Taking Care of Urban Beggars” [19] (No.158[2015]MOCA), jointly issued by MOCA and MPS, requires local MOCA authorities and public security authorities to identify and take care of homeless beggars according to their respective duties.

1.2.3 Articulation of Social Assistance, Social Welfare and Social Aid

Articulation of SA institutions or social aid is a vital field of inter-authority coordination. The first aspect of it is the articulation of SA programs. For instance, many current SA programs target Dibao recipients. One reason for this is that this is stipulated in the “Interim Measures on SA”. But another, more important reason is that a completely digital means-testing system is established in the Dibao program. This can lower the cost of information checking for many other SA programs. The second aspect of this articulation is that many different assistance or aid policies have the same problem. A typical example is the medical issue. For instance, rural medicare has a need for Dibao information as do the New Rural Cooperative Medical Insurance, the Disastrous Disease Insurance and Medical Assistance. The coordination issue for these programs should, actually be that of medicare, prevention and health care. (Figure 4)

Figure 4: Medical-Healthcare Social Assistance and Security Chain for Poverty Reduction

GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT PROCESSES



The third aspect is the articulation of social assistance, social welfare and social aid, especially the coordination of Dibao with the Poverty Reduction Program. In 2009, the State Council Office for Poverty Reduction and Development (SCOARD) and MOCA jointly issued the “Notice on Piloting the Effective Articulation of the Rural Dibao Program and the Poverty Reduction Policy (No.1[2009] SCOARD). In 2010, the Office of State Council re-issued the “Notice on Enlarging the Piloting the

[19] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/gk/wj/201508/20150800867687.shtml>

Articulation of the Rural Dibao and the Poverty Reduction Policy”^[20](No.31 [2010]SC) indicates that the two systems should be allineated in three aspects: process, policy and management. The “*Decision on Gaining Victory over The Fight against Poverty*”^[21], made by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council in 2015, explicitly detailed the plan for implementing the articulation of the Rural Dibao and the Poverty Reduction Policy, which function as the basic security for the population in the campaign against poverty. MOCA’s “*Notice on Implementing the CPC Central Committee and the State Council’s Decision on Gaining Victory over The Fight against Poverty*”^[22] (No.57[2016]MOCA) states that poor families eligible for the Rural Dibao benefit, especially those families whose main member/s is/are entirely or partially unable to work should be all covered in the program. It also expects that the Rural Dibao standard of all the regions would be the same as the National Standard for Poverty Reduction by 2020. In addition it promotes effective articulation of the Rural Dibao and the Poverty Reduction policy, in which relevant authorities should introduce eligible rural Dibao families into coverage under the poverty reduction policies on industry supporting, inter-regional movement, environment protection, education support, medical protection, asset financing and the social reduction of poverty.

In practice, the MOCA system provides a list of names of rural Dibao and Tekun benefit recipients to the Poverty Reduction authorities and the latter provides eligible recipients with supportive policies. Then the Poverty Reduction authority must report the names of eligible recipients, the measures for helping them, the names of recipients who have successfully moved out of poverty and the income per capita of their family members to MOCA authorities. Taking Inner Mongolia for instance, the involved authorities conduct the articulation of the SA and Poverty Alliviation policy following the order of the provincial CPC Committee and the Government that targets the implementation of the above-mentioned Decision on Gaining Victory over the Fight against Poverty. One of the ways of achievng this is that MOCA authorities contact the local Poverty Reduction Office and hold two conferences to discuss the articulation of Dibao and Poverty Reduction in order to exercrise the function of Dibao to protect the basic livelihood of poor people. The second way is that MOCA authorities conduct investigations with the Poverty Reduction authorities. At the first stage, the investigation was conducted in Chifeng and Ullanqab. Then the second stage of investigation was conducted, with MOCA supervision, in 6 regions, 15 counties and 9 townships (streets) over the articulation of Dibao and Poverty Reduction system in rural and pastoral areas. The third way was holding a panel discussion on SA and the Articulation of Dibao and Poverty Reduction of Inner Mongolia, in Ullanqab. At that meeting the articulation of Dibao and Poverty Articulation in rural and pastoral areas was arranged for. The fourth way is issuing the articulation plan of, two systems, e.g. the Implementation Plan of Articulation of Social Assistance and Poverty Reduction in the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia, jointly issued by the Financial Development and Poverty Reduction Office of the Region.

1.3 Characteristics of the Governance Framework for SA Administratrion and Management

China is the largest developing country, transforming from a traditional society to a modern society, from planned economy to a market economy. This shapes the characteristes of the governance framework for SA administration:

1.3.1 Social Assistance: A Growing and Expanding Area

In past three decades, China was a developmental state. Its main foci and resources were concetrated in the area of economic development. Entering into 21st century, the need for social security, social welfare as well as social assistance grew quickly in response to the population’s demands. On the one hand time is still needed for the SA governance system to accumulate greater experience,

^[20] Date from the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China http://www.gov.cn/zw/gk/2010-05/11/content_1603979.htm

^[21] Data from XinHua Wibset http://news.xinhuanet.com/ttgg/2015-12/07/c_1117383987.htm

^[22] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/yw/shjz/fgwj/201605/20160500000289.shtml>

summarize its experiences to date, synthesize them and improve. In particular, the SA governance system has a distance to travel to achieve its specialization, institutionalization and legalization. More administrative resources are required for this process. On the other hand, the reform of overall governance framework of China is not yet completed it's about half way. The general trends of the governance reform has built-up a partially responsive and decentralized government. In the context, of the size of county and with township government limited and even reduced, the size of the SA administration will not expand in near future in general as the SA task expands.

Table 2: Main Official Policy Documents on Social Assistance

| Date | Policies |
|------------|--|
| 1999/9/28 | Regulation on Urban Minimum Subsistence Allowance, SC No. 271 |
| 2006/1/21 | Regulation on Rural Wubao Work, SC N. 456 |
| 2010/10/22 | Management Measures of Rural Wubao Service Organizations, MoCA, No. 37 |
| 2010/11/11 | Guidance Opinion on Further Specification for Rural Minimum Subsistence Allowance, MoCA No. 153 |
| 2012/9/1 | Opinion on Further Strengthening and Improvement of the Work on Rural Minimum Subsistence Allowance, SC No. 45 |
| 2013/8/30 | Agreement on the Set-up of Inter-Ministry Meeting Mechanism on National Social Assistance, SC No. 97 |
| 2013/10/12 | Notice on Setting-up and Improving the SA Monitoring and Inspection Mechanism, MoCA No.161 |
| 2013/11/15 | Ministries of CA and Finance Opinions on Further Promotion of Community Social Work, MoCA, No. 178 |
| 2014/4/9 | MoCA Opinion on Further Promotion of the Development of Civic Social Work Service Organizations, MoCA No. 80 |
| 2014/2/21 | Interim Measures on Social Assistance, SC No. 649 |
| 2014/10/3 | SC Notice on Complete Establishment of the Temporary Assistance Institution, SC 47 |

Source: Data from Official Websites of MOCA, etc.

1.3.2 Targeting SA Governance: Vast Geographic Size, Large Population, Disparity and Diverse Distribution and Huge Administration Cost

Although government administration is the main part of SA governance, the special part of SA governance in the Chinese context is the role of community organizations (rural village committees, and urban residents' committee). These two Committees play fundamental and irreplaceable roles in complementing government administration. When the capacity of township government is limited, the Committees will in practice share duties of the Government e.g. the primary identification of Dibao target groups is often done by the Committees. The fact that the Committees are familiar with local residents is an advantage. The challenge is ensuring the consistency of the designed policy orientation.

1.3.3 SA Governance Framework in China: Multi-Sector, Multi-Layer Structure

The SA Governance framework in China is a trans-sector, multi-layer and plurist structure, which is consistent with the overall shape of administration structure in China. The trans-sector governance

framework reflects the drivers and uncertain demands of a transforming society. Multi-sector governance may have advantages of specialization, complementarity and a competitive model but it also increases the cost of coordination between sectors and may result in SA fragmentation and friction. The effective articulation between the different sectors is a great issue currently in China. A multi-layer governance framework also implies many possible problems in policy transmission among the different layers. It is necessary to clearly define the responsibility and resources between the central and local governmental layers.

1.3.4 Exploring a Pluralist Governance Framework for SA Administration and Management

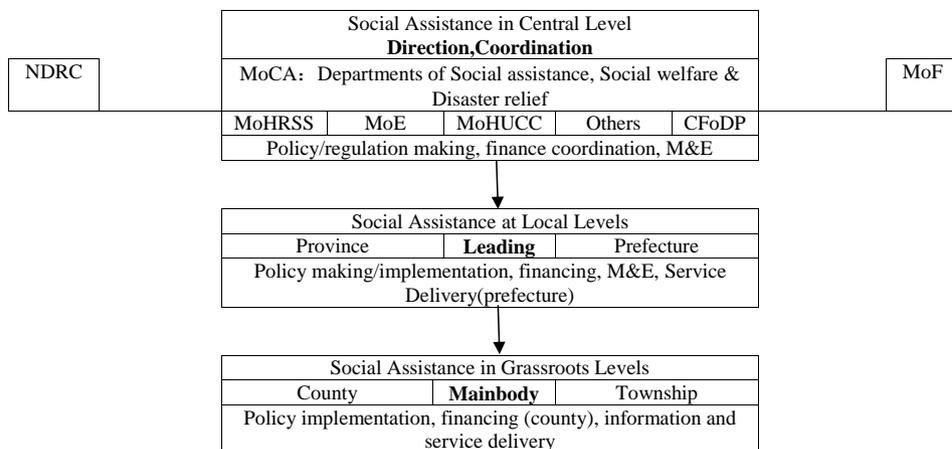
Today work in SA administration and governance is much more than delivering fund benefits. It not only refers to very complex work such as family economic verification and digitalization, but also to inter-person communicative work such as caring and nursing, psychological health, social integration and activation, etc. In order to enhance the quality of social assistance and avoid the current disadvantages of the quantity of staff, many kind of experiments have been conducted in a pluralist way, such as service procurement from social organizations, participation of civil societies, government and private partnership building, involvement of community organizations, etc. Currently, the social assistance administration sectors are closely working with other administration sectors for policy articulation and coordination, for example with the social insurance sectors and the poverty reduction sectors.

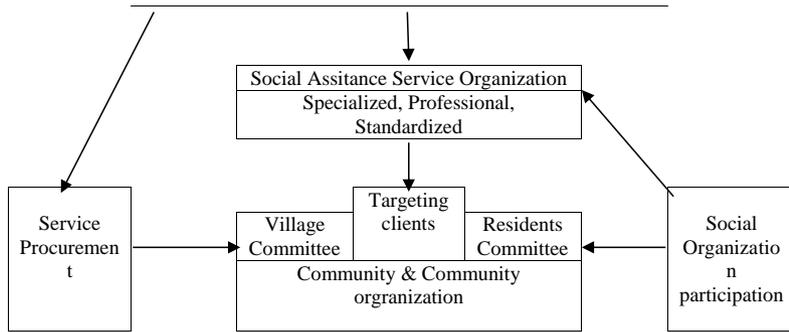
2. STATE ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM ANALYSIS – A PERSPECTIVE FROM LOCAL/GRASSROOTS

2.1 Settings of County and Township Level Administration and Management

In China, SA for the urban and rural areas is established with systems of authority at different levels. The system can be characterized as: a system based on the urban and rural Dibao program, principally consisting of rural Wubao, Assistance for Disaster and Emergencies, Medical Assistance, Assistance to Homeless Beggars, supplemented with Housing Assistance, Education Assistance and Legal Assistance. It is also accomplished with Temporary Assistance and coordinated with charities. The development of administrative agencies is a critical guarantee of the system, in which grassroot SA agencies in townships, streets and communities are at the forefront of SA work.

Figure 5: Framework of Social Assistance Governance in China





Source: Developed by the author

Although policies made by the State are universal, the administrative structure of different provinces is diversified. The institutions of local governmental agencies (their political nature and composition of staff) and their functions are managed by local government. Due to the different degrees of market economy, its diverse economic strength and the Government’s attitude, SA works differently in different provinces. The gaps in standards for SA benefit vary among provinces and even between regions in the same province. The institution of agencies and management of SA are not equally developed, thus SA work in different areas is based on different models.

Generally speaking, the structure of SA agencies across the country is the same. But in some regions, there is a Bureau of Social Assistance that is instituted as coporate body and subordinated to the Provincial Office or Municipal Bureau of SA to improve SA work. The departments for SA inside the MOCA system are, however, not always the same. For example, Dibao is the responsibility of Department of Social Assistance, whilst Wubao (Tekun) is sometimes the responsibility of the department of social welfare and Temporary Assistance is sometimes the responsibility of the Department of Disaster Relief. There is a means-testing center in the MOCA structure above the municipal level. At county level, there is an agency for children’s welfare and one for disabled person’s welfare. At the level of township, the management of SA varies significantly in different regions. But SA is usually administered by the MOCA authorities, whose staffs are different in composition and number. According to the Regulation on Wubao, governments of township are the subjects responsible for Wubao work. Therefore, in most of the townships, there are agencies for Wubao.

There isn’t a universal administrative framework and structure for SA across China. The diversity of SA models leads to shortcomings. But according to investigations across different regions, there is also advantage derived from the diversity: it is good for encouraging innovation and competition.

2.2 Administration and Management at County Level

In the hierarchy of the Chinese governmental structure, a county is the lowest level at which there is a complete government with responsibility for local governance. A county government has a relatively complete competence in making decisions, managing human resources, finance and materials, administration and applying the rule of law. The general trends of China’s reform of goveremnt is to extend the competence of county governments for governance. In the current Poverty Reduction campaign, integrating the financing of different programs at county level will be piloted in at least 13 poverty stricken counties all over China.

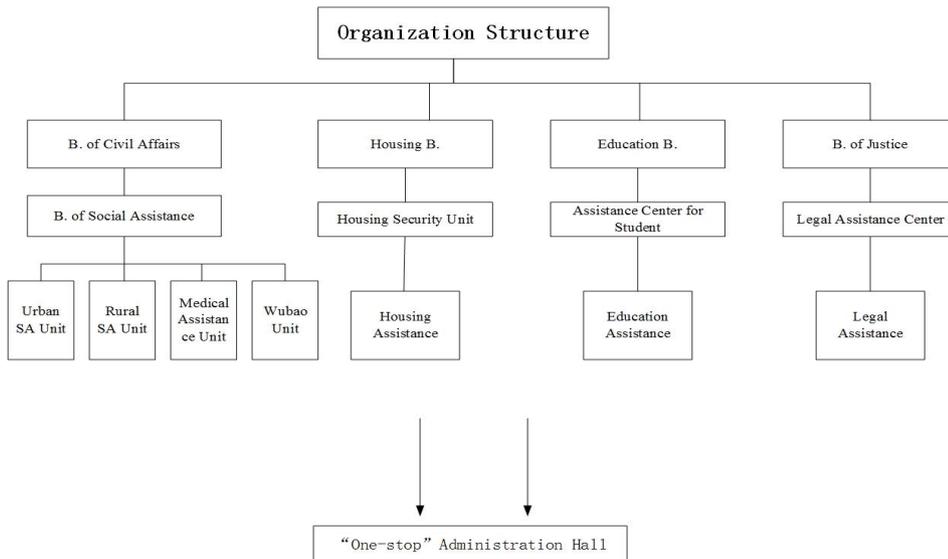
Being limited by the current financial system, the framework of SA in a county is usually an extension of national, provincial and municipal SA policy, unless the county has a powerful financial base. To a certain extent, the implementation of SA policy depends on the reality of a county and the intentions

of the county government. The county government is responsible for pooling the medical social insurance fund. Therefore, each county has its own management model for the fund. County government can do what they want relating to its management.

In the current financial system, SA programs have different sources of funding. Wubao is an old SA program. Its funding is normally transferred by the financial authority. Thus a county government is responsible for greater proportion of Wubao funding. Dibao and Medical Assistance are new programs. They are funded by specific transfers. Thus the national and provincial/municipal financial authorities provide a greater percentage of the transfer. In the last 1-2 years, the State has extended the flexibility of county governments in utilizing specific funds that are transferred by the State. For example, 10% of the Dibao fund is allowed to be used for Temporary Assistance. The Financial Bureau is in charge of the budgeting, allocation, supervision and management of funds, while other authorities must cooperate with it so that SA work at the grassroots level can be conducted orderly.

A County Bureau of Civil Affairs coordinates the SA work in a county. It is in charge of coordinating the SA programs. In some counties or districts, SA is managed by the Bureau of Social Assistance. This is an example so as to understand the situation. County Bureaus of Social Assistance (CBSA) are institutions at vice-unit (Ke) level (the tenth or lowest level in China’s administrative hierarchy). It is responsible for administration of SA, managed by a municipal Bureau of Civil Affairs. Most of the CBSAs are divided into a General Unit, Financial Unit, Urban SA Unit, Rural SA Unit, Medical Assistance Unit and Wubao Unit. The Housing Security Unit of the Housing Bureau manages Housing Assistance, the Student Assistance Center in the Education Bureau manages Education Assistance and the Legal Assistance Center in the Bureau of Justice is in charge of Legal Assistance. In some counties, due to a different situation, Education Assistance is managed by the Bureau of Civil Affairs.

Figure 6: SA System at County Level



Source: Data from official website of local government.

The State has a universal standard on staff composition, functions and work conditions for CBSA. Standardisation makes it easy to manage the work. There is a consultancy platform in the administrative hall of CBSA, providing SA recipients with information about policies and procedures. There is national “complaint telephone number” (the phone number to receive complaints from the

public) for people to oversee the SA staff and CBSA. CBSA is the competent authority that manages the SA for urban and rural areas. It is in charge of setting the strategy for SA in a county, extending the effect of SA and optimizing the function of SA, according to the development plan for the economy and society of the county.

The financing of SA includes raising funds and expenditures. In terms of raising funds for SA work, governments at different levels that take that responsibility. Therefore, the transfer from the financial authority is the main source of SA's working funds. It is necessary to build up a mechanism for financial investments in a scientific, reasonable, regularized and effective way and to supervise the use of SA working funds from the beginning of the procedure. Therefore, the key to SA is whether the allocated money is sufficient and timely delivered. This determines the success of SA work. SA is a big responsibility for Government and it relies on the financial support of the State, which provides the principal guarantee of the system. The enhancement of SA administration can be realized when SA funds are used to improve work condition, infrastructure and training of SA staff.

Monitoring and evaluation of SA is critical for the system. Since expenditures on SA are increasing in size, without supervision, it would be easy for there to be corruption. A key to SA management at county level is the system's monitoring and evaluation. The key to the monitoring is the supervision of the implementation of SA policies, laws and regulations, the regularization of SA work, the pooling and use of SA funds, developing administration at grassroots level and the response to emergency and daily checking. The approach to monitoring is mainly the institutionalized reporting to government at the same or higher levels. Specific supervision is also frequently used. It helps counties to understand the progress of SA and discovers problems as soon as possible, so that solutions and changes can timely be made. Daily supervision should be reinforced and SA work should be more transparent. Errors and faults in the work, insufficient implementation and serious accidents taking place in the administration of SA must be reported and even criticized. This approach to supervision should be extended and the complaint system should be perfected so that social supervision can play a better role in the SA process. Currently, the regions have set up an accountability system. In the case of serious problems, especially those having a strong impact on society, the responsible agency or individual must take responsibility. Incentive mechanisms should also be established, which means the allocation of SA subsidies, work funds and SA work rewards should be indexed to performance evaluation and monitoring result of SA. This way, good cases of SA work can be rewarded and bad one can be remedied.

Two aspects both exist in county SA agencies in terms of implementing policy and providing services. On the one hand, the basic work of many SA policies is conducted by SA departments of township governments. In this case, implementation strictly following the order of the higher level government is critical. Thus it is important to motivate and support the township government to conduct better work on SA, such as Dibao, and to supervise its work. On the other hand, county SA authority is also in charge of supplying direct services. Therefore it is not appropriate to conduct some SA programs at township level. For instance, Medical Assistance and Temporary Assistance are normally directed administered by the county SA authority. There is usually a service hall in the SA agency, where there is a one-stop service for people. Some SA agencies are set inside the MOCA system, for example the assistance station for homeless people, the center for children's welfare, the center for disabled persons' welfare and the means-testing center.

The means-testing center is a kind of new institution recently established with the SA system so as to improve the precision and fairness of the SA benefit. SA is a fundamental system for protecting people's basic living, help people in emergencies and maintaining social fairness. Thus the identification of SA recipients is directly related to the interest of persons in adversity, social fairness and justice and the credit of public power. The institution of authority crossover, a multi-tier and information-sharing means-testing system for SA is a pre-condition for the precise and efficient identification of SA beneficiaries. By the end of 2014, 30 Chinese provinces had established a specific

agency for means-testing management, and 70.1% of Chinese counties had conducted means-testing, so as to prevent fraud when paying a SA benefit and reducing cases of mistaken identity.

The Assistance Station for Homeless Beggars is a SA agency established at county level. SA management agencies across China work 24 hours a day which means that they can receive homeless beggars at any time of the day. The service provided by the Assistance Station is mainly clothing, food, housing and travel services to applicants to sustain his or her subsistence and provide them with help according to the reason that they have fallen into adversity. The principal assistances includes, for instance, helping the homeless to get back to their living or residential region. Besides, the Assistance Station is in charge of accommodation, education, persuasion and assistance to homeless children. It is also responsible for accommodating homeless people in an emergency. At present, there are 2031 Assistance Stations for Homeless Beggars, among which 261 are independent stations for juveniles whose beds can accommodate almost 100,000 persons. According to the latest statistics, there were 228 million homeless who received assistance from the stations in 2014, of whom 150,000 were homeless children.

Box 1: Mean-test center of Inner Mongolia

Taking the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia as an example, the Regional Government has conducted work in the following ways in order to regularize SA means-testing in the region to ensure fairness of recipient identification. Firstly, the human resources needed for means-testing are intensified. By June 2016, the means-testing agencies were set up at the regional level and in 12 leagues and municipalities, 102 banners and counties (cities and districts), and staff were allocated to the agencies. There are 421 persons working on means-testing in Inner Mongolia. Among them, 21 are administrative officials, 295 are institution employees and 105 are employed (either borrowed or sub-contracted). 18 staff work for the regional means-testing agency, among whom 4 are administrative officials, 43 are institution employees, and 12 are “borrowed” staff from other organizations. Meanwhile, 344 staff are work for leagues and counties, among which 13 are administrative officials, 248 are institution employees and 83 are borrowed force. Since 2013, RMB 10 million has been used each year for digitalization of SA and mean-test information. Secondly, information sharing among authorities has been improved. At regional level, the Regional Hall of Civil Affairs shares information on 18 categories with 10 other authorities. It has signed collaboration agreement with Regional Hall of Public Security on sharing information about residence and automobiles. It uses a specific approach to connect with the Regional Hall of Housing and the Regional Hall of Human Resources for checking information about real estate, old-age insurance, contribution to social insurance, unemployment and medical insurance etc. It checks information about the composition of governmental agency staff, persons receiving state financial pay, benefit delivery and beneficiaries of Poverty Reduction with the Regional Office of Public Sector Reform, the Regional Disabled Persons’ Federation, the Hall of Finance and the Office of Poverty Reduction by way of data transfer. It has finished the coordination of information sharing with authorities of industry and commerce and taxation (local and national), and now it is at the checking and testing stage. It has coordinated the financial affairs covering Hohhot and Baotou into the first 14 pilot sites of information checking on SA beneficiary security. And at local level, the authorities keep on extending the scope of information sharing. More and more types of information are to be shared. Thirdly, the development of an information checking platform is being accelerated. In the first half of 2016, the regional government had updated the platform and started using a new version. The government has also connected the network of information checking of the region, leagues/municipalities and banners/counties. This implements the information sharing platform between the 12 leagues/municipalities and the region. In this way, the leagues/municipalities can directly access data through the network and synchronize the information on SA recipient families among the region, leagues/municipalities and banners/counties, which enables the authorities to check information on SA recipient family’s

automobile, social insurance, old-age insurance and housing etc. across leagues/municipalities, so as to prevent benefit fraud of benefit. Fourthly, information checking is being regularized. For setting institutional standards, the Inner Mongolia Government has issued the “*Notice on Accelerating the Development of SA Mean-test Mechanism in Inner Mongolia*”. This states the requirements on workplaces, work funds and work procedures in leagues/municipalities and banners/counties. In June 2016, the Operational Procedure (Pilot) of SA Mean-test of the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia was issued, in which the scope, authorization, approach and supervision of SA mean-test are stipulated in detail. Total income and assets of a SA beneficiary’s family are all listed as an object for means-testing and this document becomes the foundation on which staff conduct their work. For operational standards, Inner Mongolia has unified the standard form of “*Trust of SA Means-testing and Authorization of SA Means-testing*”. The region has also defined the category, item, feedback cycle and way of work for sharing information. In order to ensure efficiency of checking and the security of information, the region has instituted a mechanism for data-checking feedback among authorities. This requires the SA authority to apply for information-managing authority by formal administrative letter before searching the data and after the checking, the regional authority will send an alarm to local authorities at league/municipality level. The leagues/municipalities then require banners/counties to check the information and to make a detailed note after the processing. The regional authority will aggregate the feedback of leagues/municipalities, and finally send the feedback officially through administrative letters to the information-managing authorities. Fifthly, information checking goes on producing effects. In 2015, the operation of information checking had increased dramatically. There were 2.786,000 operation of information checking of various categories, an increase of 248% over the same period in the previous year. 2.567,000 operations of information checking on Dibao, Temporary Assistance, Tekun Assistance had been conducted, of which 67000 pieces of information were found to be wrong. 2.6% of the information was untrue and discovered, which saved the SA fund about RMB 240 million. Operations of information checking on housing security were 194300, of which 740 pieces of information were discovered wrong, or 3.8 % of the whole. There were 23,700 operations of other sorts of information checking of which 2000 or 8.4% were wrong

2.3 Administration and Management at Township Level

Agency and staff: In townships (streets), there is usually a SA work station. In some communities whose administrative level is at street level, there is a SA service center and that center is responsible for SA administration. Instituting a SA service center in a village (community) is flexible. It depends on the needs of the village. The development of the new socialist countryside and urbanization have made villages reduce in size. Therefore there is no need to establish a SA service center in every village. The task of the SA service center can be completed by a SA work station whose responsibility covers the village in need. SA staffs are actually 3 or 4 officials of the township government.

Investigation shows that there is no specific budget for SA work at township level. When it is in need of expenditure on SA, there must firstly be the approval of the responsible leader. Then the SA staff pay for the expenditure item and get reimbursement at the end of the same year, with signature of the same leader. SA work at township level is really a hard work because there are many items and expenditure is usually necessary for every item. Since there is now a specific budget, township SA staff have no subsidy for their transportation and communication. A consequence is that they usually use private vehicles for public purposes or take public bus for their task. Where transportation in the countryside is poor, it is really difficult to reach the home of recipients for delivering service.

There are nursing houses in Chinese rural townships and urban streets. Aged Wubao benefit recipients are the principal beneficiaries of nursing homes. Some better nursing homes also provide services to retired persons who pay for that service. Entry into, and exit from, nursing homes is voluntary. In many regions, there are honorable veterans nursing homes for aged veteran, whose beneficiaries must

be eligible at a certain standard. Nursing homes are funded collectively, which includes expenditures on basic living and the medical cost for beneficiaries.

In some region, there are welfare centers (homes) whose service is provided to beneficiaries of different townships. The service is standardized and regularized. Taking Da'an city of Jilin province for instance, its Social Welfare Center was established in 2005 and has been in use since 2006, with a total area of 50,000 m², including 13,148 m² of building area and 24,000 m² of green and concreted areas. There are living areas and productive area in the center. In the living area, there are 224 rooms, 448 beds and 165 aged persons are receiving service in the center. The land is provided by the local government and it provides a subsidy of RMB 100,000 to the center every year. Because the center is located in an urban area, the beneficiaries are mainly retired persons and there are only 3 are Wubao beneficiaries, two of whom are rural Wubao beneficiaries. Except for the Wubao beneficiaries, the other residents must pay RMB 700 per month. According to people's different needs, the rooms are divided into normal rooms, standard rooms and rooms for couple, with different prices. 50 staff of the center are responsible for its financial affairs. 7 are in charge of expenditure, and 43 are social non-profit positions. The state subsidizes RMB120 per year to the beneficiaries who can live independently. The other beneficiaries can receive RMB 1200 per year and RMB 3,600 per two years from the state. There are many supplementary facilities, such as medical house, gym, billiard house, shower room, library, square, green hallway, park and lake. Thus the center is capable of providing services ranging from living and medical care to entertainment etc. More than 100 aged persons can be accommodated. Service staff clean the rooms twice per day for cloth, blanket and other stuffs of the beneficiaries. In the center's productive area there is a vegetable greenhouse and a pigsty where 500 pigs are raised for providing the beneficiaries with food. Therefore, dinner in the center is of a good quality, and there are food dishes consisting of 1 sort of meat plus 2 sorts of vegetables for lunch every day.

There are many innovations in developing the social welfare agency. For example, there is a Social Welfare Office in the Datong Autonomous County of Ethnic Group of Tu and Hui, whose director is directly appointed by the county government for managing all the welfare agencies in the county. At present, there is 1 Old-age Center, 7 rural nursing home and 1 welfare home for children. They provide services to different groups, the old-aged, children and disabled persons. They allocate resources in a coordinated and reasonable way, so that the efficiency of MOCA authorities is enhanced.

2.4 Different Models of County/Township for Optimizing Administration and Management

There are many good experiences in SA practice in different regions, especially at grassroot levels, for example: "one-stop" coordination service, "welfare district", managing the grid of the "social assistance network" and a central nursing home for multi-township etc. Some of the experiences are promoted across the country, for example the "one-stop" coordination service.

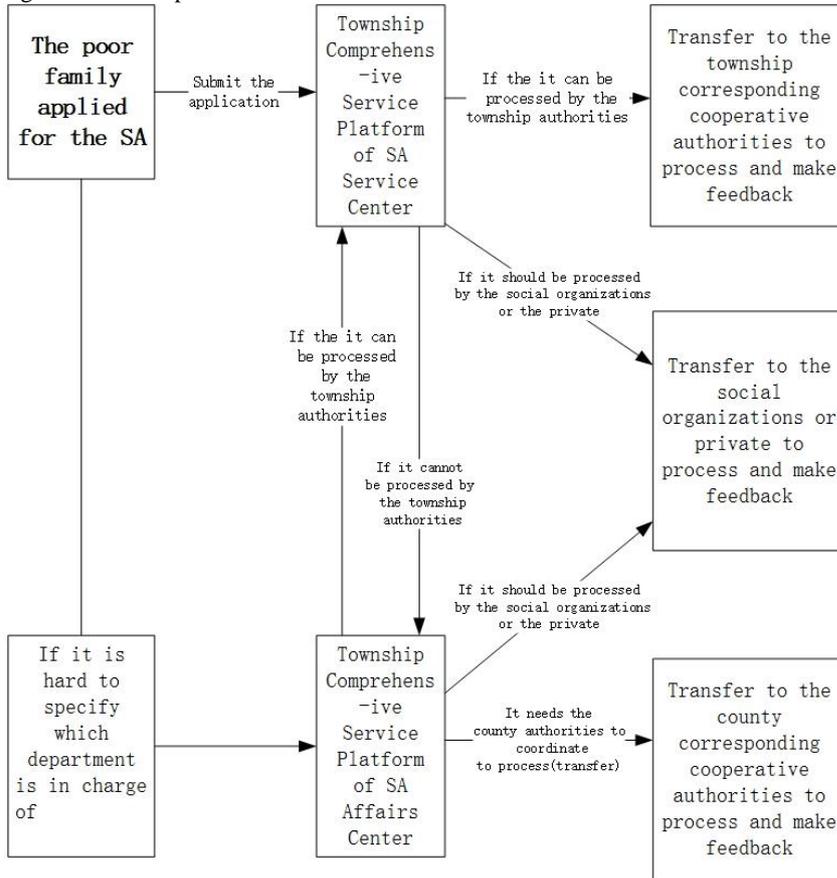
2.4.1 "One-stop" coordination service

The creation of "one-stop" coordination service is required by the *"Interim Measures on Social Assistance"*. It refers to the coordination of multi-authorities, integration of SA resources, extension of services and cooperation between different authorities at different levels. For this mechanism, the county MOCA authority and the township government must establish a "one-stop" service platform in the administration hall. For implementation of the mechanism, there should be a unified SA logo, transparent SA policy, clear position division and a telephone number for supervision. Eligibility, standards, procedures, timing of the SA should all be defined and procedure such as accepting applications, processing applications, processing transfers, result feedback and follow-up supervision should all be regularized. In addition preservation of materials and management of archives is critical. At municipal or county level, logo, application forms, processing, processing transfers and feedback

should be all be unified. There should be a service desk for processing all the applications and consultancy, ensuring that every thing is well managed for the population.

The one-stop coordinative mechanism originated due to the fact that SA is diversified and social management is flattened. At present, the mechanism is generally in place across the country. By the end of 2014, 18 provinces including Beijing and Tianjin had established one-stop service desks in every township or street, so that every person in adversity and/or difficulty could timely submit his or her application.

Figure 7: One-stop Coordinative Procedure



Source: Data from SA brochure.

In Shandong, the one-stop coordinative mechanism involves many authorities – the MOCA authority, whose responsibilities cover Dibao, Tekun, Disaster Assistance, Medical Assistance, Assistance to College Freshmen from Dibao Families, Temporary Assistance and Comprehensive Assistance; and the articulation of social medical insurance and medical assistance (one-stop benefit payment for medical affairs) with the relevant authorities; the Education authority, whose responsibility is directing Education Assistance and collaborating with the MOCA authority; the Financial Authority, which is in charge of budgetting, managing and supervising SA funds; the Authority of Human Resources and Social Security, whose responsibility is directing Employment Assistance and collaborate with the MOCA authority; the Authority for Housing and Urban-rural Development

whose responsibility is directing Housing Assistance and collaborate with the MOCA authority; the Authority on Health and Family Planning, whose responsibility is directing Assistance for Emergency and Assistance to special poor families due to the one-child policy; Trade Unions, whose responsibility is directing assistance to workers, government-rewarded worker and rural migrant workers (Nongmingong); the Disabled Person's Federation, whose responsibility is directing assistance related to disabled people, their rehabilitation and collaboration with other authorities. At the same time, the MOCA authority must also direct the coordination with the authorities of public security, justice, the Communist Youth League, the Women's Federation, charities and the Red-Cross to hold a Multi-Authority Conference on SA, on how to better conducting work in the SA field.

In Lüyuan district of Changchun city, Jilin province, the one-stop service includes procedures for dividing, transferring, trasporting, transfer processing and introducing as the 5 approaches to processing the applications. In this case, the MOCA authority of the district is in charge of: firstly, setting up a one-stop service platform for accepting and processing direct applications; secondly, for accepting SA application transferred by the street authority; thirdly, trasporting the applications to the township or street government, or transferring them to other relevant authorities, or seeking a solution from society; and finally for supervising township government and assistance-managing authorities to process the applications in time. This is usually 3 days. Other authorities, such as that of health, education, housing and human resource, submit their SA policy and programs to the township government and the district MOCA authority, process and give feedback on the applications and provide consultancy to the township government and district MOCA authority.

2.4.2 Managing the Grid of the “Social Assistance Network”

For the identification of SA needs, there is a service network of “emergency aid” established in the regions, whose management is grided with a grid staff to identify the needs of people in adversity. The SA authority of Shandong province has a goal for the SA network: *connecting vertically adminitrative levels and horizontally governmental departments, coordinating the authorities and comprehensively covering the beneficiaries.*

In Inner Mongolia, the SA network focuses on “emergency aid”. Service grids include 3 levels from the village/community, the township/street to the district and the staff for the emergency aid is composed of village officials, soial workers, volunteers and charity workers, in total 670 persons. In the city of Ulan Hot, there is a directional center of SA management, and the management is grided with 1120 grid staff, each of whom has a specific telephone for communicating with the center. In this way, the staff can actively identify difficuties in the target group as soon as possible. In Manchuria, SA contact staff are allocated to each community as a grid, and people falling into an emergency can be identified in time. It is a better communication method. In Linhe District of Bayan Nur, the financial authority arranges RMB 5 million specifically for emergency aid, while in Sonshan district of the same city, RMB 500 million is allocated to establish an Emergency Aid Fund. It is a better financial arrangement. In all the pilot sites, a reverse approval sytem is established for an emergency, so that timely assitance can be delivered as needed. For social participation, Linhe District Government cooperates with the Social Work Center and Community At-Home Old-Age Service Center to provide psychological, homebased services, which are diverse and individualized; while in Manchuria, the authority has built up a social benefit chain comprising “platform constructing + organizing hatching + program design + local implementation + evaluation” on the basis of the Social Organization Incubator and encourages social organizations to participate in SA work through government purchase of services and volunteer awards.

For conducting flexible, accurate, regularized and effective SA work, the Darhan Mumminggan Joint Banner, subordinated to Baotou, has built up a SA network that connects the MOCA burearu, sumus/township and gacha/village. This network is based on one office plus three centers in sumus/townships. At the same time, all the sumus/townships in the banner have included 85 village officials into the SA network through the “Ten Full Coverage Program”. In this way, the information

system of MOCA is extended to every village and every family, then the history of that applicant which must go to the authority for applying benefit is changed. The SA therefore becomes more exact and timely. In this network, all the positions are assigned clear tasks and the advantages of different aspects can be released.

2.4.3 MOCA Welfare District

Box2: MOCA Welfare District

Darhan Mummingsan Joint Banner has a MOCA Welfare District. It is an integration of the original nursing homes on the basis of the distribution of Wubao recipients in the banner. This, is conducted by the Banner Bureau of Civil Affairs after careful investigation. In this district, there is a nursing home, a honorable veterans home and a welfare house. In Wuke Town and Shibao Town, there are a nursing house. This arrangement can not only meet the need for old age care, but also change the scattered and low level management the prevailed in the past. By 2015, the benefit standards for collective benefit and individual benefit are respectively RMB 8000 per person per year and 5000 per person per year. In order to promote economy, the Hongta Nursing house developed programs to raise a cow and a pig, as well as countyyard economy, which produced RMB 100000 for the institution. In Wuke Town, the central nursing house develop pig raising and it produces RMB 20,000 per year. Therefore, the effect of self-sustaining the nursing homes is evident. Since 2011, when the nursing house was established, there is director appointed, other staff and a doctor. Beneficiaries of nursing house receive uniform clothes and blankets and they wear the same kind of badge. Currently, there are more than 70 beneficiaries living in the nursing house. For each quarter, they can receive RMB 200 for daily expenses. The Director of the Welfare District is responsible for the management, staff are employed through contracts and their work is under performance evaluation. The Welfare District was set up by public funds but is managed as a private organization with a public subsidy. This can ensure the development of the three types of welfare organization in the district. The city of Baotou has integrated the management of the Social Welfare Center and the Nursing House for Children. Thus three groups are the major beneficiaries: orphans, persons without the three types of living resources (Sanwu) and homeless people with mental problems. For orphans, there is not only for and upkeep but also a special education school, which is established by the Municipal Bureau of Education. The school is treated equally like other public schools. The students have their education identity and can receive educational subsidies from the state. Public employees of the school can receive 15% extra salary. There are 13 teachers in the school, but without a formalized identity. There are specific staff to take care of homeless people with mental retardation, but there is no doctor for mental diseases. The school is now applying to the authorities of MOCA, health, education and the Disabled Person's Federation. In the welfare center and the welfare home for children, there are 300 beneficiaries, of whom 200 are adults, 20 are aged and 100 are children. 93 children are educated in the school. The ratio of beneficiaries to service giver should be 1:1.5. Thus it is in need of 450 staff. But there are only 230 staff, of whom 55 are formal employees. 19 in these 55 are public administration employees.

2.4.4 Central Nursing Home for Multi-township

In most regions, it is stressed that the township is the subject for SA. Then a phenomenon occurs: there is an old-age nursing home in every township. But most Wubao beneficiaries prefer living independently, which results in the fact that the number of beneficiaries living in a nursing home are few. Then the management and service is ignored, leading to a negative impact on the services. And this makes the aged people not want to live in nursing house. In studying the cases, it was also found that there are models suitable for different local features. For instance, in Qinghai province, there are nursing houses providing service for beneficiaries from different townships and even different

counties. There are also some good cases of participation of NGO's. In the Datong Autonomous County of the Ethnic Group of Tu and Hui, there is a social welfare institute that is subordinated to the local Bureau of Civil Affairs. It is responsible for managing all the welfare agencies in the county, including an Old-Age Central Welfare Home, 7 Rural Central Nursing Homes and a Welfare Home for Children. In this way, the work of the local MOCA authority can be improved. In Hunan province, there are some nursing homes developing on commercial principles and some using free beds to provide social old-age services. Some nursing homes build up "Wubao Family" in rural areas and some have good experiences of optimizing the beneficiary composition. Actually, a township-sponsored nursing home that provides services to Tekun people can be a lever for developing universal old-age services in a rural area. When considering how to solve the problem of salary and employment means for staff, there is great diversity among the regions. There are also many good experiences to be exchanged.

Box 3: Central Nursing House of Jianzha

The nursing house of Jianzha was established in May 2007, and has officially operated since 2009. It is a place for providing collective service to rural Wubao beneficiaries. In 2013, the nursing home was rewarded as a three-star nursing home. There are 120 beds divided into double bedrooms and triple bedrooms. The double bedrooms are mainly for disabled persons. Currently there are 109 aged people living in the home the majority of whom are single and disabled aged persons. In terms of gender, 69 are female and 40 are male. In terms of age, the oldest is 94 and the youngest is 42 but she is seriously disabled. The average age is 79. Wubao beneficiaries above 60 years old are 70% and 30% of them are disabled. In terms of ethnic groups, there are 5 Han-Chinese among the beneficiaries, others are all Tibetans. Orphans and poor children in Jianzha mainly receive assistance at the Child Welfare Home of Huangnan Land, which has been operational since September 2006 and provides collective assistance to orphans and disabled childrens of the four counties of the land. Currently, there are 510 beneficiary children whose ethnic groups are Tibetan, Han-Chinese, Tu, Hui and Mongolian. Among them, there are 15 of pre-school age, 99 being educated in primary school, 107 in middle school and 74 in high school. During their obligatory education, the children can receive an incentive under the "Two Exemptions and One Subsidy" policy. In high school, the children can receive RMB 1000 per month subsidized by the State.

2.5. Characteristics of and Gaps in the Administration and Management in Counties and Townships

2.5.1 Main Characteristics of SA Administration and Management in Counties and Townships

The County and Township SA administration and management is at the last level of the SA administration and management system in China, however, it is also at the frontier of SA policy implementation and service provision, directly facing and responding to the population's demands for SA. The characteristics of SA administration at county and township level include:

- (1) Although there is a unified requirement for administrative management, due to the diversity of local social economic development stages, population sizes and geographic conditions, the concrete governance models for social assistance are different. This provides the possibility for exchanging and comparing learning experiences.
- (2) The structure of governance for social assistance at county level, in general, is an extension of the upper level of governance. However, there is space for decision-making by county level government. The township level government also has a big discretion in policy explanation and implementation. At the village level, customary regulations and culture also affects the understanding and implementation of policies. The mobility of rural youth to the cities is another reason affecting the effectiveness of the social assistance program at village community levels.

- (3) When compared to the requirements for policy subjectivity in social assistance, complexity and hardship of the policy objectivity, and the expansion and increase in social assistance programs, the governance of social assistance at county and township level have limits in both in the quantity and professionalism of staff. These aspects should be main focus for capacity building of the entire social assistance administrative system.
- (4) Rural villages have traditions and cultures of mutual help inside their community. The rural collective economic organizations also have certain kind of duty to assist collective members, such as individual support to Wubao people. Such community conditions, together with the introduction of a new social work organization should be integrated into the official administrative management system, to formulate a new governance framework.
- (5) Apart from the factors mentioned above (regional diversity, county decision-making space, township discretion, community customary regulation, etc.), knowledge and attitudes of administrative staff is a very influential and very variable.

2.5.2 Gaps in SA Administration and Management in Counties and Townships

- (1) The position and nature of the SA agency at township level is not clearly defined.

At present, reform of Chinese grassroots government is still to be completed. But generally speaking, the understanding of grassroots government of the SA agency, especially its positioning and importance is inadequate. Therefore grassroots governments do not pay enough attention to work on people's basic living needs. In most townships, there isn't any specific agency for civil affairs. Most of the similar agencies are called "Office for Social Affairs" or "Center for Social Security". In some regions, there is only one staff in an agency, called an Assistant of Civil Affairs, whose work covers all the civil affairs including SA.

In some townships, there is difficulty for the SA agency or institution to registered as a legal corporate entity. According to relevant policies, SA agencies must be legal corporate entities. But the township governments usually do not support them with an official formation (identity of employee). For funding, some is provided by the governmental budget, but some is pooled by the agencies. Thus it results in the number staff in the agency being insufficient, especially those who are professional in the SA work. In practice, shortage of staff and professionalism has really limited the development of SA agencies. The ratio of recipients to staffs in township nursing houses is usually about 1:10. The beneficiaries are mainly aged persons that can live independently. But seriously disabled persons and aged persons without ability and intelligence are sometime excluded from welfare services.

- (2) The shortage of staff and the practice of part-time work results in little effect from SA work.

Many current programs of SA have been developed since 2000. However, during the same period, grassroots agencies are facing the challenge of the fact that official registration is restricted while the work is increasing. Grassroot SA relates to thousands of families and every part of society. It must follow recipient changes every quarter and every month. Besides, the current Temporary Assistance program is designed to be able to proactively identify beneficiaries. All these require greater numbers and a higher quality of SA staff. At present, the number of staff for grassroots SA work is insufficient. Taking Shengli village of Da'an city as an example there is a village SA agency and a SA agency of Longquan Community, whose staff totals 6. All the staff are village or township officials undertaking a part-time job in SA. As China's market economy develops, the work of the grassroots SA increases more and more and the burden on the staff gets heavier and heavier. In addition some staff can not spend enough time on their work and they just complete the relevant work without focus. It is right to indicate that a shortage of staff, the scattering of time and energy and the increase in the amount of work is forming a dilemma and challenge to the Chinese SA program.

To increase their human resources, different regions have adopted different strategies. Bautou city mainly relies on the "Project of Public Interest Position and Social Worker", through which the SA

authority employes temporary staff. Da'an city of Jilin province and Xianglong Community of the city employ two graduate college students to be resident assistants responsible for SA in the community. They are experienced and professional and can not be replaced by other human resources. However, the position of resident assistant does not have formalized employment identity, and the salary is only RMB 2400 per month, without the mandatory Five Insurances and One Fund. The salary of some staff never increase, though they have worked for 8 years. Thus this position is not attractive to graduate college students. The active staff are also working intensely.

Since the basic staff of SA are temporary. They vary in their professionalism. In many cases, grassroots SA staffs are village officials, who are old and never received a high education. In other cases, SA staff have no clear division of work. They just provide service and assistance to people when they are not busy on other issues. Another problem is that although there is daytime center for aged people and a charity supermarket, these facilities do not function as expected. As we know SA is difficult work and we must pay adequate attention to it. The target groups of SA are the vulnerable in society. They have special economic foundation and own ways of thinking and behaviours, which is far different from other social groups. This fact requires that SA staff must not only have a good awareness of the policies, laws and regulations, but also understand how to persuade, convince and explain them to the beneficiaries. Sympathy and patience must be the key elements to inspire them to contribute to SA work.

3. OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AT LOCAL/GRASSROOT LEVELS

3.1 Inter-sector Cooperation among Administration Stakeholders

3.1.1 SA service in the community

SA is a component of the MOCA system. Other components of the MOCA system are also related to SA, for example social welfare, social work and grassroots organization. In some regions, SA is not separately conducted but integrated into the macro MOCA system. SA integrated into the community is needs-oriented. This means it takes effort to discover potential needs, extending the coverage of benefits and satisfying community residents with a good service. This sort of service based on the community helps to cultivate a community organization, leads residents to govern themselves with a concept of "autonomy" and include SA beneficiaries into the community. Social organizations that provides SA services can supplement the government in facing the challenge of the diversified needs of SA services. As society develops, the concept of poverty also changes. To many families, low-income is not a problem. But a life that becomes inconvenient, sees many people unable to walk or suffer from psychological issues. In this context, a social organization can provide special services to people with these problems. However, when the community is not capable of satisfying these needs, it can refer them to the MOCA authority and the latter will help the community to solve the problem.

3.1.2 Appointed Hospital and "One-stop" Medical Assistance

"One-stop" real-time benefit payments for urban and rural Medical assistance means that when eligible medical assistance beneficiaries are cured in the appointed hospitals, they can get medical assistance from the MOCA authority, after being reimbursed from the New Rural Cooperative Medical Insurance or Urban Basic Medical Insurance. There is no threshold for conducting "one-stop" payments and no disease is excluded from this procedure. Through information sharing and network connecting, the New Rural Cooperative Medical Insurance, Urban Medical Insurance and Medical Assistance are aligned so that the payment from these three programs can be synchronised.

The one-stop payment for medical assistance is a key part of SA activities, since it can solve problems raised by expensive medical costs for poor people. It helps to pay for medical expenses without the limitation of time. This approach has solved the problem of complicated procedures that require application through all the levels of administration to be approved. In the past, the procedure lasted for several years. But now this problem is solved by the one-stop mechanism, from which all people

can benefit. To a certain extent, the one-stop payment also help to solve problem of excessive medical costs.

The one-stop mechanism requires collaboration between the MOCA authority, appointed hospitals and authorities of finance and auditing. The county MOCA authority is responsible for coordinating and organizing the one-stop mechanism in the same county, including identification and approval of beneficiaries and benefits, registration updating and the dynamic management of information. Besides, it also adjusts the coverage of beneficiaries and the standard of benefit, providing detailed information on beneficiaries to hospitals and supervising the procedure in real time. Appointed hospitals are in charge of establishing the one-stop platform and providing specific services. In addition, they must provide specific accounts of the cost of medicine for beneficiaries and set up a mechanism for the pre-payment of the SA benefit and its periodical checking. In cases where irregular expenditures occur due to unrestricted supervision, the hospital must accept accountability. The County MOCA authority conducts supervision over the management of the one-stop payment and the use of SA funds in collaboration with the authorities for finance, audit and supervision. The hospitals pre-pay the medical cost and report it to the county MOCA authority. After approval of the payment, the SA benefit will be directly paid to the hospital.

Taking Baotou for instance, in the case of a cure for a normal disease at the out-patients' department, the beneficiaries can get assistance benefit directly from the hospital with the Medical Assistance Card and without the certificate of medical insurance. In cases needing the cure of serious diseases, such as chemical cures, dialysis or blood transfusions, the beneficiary must register the case at the MOCA authority of the banner/county of his or her residence. In cases of accepting a cure in a hospital, the beneficiaries can live in the hospital initially and then apply for medical assistance with a certificate from the MOCA authority of the banner/county. The authority must check the case and confirm it with a personal signature on the certificate. After the cure, the beneficiaries can approach the one-stop payment shop with the notice issued by the MOCA authority and pay for the cost, then discharge themselves.

3.2 Specialized Social Organizations as Extensions of Public Administration

3.2.1 Centers for Social Welfare

Centers for Social Welfare provides care services, at home or in nursing home, to aged persons. It is a space for satisfying the basic living needs of aged persons. It is an important component of old-age services. Following the trend of an aging population and diminished family sizes, more and more aged persons need to go into an old-age institution for service. The Government should take the leading role to promoting Social Welfare Centers as the basis for satisfying the needs of urban and rural people in adversity and protecting their basic livelihood. There needs to be a balance so the fee for social welfare should consider the income levels of local residents.

Box 4: The Social Welfare Center of Da'an City

Taking Da'an city of Jilin province as an example, its Social Welfare Center was established in 2005 and has been in use since 2006. Its total area is 50,000 m², including 13,148 m² of building area and 24,000 m² of green and concreted areas. There are living areas and productive areas in the center. In the living area, there are 224 rooms, 448 beds and 165 aged persons are receiving services in the center.

The land is provided by the local government and the later subsidizes RMB 100,000 to the center every year. Because the center is located in an urban area, the beneficiaries are mainly retired persons and only 3 are Wubao beneficiaries, among whom 2 are rural Wubao beneficiaries. Except for Wubao beneficiaries, other persons must pay RMB 700 per month. According to their different needs, the rooms are divided into normal rooms, standard rooms and rooms for couples, with different prices. 50 staff of the center are responsible for financial affairs, of whom 7 are in charge

of expenditure, and 43 are in social non-profit positions. The state subsidizes RMB 120 per year to the beneficiaries who can live independently, and other beneficiaries can receive RMB 1200 per year and RMB 3600 per two years from the state.

3.2.2 Charity Supermarket

A Charity Supermarket is a new way of SA promoted by the MOCA. It can supplement the functions of government and release the energy of charity, which is significant in developing the diversity of the SA system.

Box 5: Leifeng Supermarket

In Lüyuan District of Changchun, there is a charity supermarket named Leifeng Supermarket. It is located on the east side of SA center, with 600m² of space. There are five areas in the market: grain and oil, daily goods, food, culture utility, donated cloth, etc. More than 2000 kinds of product are supplied. It is a non-profit center for helping vulnerable groups sponsored by CPC the Committee and the government of the district. There is a supermarket manager 10 staffs being in public interest positions. They are employed by the society. This is a way to solve the problem of unemployment for them. Their salary is RMB 1480 per month. According to the regulations of the market, they must wear a uniform of the supermarket and budche, when they come to the market for their work, they must sign their names. The target groups of the market include Dibao and Tekun beneficiaries, as well as some local residents. There are two price levels. One is the Dibao price, which is the cost of goods for Dibao and Tekun beneficiaries. The other is cost + 10% which is paid by local residents. Dibao and Tekun beneficiaries can buy products totalling RMB 150 per month with their Dibao or Bond certificate. Based on this, Dibao beneficiaries can get a voucher that can buy goods equal to RMB 600 from the market, and Tekun beneficiaries can get RMB 1200 of subsidies, in the form of a *Bond Card or Voucher* for buying the goods. Every quarter, beneficiaries can get clothes through a donation card. There is a bus for taking the distant beneficiaries to the market, and after their purchases the bus takes them back home. For Dibao and Tekun beneficiaries who are aged, ill or disabled, the market can deliver goods to them. Since 2009 when it first opened, there have been more than 130,000 times when beneficiaries have come to the market and 300 times that market bus has served them. 63606 bags of rice, 64742 bags of flour and 32928 buckets of bean oil are supplied to them and about 60,000 clothes are donated to the beneficiaries. The Government of the district subsidizes RMB 3 million per year for the market. CPC members and volunteers are encouraged to provide donations by providing vouchers and subsidies to the beneficiaries of Dibao and Tekun.

The charity supermarket is needs-oriented and flexible. It is a win-win program. On one hand, SA beneficiaries can come to the supermarket to choose what they need. On the other hand, it provides a regular platform for donations, which is better for helping the beneficiaries. The charity supermarket is a form of reciprocal and non-government SA. It can benefit poor people in the same district. This group contains not only SA beneficiaries but also other poor people who are not eligible for a SA benefit. People who are not poor but who have special needs can also come to the supermarket. That means that the coverage of the charity supermarket is larger than that of the SA. The charity supermarket is non-profit designed to help vulnerable groups. It is a good approach to SA in terms of helping them overcome adversity. From the perspective of the community, it is a good way to cultivate solidarity of community, improve the organization and the collecting, integrating and allocating of resources. Anyway, charities in the community are closer to the needs of local residents. As an invisible assembly of rights presentation in charity supermarket, it can cover the shortage of governmental division and hierarchy where the rights protection are scattered.

3.3 Increasing the Roles of Other Stakeholders

For developing a modern SA system and professional social work, the MOCA and MOF jointly issued the “*Opinion on Accelerating the Development of Social Work in The Field of Social Assistance*”^[23]. The Opinion defines the leading ideals, principles, objectives, approaches and the measures to guarantee the work. By avoiding an unclear definition of SA work, the Opinion has stated that the principal content of SA work contains services for social inclusion, ability improvement, psychological communication, resource coordination and publicity. For social inclusion, the SA agency and social workers can help beneficiaries adjust family-society relations, reconstruct social support networks and better adapt to society and the community. For ability improvement, they can help beneficiaries change their way of thinking, release their potential, learn technology, develop economic programs and live independently. For psychological communication, they can help beneficiaries change their negative and hostile attitude toward society and life, reduce pressure and adjust their behaviour, so that the beneficiaries can have an optimistic view on life. For perfecting the social work mechanism in the SA system, it is important to set up mechanisms of learning about needs, service coordination and service transfer. The SA agency and social workers should be supported to participate in means-testing, archive management and service need analysis etc., which are all contents of SA management and service, so that the reaction of SA to the real needs of people can be more efficient. Grassroot platforms such as township social affairs office, the MOCA agency, social service centers and social service stations should employ social workers. It is also important to develop more positions in SA management and the service agency. Mechanisms for social worker and volunteer coordination should be established and the scope of social work should be expanded. The government should be determined to establish the goal that by 2020 social workers can widely participate in SA and SA staff can practice according to professional social work theory, knowledge and methodology. Then the scope of social work of SA and its beneficiaries can be increased, and the professionalism and effect of social work can improve.

Box 6: The support center for social organizations

To promote the development and professionalism of social organizations, Lüyuan district of Changchun city established a social support center for social organization. It is about 800 m², principally provided to non-profit and charity organizations for developing social service organizations that are at their initial stage to become good social organizations that are capable of providing effective service. Currently, there are already 10 organizations established, such as Aixin Association and Dingli Association. The functions of the support centre are mainly: providing consultancy on laws, regulations and policies on social organization and about market forecast, analysis, registration, management of an organization, which help the organizations to develop healthily; supporting the initial organizations by providing them hardware and software, such as workplace equipment, help towards registration, direction of development and financial support, etc.; cultivating and improving capacity of social organizations on the basis of social needs and providing the organizations with training, lectures and opportunities to visit and study; helping the organizations to develop non-profit programs, constructing a management framework and improving their capacity for internal governance, project management and resource integration; providing professional services through third parties who are professional in their daily management, legal consultancy, financial management and internet maintenance, special government purchases, authorization and entrusting; publicizing information about laws, regulations, policies, evaluation and information about social organization, their activities and programs, through an information directory; providing opportunities for social practice for social workers, college students and volunteers, which helps to increase their experience and improve their ability to deliver social services; providing space and opportunities for social organizations

^[23] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/fvfg/shgz/201506/20150600832143.shtml>

for conducting cross-field cooperation, so that they can get into win-win opportunities; publicizing the impact of the social organizations and helping them to be exemplary organizations in the province.

The process of social organization getting support is application – entry – development – evaluation – exit. At the stage of application, the applicant social organizations must submit application forms. At the stage of entry, there are for steps: accepting, checking, evaluating and publicizing, in which the incubator management invites experts to give a comprehensive evaluation of the applicant. Only those eligible applicants can enter the incubator. The evaluation focuses on how much interest can the organization can arouse in the public, how practical are their activities, how reasonable are their teams and what is their potential. At the development stage, the support center provides places, training, strategy, information and a small amount of financial support to the organizations and provides them with service to expand resources, manage finance, register the association and evaluate their development. At the evaluation stage, the support center issues an evaluation program and conducts an evaluation once every half year in order to review the experiences over time, improve their work and finally realize dynamic support centre in which the circle of entry, development and exit runs well. At the stage of exit, the social organizations are able to run independently. After the exit, the support centre still provides evaluation and program introduction to the organizations, helping them exist and develop in a better way.

The social organization support centre helps to reduce the pressure on SA agencies. By now, the social organizations who have received support have conducted 91 SA, under which 600 + persons are beneficiaries. The investment for this has been RMB 2 million. The government requires that each of the counties should establish a support centre build and principal streets/townships should build up 1-2 support centres by the end of 2017. By 2020, through the support centres and relevant policies and experiences, it is expected to build up a system of social organization, so that these organizations can be a good extension of government functions and important subjects of social governance.

3.4 Roles of Community (Rural Villager and Urban Residents) Autonomous Organization

For improving SA administration and its service system and promoting the role of grassroots self-governance organizations in urban and rural areas, MOCA has issued the “*Opinion on Directing Village (Community) Resident Committee to Support Social Assistance*”^[24], in which there are several requirements for village/community resident committees to support SA. The Opinion emphasizes that the resident committees must conduct the work of reporting potential SA beneficiaries. They must arrange human resources to get information about the people’s living standards, understand and check the real difficulties of people, such as emergency, accident and disastrous diseases, and timely report the situation to the township/street government. The Opinion has defined the procedure of SA benefit approval as: application – check – evaluation – re-check – publication – management, on the basis of SA documents, and the role of the village/street resident committee in the procedure. The Opinion also requires the resident committees to support NGO’s to participate in SA, provide opportunities and the necessary conditions for social work agencies and social workers to enter the community and promote charity in community by encouraging social organizations, enterprises, institutions and individuals to conduct charity activities for beneficiaries. Besides, the committees must also reinforce the sharing of information in the community. The Opinion asks local government to consider supporting village/community resident committees on SA work as an important component of social governance. Therefore local government must reinforce the organization for that, in order to ensure village/community resident committees play their role in SA.

^[24] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/mzyw/201506/20150600829390.shtml>

When governments supply SA to the population and village/street resident committees take a role in implementing SA and deliver public goods to residents, the resident committee becomes an intermediary between government and the people. In this process, village officials can firstly publicize and explain the policies made by the governments, on different programs, eligibility and standards to the residents. It can be shown by investigation that explanations or publicity to the village is the primary way of promoting SA. Secondly, in the implementation of SA, the village/street resident committee can exactly target the beneficiaries. For instance, in the rural Dibao program, the most important issue is to conduct means-testing of the beneficiaries. Village officials are the group that can get the information and understand the reality as soon as possible, rendering effective and efficient information. Secondly, due to industrialization and urbanization, the rural population, especially the young generation, “escape” from village, which leads to “hollow villages” where the SA task becomes the responsibility only for local/village officials. When there is an emergency, younger generation of old people are not there, so only the local/village officials can provide the assistance as soon as possible. Therefore, the grassroot governance organization is the first responder to SA for rural residents.

When governments conduct SA, there might be errors and faults, which lead to low efficiency. In such cases, the village resident committee can take on the role of supervision and provide feedback about SA to the government. In fact, village officials have a clear understanding of what can satisfy the beneficiaries, what is not needed and what is the best way forward for SA. Therefore they can inform the government about this helping it to enhance SA’s efficiency and effectiveness.

3.5 Initiatives of Public-Private Partnership

In 2012, MOCA and MOF jointly issued the “*Directional Opinion on Governmental Purchase of Social Work Service*”^[25], in which the subject, objectives, scope, procedures and supervision are clearly defined. In 2013, the “*Directional Opinion on Governmental Service Purchase from Social Forces*” was issued requires the Opinion to be extended to purchases. In 2014, MOCA’s “*Directory of Social Service Purchases*” was issued which clearly defines the nature, content, category, program, subject and evaluation standards for these sorts of purchases. The “*Interim Measures on Social Assistance*”^[26], issued on 21 February 2014, gives regulation on participation of social forces (NGO’s) in SA. It has chapters on the Basis of Participation and Ways to Extend Social Assistance. This measure moves SA from only providing material and cash assistance to providing assistance that integrates cash, material, care and psychology. This is a new paradigm and new development for social assistance. The “*Notice on Fully Establish Temporary Assistance*”, issued on 3 October 2014, states that there must be a mechanism for the participation of social forces in social assistance. The “*Opinion on Motivating Social Forces to Participate in Poverty Reduction*”, issued on 19 November 2014, states that the government purchase of services should be promoted, and social organizations should be supported to conduct the Poverty Reduction project. The “*Opinion on Accelerating Social Work in the Field of Social Assistance*”, issued on 10 June 2015, defines the contents of social work services and the role of social workers in SA.

Social organizations have great advantages in conducting social assistance services because they are more professional. There is no need for government to entrust an agency and nor any reduction in efficiency so that the efficiency is high. In respect to the traditional material and cash assistance, social organizations can provide more forms of service. Diversity of service can better fit into the needs of beneficiaries who are of different groups. Social organizations can also be oriented to the needs and extend the coverage of services over the community. Services conducted at the community level helps cultivate community organizations and leads to the residents governing themselves. Social organizations providing SA service can supplement the government in facing the challenge of the diversified needs of SA services. As society develops the concept of poverty changes. For many

^[25] <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/tzl/201211/20121100383464.shtml>

^[26] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/zwgk/fvfg/zdshbz/201402/20140200593613.shtml>

families low-income is not a problem. But the life becomes difficult when they are unable to walk or are suffering psychological disease.

With the goal of optimizing the functioning of social organizations in SA, directing and guiding them to participate in SA and providing a diversified and individualized service to SA beneficiaries, in 2014 the Province of Yunnan defined 24 counties as pilot sites for social forces' participation in SA. The pilot in Wujing Street of Guandu District, Kunming city, is excellent. This district held a ceremony for the start of social organization's work in April 2014 when the first Social Work (Human Resource) Service Center of a street was established. Various officials and experts were invited to evaluate the feasibility of the project. The local Bureau of Civil Affairs had employed five social workers, through the government purchase of social services for the service center and allocated RMB 100,000 to be the initial fund. The street government provided RMB 220,000 per year to the center for its operational costs. The center has now introduced 4 social organizations, which are regularized and mature in their management. They are Yunnan Entrepreneurship Service Center for Poor People, Charity Station of Yunnan Property Management Association, Community Reclamation Consultancy Center of the Bureau of Justice, Guandu District and Yunnan Boya Research Institute of Juvenile Psychological Health. The Social Work Service Center provides the workplace, electricity, water, communication and facilities to the organizations. The Social Work Service Center has also cooperated with the organizations to assist Dibao and socially excluded groups on a daily basis, to provide psychological care of aged persons, re-employment training, consultancy on psychological health for juveniles and residents, etc.

3.6 The Roles of Charity, Volunteer and Social Work Organizations in Social Assistance Provision

Charity is an important component of the Chinese SA system and also a field of interest to the public. In the Report of the 18th National Congress of CPC, the party states an objective of "improving the systems of social assistance, social welfare, charity and veterans benefits." The 4th Session of CPC's 18th National Congress issued the "Decision on Several Important Issues in the Reform", where the party states its objective of improving the institution of exempting tax on charity donations and supporting charity in poverty reduction. The series of decisions made by the CPC is a conceptual guarantee for better charity. The CPC and the Chinese government have always considered poverty reduction an important obligation. China has achieved a lot in the fight against poverty. The number of poor people has decreased significantly and people's livelihoods have improved. But when the fighting comes to the decisive moment, there are more difficulties, and it requires more efforts to be made. The Government is the leading power in poverty reduction, but charity's role in supplementing it cannot be ignored especially when we think about temporary assistance. "Temporary Assistance" here means that when people have sudden, urgent and temporary difficulty in living, charities should use donations to provide assistance. Therefore, charity volunteers' technological, physical and mental skills should all be improved. By working effectively in this field, charity can perfectly fit into the SA system, then form an integrated power to promote the system. After ten years of investigation and drafting by MOCA, the Internal Legislative Committee of the NPC took on the role of drafting the "Charity Law". In March 2016, the law was approved by the 4th Session of 12th NPC. The Charity Law is a vital part of the support for Chinese charity and SA.

In Jilin province, charity organizations include mainly the Charity Federation and Aiyouhuaxia Charity Fund. The charity programs comprise "Light of Life" for children suffering from congenital heart disease, "Life Care" for surgically serious diseases, "Smile Train" Free Cure for Cheilopalatognathus and the Shenhua'axin Program, etc. The Lüyuan District of Changchun, Jilin, has built up a "Lotto Mart Medical Fund" in collaboration with charity organizations. The fund provides Tekun beneficiaries with medical subsidies ranging from RMB 5,000 to 10,000. Lüyuan District also provides students from Dibao families or poor families without Dibao with study subsidies under the Changchun Woxinfeixiang Charity Program for Students, 2014, and the

Changchun Aixinyuanmeng Charity Program for Students. Every year since 2001, the Municipal Charity Federation has conducted charity programs for students. RMB 24.5 million has been donated to 52,000 recipients. Charity assistance in Changchun has been reinforced. For instance the subsidy for poor students taking the University Entry Examination (Gaokao) has been increased from RMB 1,000 to RMB 10,000, and for students taking the High School Entry Examination (Zhongkao) it has been increased from RMB 600 to 3,000. The City's charity resources have also been integrated to provide assistance, ranging from programs for aged, young, poor and medical costs to Dibao and Tekun beneficiaries. 113 persons have received a charity benefit the total cost being RMB 300,000.

3.7 Innovation in Practices e.g. community caring, third party nursing, etc.

Considering the differences among SA beneficiaries, in terms of their individual will, physical condition and surrounding, there should be more ways to deliver a benefit other than people living in nursing homes. In the case of an individual Tekun beneficiary, the village resident committee and the village people's governance group take a part of the responsibility for protecting the beneficiaries. However, this responsibility is not clearly defined in practice, resulting in many beneficiaries living without any care or protection. Thus, sometimes an extreme accident takes place. It is suggested to provide a small amount of financial support and define the responsibilities of the community governance organization. Meanwhile, social organizations are supposed to participate in rural SA. Regions with better conditions can pilot a more systematic day-time care program at people's homes.

The "Measures on Family Adoption" were issued on 14 September 2014 by the Ministerial Meeting of MOCA. According to the Measures, the Children's Welfare Agency can contract with adopting family to define the duration of an adoption, the obligation and rights of the two parties, the primary guardian, the transition period, the responsibility when there is violation of the contract and the way of processing the issue, etc. The subsidy for adoption is in line with the relevant regulation. The labour subsidy to the adopting family and the work fund for adoption affairs should be guaranteed by the local government.

Box 7: Piloting purchases of old-age services care for poor aged people in rural and pastoral areas

In the second half of 2015 the Government of Qinghai province decided to conduct a pilot on purchasing old-age services for poor aged people in rural and pastoral areas in Huangnan, Guoluo, Yushu and Hainan. County and township governments are required to purchase third party old age care services and entrust the third party to provide poor aged people with old-age care services at home, including daytime care which is mainly the daytime visit, food services such as cooking or buying food for the beneficiaries, medical service such as helping beneficiaries consult relevant information and a cleaning service as washing clothes, cleaning bodies and the house for the beneficiaries and services for dealing with the daily affairs for beneficiaries. In addition there are also psychological services and a guard service for beneficiaries. All the services are aimed at satisfying the needs of beneficiaries. The target group of these programs includes Wubao and Sanwu aged persons that are resident of Qinghai province, living a long time in agricultural and pastoral; beneficiaries of rural Dibao aged over 70 who live alone without a child at home; beneficiaries receiving a veteran's benefit, aged over 70 and who live in agricultural and pastoral areas. Third parties that supply the services can be an incorporated nursing home or village governance organization, an old-age association, an old-age home service station or individuals. The later four can participate in the service with government's blessing.

4. CONCLUSION: EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES

4.1 Main Experiences

4.1.1 Multi-authority Conference

The multi-authority conference is a fundamentally important management system. It should be institutionalized and optimized. Social Assistance is a fundamental system for protecting poor people's basic living needs so there must be a coordination mechanism on SA that is directed by the government, coordinated by the MOCA authority, co-operating with other authorities and involving participation by social forces. The Multi-authority Conference is a mechanism that helps to solve concrete problems. It is strong and fast. The issues discussed in the conference are all realistic problems in SA. It is not possible to just wait for a solution provided under a law. In addition, the conference helps to resolve conflicts between the supervisor and the supervised. Decisions made in the conference result from deliberations among different stakeholders, representing a common understanding of the problem. Therefore, it is easy for stakeholders to follow the decision. For instance, the inter-authority joint conference in Changchun city has participation by 24 authorities and agencies such as the publicity department of Changchun CPC Municipal Committee, the Municipal Sectors Reform Office and the Municipal Development and Reform Commission. Normally, the conference is held every year, focusing on planning significant systems and policies and improving institutions, mechanisms and measures. It is aimed at negotiating and coordinating the different programs and policies, solving the main problems in SA, improving SA means-testing and establishing an inter-authority information sharing mechanism.

4.1.2 One-Stop Coordination Mechanism

The one-stop coordination mechanism is an important innovation that helps to build up timely, transparent, fair and regularized SA work. It also helps to coordinate the use of the various SA funds, introduce social forces into SA and integrate social and governmental resources. In addition the mechanism is important for it can improve the political and social position of SA. Therefore, it is suggested to review the experiences of this mechanism and solve the problems occurring in SA. Exemplary cases should be collected to promote the one-stop coordination mechanism.

4.1.3 Social Assistance Network

The establishment of more grassroot SA networks should be intensified so as to proactively discover social problems. There should be clear and definite tasks and responsibilities at different points and levels in the SA network. The division of tasks and responsibilities will release staffs' energy for work and utilize the advantage of all the resources. Then the old way under which a benefit applicant had to travel to the authorities can be replaced by SA staff working to actively identify them. The Darhan Muminggan Joint Banner, subordinated to Baotou, has built up a SA network that connects the MOCA bureau, sumus/township and gacha/village. This network is based in one office plus three centers of sumus/township. At the same time, all the sumus/townships in the banner have included 85 village officials into their SA network through the "Ten Full Coverage Program". In this way, the eyes and ears of MOCA are extended to every village and every family, with the requirement that applicants must go to the authorities to apply for a benefit changed. The SA therefore becomes more exact and timely.

4.1.4 Support centre for Social Organizations Development

The support centre is a good way to develop social organizations. By developing through the support centre social organizations that are not eligible to be registered as a legal corporate identity can receive help in the form of a workplace, equipment, services, training and an opportunity to participate in social development on basis of the support centre's regulations and procedures. Then social organizations in the support centre can better develop and participate in social management and development. Following the transfer of governmental functions, the community residents' intention to participate in the governance of their own community is getting stronger. Therefore their needs for public services is also getting greater and their requirements are becoming more fixed. The need for more social services needs social organizations, especially non-profit organizations, to participate in their management. The support centre of Changchun city is a typical example. Its functions are mainly

consultancy, guiding, cultivation, developing, training, servicing, providing information, social practice, exchange and publicity. The process of the support centre is application – entry – developing – evaluation – exit. Funding of the support centre is mainly provided by regional financial authorities. Enterprises and society are encouraged to donate. Other legal approaches are also introduced, so that sufficient financial support can sustain the development of the support centre. There are several ways of managing the support centre. Mature support 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. Less mature support centres can primarily be managed by then MOCA authority and then, when matures, the management can be transferred to a professional agency. Support centres help to reduce the pressure on SA agencies. By now, the social organizations in the support centre process have conducted 91 SA, whereby over 600 persons are beneficiaries and the investment is RMB 2 million.

4.1.5 Innovation and Exchange of Local and Grassroot Experiences

There are many experiences from local practices. They should be studied, exchanged and promoted. Currently, besides the inter-authority joint conference and the one-stop coordination mechanism, there are many localized models, such as welfare districts, charity supermarkets, one-stop medical assistances at appointed hospital and SA intergration in the community. In terms of management, the service agencies are centralized, or centralized-divided, or regionalized. In some regions, they are managed by a public authority; in some cases, they are publicly sponsored but privately managed; and in other cases they are totally privately managed. In terms of administrative structures and staff composition, there are also many variations. In terms of cooperation, the participation of social organizations, social work organizations and community organizations is a new model. There is also government-enterprise cooperation and society-enterprise cooperation. On the basis that the central level legislation is complicated, many provinces have issued their own regulations on SA, most of which have many innovations.

4.2 Main Challenges

4.2.1 Organizational Challenges

Formal employment in a grassroots agency is restricted, which results in inadequate work force and the frequent movement of staff. SA is a policy which requires staff to be familiar with its operation after a certain period of time. Frequent changes of jobs can have a direct impact on the professionalism of the services. Grassroot staffs of SA are usually not well educated. Many SA staffs are temporary worker employed in non-profit positions. In some regions, it is possible to employ staff but it is not easy for the staff to remain on their position for a long time. Thus the number of active SA staff is not sufficient. Pressure on them is great and their work is intensive, with a high risk of danger. This is another reason why there is frequent movement of staff at grassroots level.

4.2.2 Financial Constraints

For some SA programs, funding is insufficient. The medical assistance fund is limited by local financial affordability. Thus it is usually insufficient. Another reason for this is that there are not many approaches for collecting funds for SA. The participation of social organizations is not well developed. A multiple approach that involves government investment, social donations and charity has not yet been developed. In terms of developing infrastructure, especially after the new Tekun policy has been made, it is necessary to construct better infrastructure for fire control, care and alarms in nursing homes. But the current infrastructure of some nursing homes makes them ineligible for this requirement. There is great difficulty associated with SA work. SA staff usually need to go to rural villages to conduct means-testing or an investigation at the recipient's home. But there are no vehicles for this travel. Some staff just use their own private cars or take a taxi. In Inner Mongolia, where the distances between residences are large, conducting means-testing is more difficult. Sometimes only two families a day can be means-tested due to long distance between them. Thus

expensive transportation costs and the lack of a specific vehicle makes conducting means-testing hard.

4.2.3 Information Sharing among Authorities

Information is not shared among authorities in a good way. The three indicators of eligibility for a Dibao benefit are residency (Hukou), income and assets. In many regions, there are databases of family economic information at district and municipal level. However, the information managed by some authorities is not used. The discussion on this issue is incomplete. For instance, information about house, car, financial authority, educational authority and information of salary, old-age insurance, retirement subsidy and internal retirement of employees of organizations directly subordinate to government are not registered in the database. And the information often does not fully represent reality. At present, digitalized information is made by copying information without its real-time updating. For instance, the information about contributions to old-age insurance in Baotou city is without the names of employers, the dates contribution were made and the basis for contributions. In addition applicant's information is sometimes checked twice, which is a duplication.

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ANNEX 1: LOCAL STUDY VISIT IN JILIN

1 The Social Assistance Situation in Changchun's

Lüyuan district of Changchun city is an area of 216 square kilometers, of which the urban area is 45 square kilometers; It has five street offices, three villages and towns, a provincial industrial clusters and four development zones and 620000 residents in the area residents. It has 4019 Dibao households covering 6534 people. 746 are rural households covering 1276 people and 3273 are city households, covering 5258 people. There are also 176 Wubao beneficiaries, including 127 receiving scattered support and 49 receiving concentrated feed. As of June 2016 1796 people received the difficult disabled living allowance and 2016 people received a severely disabled care subsidy.

1.1 Distress relief

So far, Lüyuan district has published the “*The Opinions on Carrying out Distress Relief*”, “*The Notice of Lüyuan district Social Assistance Department's Joint Conference*” etc., in total 10 policy documents. About 80% of approximately RMB 50 million in funds is used for social assistance and integration and an additional RMB 5 million in funds for education, charity, emergency rescue etc. The Bureau of Finance of Lüyuan district invests RMB 1.2 million per year for interim relief and 3 million vouchers for the Lei Feng charity supermarket. The Civil Administration Bureau invests RMB 7 - 8 million per year. In 2014, they invested RMB 5 million to rebuild the office hall for rescue work. They enlarged all the office halls in three towns and five street offices. They are required to actively find people who need help and to carry out the griding management of the social assistance network. According to these requirements, the district divided the whole community into grided areas, each grided area being managed by a deputy director of the community. They visited the grided area once a week to collect the information on those needing help.

1.2 Basic living allowance assistance

The Dibao identification team has 9 people, including 5 civilians and 4 staff. They carry out Dibao comprehensive review work. They go into the villages and communities to gain information about the poor people. For those families with difficulties who not meet the eligibility conditions for Dibao, they will take various measures to help them handle their difficulties.

The payment in the Dibao policy refers to the difference between the family income per capita, family members basic deposit and the the standard calculation for guaranteed living in the villages. The gap

in Dibao standards between urban and rural areas is very big and should be reduced to establish equitable and uniformed security standards.

Tekun Assistance including Wubao, rural veteran's widow support and the holiday greeting focus on the key targetting groups.

Lüyuan district has 176 Wubao beneficiaries including 127 for invidual benefits and 49 for collective benefits. The Dibao standard for collective benefits has been raised to 7250 yuan per person per year, and invidual benefit has been raised to 5800 yuan per person per year. The Civil Affairs Bureau facilitate the eligible veteran widow into Wubao program. Every New Year's day and Spring Festival, the social welfare department of civil affairs bureau visits the key entitled groups and the elders in the rural social welfare service center and the private pension agency.

1.3 Temporary assistance

Temporary Assistance is used to provide the residents in the administered area no-periodic, no-quantity defined support when they face temporary, urgent challenges such as serious diseases, disasters, big expenditure (e.g.college tuition fees), incidents, etc.

In terms of the timing for temporary assistance relief delivery, it may be at three points of time: before the event, during the event, and after the event. For every emergency demand, the township government can advance payment to implement a before the event rescue. For emergency cases, such as serious disease which case the family itself unable to prevent, a "one policy for one case" measure will be made during the event. And after a family has suffered a major accident, due to an enormous expenditure of family and the family's life was in peril trouble, a joint meeting will be held and according to the level of distress, an after the event assistance measure will be discussed and provided.

1.4 The participation of social forces

- cadres and party members participate: low-income residents and government cadres pair up
- Communication with charity: The charity fund is used to help low-income residents, Wubao people and disabled people. So far, the charity has helped 113 people.

1.5 Social organization support centre

To promote the development and professionalism of social organizations, Lüyuan district of Changchun city has established a support centre for social organizations. It is about 800 m2 , principally provided to non-profit and charity organizations to develop social service organizations that are at their initial stage of development to become good social organizations capable of providing effect services. Currently, there are already 10 organizations which have been developed, such as Aixin Association and Dingli Association. The functions of the support centre are mainly: providing consultancy on laws, regulations and policies on social organization and on market forecasting, analysis, registration, management of an organization which help the organization to develop healthily; supporting initial development of organizations by providing them with hardware and software, such as a workplace, equipment, assistance in registering, direction of their development and financial support, etc.; cultivating and improving the capacity of social organizations on the basis of social needs and providing the organizations with training, lectures and opportunities to visit and study; helping the organizations to develop non-profit programs, constructing their management framework and improving their capacity for internal governance, project management and resource integration; providing professional services through a third party which is professional in their daily management, legal consultancy, financial management and internet maintenance, government service purchasing, authorization and custody; publicizing information about laws, regulations, policies, purchased service, evaluation and information about social organizations, their activities and

programs through an information directory; providing an opportunity for social practice to social workers, college students and volunteers to help them in adding to their experience and improving their ability to deliver social services; providing space and opportunity to social organizations for conducting cross-field cooperations so that they can get win-win opportunities; publicizing the impact of the work of social organizations and helping them to be exemplary organizations in the province.

The process of social organization getting support is application – entry – development – evaluation – exit. At the stage of application, the applicant social organizations must submit application forms. At the stage of entry, there are four steps: accepting, checking, evaluating and publicizing, in which the incubator management invites experts to give a comprehensive evaluation of the applicant. Only those eligible applicants can enter the incubator. The evaluation focuses on how much interest can the organization arouse in the public, how practical are their activities, how reasonable are their teams and what is their potential. At the development stage, the support center provides places, training, strategy, information and a small amount of financial support to the organizations and provides them with service to expand resources, manage finance, register the association and evaluate their development. At the evaluation stage, the support center issues an evaluation program and conducts an evaluation once every half year in order to review the experiences over time, improve their work and finally realize dynamic support centre in which the circle of entry, development and exit runs well. At the stage of exit, the social organizations are able to run independently. After the exit, the support centre still provides evaluation and program introduction to the organizations, helping them exist and develop in a better way.

The social organization support centre helps to reduce the pressure on SA agencies. By now, the social organizations who have received support have conducted 91 SA, under which 600 + persons are beneficiaries. The investment for this has been RMB 2 million. The government requires that each of the counties should establish a support centre and principal streets/townships should build up 1-2 support centres by the end of 2017. By 2020, through the support centres and relevant policies and experiences, it is expected to build up a system of social organization, so that these organizations can be a good extension of government functions and important subjects of social governance.

2. Social Assistance Work in Da'an County

Da'an is a city of Jilin province. Its Social Welfare Center was established in 2005 and has been in use since 2006, with an area of 50,000 m², including 13,148 m² of buildings and 24,000 m² of green and concreted areas. There are living area and productive area in the center. In the living area, there are 224 rooms, 448 beds and 165 aged persons are receiving service in the center. The land is provided by local government and the later subsidizes RMB 100,000 to the center every year. Because the center is located in urban area, the beneficiaries are mainly retired persons and only 3 are Wubao beneficiaries, among which 2 are rural Wubao beneficiaries. Except Wubao beneficiaries, other person must pay RMB 700 per month. According to different needs, the rooms are divided into normal rooms, standard rooms and rooms for couple, with different prices. 50 staffs of the center are responsible for financial affairs, among which 7 are in charge of expenditure, and 43 are social non-profit positions. The state subsidize RMB 120 per year to the beneficiaries who can live independently, and other beneficiaries can receive RMB 1200 per year and RMB 3600 per two years from the state. There are many supplementary facilities, such as medical house, gym, billiard house, shower room, library, square, green hallway, park and lake. Thus the center is capable of providing services ranging from living, medicare to entertainment etc and more than 100 aged persons can be accommodated. Service staffs clean the rooms two times per day for cloths, blankets and other stuffs of the beneficiaries. In the productive area of the center, there is a vegetable greenhouse and a pigsty where 500 pigs are raised for providing the beneficiaries with green food. Therefore, dinner in the center is of good quality, and there are 1 meat plus 2 vegetables for lunch every day.

2.1 Xiang'an Community

In Xiang'an Community of Jinhua Street, Da'an City, the SA adopted a one-stop coordination mechanism in processing emergency, accident injury, serious disease and assistance to recipients and family members claims in accordance with the Interim Measures on Social Assistance. There are five ways of processing, as mentioned: dividing the application, transferring the application to other authorities, transporting the application to higher level authorities or introducing the recipients to other resources. When the problems can not be solved by the community, SA staff transfer the problem to the MOCA authority or other authorities for resolution. When collecting information of the recipients, staff go to their homes. There are 22 grid staff that conduct information checking and updating of the recipients. In the community, there is an administrative hall with a one-stop service, because CPC affairs, SA and social security are all administered in the hall. This helps the clients process all related affairs in the one place.

In Xiang'an community, there is a space for activities for the elderly, spaces for games like poker, chess and billiards. There are also gyms, where people above 60 can go for free. There is a Grade 3 psychological consultant in the community, which every resident access for psychological services. Because our investigation was conducted during the time of the Chinese University Entry Examination (Gaokao), so we saw many students consulting. There is also space for practicing calligraphy and painting, where people can learn the technics for free. Exhibition of art works are also held periodically. An e-library with more than 600,000 books is provided to community residents, who can log in with given account and password.

There is a non-profit organization called Amour-Rainbow in Anxiang Community. It is composed of volunteers, entrepreneurs, people who go to shops, active officials of the community who are CPC members, workers of public institution and members of CPC branches in different sub-communities. In total there are 800 persons. The members of this organization are classified into 7 groups according to their profession, character and interests. Different groups provide different services to corresponding beneficiaries. For Dibao beneficiaries, they create a team which is good at legal issues; for families experiencing an emergency, they create a team who are good at employment issues; for Sanwu people, they create a team taking care of health; for veteran's or martyr's families, they create a team to support them; for aged persons without children, they create teams to entertain them; for orphans and widows, they compose a team for daily services; for special groups, they compose a team for comprehensive governance. When problems occur with different beneficiaries, the corresponding team will go to help them. This way, the tasks are clear, the teams are professional and their work will be efficient. In 2015, 130 persons got assistance from this non-profit organization, for which RMB 30,000 was spent.

The composition of the SA staff in Xiang'an community includes not only those with a formal administrative employee identity, but graduate college students are also employed as resident SA assistants, through the universal examination held by the Jinlin authority. They are sent to communities after training to conduct grassroots SA work. The salaries for these assistants are composed of subsidies from MOCA, public interest work and the municipal authority of civil affairs. It totals RMB 2,400. These graduate students are capable of learning new things. They work at grassroots level and they understand the situation better after several years of work. Therefore they can not be replaced by other human resources. But they never get a formal employee identity, and their salary is low. So many of these students decide to change their job.

ANNEX 2: LOCAL STUDY VISIT IN INNER MONGOLIA

1. General situation of SA in Inner Mongolia

1.1 SA means-testing in Inner Mongolia

The regional government has conducted work in the following ways in order to regularize SA means-testing in the region and ensure the fairness of recipient identification. Firstly, the human resource

for means-testing was intensified. By June 2016, means-testing agencies were set up at the regional level and in 12 leagues and municipalities, 102 banners and counties (cities and districts), and staff were allocated to the agencies. There are 421 persons working on means-testing in Inner Mongolia. Among them, 21 are administrative officials, 295 are institution employees and 105 are employed (either borrowed or sub-contracted). 18 staff work for the regional means-testing agency, among whom 4 are administrative officials, 43 are institution employees, and 12 are “borrowed” staff from other organizations. Meanwhile, 344 staff are work for leagues and counties, among which 13 are administrative officials, 248 are institution employees and 83 are borrowed force. Since 2013, RMB 10 million has been used each year for digitalization of SA and mean-test information. Secondly, information sharing among authorities has been improved. At regional level, the Regional Hall of Civil Affairs shares information on 18 categories with 10 other authorities. It has signed collaboration agreement with Regional Hall of Public Security on sharing information about residence and automobiles. It uses a specific approach to connect with the Regional Hall of Housing and the Regional Hall of Human Resources for checking information about real estate, old-age insurance, contribution to social insurance, unemployment and medical insurance etc. It checks information about the composition of governmental agency staff, persons receiving state financial pay, benefit delivery and beneficiaries of Poverty Reduction with the Regional Office of Public Sector Reform, the Regional Disabled Persons’ Federation, the Hall of Finance and the Office of Poverty Reduction by way of data transfer. It has finished the coordination of information sharing with authorities of industry and commerce and taxation (local and national), and now it is at the checking and testing stage. It has coordinated the financial affairs covering Hohhot and Baotou into the first 14 pilot sites of information checking on SA beneficiary security. And at local level, the authorities keep on extending the scope of information sharing. More and more types of information are to be shared. Thirdly, the development of an information checking platform is being accelerated. In the first half of 2016, the regional government had updated the platform and started using a new version. The government has also connected the network of information checking of the region, leagues/municipalities and banners/counties. This implements the information sharing platform between the 12 leagues/municipalities and the region. In this way, the leagues/municipalities can directly access data through the network and synchronize the information on SA recipient families among the region, leagues/municipalities and banners/counties, which enables the authorities to check information on SA recipient family’s automobile, social insurance, old-age insurance and housing etc. across leagues/municipalities, so as to prevent benefit fraud of benefit. Fourthly, information checking is being regularized. For setting institutional standards, the Inner Mongolia Government has issued the “*Notice on Accelerating the Development of SA Mean-test Mechanism in Inner Mongolia*”. This states the requirements on workplaces, work funds and work procedures in leagues/municipalities and banners/counties. In June 2016, the Operational Procedure (Pilot) of SA Mean-test of the Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia was issued, in which the scope, authorization, approach and supervision of SA mean-test are stipulated in detail. Total income and assets of a SA beneficiary’s family are all listed as an object for means-testing and this document becomes the foundation on which staff conduct their work. For operational standards, Inner Mongolia has unified the standard form of “*Trust of SA Means-testing and Authorization of SA Means-testing*”. The region has also defined the category, item, feedback cycle and way of work for sharing information. In order to ensure efficiency of checking and the security of information, the region has instituted a mechanism for data-checking feedback among authorities. This requires the SA authority to apply for information-managing authority by formal administrative letter before searching the data and after the checking, the regional authority will send an alarm to local authorities at league/municipality level. The leagues/municipalities then require banners/counties to check the information and to make a detailed note after the processing. The regional authority will aggregate the feedback of leagues/municipalities, and finally send the feedback officially through administrative letters to the information-managing authorities. Fifthly, information checking goes on producing effects. In 2015, the operation of information checking had increased dramatically. There were

2,786,000 operation of information checking of various categories, an increase of 248% over the same period in the previous year. 2,567,000 operations of information checking on Dibao, Temporary Assistance, Tekun Assistance had been conducted, of which 67000 pieces of information were found to be wrong. 2.6% of the information was untrue and discovered, which saved the SA fund about RMB 240 million. Operations of information checking on housing security were 194300, of which 740 pieces of information were discovered wrong, or 3.8 % of the whole. There were 23,700 operations of other sorts of information checking of which 2000 or 8.4% were wrong

1.2 SA network focuses on “emergency aid”

In Inner Mongolia, the SA network focuses on “emergency aid”. Service grids include 3 levels from the village/community, the township/street to the district and the staff for the emergency aid is composed of village officials, social workers, volunteers and charity workers, in total 670 persons. In the city of Ulan Hot, there is a directional center of SA management, and the management is grided with 1120 grid staff, each of whom has a specific telephone for communicating with the center. In this way, the staff can actively identify difficulties in the target group as soon as possible. In Manchuria, SA contact staff are allocated to each community as a grid, and people falling into an emergency can be identified in time. It is a better communication method. In Linhe District of Bayan Nur, the financial authority arranges RMB 5 million specifically for emergency aid, while in Sonshan district of the same city, RMB 500 million is allocated to establish an Emergency Aid Fund. It is a better financial arrangement. In all the pilot sites, a reverse approval system is established for an emergency, so that timely assistance can be delivered as needed. For social participation, Linhe District Government cooperates with the Social Work Center and Community At-Home Old-Age Service Center to provide psychological, homebased services, which are diverse and individualized; while in Manchuria, the authority has built up a social benefit chain comprising “platform constructing + organizing hatching + program design + local implementation + evaluation” on the basis of the Social Organization Incubator and encourages social organizations to participate in SA work through government purchase of services and volunteer awards.

2. Baotou’s situation of social relief work

Social relief institutions. The city bureau has a Social Relief Unit, with two management positions, they are civil servants. Donghe district and Qingshan district are the institutions at vice-unit (Ke) level.

Staffing social relief agencies: At the end of 2014, the city had 288 social relief staff including 41 administrative staff, 130 staff in career preparation and 117 employed staff. The city bureau has increased its staff by 2 people and has a total of 7 people, including 4 civil servants, 2 borrowed staff and a handyman. The Verification Center of the city bureau has 6 staff. The city of Baotou has integrated the management of the Social Welfare Center and the Nursing House for Children. Thus three groups are the major beneficiaries: orphans, persons without the three types of living resources (Sanwu) and homeless people with mental retardation. For orphans, there is not only board and lodging but also a special education school, instituted by the Municipal Bureau of Education. The school is treated equally as other public schools. The students have their education registration and can receive educational subsidies from the state. Public employees of the school can receive 15% extra salary. There are 13 teachers in the school, but without formalized employment status. There are specific staff to take care of homeless people with mental retardation, but there is no doctor with mental health experience. The school is now applying to the authorities of MOCA, health, education and the Disabled Person’s Federation. In the welfare center and the welfare home for children there are 300 beneficiaries with 200 adults and 100 children. 93 children are educated in the school. The ratio of beneficiaries to service providers should be 1:1.5. They therefore need 450 staff but there are only 230 staffs - 55 are formal employees of whom 19 are administrative employees (public).

Participation of social forces: Grassroots community organizations actively participate in the various social relief works. But the main problem is the shortage of staff working at grass-roots level. At the present, Baotou city mainly employs “commissioned work” staff and there is a task force whose working group members are to solve the problems involved in the legal status of staff. Social work organizations and market players have a strong desire to participate in service delivery but the basic work is still in the theory and discussion grouping stage. The City bureau has contracted the service of the social assistance hotline delivery which has obtained a certain result, but so far they have not purchased or paid the service fee for other services. At the end of 2015, as the body responsible for medical treatment, the City bureau bought supplementary insurance for commercial medical treatment to improve the efficiency of the medical relief fund, to reduce the economic burden of recipients of medical treatment and improve work efficiency.

3. The situation of social relief work in Darhan Muminggan Joint Banner

The Darhan Muminggan Joint Banner, subordinated to Baotou, has built up a SA network that connects MOCA bureau, sumus/townships and gachas/villages. This network is based on one office plus three centers of sumus/township. At the same time, all the sumuses/townships in the banner have included 85 village officials into the SA network through the “Ten Full Coverage Program”. This way, the eyes and ears of MOCA are extended to every village and every family. The history of an applicant must go to the authority and the process for applying for a benefit has been changed. The SA therefore becomes more exact and timely. In this network, all the positions are allocated assigned clear tasks and the advantages of the different processes can be gained.

Darhan Muminggan Joint Banner has a MOCA Welfare District. It is an integration of the original nursing houses on the basis of the distribution of Wubao recipients in the banner, which is conducted by the Banner Bureau of Civil Affairs after careful investigation. In this district, there are 1 nursing home, 1 honorable veterans’ home and 1 welfare home. Each of Wuke Town and Shibao Town has a nursing home. This arrangement can not only meet the need of old age care, but also changed the scattered approach and low level of management in the past. In 2015, the benefit standard for collective benefits and individual benefits was respectively RMB 8000 per person per year and RMB 5000 per person per year. In order to promote income, the Hongta Nursing home raised a cow and a pig, as well as agricultural products. This countyyard produced an income of RMB 100000 for the institution. In Wuke Town, the central nursing house developed pig raising which raises RMB 20,000 per year. Therefore, the self-sustaining of the nursing homes is evident. Since 2011, when the nursing home was established, there has been a director appointed as well as and other staff including a doctor. Beneficiaries of the nursing home receive uniform clothes and blankets and they wear the same kind of badge. Currently, there are more than 70 beneficiaries living in the nursing home. Each quarter, they will receive RMB 200 for daily expenses. The director of the Welfare District is responsible for the management, staff are employed under contract and their work is under performance evaluation. The Welfare District is set up by the public authority but managed as a private organization with a public subsidy. This ensures the development of the three types of welfare organization in the district.

3.1.2 Governance Framework for Social Assistance Administration and Management Processes

EU best practice report

Davor Dominkus, EU-China SPRP expert

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List of acronyms

EU Member States in the order of accession:

- BE - Belgium
- DK - Denmark
- DE - Germany
- IE - Ireland
- EL - Greece
- EC - Spain
- FR - France
- IT - Italy
- LU - Luxembourg
- NL - Netherlands
- AT - Austria
- PT - Portugal
- FI - Finland
- SE - Sweden
- UK - United Kingdom
- CZ - Czech Republic
- EE - Estonia
- CY - Cyprus
- LV - Lithuania
- LT - Latvia
- HU - Hungary
- MT - Malta
- PL - Poland
- SI - Slovenia
- SK - Slovakia
- BG - Bulgaria

RO - Romania

HR - Croatia

Institutions and other acronyms:

AROP - At risk of poverty rate

AEP - active employment policy

GDP - gross domestic product

COFOG - Classification of the Functions of Government (OECD methodology)

CSW - Centre for Social Work

EC - European Commission

EMU - Economic and Monetary Union

ESPN - European Network for Social Policy

ESSPROS - European system of integrated social statistics

EU - European Union

EU-SILC - European statistics on income and living conditions

EUROSTAT - Eurostat

ICT - information and communication technology

IMPROVE - European research network to explore poverty, social policies and social innovation

IRSSV - Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for social protection

MFLSA - Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

MI - Minimum Income

MS - Member States

NGOs - non-governmental organizations

OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

OMC - open method of coordination

PSS - the personal social services

PPP - purchasing power parity

PRC - People's Republic of China

PSI - a package of social investment

SPC - social protection comity

SSGI - social services of general interest

UN - United nations

WB - World Bank

PCSW - Public Centres for Social Welfare

1. INTRODUCTION

Providing social assistance to people in need (poor families) is one of the key tasks of States and Governments, both in European Union and in the People's Republic of China. Different minimum income schemes are a form of assistance that is provided to those families and individuals who are for various reasons left without the means for surviving. China is actively developing its own system of social assistance and has in recent years achieved significant progress in this field.

Within the EU there are large differences in the provision of a minimum income and services guaranteed to its recipients. There are also differences in this area between individual provinces in China.

The aim of this paper is to present the situation in EU member states related to the organisation and delivery of social assistance and to identify good practices from the EU. These could be of relevance for the People's Republic of China in developing governance and management in the field of social assistance.

2. THE DEFINITIONS AND KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF GOVERNANCE IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN THE PRC AND EU

2.1 Concept of Governance

The concept of governance is notoriously slippery. It is frequently used among social scientists and practitioners without a definition all agree on. (Pierre and Peters, 2000)¹

The concept of governance is usually used around ways one is developing, organising and structuring society. It can be connected to government, to corporate governance or to “so-called” good governance which involves many stakeholders (Greve 2015). The crucial questions related to governance are who are the main actors and how do they interact with each other and what are the consequences of the different ways decisions are made? Another important question is who takes the decision, - is it top down or bottom-up or preformed in some other way (multilevel or within networking processes).

Most commonly the concept of governance is referring to the different modes of coordination and balance between state, market and civil society. Greve (2015) indicates different types of governance.

Table 1: Governance types

| | Source of rationality | Forms of control | Service delivery focus |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| Procedural governance | Law | Rules | Universal |
| Corporate governance | Management | Plans | Target groups |
| Market governance | Competition | Contracts | Price |
| Network governance | Culture | Co-production | Clients |

Source: Greve 2015

Greve (2015) also points out the fact that different types of governance can be typical for different welfare regimes but on the other hand different types of governance can also be used for different welfare programs within one country. As far as Europe is concerned a more universal and procedural governance is applied in the Scandinavian welfare states and a more targeted and market based approach is adopted in the liberal welfare states while the continental welfare states are somewhere in between.

¹ Governance, Politics, and the State; St. Martin's Press, 2000

In the following table the relationship between European welfare regimes and their prevailing territorial organisations and governance models is illustrated.

Table 2: Welfare systems and governance in EU MS

| Welfare models | Geographical Zones | Territorial organization | Governance | Relationships State/Third Sector | Capacity of Innovation |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Nordic/ Universalistic | North of Europe | Local autonomy centrally framed | <i>Managerial and participative mixed</i> | Dominant role of the State | High capacity of innovation |
| Continental/ Conservative | Continental Europe | Regionally /Centrally framed | <i>Corporatist</i> | Active subsidiarity | Later but substantial innovation |
| Anglo Saxon/ Liberal | Anglo-Saxon Countries | Centrally framed | <i>Pluralist and corporative mixed</i> | Market model and residual role of the State | Proactive deregulation |
| Mediterranean Formalistic | South of Europe | Regionally framed | <i>Populist and clientelistic mixed</i> | Passive subsidiarity | Fragmented innovation |
| CEE/ Transitional | Central and Eastern Europe | Transitional mixed | <i>Highly diversified – difficult to define</i> | Highly diversified – difficult to define | Highly diversified – difficult to define |

Source: Oosterlynck, S. et.al. 2013

2.2 Definitions of governance (OECD, UN)

As was stated earlier there is no single definition of the concept of governance. What is even more interesting is the fact that within the same institution there are often several different definitions of governance.

In the OECD On-line Glossary it is stated that²: “Governance is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority necessary to manage a nation’s affairs”. Later governance is explained as” ... the process by which decisions are made and implemented. Within government, governance is the process by which public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources”.

The concept of governance and management are often linked in everyday life, in this regard the United Nations has prepared the following explanation of the difference between governance and management:³

“Often there is a tendency to equate governance with management, the latter primarily referring to the planning, implementation and monitoring functions in order to achieve pre-defined results. Management encompasses processes, structures and arrangements that are designed to mobilize and

² <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=7236>

³ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/quality-framework/technical-notes/concept-of-governance/>

transform the available physical, human and financial resources to achieve concrete outcomes. Management refers to individuals or groups of people who are given the authority to achieve the desired results. Governance systems set the parameters under which management and administrative systems will operate. Governance is about how power is distributed and shared, how policies are formulated, priorities set and stakeholders made accountable. Table below summarizes the difference between governance and management:

Table 3: The difference between governance and management

| Governance | Management |
|---|---|
| Set the norms, strategic vision and direction and formulate high-level goals and policies | Run the organization in line with the broad goals and direction set by the governing body |
| Oversee management and organizational performance to ensure that the organization is working in the best interests of the public, and more specifically the stakeholders who are served by the organization’s mission | Implement the decisions within the context of the mission and strategic vision |
| Direct and oversee management to ensure that the organization is achieving the desired outcomes and to ensure that the organization is acting prudently, ethically and legally. | Make operational decisions and policies, keep the governance bodies informed and educated |
| | Be responsive to requests for additional information |

Source: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/quality-framework/technical-notes/concept-of-governance/>

In development literature, the term ‘good governance’ is frequently used. In particular, donors promote the notion of ‘good governance’ as a necessary pre-condition for creating an enabling environment for poverty reduction and sustainable human development.”

At the theoretical and practical level, in relation to the perception of governance, at least two important concepts emerge: good governance and multilevel governance. These two concepts are briefly explained in following chapter.

2.3 Good governance

The concept of “good governance” emerged in the early '90s of the last century when dramatic political changes occurred in the world. It basically involves interactions between governmental bodies, civil society and the private sector. It is often characterised by principles such as participation, transparency, accountability, rule of law, effectiveness and equity.

In literature a famous sentence about good governance by UN Secretary General Kofi Anan is often cited⁴: »good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development«.

⁴ Principles for Good Governance in the 21st Century; Policy Brief No. 15 - Institute On Governance, Ottawa, Canada/<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UNPAN/UNPAN011842.pdf>

In Europe, democratic and good governance has been the subject of a great deal of attention. This issue is particularly the area of interest of the Council of Europe⁵. Related to good governance at the local level, the CoE highlights the following 12 principles⁶:

“Principle 1 - Fair Conduct of Elections, Representation and Participation

- a) Citizens are at the centre of public activity and they are involved in clearly defined ways in public life at local level.
- b) All men and women can have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate bodies that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on the freedoms of expression, assembly and association.
- c) All voices, including those of the less privileged and most vulnerable, are heard and taken into account in decision-making, including on the allocation of resources.
- d) There is always an honest attempt to mediate between various legitimate interests and to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the whole community and on how this can be achieved.
- e) Decisions are taken according to the will of the many, while the rights and legitimate interests of the few are respected.

Principle 2 - Responsiveness

- a) Objectives, rules, structures, and procedures are adapted to the legitimate expectations and needs of citizens.
- b) Public services are delivered, and requests and complaints are responded to within a reasonable timeframe.

Principle 3 - Efficiency and Effectiveness

Results meet the agreed objectives.

- a) The best possible use is made of the resources available.
- b) Performance management systems make it possible to evaluate and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of services.
- c) Audits are carried out at regular intervals to assess and improve performance.

Principle 4 - Openness and Transparency

- a) Decisions are taken and enforced in accordance with rules and regulations.
- b) There is public access to all information which is not classified for well-specified reasons as provided for by law (such as the protection of privacy or ensuring the fairness of procurement procedures).
- c) Information on decisions, implementation of policies and results is made available to the public in such a way as to enable it to effectively follow and contribute to the work of the local authority.

Principle 5 - Rule of Law

- a) The local authorities abide by the law and judicial decisions.

⁵ The Council of Europe is a key European organization in the field of human rights. It is composed of 47 Member States including all the 28 EU Member States.

⁶ http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/Strategy_Innovation/12principles_en.asp

- b) Rules and regulations are adopted in accordance with procedures provided for by law and are enforced impartially.

Principle 6 - Ethical Conduct

- a) The public good is placed before individual interests.
- b) There are effective measures to prevent and combat all forms of corruption.
- c) Conflicts of interest are declared in a timely manner and persons involved must abstain from taking part in relevant decisions.

Principle 7 - Competence and Capacity

- a) The professional skills of those who deliver governance are continuously maintained and strengthened in order to improve their output and impact.
- b) Public officials are motivated to continuously improve their performance.
- c) Practical methods and procedures are created and used in order to transform skills into capacity and to produce better results.

Principle 8 - Innovation and Openness to Change

- a) New and efficient solutions to problems are sought and advantage is taken of modern methods of service provision.
- b) There is readiness to pilot and experiment new programmes and to learn from the experience of others.
- c) A climate favourable to change is created in the interest of achieving better results.

Principle 9 - Sustainability and Long-term Orientation

- a) The needs of future generations are taken into account in current policies.
- b) The sustainability of the community is constantly taken into account.
- c) Decisions strive to internalise all costs and not to transfer problems and tensions, be they environmental, structural, financial, economic or social, to future generations.
- d) There is a broad and long-term perspective on the future of the local community along with a sense of what is needed for such development.
- e) There is an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which this perspective is grounded.

Principle 10 - Sound Financial Management

- a) Charges do not exceed the cost of services provided and do not reduce demand excessively, particularly in the case of important public services.
- b) Prudence is observed in financial management, including in the contracting and use of loans, in the estimation of resources, revenues and reserves, and in the use of exceptional revenue.
- c) Multi-annual budget plans are prepared, with the consultation of the public.
- d) Risks are properly estimated and managed, including by the publication of consolidated accounts and, in the case of public-private partnerships, by sharing the risks realistically.
- e) The local authority takes part in arrangements for inter-municipal solidarity, fair sharing of burdens and benefits and reduction of risks (equalisation systems, inter-municipal co-operation, mutualisation of risks...).

Principle 11 - Human rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion

- a) Within the local authority's sphere of influence, human rights are respected, protected and implemented, and discrimination on any grounds is combated.
- b) Cultural diversity is treated as an asset, and continuous efforts are made to ensure that all have a stake in the local community, identify with it and do not feel excluded.
- c) Social cohesion and the integration of disadvantaged areas are promoted.
- d) Access to essential services is preserved, in particular for the most disadvantaged sections of the population.

Principle 12 - Accountability

- a) All decision-makers, collective and individual, take responsibility for their decisions.
- b) Decisions are reported on, explained and can be sanctioned.
- c) There are effective remedies against maladministration and against actions of local authorities which infringe civil rights.”

Whereas the fight against poverty and social exclusion is largely related to the specific local environment and its characteristics, it is important that the implementation of the various national measures is adjusted to special grassroots circumstances. Appropriately designed local approaches, based on the presented principles of good governance at the local level can be very effective and efficient.

2.4 Multilevel governance

Governance in the field of social assistance in the EU is related to the term “multi-level governance” This is characterized by following principles: practical orientation, grassroots participation and deliberative way of finding solutions (Oosterlinck et al. 2013). According to European scholars’, deliberative governance should contribute to institutional trust and enhanced policy implementation (Oosterlinck et al. 2013).

In the final report of the peer review seminar, related to the strengthening of community approaches in the fight against poverty, held in 2016 in Holland, the following important conclusion was adopted⁷:

“Transferring responsibilities to the local level brings with it two major challenges: the lack of resources to cover liabilities that have been delegated, and the risk that inequality among different municipalities could lead to unequal treatment on the basis of residence, and thus to care migration. This is one of the reasons why **multilevel governance** between the local, intermediate, national and European levels is needed, as is horizontal cooperation/partnership among different actors (public, private for-profit, and NGOs) and across different domains (departments).

Increasing emphasis should be put on evidence with regard to policy making, service delivery and evaluation, in order to identify the most effective and efficient approaches and scale them up. Constant coordination of policy and practice is needed. This requires a significant effort involving politicians, civil servants, private actors and local communities. Cooperation with NGOs is important, as they can contribute valuable specialist knowledge.”

Definition in the context of this report:

The understanding of governance in the current context is broad and it is not only related to government administration at different levels but also to involvement and collaboration of different other stakeholders.

⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15459&langId=en>

The purpose of this paper is to provide some examples of efficient grassroots governance in the EU in the field of social assistance. Allied to this it is important to say that planning, organisation and the delivery of social assistance at local level is becoming increasingly important in EU countries.

3. DIFFERENCES IN GOVERNANCE BETWEEN THE EU AND THE PRC

Basically governance in the field of social assistance in the EU and the PRC is organised and performed at three levels: national, provincial (intermediate) and local. The important difference between the EU countries and the PRC is the fact that the EU represents the supranational level within which joint strategic documents are adopted, the exchange of good practices is performed, and also mechanisms for monitoring and financing are established.

The division of responsibilities between the different levels of governance within each EU member state differs significantly. In smaller countries, the focus is primarily on the central and local levels, while in a number of bigger countries (Spain, Italy, Poland, among others), the importance of the regional level is very high. Due to the different historical circumstances and longer EU traditions in this area, the number of stakeholders involved in the processes of governance related to social assistance is significantly higher in the EU than in PRC.

According to the reports of Chinese experts⁸ the key difference in the grassroots level of governance between the EU countries and the PRC is that the system in the EU is formalized and professionalized whereas the system in the PRC is lacking in professionalism. Important differences at grassroots level are also related to the financing mechanisms and a lack of involvement of non-governmental stakeholders.

Therefore, one of the key questions for China is how to provide better professional support especially in remote (village) areas and to engage new players (stakeholders, social forces) in the process of grassroots governance. Once again conclusion from Netherlands Peer Review seminar on community teams could be cited:

“Integrated social work requires interdisciplinary teams composed of highly motivated and competent professionals. Generalist social workers, with a broad perspective and legal competences (front office), could assist in coordinating and developing networks at the local level. The specialist competences of social workers (such as their knowledge of appropriate methods) remain fundamental”.

Table 4: Levels of governance in PRC and EU (top down)

| Level | Main functions PRC | Main functions EU |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Supranational (EU) | | Funding; networking; agenda setting; research; benchmarking |
| National | Legislative framework; political backing; finance coordination; funding | Legislative framework; political backing; coordination; networking; funding |
| Provincial/Regional | Legislative framework; funding; political backing | Funding; (legislative framework); networking; research; coordination |
| Municipality | Coordination; management; means testing | Coordination; management |
| County/Township | Coordination; management | Implementation; needs assessment |
| Town/street office | Implementation; needs assessment | Needs assessment; mobilisation |
| Village committee | Implementation; needs assessment | |

Source: Adapted from Prof. Zuo Ting, p 17; Improve/discussion paper no.16/11⁹

⁸ Prof. Zuo Ting: Governance Framework, EU-China SPRP, August 2016

⁹ Towards a more effective governance of socially innovative policies – First insights from the case studies

3.1 The Present situation in the PRC and the EU

Since 2014 the highest legislative document on social assistance in China has been the **Interim Measures for Social Assistance**. According to that document the provision of social assistance programs is the responsibility of different ministries and levels of political organization: central government of which MOCA in the most important ministry; followed by, provinces, municipalities and counties.

Regulations related to the implementation of social assistance programs are not part of the Interim Measures on Social Assistance, so all the provinces have adopted their own regulations.

According to the report of Zuo (2016) the present system is characterized by relatively significant differences in the implementation of regulations between the provinces and other levels of political governance.

Compared to situation in the PRC, most EU countries have SA legislation framed at a national level, clearer divisions of responsibility at the different levels of governance and professional staff employed for the delivery of SA related benefits and services. It is important to note that more and more countries are introducing the “one-stop shop” approach at the local level. In the chapter 4 the concept of the “one-stop shop” is elaborated in more detail.

3.2 Governance arrangements for social assistance (minimum income) in the EU

A key feature that applies to almost all EU countries (except Greece and part of Italy) is that they are providing (within their social assistance systems) to their poor and socially excluded population, some form of financial assistance. This is linked to the concept of the so-called “minimum income”. To complement minimum income schemes most countries are also organizing and providing a basic set of services for their citizens. These are typically provided at the local level.

An important fact is that the concept of a minimum income “plays a vital role in combating the worst effects of poverty and social exclusion in most countries” (Frazer 2016).

Minimum income in the EU Member States

In 2015 the European Commission published a study on minimum income prepared by ESPN (ESPN 2016), which was carried out in 35 European countries. In addition to the Member States of the EU Serbia, Norway, Macedonia, Switzerland, Iceland, Turkey and Liechtenstein were included. Based on the survey the European Commission wanted to learn:

- How effective and relevant are European minimum income schemes and what is the number of people who use it (take up)?
- How effective are the schemes of minimum income in combating poverty and social exclusion?
- How the minimum wage is associated with other benefits and services?
- How to support the integration of recipients into the labour market?

Crucial findings of the study are summarized in the following paragraphs:

“Researchers have noted that in most countries the level of minimum income is significantly below the risk of poverty. This has a rather limited effect on poverty reduction. This was especially shown in the period after 2009, when in many countries the amount of the minimum income was constrained due to the global financial crisis.

In recent years, the EC has stressed the need for minimum income schemes to be associated with the active inclusion approach, access to inclusive labour markets and access to quality social services.

Despite such recommendation researchers in almost half of the countries found that the link with the active employment policy is in principle guaranteed, but access to quality social services is significantly worse, making the effects of the integration of active employment policy measures smaller.

For most of the countries a trend of long-term dependency of people receiving the minimum income is typical. Often this phenomenon is associated with certain groups of the population which, as estimated by the study, present a special challenge for the countries. Poor health, low education, low qualifications and difficulties with school and child care are the reasons for which the receivers of minimum income cannot be successfully incorporated into employment/training and are long-term dependent on social benefits.

In some countries, the results of the study also showed a strong link between receiving the minimum income and work in the grey market or in informal employment⁷.

Based on the findings of the survey a set of recommendations for European countries was developed. On the basis of this recommendations countries should ensure a more universal and adequate minimum income for all who need it. This should become the main priority of social policies in European countries, especially in the light of the objectives of the Europe 2020.

In order to ensure improved coverage in the number of people who should receive a minimum income, EU member states, should introduce the following changes¹⁰ into their MI schemes:

General recommendation

“.... The European Commission and Member States should agree on a set of common principles, definitions and methods for an adequate MI to be achieved in all Member States.

Given the key role that MI schemes can play in achieving the Europe 2020 target of reducing poverty or social exclusion by at least 20 million by 2020, the improvement of the adequacy and effectiveness of MI schemes should continue to be a core message of each Annual Growth Survey and a priority issue for Member States’ annual reporting. MI schemes should continue to be a central element in the European Commission’s monitoring and reporting on the European Semester....

Providing for regular uprating

All countries which do not already have a transparent and effective mechanism for uprating the value of their MI schemes on an annual basis should consider putting one in place. This mechanism ought to ensure that MI schemes keep in line both with inflation and rises in standards of living.

Increasing coverage

To increase coverage of minimum income schemes countries should:

- a. those countries with very complex and fragmented systems should consider simplifying these and developing more comprehensive systems;*
- b. countries with currently low levels of coverage should review their conditions to ensure that all people in need are covered;*
- c. those countries whose MI schemes currently exclude significant groups experiencing poverty such as homeless people, refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, Roma, young people (18+), should consider amending their schemes to better cover them;*
- d. countries with high levels of administrative discretion in their MI systems should aim to reduce this and ensure that there are clear and consistent criteria for making decisions linked to an effective appeals process.*

¹⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2506&furtherNews=yes>

Reducing non-take-up

All countries which do not already do so should consider putting in place arrangements to monitor levels of non-take-up and analyse the reasons for this; they should also consider introducing strategies to reduce non-take-up and regularly analyse and monitor the effectiveness of these strategies and make the results of this analysis and monitoring publicly available.

Tackling disincentives

The EC and the Social Protection Committee should research and promote effective ways of addressing the dual challenge of ensuring that: a) MI schemes are efficient in removing disincentives to take up work and in ensuring that those in work have incomes that lift them out of poverty; and b) the adequacy of MI schemes is guaranteed. This is essential to avoid some people being left outside the system.

Promoting an “active inclusion” approach

To better promote an active inclusion approach:

- a. Countries lagging behind should put in place a more systematic approach to targeting active labour market measures at recipients of MI schemes and giving them a right to participate in activation measures and to develop a more personalised and comprehensive systems of support. The provision of quality supporting services should be considered at least as important as the use of financial incentives and sanctions.
- b. Those countries who are not already doing so should consider giving specific attention to ensuring that recipients of MI schemes have access to quality services; they should also consider the best ways of closely monitoring progress in this area.
- c. Countries that have not already done so should put in place effective arrangements for coordinating the efforts of the agencies responsible for delivering MI schemes, active labour market measures and enabling services and especially for improving cooperation between public employment and social assistance agencies. In doing so, they should foster one-stop-shop/single point of contact arrangements for MI recipients.
- d. Countries should be encouraged to develop assessment tools for evaluating the effectiveness of measures intended to help MI recipients to access employment.

Enhancing exchange of learning and good practice

The European Commission and the Social Protection Committee could usefully document and disseminate examples of successful strategies and promote peer reviews and other methods of exchanging good practice on MI schemes. These could focus on key issues such as ensuring regular updating, improving coverage and take-up, addressing disincentives, enhancing links between MI schemes, active labour measures, access to quality services as well as developing coordinated, single point of contact approaches at local level.”

3.2.1 Policy decisions related to minimum income schemes

The legislative framework and the political decision-making process in relation to the area of social protection in EU member states is exercised at different levels. Policy decisions can be defined at the national level, jointly at national and regional/local level or exclusively at regional and local level. According to the ESPN study, in most cases policy decisions related to the minimum income in the EU are made on national level.

Table 5: Level of governance at which policy decisions are made about MI schemes

| Exclusively or almost exclusively national | National and regional/local jointly | Exclusively or almost exclusively regional/local |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| BE BG CY CZ DE DK EE EL FI (BSA from 2017*) FR HR HU IE LI LU LV MT NL PL PT RO SI SK UK | AT FI (BSA, ASA*) IT (NSC**) LT SE | ES FI (PSA*) IT (BA/BZ/FG/MO/PU/SA/SI /TN/VA**) |

*Acronyms for relevant MI schemes in Finland:

**Italy does not have a single national MI scheme but there are means-tested social assistance schemes approximating to MI schemes criteria in a number of regions and municipalities

Source: ESPN report on MI, 2016;

It is reported in the same study that only in three European countries (or their regions) decisions on MI are taken mainly at regional and local levels (namely Italy, Spain and partly Finland). For more than two-thirds of the countries a clear regulatory and policy framework at the national level is characteristic.

3.2.2 Delivery of benefits (and services)

The ESPN study shows a completely different picture in the case of the delivery of SA benefits. Delivery at regional and local levels is dominant, followed by a model where responsibility for delivering is shared by national, regional and local levels and in just in a few cases is delivery provided exclusively or almost exclusively at the national level.

Table 6: Level of governance responsible for delivery of MI benefits

| Exclusively or almost exclusively national | National and regional/local jointly | Exclusively or almost exclusively regional/local |
|--|---|---|
| CY FI (BSA from 2017*) HR LI MK MT | BG DE EL FI (BSA, ASA*) FR HU IE IT (NSC**) LU RS SK UK | AT BE CZ*** DK EE ES FI (PSA*) IS IT (BA/BZ/FG/MO/PU/SA/SI/TN/V A**) LT LV NL NO PL PT RO SE SI |

* and ** Acronyms relevant for Finland and Italy (see table 5)

***Delivery of benefits in CZ is done by regional sections and local contact points of the Employment Office (national body). In this sense, it is regional/local but municipalities are not involved.

Source: ESPN report on MI, 2016

Strengthening of the role played by the local environment is characterized for the period during the economic crisis which started in 2008.

Although the trend to transfer responsibilities to the local level could be criticized as the desire for more residual and targeted social welfare policies, and for the greater financial savings, that it is not always necessary as the experience of the Scandinavian countries shows (Vranken 2016).

A democratically organized process of governance in the field of social assistance at the local level could contribute to some more innovative policies in this domain and could also provide a better solution for a more efficient and effective approach towards the elimination of poverty and social exclusion.

New forms of governance in the EU, especially in urban areas may be associated with overcoming the old political culture based on the model of "representative democracy" and the enforcement of new, more participatory ways of governance in which the various local players involved, could develop

a firmer collaboration. The transfer of responsibility for delivery of social assistance from the central government to the local level could be an opportunity for a strengthening of the social movements and the creation of a different division of roles and tasks in the provision of welfare. In this regard new approaches in the provision of social assistance services should be based on equality and a strengthening of the alliance between the users and experts.

3.3 Present situation related to the welfare systems and governance in the field of social assistance in EU Member States

Social security systems in European countries are built on different traditions and political platforms. Related to that, the legal provision of social assistance in European countries is very diverse, but subject to certain common characteristics, such as subsidiary nature, funding from state and municipal budgets and its individualized nature (assessment of individual needs).

The European integration process, which was begun in the middle of the last century, had at first mainly economic goals. Towards the end of the century, Member States and the EC started to include more social protection content into their fundamental documents. Gradually (from the end of the last century), objectives related to the well-being of its people, full employment and social progress became increasingly important.

In accordance with the legal regulation of the EU, Member States maintain primary responsibility with regard to the organization of social security systems in their territory. The EU can only complement and support the activities of the Member States.

The key tasks in the field of social security, which are implemented at EU level, are the co-ordination of social security systems, financing of development projects from the EU structural funds, the sharing of best practices, mutual learning and statistical monitoring and analysis in the area. Except for the coordination of social security systems and the EU funding, the majority of these tasks are carried out in the framework of the so called (social) **open method of coordination (OMC)**.

3.3.1 Social assistance (services) in EU

Social assistance in EU MS falls within the broader scope of social security and social protection. MS are using different terminology for it, such as social care, social assistance or social welfare, or even social work.

The legislation and individual solutions in the field of "social assistance" within the Member States are strongly associated with their culture, history and many other national characteristics.

One can find several common characteristics that allow for comparison between national systems in the case of cash benefits provided to the poor (social assistance/minimum income), but in the case of "social services" for benefit recipients the differences are significantly larger.

In European theory the term "personal social services" is often used to clearly separate these services from the other services within the field of social protection (Anheier 2000). In most cases, personal social services are funded and provided through public or non-governmental agencies, often in a not-for-profit form, but also through private "for-profit" providers. A part of these services is also carried out in the form of unpaid informal work, provided by family members, friends and neighbours or unpaid volunteers (Munday 2005).

Among countries, there are differences in the types of services, their size and users that are addressed. In most countries, personal social services are addressing children and families, seniors, persons with disabilities, but also people with various health problems. Among them they may also be refugees, asylum seekers and other risk groups. Personal social services can be delivered at home, in daily forms or in closed institutions, although the European area is characterized by a general trend of declining institutional services.

On the basis of certain common characteristics, one can divide European countries according to the way by which social services are provided into four groups, namely (Munday 2005):

1. Scandinavian model of provision of social services. This model is based on the principles of universalism; services are provided to people in times of risk events. Services are in most cases available free of charge and are funded through general taxation. In such arrangements, local authorities have a key role in the planning and provision of services, where the role of NGOs and non-profit organizations is relatively small. The system is providing a wide range of quality services, with a strong emphasis on the rights of service users. In recent years, due to the effects of the economic crisis some changes in this model were introduced, primarily by reducing universalism and increasing the participation and importance of NGOs that are involved as service providers.
2. The second group is formed by the countries with the dominant model of care within the family (Southern European model). This group includes primarily the Mediterranean countries, which are characterized by a limited engagement by the state in the provision of services and a focus on the Christian tradition. In this system, paid services (market) are provided for the wealthier part of population. In such arrangements, women are especially engaged, therefore they have fewer opportunities to enter the labor market. The rights of service users are not clear. The state provides mainly basic (rudimentary) services.
3. The third group consists of those countries, where service provision is related to the income (means testing) of the recipients (Liberal model). This is particularly connected to Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. In these arrangements, the state withdraws from direct service provision. Its role is to conclude contracts with various contractors that provide services, especially for the most dependent user groups with limited financial resources. For-profit providers and NGOs play an important role. The system is also characterized by various forms of public-private partnerships and a continuous focus on privatization.
4. The fourth model is common to some Central and North European countries (Conservative/Corporatist Model) where the subsidiary approach is crucial. Subsidiary is extremely strong in Germany and the Netherlands, where the state transfers responsibility for the implementation of personal services primarily to a small number of well-organized NGOs, which are often associated with the church. The State plays an important role in the financing of their work. At the primary level families play an important role in the provision of help. Among these countries there are important differences in the provision of services for specific population groups such as children or elderly.
5. To the listed four groups one could, add a group covering the former socialist countries (transitional countries), which to varying degrees combine features of the all above models.

The functions of personal social services (PSS) can be divided according to their characteristics into six crucial objectives (Munday, 2005):

1. Provision of care and support. This is a central feature of PSS but differs depending on to whom and under what circumstances it is intended.
2. Protection of vulnerable groups from abuse and exploitation.
3. Control over the market of social services, including provision, monitoring and definition of standards for the implementation of services.
4. Coordination and development. As a result of limited public resources there is a need to constantly look for new and effective coordination and the optimal use of existing resources.

5. Social control. This is associated primarily with the enforcement of social norms, rules and procedures for certain groups, such as young offenders, ex-prisoners, people with mental health problems, (many experts warn that social control should not be an integral part of the service).

6. The social integration function is closely linked to the paradigm of social integration of vulnerable groups, in which personal social services play a key role.

A common feature of the area of PSS, is that it is more and more decentralized and carried out by different contractors, among which the non-profit and the non-governmental sectors are gradually becoming very important. To a great extent this sector is financed by public funds or by the state (Alfredson 2000). In a number of countries social services are provided in the form of statutory rights, while elsewhere the scope of rights differs between regions and local communities within each country. In general, decentralization is seen as positive trend and is not to be understood as a withdrawal of the State from providing this service.

Despite the large differences between countries, according to many researchers in the field of social policy, the key challenges for all EU MS are basically similar. They are linked mainly to improvement of quality and efficiency. The following areas are also important: greater professionalization of both formal and informal providers; improved coordination and cooperation among different providers of services; promotion of innovation and the exchange of good practices at the international level.

3.3.2 EU Strategy 2020

In 2010, the EU adopted "Strategy 2020"¹¹, which has a key objective of "smart, green and inclusive growth". As part of this strategy a specific target related to poverty and social exclusion was clearly defined for the first time in the EU. According to the strategy, the EU's goal for the year 2020 is to reduce the number of those living below the poverty threshold by at least 20 million.

By defining specific recommendations contained in the "European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion" (EC 2010), the European Commission wanted to contribute to a deeper and more systematic addressing of the fight against poverty and social exclusion. Related to that it is spacially important to address the multiple dimensions of poverty and exclusion, poverty throughout the all life cycle, new vulnerabilities and specific disadvantaged groups".

The Commission has identified the following priority areas for action by the Member States:

- Delivering actions across the policy spectrum;
- Greater and more effective use of EU funds to support social inclusion;
- Promoting evidence based social innovation;
- Working in partnership and harnessing the potential of the social economy;
- Enhanced policy coordination among Member States.

The European Commission notes that poverty is a multidimensional problem that is composed of different elements. Among the most important are the lack of material resources for a decent life; poor ability to access housing and adequate services, such as health and education; exclusion from the labor market and the provision of badly paid jobs of low quality.

In order to effectively address poverty, it is necessary to go beyond the narrow sectorial approaches and to harmonize and integrate action in different policy fields.

In the period up to 2020, a special commitment of the EU relates to the promotion of innovation and modernization of social policies through mutual learning and transfer of good practices. As part of these efforts, it is very important that the plans for the modernization of the different fields of social

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/documents/related-document-type/index_en.htm

protection are based on reliable data and that the implementation of the reform proposals is constantly monitored. The same is true for social experimentation and testing and introduction of new approaches in social protection and in social assistance. The EC particularly reminds Member States that, for the successful implementation of social experimentation and to create innovative solutions, great importance should be paid to high-quality preparation and selection of proposed solutions.

To achieve the objectives in the field of the fight against poverty and social exclusion, the Commission considers of the utmost importance the development of the new partnerships at both the vertical and horizontal levels. In relation to that it is very important to bring together the various political levels (national, regional, local) be it through existing mechanisms (eg.: through the Committee of the Regions) or through the development of new forms of the collaboration. In the context of the proposed actions new partnerships and the development of social entrepreneurship are of paramount importance as well as the inclusion of NGOs in these efforts. In addition to the involvement of the non-governmental organizations, Member States should, as much as possible strive, for the active participation of those people who themselves live in poverty.

In the "European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion" the EC has particularly highlighted the importance of design and development of indicators of social progress. The Commission also recommended that the objectives and strategies in this field should clearly be recorded in the national reform program (NRP). The Commission is particularly committed to the regular monitoring and implementation of national targets and the evaluation of the progress made in this field. It has also stressed the importance of the coordination that takes place within the social OMC.

A prerequisite for the successful implementation of the proposed actions are the following systemic changes:

- Establishing a single, entry point, providing easy access to services and benefits for socially excluded people.
- Collaboration between the providers in the field of employment and those who provide social benefits and personal social services should be stronger.
- Simplification of procedures, allowing access to social rights and services.
- Establishment of integrated information systems to provide an individualized and holistic approach and elimination of duplication and inefficiency of systems to deal with hardship and social exclusion.
- More effective cooperation and coordination between local, regional and national authorities.
- Partnerships to support the socially excluded.

In addition to the appropriate approach at the individual level it is necessary to establish active partnerships with many other partners and stakeholders, as this is the only way to overcome various obstacles to effective labour and social integration of marginalized people. Effective co-operation with the local community, educational, social and health institutions and other social partners is crucial to the success of social integration and employment of long-term recipients of transfers. In situations where no suitable public providers of such services exist, it is necessary to provide options and enable the development of private operators, who must ensure equal accessibility, affordability and quality as public contractors.

3.3.3 Decentralization and community based approach

During the economic crisis, there were many European initiatives for the more effective implementation of the measures and welfare policies aimed at the promotion and development of community based approaches. Proponents of such proposals argued that such an approach with a better and more effective focus on the individual and encouraging responsibility of the local

environment to combat against poverty was better. At same time, they were less explicit about potential monetary consequences, deprofessionalization and strengthening of the "residual" instead of "institutional" features of welfare policy and social protection (Vranken 2016).

Related to their new role, local communities and participating stakeholders should be able to draw up programs of support and assistance that are more tailor made for recipients of transfers and services. In this regard, in particular, a need for greater integration of the different services at the local area is needed (social assistance, health, education and employment). An effort to improve cooperation between different actors, public social services, non-governmental organizations, profit organizations and a variety of voluntary social networks is also important. In the context of such an approach experts are talking about new forms of governance, the so-called "social governance", which is highly promoted by some European countries (eg. Netherlands) (Vranken 2016).

The welfare systems in European countries are, as it was repeatedly pointed out, constantly changing. Related to that, the way they are organized and managed is also changing. New concepts such as networks, coordination and delegation are appearing (Greve 2015). One should say that countries are constantly experimenting with new forms and methods of political governance in the field of social policy.

4. THE ONE STOP SHOP APPROACH IN THE EU

4.1 One stop shop introduction

Very often, people who find themselves in need and difficulty do not have adequate information or are not familiar with some of the complicated procedures which could enable them to apply for public help and support (social assistance benefits and services). Many claimants of social assistance services are usually unaware of the full range of benefits and services available within their local environment. If local government and service providers would like to ensure that those people in need will be able to use the full range of services available, then coordination and networking mechanisms need to be provided. Lack of coordination should not be shifted onto the shoulders of beneficiaries.

One stop shops could enhance transparency and contribute to improving the relations between social assistance administration and benefit claimants and within the social assistance administration itself. They could be important elements in providing the co-ordination of systems within the local community and with other organisational levels of state.

It is important both for the potential beneficiaries and for the targeting of benefits to ensure coordination and networking between the available benefits and the administrations providing them.

The basic idea behind the concept of a one-stop-shop is that the potential beneficiary has to be in contact with one single entity to get information, make applications and provide the necessary documentation, rather than to go through many different government or service providing bodies. A coordinated approach in the provision of social benefits and services can also reduce the potential threat for corruption and increase governmental efficiency by reducing costs.

Therefore the processes of providing social assistance benefits and services should be concentrated in a single contact point, operating at the level closest to the citizens/users.

In addition to providing cash benefits in a single place, one stop shops could be also the point where the different needs of beneficiaries are assessed and they are directed to the competent social, health or other service provider.

Recently, an increasing number of international institutions (OECD, UN, World Bank, European Commission) and national governments have adopted the belief that one stops shops are a good administrative practice for facilitating the access of citizens to information, benefits and services, reducing bureaucracy and costly procedures. In the field of social assistance one stop shops could also contribute to better communication between various Ministries and Autonomous Bodies which

are working in the area of social protection administration. They could have an important role in the process of improving social protection coordination.

4.2 Concept and models for one-stop-shops

The idea of gathering different services under one roof is not a new concept. The origins of this idea can be found in Australia and the United States of America and are nowadays often used in public administration reforms (Minas 2013). The concept refers to the integration and rationalisation of public services from a citizen's point of view (Contiades 2007). The key idea related to the concept of one-stop-shops is "to bring services together under one roof, both in order to share costs and to make it easier for people to access a range of services in the one place". The idea of concentrating information and services at a single point is a business model that was applied initially in the private sector and became very popular during the last decades. One of the first applications of this idea was supermarkets, which allowed clients to do all their shopping in one place instead of visiting different stores. The idea of concentrating different services in one spot proved to be time-saving and efficient for the client, who spares himself the inconvenience of moving to different places, and at the same time has proved to be cost-effective for the provider of the service" (Contiades 2007, 9). Following the success and its usefulness in the the business sector, the idea of one-stop-shops was gradually adopted also by public administrations.

According to Contiades (2007): "public administrations around the world try to identify ways to:

- (a) provide high quality services to citizens, and
- (b) provide services on the basis of cost-efficiency".

In their efforts to improve public service provision, governments are seeking to join different services in one place and provide a more customer friendly and responsive approach. The main aim for this is (Contiades 2009):

- To improve interaction with the citizens;
- To simplify access to a range of services, regardless of the agencies/services competent for their delivery;
- To build the provision of services around the needs of citizens.

Different names are often used for this approach, the most common are: information centres, one-stop-shops, single-windows, integrated services, community service centres, citizens' service centres etc.

Despite the slight differences that exist in these different models, in most cases the basic idea is the same. A broad classification of one-stop-shop projects is based on their purpose and structure; in general terms, such initiatives are classified either as "information gateways" or "information centres" which provide access to government information and referral services or as "one-stop-shop" services, which provide access to many or all of the services (related and unrelated) provided by Government in a single location.

In accordance with the classification, which is taken from Contiades (2009; 10-12), the concept of concentrating information or services at a single point can be classified as shown below, depending on the extent to which the services offered are integrated:

- “• First-Stop shops or information centres

First-stop-shops or centres have as their main purpose the dissemination of information. Consequently, they refer essentially to information counters which guide the citizen to the relevant services based on his or her needs. The information counter can be realized both in a physical location or "virtually", e.g. online through a web-site or an internet portal. In the strictest sense, this is not a

‘one’-stop service, since at least a second ‘stop’ will be necessary in order to apply for an administrative service. Under this model, only information is concentrated at the one location.

- Single authorities or single windows

Single windows refer mainly to a single entry-point of transaction from the part of the citizen. This means that the actual administrative service (e.g. the issuance of a certificate etc.) does not necessarily take place at a single location, but instead the citizen can apply for different services at one location (thus having a single, entry point to the administrative system). Once the citizen has made his application, the single authority or single window authority (in whatever form this might take, be it physical or virtual) will undertake to interact with the competent authorities in order to deliver the final administrative product. Consequently, under this model, services continue to be delivered by the competent authorities at the place where they are located. However, the citizen is not obliged to interact with the individual authorities, since the single window authority acts as ‘mediator’ and handles the application on his behalf. Under this model, entry points to different administrative procedures are concentrated at one location.

- One-stop-shops

One-stop-shops (in a physical location) ideally go beyond single authorities with regard to the fact that many different transactional services, which satisfy the needs of many different categories of citizens, are located in a single office. Therefore, the citizen would find in one spot, representatives of the authorities competent for pensions, health, issuance of civil status certificates, tax administration etc. Under this ideal model, representatives of the administration delivering specific services would be concentrated in one location, thus creating a “public 12 administration supermarket”. However, this model is usually extensively complicated to implement. In most cases, and also in the present report, one-stop-shops will be understood to refer to the model where the citizen has a single entry point for his transactions with the public administration. This simplified categorisation is used only in order to illustrate alternative approaches to the issue, depending on the extent of the reform to be undertaken, the resources to be allocated etc. as well as the specific needs of the social security administration.”

Delivery channels

In one stop shops a variety of different information methods and channels could be used to connect with potential customers. The most common delivery channels are:

- Physical location office where services are delivered
- Web site/internet
- Call-centres

Target groups

Information centres and one-stop shops could theoretically target the whole population of a country, region or municipality. But they can be especially useful and convenient for people who reside in remote places, who are socially excluded, chronically ill or disabled etc. Information centres and one-stop-shops could be also thematically focused (e.g. LTC services, employment opportunities, immigration issues) addressing specific target groups such as elderly, unemployed persons or immigrants etc.

Administrative level – location

Information centres and one-stop-shops are usually decentralised and organised at the local level (of government), due to a fact that is often the first level of service delivery and closer to the citizen.

The location of one stop shops is an important issue, since it is imperative for their success that they be visible and fully accessible to the citizens. Ideally, information centres or one stop- shops should

be situated in either a town centre location or where people can be easily attracted. Issues which can play an important role are (Contiades 2009):

- the one-stop-shop must have a strong identity i.e. a recognisable logo etc.
- the building must be fully accessible to all users including disabled people etc.
- it should preferably be in close proximity to public transport
- it should have a visible ground floor ‘shop window’ or display area as well as appropriate signage, so that people are aware of the service and its function and attracted to it.

Key advantages of one-stop-shops

In accordance with different experiences and reports the following key benefits of one-stop shops are (Contiades 2009):

- Taking into account the needs of the citizen they improve the image of public administration
- Facilitating the interaction between the citizen and the administration and making it more efficient and effective
- Enabling services to be tailored to local needs and to be provided locally
- Reducing costs and providing economies of scale
- Facilitating a co-ordinated service provision
- Allowing for flexibility in the way services are provided
- Cost-efficiency
- More effective and efficient deployment of resources including better coordination between existing governmental systems and processes
- Increased integrity and transparency
- Combining physical convenience and social contact – especially valuable to the more vulnerable members of society

Research focussing on the operation of one-stop-shops reports the following positive impact when they are operating in rural areas (Contiades 2009):

- Their accessibility at the local level to all, including low income user groups;
- The possibility for flexible arrangements and support in order to meet clients’ needs
- User-friendliness
- The higher quality of the facilities/ services offered mainly due to their location, their easier accessibility to information etc.
- The proximity to other facilities/services
- Savings in time, cost, travel
- Improved community confidence and influence
- Proximity to the service providers and the possibility to develop synergies with other services/ providers

The main disadvantages related to one-stop-shops relate mostly to technical issues such as problems with staff recruitment (e.g. due to short term funding).

5. SOCIAL PROTECTION SPENDING IN EU

5.1 Social protection expenditure in the EU

EU Member States differ considerably in terms of the volume and structure of social protection expenditure. The level of spending is associated with the history and the specific aims of the social policy in individual countries. In this chapter the structure and volume of social spending in EU MS is shown as well as its efficiency. By comparing countries that belong to the particular welfare regimes we can see that certain similarities exist between those countries.

According to the previously described typology of welfare regimes countries are classified into the following groups:

Scandinavian (universal) welfare: Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark (marked with gray color)

Corporatist, Central European welfare: Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Luxembourg (marked with yellow color)

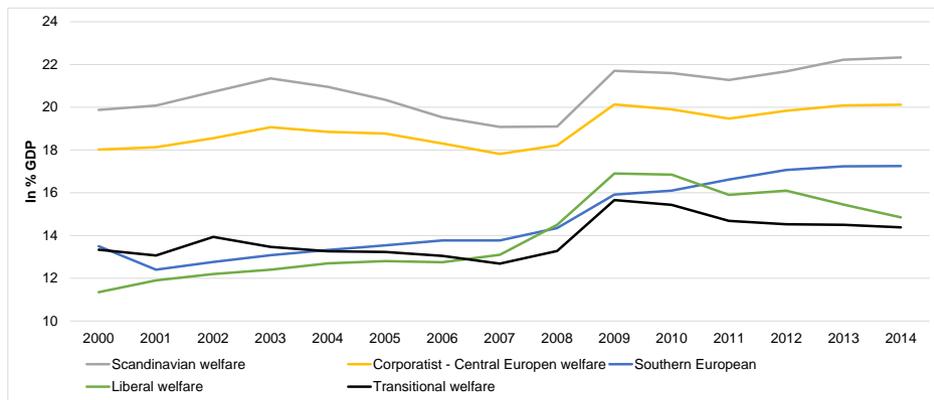
Southern European, family base welfare: Spain, Italy, Greece, Malta, Cyprus (marked with blue)

Anglo-Saxon (liberal) welfare: Great Britain, Ireland (marked with green)

Transitional welfare: Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia (marked with black).

For comparison, the Eurostat data for the period from 2000 to 2014 was used.

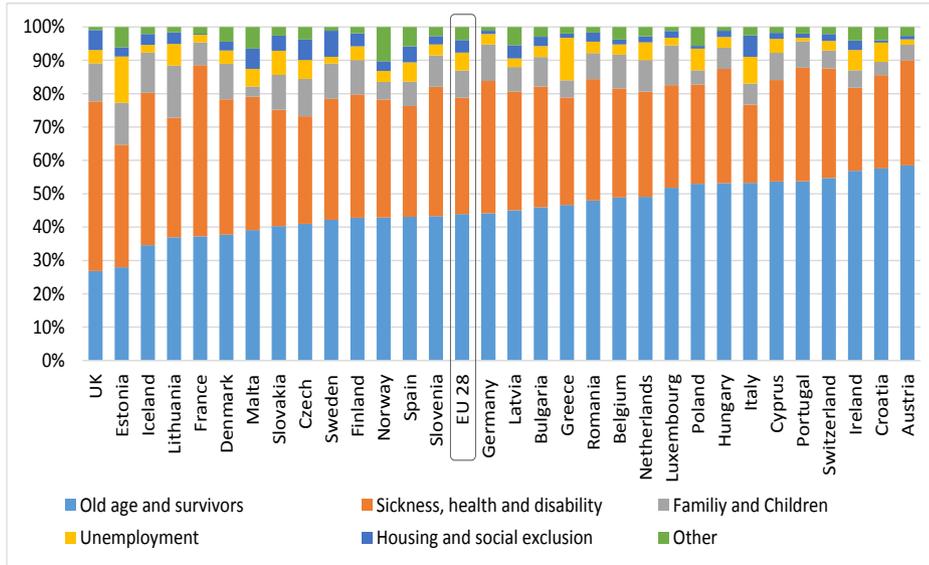
Figure 1: Share of social protection expenditure in GDP in the period 2000-2014



Source: Eurostat (COFOG).

Figure 1 shows the social protection expenditure of general government according to COFOG methodology for different types of welfare regimes in the EU. Data shows that there are important differences among welfare regimes related to the extent of expenditure. The groups of countries belonging to Scandinavian and Central European welfare regimes are different from the rest of the regimes. Those countries allocate the largest share of GDP for social protection. The countries in other welfare regimes, notably liberal, southern European and transitional countries are significantly lagging behind. In the period after 2011, the Scandinavian and Central European countries have increased their expenditure on social protection, while in the liberal and transitional countries the share of expenditure decreased. It is clear that the differences in welfare expenditure at the end of the recession in Europe have increased.

Figure 2: Structure of total expenditure on social protection in EU countries, 2013



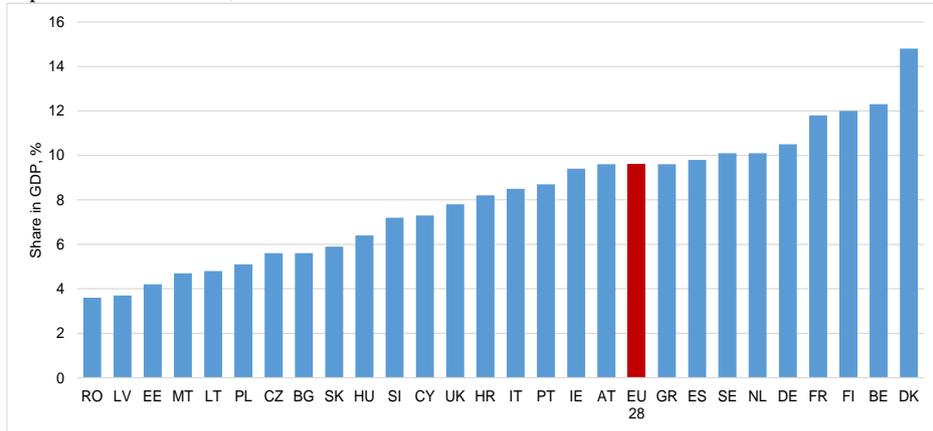
Source: Eurostat (ESPROSS); own calculations. Note: Countries are ranked according to the share of expenditure for old-age.

Figure 2 shows the structure of social protection expenditure in EU countries. Differences in the structures are reflected in the relatively comparable shares for categories of expenditure for their age and health (where the southern European countries are characterized by a significantly higher proportion of the funds for pensions). While the share of expenditure on other areas is much smaller, differences between the countries are greater. This is especially true for the expenditures, which are intended for the unemployed and socially excluded.

5.2 Efficiency of social spending

The structure and scope of social protection expenditure is affecting the performance of countries in reducing poverty and social exclusion. Comparison of the data shows that there is not always a direct connection between the level of expenditure and its effectiveness. In the EU there are some countries which have succeeded in reducing poverty significantly, with targeted spending on social protection (assistance), despite lower than average social spending. Figure 3 shows the total expenditure on social protection in the EU MS without spending on pensions, sickness or health. The average EU spending is little above 9% of GDP, while there are huge differences between MS. Figure 4 shows the correlation between social protection spending (as a share of GDP in 2013) and average risk of poverty rate (AROP which was 17,2 % measured in 2014 for 2013) for the EU MS.

Figure 3: Total social protection expenditure, excluding old age, sickness and health care expenditure in EU MS, as a share in GDP in 2013

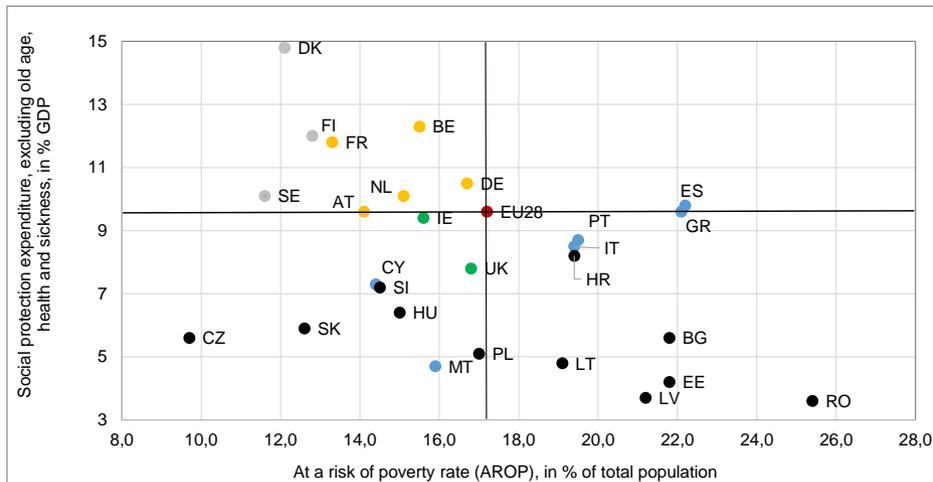


Source: Eurostat (based ESPROSS data and EU-SILC survey).

In the figure below the countries are divided into four clusters:

- those with high social expenditures and effective poverty reduction
- those with large social expenditures and poor performance
- those with lower social spending than average and greater efficiency and
- those with low social spending and low efficiency in reducing of poverty.

Figure 4: The effectiveness of social protection expenditure in EU MS in 2013

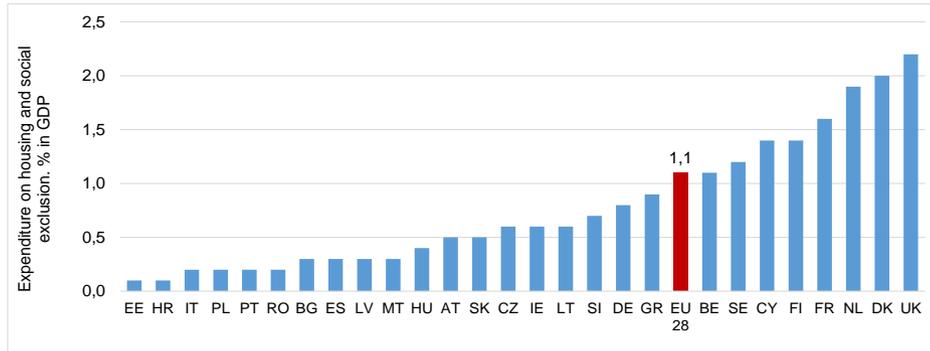


Source: Eurostat (based ESPROSS data and EU-SILC survey); own calculations

Most of the Scandinavian and Central European countries which are in the first cluster are characterized by above-average spending and efficiency in reducing poverty. High spending and low efficiency is characteristic of Spain and Greece. Nine countries have below-average spending but they also have a below-average poverty line. These are the countries which belong to the Mediterranean, liberal and transitional welfare systems, while eight countries have below average spending and an

above-average poverty rate. All of these countries are coming from the circle of those with Mediterranean and in transitional welfare systems.

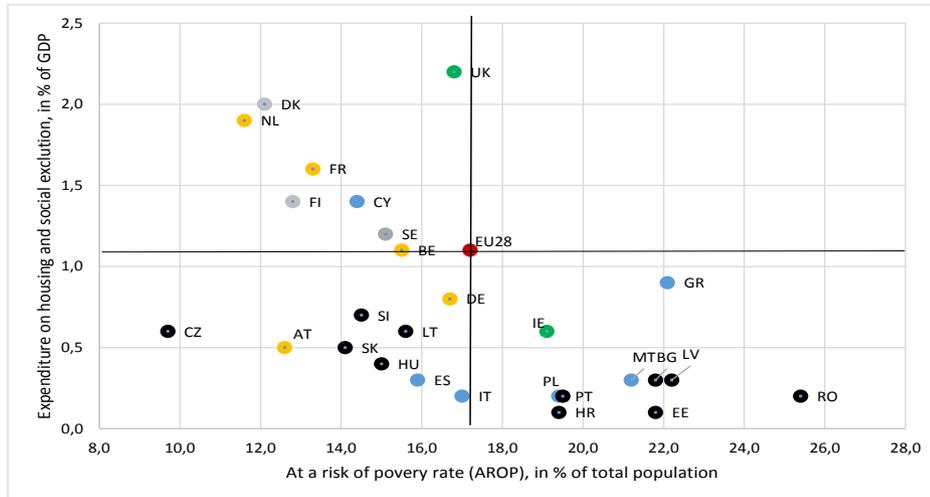
Figure 5: Expenditure on housing and social exclusion in EU MS, as a share in GDP in 2013



Source: Eurostat (based ESPROSS data and EU-SILC survey); own calculations

Figures 5 show big differences in the spending related to social assistance only as a share of GDP. In figure 6 comparison is made between the spending on housing and social exclusion (social assistance) on the one hand and the level of risk of poverty on the other.

Figure 6: The effectiveness of expenditure on housing and social exclusion in EU MS in 2013



Source: Eurostat (based ESPROSS data and EU-SILC survey); own calculations

In general, it can be stated that the countries which have allocated more funds for this purpose were more successful in reducing poverty. The finding that there is no country in the quadrant with high spending and low efficiency is positive, while it should be noted that the number of countries belonging to the group with an above average poverty rate due to low spending on social assistance was alarmingly high. The presented comparisons suggest that there is still great potential for improving the systems of social assistance in EU member states.

6. GOVERNANCE OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN THE EU: EXAMPLES OF EU MS

Belgium

The anti-poverty policy in Belgium is based on fundamental social rights which are guaranteed by the Belgian constitution.

Concretely, these rights include (Driessens et Goris 2016):

- a) the right to work and to a free choice of professional activity in the framework of a general employment policy which, among other things, aims at guaranteeing the highest and most stable possible level of employment, the right to reasonable working conditions and fair remuneration, as well as the right to information, consultation and collective negotiations;
- b) the right to social security, health protection and social, medical and legal assistance;
- c) the right to decent housing;
- d) the right to the protection of a healthy environment;
- e) the right to cultural and social development.

The fight against social exclusion and poverty is the responsibility of several policy levels and is provided through cooperation and coordination between the Federal Government, the Communities, the Regions and local administrations (Driessens et Goris 2016). Their responsibilities include design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the various measures. This approach is characterized by vertical and horizontal cooperation.

In Belgium “a formal distinction should be made between the “right to social integration” and the “right to social assistance” (Schepers et Nicaise 2016). Although they are interrelated they are to some extent also separate schemes. The first is related with the initiatives for employment and minimum income. The second includes “various forms of support” from social agencies.

In respect of the minimum income schemes, the Federal level (Parliament) is responsible for the legal framework but many decisions are also taken by the Government or “The Ministry of Social Integration” on its behalf.

Real competency in relation to the minimum income, social integration and social assistance are in the hands of municipalities (local communities) and Public centres for Social Welfare (PCSWs), which are organised in four levels (Schepers et Nicaise 2016).

The first level consists of the staff and management at centres.

The second level is the Council of Social Welfare (CSW).

The third level is the Board of PCSW which is responsible for its management.

At fourth level there are Special Committees which are established by CSWs and are (within the legal framework) responsible for matters related to social assistance, employment or housing.

PCSWs are responsible for the delivery of social benefits (among which is minimum income) and different social services. Minimum income is partly financed by the Federal Government and partly by local government, which provides national and local solidarity and responsibility (Driessens et Goris 2016). Discretion of the PCSWs in the case of minimum income is severely limited by federal legislation, while in case of social services (social assistance) they obtained increased autonomy. This means that the practical solutions among municipalities may vary significantly. The instruments they use are not explicitly framed at national or regional level. This means that PCSWs can provide different solutions related to the specific conditions and social needs at their local level.

Key features and the role of PCSWs are summarized in the Belgian report provided for the Peer Review seminar: “Social community teams against poverty” held in the Netherlands in 2016.¹²

6.2 Netherlands

The Netherlands system of social assistance is providing a broad package of benefits and services. Due to the comprehensive ‘safety-net’ poverty in the Netherlands is relatively low (NL Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment 2016).

In the year 2013 the Central Government decided to decentralise large parts of the social assistance system to municipalities. Such a policy was based on the belief that local communities which are in direct contact with the people, “are more capable of understanding and analysing someone’s situation, their needs and capacities and as such can stimulate and facilitate someone’s ownership, responsibility and potential to find a sustainable solution. In line with the decentralisation, 90 % of the extra funding the government made available to combat poverty and indebtedness is granted to municipalities” (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment 2016)¹³.

¹² “The most important local actor in the combat of poverty and social exclusion is the “Public Centre for Social Welfare” (PCSW), a public institution that exists in each Belgian municipality. A PCSW is an autonomous local government body with a democratically composed council. The legal mission of the PCSW states: “Every person is entitled to social services so as to enable him/her to live a life corresponding to human dignity”.

The PCSWs are responsible for implementing at federal level the regulated minimum income scheme for people of an active age. The minimum income scheme is financed partially by the federal government and by the local government. This funding mechanism creates national and local solidarity and responsibility. Besides social assistance, the PCSW has the mission to organise the necessary services at local level to guarantee a life in dignity for every inhabitant of the municipality. The PCSW can decide to organise these services itself or to delegate their implementation to a third partner. But the PCSW always stays responsible for the coordination of the social services. Examples of social services provided by the PCSW include financial and material help, medical help, legal advice, psychological and social support, guidance to socio-cultural activities, etc. They can set up services such as homes for the elderly, cleaning services, social housing, early child care, hospitals, etc.

The PCSWs should not guarantee the beneficiaries only an adequate income support, but also offer them the chance to take control of their own lives independently. Thus, they can be seen as the institutions which implement the principles of active inclusion in practice on the local level (Vranken, 2005).

The Flemish Parliament Act on Local Social Policy (2004) adapted in the act (of 13 July 2012) provided for a stronger coordinating role for local administrations. Local social policy aims for the maximum accessibility to services for every citizen. To this end, the local government realises a Social House. This will be the place where citizens can come with questions about social services in their municipality. The Social House must provide a response to the various problems of accessibility to municipal services. The local government decides for itself how it will fulfil the three functions (information, counter and referral functions) of the Social House. There is no uniform model for the Social House in Flanders. The Public Centre for Social Welfare can play a leading role (Verschuere & Sannen, 2005).

The strengths of this model are:

- The professionals who work in the social service centre of the PCSW, dealing with social assistance, are social professionals (with the legally protected title of social worker). They learned to deal with the social law, they know about the social map of welfare services. According to the global definition of social work they promote “social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people”. So they work with a rights-based and integrated multi-level approach, in their helping relation with people in poverty.
- An accessible public service (working with generalist social workers, who can do quick instrumental social interventions) and more intensive, integral support if necessary, specialist services in back office (employment counsellors, debt mediators, etc.). The need of financial help is often a first step for a larger empowering and integrating process (Depauw & Driessens, 2014).
- Mix of social interventions and methods: with a focus on individual case management, combined with group work.
- PCSW in a coordinating function, working together with private non-profit organisations, organisations working with volunteers, associations where the poor take the floor (grass-root organisations working with poor people) and specialist social organisations.”

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1024&langId=en&newsId=2334&furtherNews=yes>

¹³ In response to this, many municipalities have set up ‘Social Community Teams’ – teams consisting of a broad range of people from various disciplines such as social workers, family coaches, people with expertise in healthcare, education or debt-relief who jointly operate on a community level to provide and coordinate services to people who, albeit

Social security (and social assistance) in the Netherlands is governed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW). According to the Participation Act (Participatiewet) which was implemented in January 2015, the national authorities are responsible for the general benefit levels and for the system, which implies that SZW will have to take active measures if the Participation Act system does not function well. The central ministry is also responsible for the definition of the target groups and for the registration and monitoring (on a yearly basis) of the Social Agreement to guarantee additional jobs for people with an occupational impairment and the Jobs Agreement and Handicapped Workers Quota Act.

The national authorities have assigned the implementation of the Participation Act and related regulations to local authorities and the municipalities, on the basis of a shared administration.

The responsibility of municipalities includes the provision of tailor-made benefits, support for people entitled to a supplementary benefit and support for people trying to regain their financial independence. The way a municipality provides its support is laid down in the regulations with the accompanying policy rules.

According to the Dutch report on minimum income (Blommesteijn et al 2015): »The Participation Act is financed from general funds (tax revenues). Local authorities receive two budgets from the national authorities: one budget for benefit payments (Income budget) and one for participation measures (Participation budget: active labour market measures, education and citizenship courses). Each budget is distributed using an allocation model. In 2015 a new allocation model was introduced replacing the one which was established under the WWB. In 2016 some improvements will be introduced. The system itself remained and will remain the same. If a municipality spends less on benefits than the amount it received from this specific budget, it may keep these funds. But if there is a deficit the municipality must compensate for the shortage itself. This is an incentive for the municipality to guide as many people as possible towards employment. If municipalities spend less on reintegration than is granted, a part of the budget may be carried forward to the following year. Eventually, the budget that is not spent must be refunded to the national authorities. Municipalities can either take care of reintegrating clients themselves or contract private reintegration agencies”.¹⁴

6.3 Slovenia

The basic idea of the legislation that regulates the field of social assistance in the Republic of Slovenia is universal access to services and benefits for all who find themselves in social difficulties and hardship, but only after they have exhausted all other possibilities of assistance in other social security systems and from the family (subsidiarity principle).

temporarily, need help. Parties involved – either in a team or as a network of cooperative partners – are from both the public and private sector (such as civil society organisations). There is no single blueprint for a Social Community Team (SCT). Depending on the local demographics, social dynamics, political priorities and available expertise, a SCT can be structured in various ways – and even evolve over time. Some municipalities even work with multiple SCTs with different focal points responding to local circumstances.

A SCT functions as a single, central and easily approachable access point for the community regarding all sorts of questions – be it youth-care, income, employment or health. A SCT could be located in a specific building – like a community house – where anyone can enter with a question or request for help. Sometimes the SCT has no fixed location, but its members are dispersed over various locations – like schools, shelters, hospitals, sporting clubs or parks – where they can easily mingle with various groups within the community, proactively approach people and simultaneously be easily approachable. It could also be that the first contact between a person and the SCT is not established directly but by referral. For instance, a civil society organisation, school principal or local policy officer may refer or advise someone to contact the SCT – or vice versa – advice (a member of) the SCT to visit someone. In any way, the SCT is intended to function as a single first ‘entry’ point for people. As such someone does not have to approach various institutions, repeat his or her (often vulnerable) story, deal with multiple contact persons and bureaucratic processes or remain isolated. There is one single entry point.”

Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1024&langId=en&newsId=2334&furtherNews=yes>

¹⁴ Blommesteijn, M. et al. 2016. ESPN Thematic Report on Minimum Income Schemes. The Netherlands.

The national parliament and government (the ministry responsible for social affairs) have, in accordance with the applicable social legislation, a crucial role in setting the conditions for the granting of social benefits, in the organization of providers' networks, financing, setting standards and the provision of monitoring the social assistance system. In comparison with the powers of the central state (government) the responsibility of local communities is significantly lower. A relatively high centralization of the social assistance system in Slovenia was one of the key characteristics of the period after independence.

By the year 2010, the fields of social assistance benefits and services were regulated by a single legislative act. Since 2010 the areas of social assistance benefits and services are regulated in separate legislation.

6.3.1 Reform of Slovenian Means-Tested Benefits

In the year 2010 two new acts related to social benefits were adopted in the Slovenian parliament. The first entitled "The Social Benefits Act" regulated minimum income and the second entitled "Exercise of Rights to Public Funds Act" regulates the procedures related to the means-tested benefits which are provided from the budgets of state and local communities.

Both acts introduced fundamental changes in the access to, and delivery of, social benefits and subsidies that are means-tested.

The ambition of Government at that time was to modernize the entire area of social assistance. According to the new legal regulation on their provision, cash benefits were regulated with the legislation which was separated from the one which defines the provision of help in the form of services. Social Work Centers became the one stop shop for all financial rights (benefits), which are paid from public funds.

Implementation of both acts started in 2012.

Characteristics of the means-tested benefits system before the reform:

Means-tested benefits and subsidies before the reform were granted on the basis of different criteria. Procedures were based on different legal foundations and conducted by different authorities (schools, social work centres, Pension and Invalidity Insurance Institute, local communities). Databases on recipients were not linked. The system was not transparent, abuse by, and accumulation of different rights for, some groups of beneficiaries was possible whilst on the other side not enough support for high-risk poverty groups was provided.

Due to the fact that the rights were regulated by different legal acts different definitions of income, family and other elements were used. During the eligibility process in some cases, only income was taken into account, in others property was also considered.

There was not enough focus on activation measures (active labour market instruments in combination with social assistance services) for the recipients of social assistance (minimum income).

The main goals of the reform were:

- More transparent, efficient and user-friendly distribution of social transfers and subsidies that are means-tested (one-stop shop, one application form, one decision about all rights).
- Harmonisation of criteria for granting 4 types of social transfers and 9 types of subsidies that are means-tested (income, property, movable assets).
- More targeted system (to those that really need the transfers).
- More adequate income support (increase of minimum income as a base for social transfers – based on a study on minimum life costs from 2009).

- Incentives for work and active search for solutions to one's problems (activity supplement for beneficiaries working or in active programmes - the amount depending on duration and character of the activity).
- More focus on activation of long-term recipients capable of work.
- Income support for pensioners transferred from pension system to social benefits system (income supplement for those not capable to work).

One of the objectives of the new regulation was also to provide better access to different services:

- Access to health services (compulsory health insurance for recipients of financial social assistance covered by the state; subsidy covering the difference to the full value of health care services)
- Contribution to the payment of a family assistant (for severely disabled persons living at home)
- Rent subsidy
- Subsidised public child-care facilities fee (or reduced payment)
- Subsidised school means (lunch/snack in elementary and secondary schools)
- Exemption from payment of social care services.

An important goal was also linked to the provision of access to the inclusive labour market for recipients of social benefits:

- Subsidies for employers when they employ a long-term recipient of financial social assistance (not much interest from employers in the circumstances of economic crisis)
- Development of new programmes for hard-to-employ persons (as part of active employment policy)
- Intention to develop social activation programmes (motivation and activation programmes for long-term recipients of financial social assistance that are far from labour market and have different complex problems, such as addiction, mental health problems, homelessness etc). Activation measures for long-term recipients of financial social assistance that are capable of work that were introduced related to that:
 - activity supplements to social assistance
 - obligatory cooperation of employment offices and centres of social work with the individual recipients in defining the problems, possible solutions and activities of the individual
 - social activation programmes and employment programmes for hard-to-employ individuals
- The aim of the reform was to increase the adequacy of income support as well as the coverage of the persons in need (and specific disadvantaged groups).
- Across the short term it was expected that there would be an increase in the number of beneficiaries of financial social assistance and the necessary public funds (due to the increase in minimum income and the transfer of income support for pensioners and old age pensions to the social transfers system).
- Over the long-term term it was expected that the number of recipients of social assistance was going to decrease, especially long-term beneficiaries capable of work (due to the activation programs).

6.3.2 Implementation of the reform

Implementation of new social legislation began in full on 1 January 2012.

Even though a huge preparation process started before the implementation of the new legislation (organization and coordination, information support – connection of 44 data sources from 24 institutions, data protection issues, training of social work centre personnel, new employments at the centres of social work, desk service support, information for the beneficiaries, etc.) it turned out that two years was too short a preparation period for such a demanding exercise.

The main problems during the first months of implementation were related to the information support (e-Social Work Centre) module – there was an overburdening of the system and huge pressure on the system caused delays in issuing the new decisions regarding benefits.

The implementation phase was also characterized by the pressure and critical attitude of the media and some experts when it became clear that the effect of property and assets taken into account reduced the number of the recipients of social benefits more than expected (some people were not entitled to benefits any more).

Non take-up of benefits also became an unexpected problem. This was connected to the Inheritance Act from the 1970s, under which the State was to be repaid the amount provided as financial social assistance after the death of the beneficiary from their estate – except if this endangered the social security of the heirs. (For this reason, a high number of the older people decided not to apply for the income support under the new legislation although the new amount was much higher).

In order to ensure the proper monitoring of the implementation of the reform, the competent Ministry signed an agreement on monitoring with the National Institute of Social Protection. After the first year of the implementation of the new legislation the Institute prepared a comprehensive evaluation report which formed the basis of several changes to the legislation.

6.3.3 IT support for the implementation of the new legislation

For the implementation of the reforms an IT system, which functioned before 2012, was supplemented by some special modules. ISSWC - Information System for Social Work Centres (E-SWC) was designed as an integrated information system that provided the SWC, responsible ministry and other institutions with particular support:

For Social Work Centres:

- the acquisition of data,
- the decision-making process,
- standardized display of legal acts and,
- calculation of transfers, which are the basis for payments under the legislation.

MLFSA is using ISSWC mainly as a management information system that:

- enables the correct payment of social benefits,
- provides support for decision making in the appeal proceedings and
- allows the responsible Ministry to plan resources and control/monitor data.

The system is a source of data for statistical and analytical reports mainly provided by the Social Protection Institute of Slovenia.

ISSWC provides support for SWC in the following stages of the decision-making process:

- entry of the application
- acquisition of data

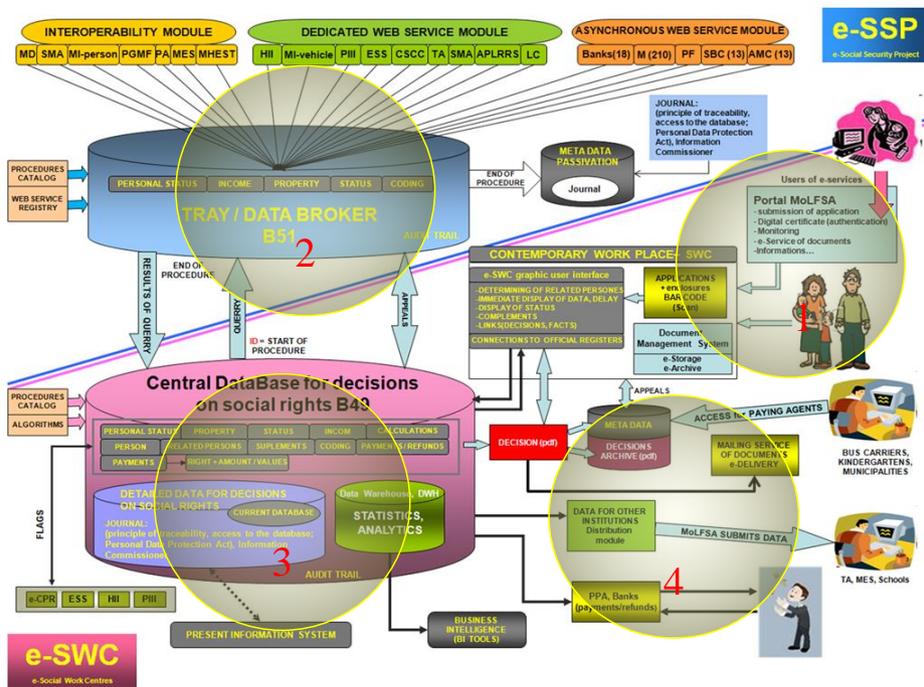
- decision making / means testing
- calculation of the benefits
- issuing of the decision

The decision-making process starts with the submission of an application for financial assistance or other transfer at the competent SWC. The SWC then decides (based on strict criteria and data provided within ISSWC) on the eligibility and the amount of transfer. On the basis of the decision of SWC, the Ministry responsible for finance then provides the payment to the beneficiaries.

The IT supported process basically consists of four parts, which are schematically illustrated in the figure below:

1. admission and examination of the application, data entry
2. acquisition of data
3. calculation and decision-making
4. adoption of a decision and issuing of decisions

Figure 7: Schematic presentation of the operation of the E-SWC system



It should be noted that the centers for social work in addition to decisions related the cash benefits also provide comprehensive assistance and support to individuals and families who are in need.

7. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AND NEW APPROACHES FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE GOVERNANCE IN PRC

- **stronger legislative framework at the level of central government;**

in the case of European countries, the most effective solution is a clear legislative framework at the central level, which at the same time provides a certain level of discretion to lower levels of governance
- **improvement of horizontal connections and cooperation at the level of provinces and regions;**

China is characterized by significant differences between provinces or regions. An exchange of good practices and learning between each other can help to improve the situation and provide the better achievement of the goals set in the field of the fight against poverty
- **provision of better IT support at the vertical and horizontal level;**

effective IT support in the decision-making process concerning entitlements to various cash benefits increases efficiency, reliability, transparency, accuracy and traceability. It provides simpler administrative procedures and at the same time also provides financial savings
- **introduction of one stop shop concept at the local level;**

the concept of a one-stopshop provides benefits for both users and providers (state). In addition to user-friendliness it enables more effective cooperation between various governmental and non-governmental departments and agencies.
- **providing conditions for greater autonomy and capacity for innovation at grassroots level;**

the circumstances under which they are providing assistance and support to various groups of the population may, in different areas, vary considerably between operators in the local environment. They should, in particular in the implementation of social services, have the appropriate autonomy and discretion on the basis of which, together with users and other stakeholders they should develop the most effective ways of combating poverty and social exclusion
- **ensuring a better staffing (professionalization) at the local community level;**

direct executive level is frequently confronted with the problems of professional staff, in particular in rural areas. Often, these needs can be solved by mobile teams and appropriate training of non-professional collaborators but over the long run appropriate help should be based on a network of skilled social workers.

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3.1.2 Governance Framework for Social Assistance Administration and Management Processes

Policy recommendation report

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|--|
| ACWF | All China Women Federation |
| CBSA | County Bureau on Social Assistance |
| CDPF | Chinese Disabled Person Federation |
| CNPC | Chinese National People's Congress |
| CWCA | China Working Commission on Aging |
| Dibao | Minimum Subsistence Allowance Program |
| FG | Five Guarantees Scheme |
| LTCI | Long-Term Care Insurance Program |
| MOCA | Ministry of Civil Affairs |
| MOF | Ministry of Finance |
| MOHRSS | Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security |
| MOHURC | Ministry of Housing and Urban and Rural Counstruction |
| NRMC | New Rural Medical Cooperative program |
| SA | Social Assistance |
| SASVG | Social Assistance for Specific Vulnerable Groups |
| SVG | Specific Vulnerable Groups |
| Tekun | Chinese Pronunciation of "Specific Vulnerable Groups" |
| Three None's | People with no ability to work, no source of income, and no statutory custodians to provide for them |
| Wubao | "Five Guarantee" in Chinese Pronunciation |
| RDOPRP | Rural Development Oriented Poverty Reduction Program |

1. Overview of State Institutional Framework on Social Assistance

1.1 Basic Governance Institutions of Social Assistance at Central Level

Social Assistance (SA) is the foundation and a vital component of social governance system of China. It is the responsibility of government to provide poor families with supports in order to protect them from risks in living and sustain their subsistence. Implementation of SA programs in China is a complicated process, in which various groups of beneficiary, with a hundred millions of people, are involved. For most of the programs, mean-test is needed to identify eligibility of applicants and make sure that the benefits can provide poor people with a living at certain level. In some programs, service provision is needed.

Management and administration system of SA includes basic legislation and supervision, policy making, finance, audit and administrative management in practice. Yet, in a country with 1.3 billion people, SA must deal with division of power and responsibility among governments ranging from the state, provinces, municipalities to counties. More importantly, management and administration system of SA, optimization of SA governance system of local and grassroots government is a critical and necessary process.

China has built up an open, comprehensive and diversified SA system for all the people. Since 1990s, following the progress of socialist market economy, China has gradually constructed a new SA system covering both the urban and rural residents. The new SA system is initially formed, regularized and systemized. As the last safety net for the society, Chinese SA protects subsistence of about a hundred millions of urban and rural people in difficulty. The amount of public investment and coverage of benefit have both reach a peak in respect to the history. Chinese SA does not only protect basic livelihood for people in difficulty, but also contributes to the progress and stability of socio-economy.

Until now, the highest legislative document of SA is the *Interim Measures on Social Assistance* that came into force in 2014. Before that, there had been several separate regulations on specific programs, such as rural Wubao, which are issued by the State Council. The *Interim Measures on SA* is a document issued through the *Order 649 of the State Council, PRC*, on 21st February 2014. The contents include *General Regulation, Dibao, Assistance to Special Vulnerable Group (Tekun), Assistance to Disaster Victim, Medical Assistance, Education Assistance, Housing Assistance, Employment Assistance, Temporary Assistance, Participation of Social Forces, Supervision and Management, Legal Responsibility and Appendix*, divided into 13 chapters, 70 items. It came into force on 1st May 2014. Following the *Measures*, the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MOCA) has issued a series of policies and directional opinions specifically on the Tekun Assistance, Temporary Assistance, *Emergency Assistance* and participation of social forces in recent years. The policies have forcefully promoted the development of SA system. Some provinces have also issued some provincial regulations or detailed implementation regulations on specific program within their legislative competence.

Among the authorities, MOCA is the fundamental and leading ministry of SA. As the fundamental ministry, MOCA and authorities on civil affairs (MOCA system) are in charge of statistics of SA. As the leading ministry, MOCA system coordinates and convenes meeting with the other authorities for SA. For instance, in the Inter-ministerial/department Conference on Social Assistance, which is organized by the State Council, MOCA system functions as secretariat unit for the Conference.

Main competence of the Department of SA in MOCA is drafting plans, policies and standards on SA, developing urban and rural SA system, organizing work on Dibao, Medical Assistance, Temporary Assistance, planning policies on Wubao, allocating and supervising SA fund transferred from the Ministry of Finance (MOF), participating in planning measures on housing, education and legislative assistance and managing SA information of the whole country. Under the Department of SA, there

are General Division, Division of Dibao, Division of Tekun and Temporary Assistance, Division of Medical Assistance and Division of Supervision. The Department of SA is the core authority on SA in China. It is responsible for managing daily affairs in SA field, coordinates other authorities and keeps all the parts in convergence with SA work.^[1]

Besides departments inside MOCA, there are other 7 authorities directly subordinate to or managed by MOCA are related to SA. The MOCA Center for Identifying Low-income Family is entrusted by the ministry to build and maintain national database on economic situation of low-income family. It is also responsible for searching and checking the information and researching policies on low-income family as well as other tasks, such as publicity, international exchange and training.^[2]

1.2 Inter-Ministry Coordination Mechanism

According to the Interim Measures on Social Assistance, the work of SA does not only involve MOCA. There are also other ministries especially in charge of different programs, such as MOHRSS, MOE, MOHURD as well as CDPF that is entrusted with administrative function. Since SA work involves many authorities, no matter in terms of SA content or implementation, a mechanism through which the authorities are coordinated is critical. There is a basic coordination mechanism of SA authorities in all the regions of China. By the end of 2014, each province has set up leading group on SA or inter-authorities coordination mechanism, and 256 municipalities (regions, lands) and 1869 counties (cities, districts and banners) have set up relevant coordination mechanism. All these lead to a more efficient and effective coordination among SA authorities.

The Multi-authority Conference on SA is a concrete form of inter-authority coordination mechanism. The State Council approved the proposal of setting up an Inter-Ministry Conference on Social Assistance by No.77[2013]SC document. The institution of this conference helps to reinforce the organization and management of SA work across the country, strengthen cooperation between authorities, solve important issues occurring in SA work and promote the development of Chinese SA system.

The function of the Multi-Authority Conference on SA varies by region. The conference is viewed by some people as a typical example of institutionalization. One representative example is found in the Lüyuan district of Changchun city. The authority of this district initiated the institution of Multi-authorities Conference on SA, under which 21 authorities such as the District Bureau of Civil Affairs and the District Bureau for Complaints are convened. The District Bureau of Civil Affairs is the leading authority and is responsible for convening the Conference. This way, the coordination of special SA issues and cases can be conducted by a higher level power and authorities can collectively study how to solve the problem. In case of normal issues, the grassroot authority can solve the problem; while in the case of a major issue, the problem can be solved by deliberation at the Conference. Besides devising a solution, the Conference also provides opportunity to discuss the allocations from the SA fund.

Coordination of institutions of SA or social aid is a vital field of inter-authority connection and cooperation. The first aspect of this is the coordination of SA programs. For instance, many current SA programs are targeted at Dibao recipients. One reason is that it required under the Interim Measures on SA. But another, more important reason is that a completely digital means-testing system is established in the Dibao program. This can lower the cost of information checking for many other SA programs. The second aspect of this articulation is that many different assistance or aid policies have the same problem. A typical example is the medical issue. For instance, rural medicare has a need for Dibao information as do the New Rural Cooperative Medical Insurance, the Disastrous Disease Insurance and Medical Assistance. The coordination issue for these programs should, actually be that of medicare, prevention and health care. The third aspect is the coordination of social

^[1] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/jg/jgsj/201507/20150700847753.shtml>

^[2] Data from MOCA <http://www.mca.gov.cn/article/jg/zsdw/201507/20150700847766.shtml>

assistance, social welfare and social aid, especially the coordination of the Dibao and the Poverty Reduction Programs.

1.3 Settings of SA Administration and Management at County and Township Level

In China, SA for urban and rural areas is established with systems of authority at different levels. The development of administrative agencies is a critical guarantee of the system, in which grassroot SA agencies in townships, streets and communities are at the forefront of SA work.

Although policies made by the State are universal, the administrative structure of different provinces is diversified. The institutions of local governmental agencies (their political nature and composition of staff) and their functions are managed by local government. Due to the different degrees of market economy, its diverse economic strength and the Government's attitude, SA works differently in different provinces. The gaps in standards for SA benefit vary among provinces and even between regions in the same province. The institution of agencies and management of SA are not equally developed, thus SA work in different areas is based on different models.

In the hierarchy of the Chinese governmental structure, a county is the lowest level at which there is a complete government with responsibility for local governance. A county government has a relatively complete competence in making decisions, managing human resources, finance and materials, administration and applying the rule of law. The general trends of China's reform of government is to extend the competence of county governments for governance.

Generally speaking, the structure of SA agencies across the country is the same. But in some regions, there is a Bureau of Social Assistance that is instituted as coporate body and subordinated to the Provincial Office or Municipal Bureau of SA to improve SA work. The departments for SA inside the MOCA system are, however, not always the same. For example, Dibao is the responsibility of Department of Social Assistance, whilst Wubao (Tekun) is sometimes the responsibility of the department of social welfare and Temporary Assistance is sometimes the responsibility of the Department of Disaster Relief. There is a means-testing center in the MOCA structure above the municipal level. At county level, there is an agency for children's welfare and one for disabled person's welfare. At the level of township, the management of SA varies significantly in different regions. But SA is usually administered by the MOCA authorities, whose staffs are different in composition and number. According to the Regulation on Wubao, governments of township are the subjects responsible for Wubao work. Therefore, in most of the townships, there are agencies for Wubao.

There isn't a universal administrative framework and structure for SA across China. The diversity of SA models results in shortcomings. But according to investigation across different regions, there is also an advantage derived from this diversity: it is good for encouraging innovation and competition.

The State has a universal standard on staff composition, functions and work conditions for CBSA. Standardisation makes it easy to manage the work. There is a consultancy platform in the administrative hall of CBSA, providing SA recipients with information about policies and procedures. There is national "complaint telephone number" (the phone number to receive complaints from the public) for people to oversee the SA staff and CBSA. CBSA is the competent authority that manages the SA for urban and rural areas. It is in charge of setting the strategy for SA in a county, extending the effect of SA and optimizing the function of SA, according to the development plan for the economy and society of the county.

In townships (streets), there is usually a SA work station. In some communities whose administrative level is at street level, there is a SA service center and that center is responsible for SA administration. Instituting a SA service center in a village (community) is flexible. It depends on the needs of the village. The development of the new socialist countryside and urbanization have made villages reduce in size. Therefore there is no need to establish a SA service center in every village. The task of the SA service center can be completed by SA work station whose responsibility covers

the village in need. SA staff are actually officials of township government. The number is usually 3 to 4.

There are nursing houses in Chinese rural townships and urban streets. Aged Wubao benefit recipients are the principal beneficiaries of nursing homes. Some better nursing homes also provide services to retired persons who pay for that service. Entry into, and exit from, nursing homes is voluntary. In many regions, there are honorable veterans nursing homes for aged veteran, whose beneficiaries must be eligible at a certain standard. Nursing homes are funded collectively, which includes expenditures on basic living and the medical cost for beneficiaries.

In some regions, there are welfare centers (homes) whose service is provided to beneficiaries of different townships. The service is standardized and regularized. There are many innovations in developing the welfare agencies. For example, there is a Social Welfare Office in the Datong Autonomous County of Ethnic Group of Tu and Hui, whose director is directly appointed by the county government for managing all the welfare agencies in the county.

1.4 Different Practices of County/Township for SA Service Provision

There are many good experiences in SA practice in different regions, especially at grassroot levels, for example: “one-stop” coordination service, “welfare district”, managing the grid of the “social assistance network” and a central nursing home for multi-township etc. Some of the experiences are promoted across the country, for example the “one-stop” coordination service.

“One-stop” coordination service: A “one-stop” coordination service is required under the *“Interim Measures on Social Assistance”*. It refers to coordination of multi-authorities, integration of SA resources, extension of service and cooperation between the different authorities at the different levels. Under this mechanism, a county MOCA authority and township government must establish a “one-stop” service platform in its administration hall. For implementation of the mechanism, there should be a unified SA logo, transparent SA policy, clear position division and telephone number for supervision. Eligibility, standard, procedure, timing of SA should all be defined and procedure such as accepting application, processing application, transferring processing, result feedback and following supervision should all be regularized. Besides, preservation of materials and management of archive is critical. At municipal or county level, logo, forms for application, processing, transferring processing and feedback should be all be unified. There should be service desk for processing all the applications and consultancy, ensuring that everything is well managed for the people.

At present, the one-stop mechanism is generally formed across the country. By the end of 2014, 18 provinces including Beijing and Tianjin had set one-stop service desks in every township or street, so that every person in adversity and difficulty can submit his or her application timely.

Gridding Management of “Social Assistance Network” : For identification of SA needs, there is service network of “emergency aid” set in the regions, whose management is gridded with a grid staff to identify the needs of people in difficulty. SA authority of Shandong province has a goal for the SA network: *connecting vertically administrative levels and horizontally governmental departments, coordinating the authorities and comprehensively covering the beneficiaries.*

Central Nursing House for Multi-township: In most regions, it is emphasized that township is the subject for SA. Then the phenomena occur: there is old-age nursing house in every township. But most Wubao beneficiaries prefer living independently, which results in the fact that numbers of beneficiaries living in nursing house are of small in scale. Then the level of management is lower and some kind of necessary service is even ignored. And this makes aged people don’t want to live in nursing house. In studying the cases, it was also found that there are models suitable for different local features. For instance, in Qinghai province, there are nursing houses providing service for beneficiaries from different townships and even different counties. There are also some good cases of participation of social forces.

Community Embedded SA Service: In some regions, SA is not separately conducted but integrated in to the macro MOCA system. SA integrated in community is need-oriented, which means it makes effort on discovering potential needs, extending coverage of benefit and satisfying community residents with good service. This sort of service base on community helps to cultivate community organization, lead residents to govern themselves with concept of “autonomy” and include SA beneficiaries into the community. Rural villages have traditions and cultures of mutual help inside community. The rural collective economic organizations also have certain kind of duty on assistance for collective members, such as individual support to Wubao people. Such community conditions, together with the introduction of new social work organization should be integrated with the official administrative management system, to formulate a new governance framework.

2. Characteristics of Governance Framework for SA Administration and Management

China is the largest developing country, transforming from a traditional society to a modern society, from a planned economy to a market economy, which shapes the characteristics of the governance framework for SA administration:

2.1 Social Assistance: A Growing and Expanding Area

For the past three decades, China was a developmental state. Its main foci and resources were concentrated in the area of economic development. Entering into the 21st century, the need for social security, social welfare as well as social assistance grew quickly in response to the population’s demands. On the one hand time is still needed for the SA governance system to accumulate greater experience, summarize its experiences to date, synthesize them and improve. In particular, the SA governance system has a distance to travel to achieve its specialization, institutionalization and legalization. More administrative resources are required for this process. On the other hand, the reform of overall governance framework of China is not yet completed it’s about half way. The general trends of the governance reform has built-up a partially responsive and decentralized government. In the context, of the size of county and with township government limited and even reduced, the size of the SA administration will not expand in near future in general as the SA task expands.

2.2 Targeting of SA Governance: Vast Geographic Size, Large Population Number, Disparity and Diverse Distribution, and Huge Administration Cost

Although government administration is the main part of SA governance, the special part of SA governance in the Chinese context is the role of community organizations (rural village committees, and urban residents’ committee). These two Committees play fundamental and irreplaceable roles in complementing government administration. When the capacity of township government is limited, the Committees will in practice share duties of the Government e.g. the primary identification of Dibao target groups is often done by the Committees. The fact that the Committees are familiar with local residents is an advantage. The challenge is ensuring the consistency of the designed policy orientation.

2.3 SA Governance Framework in China: Multi-Sector, Multi-Layer Structure

The SA Governance framework in China is a trans-sector, multi-layer and pluralist structure, which is consistent with the overall shape of the administration structure in China. The trans-sector governance framework reflects the drivers and uncertain demands of a transforming society. Multi-sector governance may have advantages of specialization, complementarity and a competitive model but it also increases the cost of coordination between sectors and may result in SA fragmentation and friction. The effective articulation between the different sectors is a great issue currently in China. A multi-layer governance framework also implies many possible problems in policy transmission among the different layers. It is necessary to clearly define the responsibility and resources between the central and local governmental layers.

2.4 Exploration of Pluralist Governance Framework for SA Administration and Management

Today work in SA administration and governance is much more than delivering fund benefits. It not only refers to very complex work such as family economic verification and digitalization, but also to inter-person communicative work such as caring and nursing, psychological health, social integration and activation, etc. In order to enhance the quality of social assistance and avoid the current disadvantages of the quantity of staff, many kind of experiments have been conducted in a pluralist way, such as service procurement from social organizations, participation of civil societies, government and private partnership building, involvement of community organizations, etc. Currently, the social assistance administration sectors are closely working with other administration sectors for policy articulation and coordination, for example with the social insurance sectors and the poverty reduction sectors.

2.5 Local Practice and Discretion of SA Administration and Management in County and Township

The County and township SA administration and management is at the lowest level of SA administration and management system in China, however, it is also at the frontier for SA policy implementation and service provision, directly facing and responding to the population's demands for SA.

The structure of governance for social assistance at county level, in general, is an extension of the upper level of governance. However, there is space for decision-making by county level government. The township level government also has a big discretion in policy explanation and implementation. At the village level, customary regulations and culture also affects the understanding and implementation of policies. The mobility of rural youth to the cities is another reason affecting the effectiveness of the social assistance program at village community levels.

When compared to the requirements for policy subjectivity in social assistance, complexity and hardship of the policy objectivity, and the expansion and increase in social assistance programs, the governance of social assistance at county and township level have limits in both in the quantity and professionalism of staff. These aspects should be main focus for capacity building of the entire social assistance administrative system.

3. Experiences, Gaps and Challenges of SA Administration and Management

3.1 Main Experiences

3.1.1 Multi-authority Conference

The multi-authority conference is a fundamentally important management system. It should be institutionalized and optimized. Social Assistance is a fundamental system for protecting poor people's basic living needs so there must be a coordination mechanism on SA that is directed by the government, coordinated by the MOCA authority, co-operating with other authorities and involving participation by social forces. The Multi-authority Conference is a mechanism that helps to solve concrete problems. It is strong and fast. The issues discussed in the conference are all realistic problems in SA. It is not possible to just wait for a solution provided under a law. In addition, the conference helps to resolve conflicts between the supervisor and the supervised. Decisions made in the conference result from deliberations among different stakeholders, representing a common understanding of the problem. Therefore, it is easy for stakeholders to follow the decision. For instance, the inter-authority joint conference in Changchun city has participation by 24 authorities and agencies such as the publicity department of Chanchun CPC Municipal Committee, the Municipal Sectors Reform Office and the Municipal Development and Reform Commission. Normally, the conference is held every year, focusing on planing significant systems and policies and improving institutions, mechanisms and measures. It is aimed at negotiating and coordinating the

different programs and policies, solving the main problems in SA, improving SA means-testing and establishing an inter-authority information sharing mechanism.

3.1.2 One-Stop Coordinative Mechanism

The one-stop coordinative mechanism is an important innovation that helps to build up timely, transparent, fair and regularized SA work. It also helps to coordinate the use of the various SA funds, introduce social forces into SA and integrate social and governmental resources. In addition, the mechanism is important as it can improve the political and social position of SA. Therefore, it is suggested to review the experiences of this mechanism and solve the problems taking place in SA. Exemplary cases should be collected for promoting the one-stop coordinative mechanism.

3.1.3 Social Assistance Network

The establishment of more grassroots SA networks should be intensified so as to proactively discover social problems. There should be clear and definite tasks and responsibilities at different points and levels in the SA network. The division of tasks and responsibilities will release staffs's energy for work and utilize the advantage of all the resources. Then the old way under which a benefit applicant had to travel to the authorities can be replaced by SA staff working to actively identify them. The Darhan Muminggan Joint Banner, subordinated to Baotou, has built up a SA network that connects the MOCA bureau, sumus/township and gacha/village. This network is based in one office plus three centers of sumus/township. At the same time, all the sumus/townships in the banner have included 85 village officials into their SA network through the "Ten Full Coverage Program". In this way, the eyes and ears of MOCA are extended to every village and every family, with the requirement that applicants must go to the authorities to apply for a benefit changed. The SA therefore becomes more exact and timely.

3.1.4 Support centre for Social Organizations Development

The support centre is a good way to develop social organizations. By developing through the support centre social organizations that are not eligible to registered as a legal corporate identity can receive help in the form of a workplace, equipment, services, training and an opportunity to participate in social development on basis of the support centre's regulations and procedures. Then social organizations in the support centre can better develop and participate in social management and development. Following the transfer of governmental functions, the community residents' intention to participate in the governance of their own community is getting stronger. Therefore their needs for public services is also getting greater and their requirements are becoming more fixed. The need for more social services needs social organizations, especially non-profit organizations, to participate in their management. The support centre of Changchun city is a typical example. Its functions are mainly consultancy, guiding, cultivation, developing, training, servicing, providing information, social practice, exchange and publicity. The process of the support centre is application – entry – developing – evaluation – exit. Funding of the support centre is mainly provided by regional financial authorities. Enterprises and society are encouraged to donate. Other legal approaches are also introduced, so that sufficient financial support can sustain the development of the support centre. There are several ways of managing the support centre. Mature support 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. Less mature support centres can primarily be managed by then MOCA authority and then, when matures, the management can be transferred to a professional agency. Support centres help to reduce the pressure on SA agencies.

3.1.5 Innovation and Exchange of Local and Grassroots Experiences

There are many experiences from local practices. They should be studied, exchanged and promoted. Currently, besides the inter-authority joint conference and the one-stop coordination mechanism, there are many localized models, such as welfare districts, charity supermarkets, one-stop medical assistances at appointed hospital and SA intergration in the community. In terms of management, the

service agencies are centralized, or centralized-divided, or regionalized. In some regions, they are managed by a public authority; in some cases, they are publicly sponsored but privately managed; and in other cases they are totally privately managed. In terms of administrative structures and staff composition, there are also many variations. In terms of cooperation, the participation of social organizations, social work organizations and community organizations is a new model. There is also government-enterprise cooperation and society-enterprise cooperation. On the basis that the central level legislation is complicated, many provinces have issued their own regulations on SA, most of which have many innovations.

3.2. Gaps and Challenges

3.2.1 Position and Mandate of SA agency at township level is not clearly defined

Formal employment in a grassroots agency is restricted, which results in inadequate work force and the frequent movement of staff. SA is a policy which requires staff to be familiar with its operation after a certain period of time. Frequent changes of jobs can have a direct impact on the professionalism of the services. Grassroot staffs of SA are usually not well educated. Many SA staffs are temporary worker employed in non-profit positions. In some regions, it is possible to employ staff but it is not easy for the staff to remain on their position for a long time. Thus the number of active SA staff is not sufficient. Pressure on them is great and their work is intensive, with a high risk of danger. This is another reason why there is frequent movement of staff at grassroots level.

In some townships, there is difficulty for the SA agency or institution to registered as a legal corporate entity. According to relevant policies, SA agencies must be legal corporate entities. But the township governments usually do not support them with an official formation (identity of employee). For funding, some is provided by the governmental budget, but some is pooled by the agencies. Thus it results in the number staff in the agency being insufficient, especially those who are professional in the SA work. In practice, shortage of staff and professionalism has really limited the development of SA agencies. The ratio of recipients to staffs in township nursing houses is usually about 1:10. The beneficiaries are mainly aged persons that can live independently. But seriously disabled persons and aged persons without ability and intelligence are sometime excluded from welfare services.

3.2.2 The shortage of work staff and normality of part-time job lead to little effect of SA work

Many current programs of SA have been developed since 2000. However, during the same period, grassroots agencies are facing the challenge of the fact that official registration is restricted while the work is increasing. Grassroot SA relates to thousands of families and every part of society. It must follow recipient changes every quarter and every month. Besides, the current Temporary Assistance program is designed to be able to proactively identify beneficiaries. All these require greater numbers and a higher quality of SA staff. At present, the number of staff for grassroots SA work is insufficient. Taking Shengli village of Da'an city as an example there is a village SA agency and a SA agency of Longquan Community, whose staff totals 6. All the staff are village or township officials undertaking a part-time job in SA. As China's market economy develops, the work of the grassroots SA increases more and more and the burden on the staff gets heavier and heavier. In addition some staff can not spend enough time on their work and they just complete the relevant work without focus. It is right to indicate that a shortage of staff, the scattering of time and energy and the increase in the amount of work is forming a dilemma and challenge to the Chinese SA program.

To increase their human resources, different regions have adopted different strategies. Bautou city mainly relies on the "Project of Public Interest Position and Social Worker", through which the SA authority employes temporary staff. Local SA service positions are not attractive to graduate college students. The active staff are also working with intensely. Since the basic staffs of SA are temporary, they vary in professionalism. In many cases, SA staffs have no clear division of the task. They just provide service and assistance to people when they are not busy on other affairs. As is known, SA is difficult work and much attention must be paid to it. The target groups of SA those in society who

are vulnerable. This requires SA staff to not only have good awareness of the policies, laws and regulations, but also to understand how to persuade, convince and explain issues to the beneficiaries. Sympathy and patience must be the key elements to inspire them to contribute to SA work.

3.2.3 Financial Constraints

For some SA programs, funding is insufficient. The medical assistance fund is limited by local financial affordability. Thus it is usually insufficient. Another reason for this is that there are not many approaches for collecting funds for SA. The participation of social organizations is not well developed. A multiple approach that involves government investment, social donations and charity has not yet been developed. In terms of developing infrastructure, especially after the new Tekun policy has been made, it is necessary to construct better infrastructure for fire control, care and alarms in nursing homes. But the current infrastructure of some nursing homes makes them ineligible for this requirement. There is great difficulty associated with SA work. SA staff usually need to go to rural villages to conduct means-testing or an investigation at the recipient's home. But there are no vehicles for this travel. Some staff just use their own private cars or take a taxi. In Inner Mongolia, where the distances between residences are large, conducting means-testing is more difficult. Sometimes only two families a day can be means-tested due to long distance between them. Thus expensive transportation costs and the lack of a specific vehicle makes conducting means-testing hard.

3.2.4 Information Sharing among Authorities

Information is not shared among authorities in a good way. The three indicators of eligibility for a Dibao benefit are residency (Hukou), income and assets. In many regions, there are databases of family economic information at district and municipal level. However, the information managed by some authorities is not used. The discussion on this issue is incomplete. For instance, information about house, car, financial authority, educational authority and information of salary, old-age insurance, retirement subsidy and internal retirement of employees of organizations directly subordinate to government are not registered in the database. And the information often does not fully represent reality. At present, digitalized information is made by copying information without its real-time updating. For instance, the information about contributions to old-age insurance in Baotou city is without the names of employers, the dates contribution were made and the basis for contributions. In addition applicant's information is sometimes checked twice, which is a duplication.

4. Preliminary Policy Recommendations

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:

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

4.3 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.

4.4 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.

4.5 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.

4.6 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.

4.7 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.

4.8 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.

3.1.2 Governance framework for Social Assistance administration and management process

Policy recommendation report

Adrianos - Pavlos Tetas, EU-China SPRP expert

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|------------|---|
| API | = Single Parent Allowance (Allocation Parent Isolé) |
| ECB | = European Central Bank |
| EEA | = European Economic Agreement |
| EFSF | = European Financial Stability Facility |
| ESM | = European Stability Mechanism |
| EU | = European Union |
| GDP | = Gross Domestic Product |
| GMI | = Guaranteed Minimum Income |
| IDIKA S.A. | = Electronic Governance of Social Security, Société Anonyme |
| IKA | = Social Insurance Institute (Idryma Kinonikon Asfaliseon) |
| IMF | = International Monetary Fund |
| IT | = Information Technology |
| KEA | = Social Solidarity Income (Kinoniko Eisodima Allileggiis) |
| NAV | = Labor and Welfare Administration (Nye arbeids- og velferdsetaten) |
| NGO | = Non-Governmental Organization |
| NPC | = National People's Congress |
| OAED | = Manpower Employment Organization (Organismos Apasholis Ergatikou Dynamikou) |
| OCMW/CPAS | = Public Centers for Social Welfare (Openbaar centrum voor maatschappelijk welzijn/ Centre public d'action sociale) |
| OECD | = Organization for the Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OMC | = Open Method of Co-ordination |
| PIN | = Personal Identification Number |
| PRC | = People's Republic of China |
| RMI | = Minimum Integration Income (Revenu Minimum d'Insertion) |
| RSA | = Active Solidarity Income (Revenu de Solidarité Active) |
| SA | = Social Assistance |
| SEK | = Swedish Krona (currency) |
| SWT | = Social Community Teams (Sociale Wijkteams) |
| TEU | = Treaty on the EU |
| TFEU | = Treaty on the Functioning of the EU |
| US | = United States of America |

DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

A couple of clarifications will be made as regards to the basic notions mentioned in this report, for the sake of its integrity.

Social assistance as a term is going to be clearly defined in order to avoid misconceptions and misunderstandings when dealing with the SA system in the PRC and SA in the EU countries. Thus, SA refers to the delivery of services and the provision of benefits to persons, who for any of a number of reasons, are unable to provide themselves with a decent standard of living.

The governance of the SA of one country, therefore, should be interpreted as the exercise of the political, economic and administrative authority necessary to manage a nation's SA¹⁵. It should be stressed, however, that while the term "social assistance" is officially used in the PRC, in the EU there may be other terms that are used to describe, at least partially, the same notion, such as

¹⁵ Adapted from OECD, 2006, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series Applying Strategic Environmental Assessment: Good Practice Guidance for Development Co-operation, OECD, Paris.

“welfare”, “social welfare”, “social solidarity” as well as more inclusive terms such as “social protection” or “social cohesion”.

Another concept, directly linked to the above-mentioned terms, and widely used in EU official documents, is the so-called ‘social exclusion’. Social exclusion refers to a multidimensional process of social rupture, detaching groups or individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live¹⁶. People experiencing poverty are usually unable to bridge this gap on their own.

1. THE GOVERNANCE OF THE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AT THE EU LEVEL

At present, the European Union is comprised of 28 member states. A number of policies, such as the trade policy and the fisheries policy are formulated at the EU level; meaning that the EU institutions set the rules in the policy area and the member states are bound by those rules and must implement them. However, social assistance does not belong to this category of policy. Social assistance policy decisions remain strictly at the national level. Therefore, there are 28 national social assistance schemes in the EU.

However, since 1999 the fight against poverty and social exclusion is officially recognized as an objective of the EU’s social policy. Since then, while the social assistance policies remain national policies, a number of mechanisms have been established in order to co-ordinate the efforts of the Member States in order to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

1.1 Tackling Social Exclusion and Poverty

Article 9 TFEU of the Lisbon Treaty mainstreams the struggle against poverty and social exclusion as a central concern of the European Union. It states that “In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion and a high level of education, training and protection of human health”.

Article 11 TUE of the Treaty stresses the importance of stakeholder involvement. It talks about giving “citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action” and maintaining “an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society”.

The Europe 2020 Strategy¹⁷ puts social inclusion at the heart of the EU’s current priorities. It emphasizes enhanced socio-economic coordination and the incorporation of inclusive growth as one of the EU’s three key priorities, alongside smart and sustainable growth. It includes, for the first time an EU headline target on for the reduction of poverty and social inclusion.

The Europe 2020 Strategy also emphasizes consultation and involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the Strategy. The Commission Communication which underpins the Strategy emphasizes a partnership approach which “should extend to EU committees, to national parliaments and national, local and regional authorities, to social partners and to stakeholders and civil society so that everyone is involved in delivering on the vision.”

1.2 The Case of the Open Method of Co-ordination

In relation to social inclusion there is a common EU objective¹⁸ emphasizing that, in order to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion, it is necessary to ensure “that social inclusion policies are well-coordinated and involve all levels of government and relevant actors, including people experiencing poverty, that they are efficient and effective and mainstreamed

¹⁶ Adapted from Hilary Silver, Social Exclusion: Comparative Analysis of Europe and Middle East Youth, Middle East Youth Initiative Working Paper (September 2007), p.15

¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy_en

¹⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=750&langId=en>

into all relevant public policies, including economic, budgetary, education and training policies and structural fund programs.” These objectives are pursued through the Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Social Inclusion (Social OMC).

The open method of co-ordination is an intergovernmental method that rests on soft law mechanisms such as guidelines and indicators, benchmarking and sharing of best practice. This means that there are no official sanctions for laggards. Rather, the method's effectiveness relies on a form of peer pressure and naming and shaming, as no member state wants to be seen as the worst in a given policy area. Generally, the OMC works in stages. Firstly, the Council of Ministers agrees on (often very broad) policy goals. Secondly, Member States then transpose guidelines into national and regional policies. Thirdly, specific benchmarks and indicators to measure best practice are agreed upon. Finally, results are monitored and evaluated.

The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is used by Member States to support the definition, implementation and evaluation of their social policies and to develop their mutual cooperation. A tool of governance based on common objectives and indicators, the method supplements the legislative and financial instruments of social policy. It is part of the implementation of the process of coordination of social policies, particularly in the context of the renewed Lisbon Strategy. The OMC process is structured as three-year cycles, leading to national reports which are synthesized by the Commission and the Council in a joint report. The proper conduct of the process is reviewed periodically by the Social Protection Committee in partnership with representatives of civil society and the social partners.

Through the Social OMC – and in collaboration with the Social Protection Committee – the EU provides a framework for national strategy development for social protection and social investment, as well as for coordinating policies between EU countries on issues relating to poverty and social exclusion, health care, long-term care and pensions.

2. THE CASE OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC'S ACTIVE SOLIDARITY INCOME (RSA)

After broad consultation with stakeholders and experiments in 34 municipalities and 15,800 households¹⁹, the law of 1 December 2008 introduced the Active Solidarity Income (Revenu de Solidarité Active - RSA) nationwide in France. It became effective in June 2009. The law also reformed inclusion policies. RSA substituted the RMI and the API. The RSA can be seen as a cornerstone of the present French anti-poverty policy, in combination with the minimum wage and the employment subsidies taking the form of reduced social security contributions.

2.1 Policy and Eligibility

The Active Solidarity Income reform set out to:

- Combat poverty, including in-work poverty — the RSA serves both as a minimum social income for those who have no earnings at all and as a top-up for those whose jobs do not provide adequate income.
- Encourage access to, or a return to, an occupational activity.
- Assist the social inclusion and employment of RSA benefit by rethinking the insertion mechanisms.
- Simplify France's minimum social income schemes — the RSA combines two previous social minima: the Minimum Integration Income and the Single Parent Allowance.

The RSA scheme is equivalent to a negative income tax. A basic benefit of 513.88 (for a single adult) or 770.82 Euros (for a couple with no children) or 924.99 for a couple with one child applies to claimants who do not work. For those who work, earnings are topped up by an in-work RSA

¹⁹ <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/094000222/index.shtml>

supplement in such a way that 62% of their net earnings are exempted. So those re-entering employment see an immediate financial benefit. The implicit tax rate is set so as to make the benefit expire as the claimant’s earnings approach the minimum wage for a single person, or 1.4 times the minimum wage for a couple. In comparison with the previous schemes, the RSA focuses more on the lowest income group and, above all, strengthens the work incentive component.

Table 1 The RSA Benefit in euros (September 2016)

| Number of Children | Single persons | Couples |
|--|----------------|---------|
| 0 | 535,17 | 802,76 |
| 1 | 802,76 | 963,31 |
| 2 | 963,31 | 1123,86 |
| Per child or additional person | 214,07 | 214,07 |
| <i>Note: These amounts may be increased, under certain conditions, for single parents or single to be parents.</i> | | |

Source: “Allocations familiales” website, <https://www.caf.fr/>

To support the reforms, local authorities have been provided with a number of instruments that they are required to use:

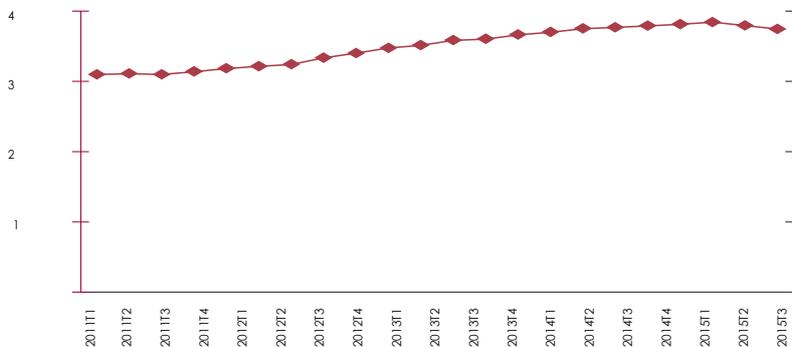
- The general orientation agreements govern the way in which beneficiaries are referred to various organizations and actors at the local level. This implies a good initial local identification of benefit claimants’ problems, which may vary according to the type of area (rural, urban, industrial, deindustrialized etc.).
- The territorial insertion pacts are commitments by the various partners to coordinate and pool their activities in line with the shared objectives for the area concerned.
- A principle applying across all the employment and social support bodies is the designation of a personal advisor for each benefit claimant for the full duration of the social insertion process.
- The State provides financial support to facilitate RSA recipients’ access to employment. Initially, help may be needed to cover the cost of transport, clothing, childcare etc.

As soon as a person applies for the RSA, his or her personal situation is also examined, taking into account the distance from the labor market, housing, health and possible social problems. Depending upon that analysis, the person is directed towards an appropriate body that can accompany his or her insertion. Today, two types of insertion path are clearly distinguished in the law: the “employment path” and the “social path”. Most of the local authorities at the municipal level (départements) are now looking at a stronger linkage between social support and employment insertion.

2.2 The Financing of the RSA

The RSA is financed by the local authorities, partly on account of their own funds, partly on account of contributions provided by the State to the local authorities. A later amendment to the legislation made clear that the state compensates the local authorities for the payments made for the RSA scheme. The financing of this new system is based, on the one hand, on the transfer of resources currently devoted to other schemes and on the other hand to the introduction in 2009 of a new tax of 1.1% on all revenues from inheritance and investment as well as from income and capital gains of all kinds received by private individuals taxed in France and subject to a set of social security contributions intended to cover the deficit of the social schemes.

Figure 1: Quarterly evolution of the base cash payments paid by for the RSA (billions of euros)



Source: “Allocations familiales” website, <https://www.caf.fr/>

2.3 The Implementation of the RSA.

The financial crisis and the slowing of the French economy has led to a steady increase in the number of claimants under the RSA scheme. At the end of 2013 the number of RSA beneficiaries had reached 2.3 million households (4.9 million people) or 7% of the total population²⁰. More recent data show that the total number of the RSA household beneficiaries was around 1.871 million in June 2016²¹

Bargain and Doorlay²² study the effect of the pre-2009 French social assistance program, the RMI, on labor supply, and they find a drop between 5 and 9% in the employment rate of young high-school dropouts. The introduction of RSA restored financial incentives to work and alleviated the inactivity trap. A study²³ has been devoted to people who, even if eligible for the RSA in 2011, did not get the transfer or the total amount available. The article addresses the problem of non-take up, estimating that more than 400,000 people would have exited poverty if RSA had been received by all potential beneficiaries.

On the other hand, some economists, have expressed their disagreement with the RSA scheme, stating that overall it will have a negative effect on the supply of labor. Moreover, the compensations to the municipalities by the state for their expenses on the RSA scheme are often delayed, leading to tensions between the central government and the local authorities, especially those that have limited funding resources. The special RSA tax has created some political tensions and adjustments to the implementation of the tax scheme have been agreed.

A relatively recent simulation²⁴ found that the RSA reform, when compared to the previous mechanisms, produces a long run reduction of poverty of almost 1.6 percentage points, corresponding to about 400,000 families out of poverty and a long run reduction of total costs by 4 billion euros.

Overall, the French active solidarity model is an ambitious model, aiming to practically eliminate poverty from the very poor households and eradicate in-work poverty at the same time, by setting standards at the national level. It is based on partnerships between the local authorities and the central government and between the above-mentioned and a large number of actors at local level.

²⁰ Les foyers bénéficiaires du RSA fin décembre 2013. In: Cnaf, RSA conjoncture, n° 5

²¹ Caisse nationale des Allocations familiales, Conjoncture RSA, no 15, Sept. 2016

²² Bargain O, Doorlay K (2013) Putting structure on the RD design: social transfers and youth Inactivity in France, IZA Discussion Paper No. 7508

²³ Domingo P, Pucci M (2012) Les non-recourants au RSA. In: CAF L’essentiel, n°124

²⁴ Canova et al. IZA Journal of European Labor Studies (2015) 4:17

3. THE CASE OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS’ “PARTICIPATION SOCIETY”

Compared to most Member States of the EU, the Netherlands has a relatively low rate of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Particular risk groups of poverty in this country are children, single-parent households with minors, and single-person households. The consequences are diverse. They have an impact not only on income, but also on health, education and labor market prospects.

The Participation Act of 1 January 2015 merged three Acts that addressed those who are most distant from the labor market: the Act on Work and Welfare (Social Assistance; WWB), the Act on Income Provision and Reintegration of Young Handicapped (WAJONG), and the Act on Sheltered Work Places (Wet Sociale Werkvoorziening).

The Netherlands has an adequate social security system providing a broad package of benefits and services. It is thanks to this comprehensive ‘safety-net’ that poverty in the Netherlands is relatively low. Though unintended, social security systems can at times also be experienced as complex, rigid or even ambivalent, both by service providers (be it public or private) and client users. This can result in undesired consequences like delays in the delivery or payment of services, non-take up of benefits, and unfamiliarity with (regulations regarding) certain services, exclusion of certain groups and may even increase user dependency.

The ambition of the Dutch government is to obtain a participatory, inclusive and self-sufficient society and it aims to ensure this by stimulating people’s individual and communal responsibilities and the strength and self-reliance to find and create solutions. In line with this ambition, fighting poverty, social exclusion and debt are priorities for the Dutch government.

The central government decided to decentralize large parts of the social security system to municipalities – known as “The Decentralizations” – since they, being in direct contact with the people, are more capable of understanding and analyzing someone’s situation, their needs and capacities and as such stimulate and facilitate someone’s ownership, responsibility and potential to find a sustainable solution. In line with the decentralization, 90 % of the extra funding the government made available to combat poverty and indebtedness is granted to municipalities.

Besides this ambition to empower people and enhance self-reliance, the goal of the decentralizations is also to prevent people falling through the cracks or getting out of sight. Tasks that were previously fragmented over different agencies have now become the (legal) responsibility of municipalities such as youth-care, community shelters, labor participation, poverty, social inclusion and debt relief and additional groups have been placed among the ‘social jurisdiction’ of municipalities, such as youth, chronically ill, and the elderly. Municipalities are now predominantly in charge of the assessment procedure and have been granted – to a great extent – discretion over the type, level and duration of services to be provided in a given circumstance and are legally required that specialized services are tailored to the individual or family in question. With the decentralizations it is expected that municipalities will create a bridge between the ‘world of systems’ and the ‘experience of the target group’ and find more adequate, timely, effective, efficient and sustainable solutions – thereby contributing to the empowerment, participation and self-reliance of the individual.

What are the priorities of this policy? Work is seen as the best antidote to poverty, but this means that it must provide an adequate income and must promote resilience and self-reliance. In return for social benefits, the municipality can require the beneficiary to undertake voluntary work. Preventing the escalation of problems and indebtedness and promoting the social inclusion of children are other priorities. The government wants an effective and efficient division of responsibilities among (as well as the involvement of) the different stakeholders: employers and employees, municipalities and NGOs.

3.1 The Response of the Municipalities: the Social Community Teams (SWTs)

At the local level, the idea of a participation society is being implemented through Social Community Teams (SWT's). Their role is not specifically to combat or prevent poverty (although this is an important part of their work), but rather to ensure an integrated approach to care, welfare, participation and youth work.

SWTs are teams consisting of a broad range of people from various disciplines such as social workers, family coaches, people with expertise in healthcare, education or debt- relief who jointly operate at the community level to provide and coordinate services to people who, albeit temporarily, need help. Parties involved – either in a team or as a network of cooperative partners – are from both the public and the private sector (such as civil society organizations). There is no single blueprint for a Social Community Team (SWT). Depending on the local demographics, social dynamics, political priorities and available expertise, a SWT can be structured in various ways and even evolve over time. Some municipalities even work with multiple SWTs with different focal points responding to local circumstances.

A SWT functions as a single, central and easily approachable access point for the community regarding all sorts of questions – be it youth-care, income, employment or health. A SWT could be located in a specific building – like a community house – where anyone can enter with a question or request for help. Sometimes the SWT has no fixed location, but its members are dispersed over various locations – like schools, shelters, hospitals, sporting clubs or parks – where they can easily mingle with various groups within the community, proactively approach people and simultaneously be easily approachable. It could also be that the first contact between a person and the SWT is not established directly but by referral. For instance, a civil society organisation, school principal or local police officer may refer or advise someone to contact the SWT – or vice versa – advise (a member of) the SWT to visit someone. In any way, the SWT is intended to function as a single first ‘entry’ point for people. As such, someone does not have to approach various institutions, repeat his or her (often vulnerable) story, deal with multiple contact persons and bureaucratic processes or remain isolated. There is one single entry point.

The figure below illustrates through which institutions contact with an SWT can be established.

Figure 2: How can an SWT (Social Community Teams) be contacted



Source: Adapted from “Peer Review on Social Community Teams against Poverty, The Netherlands 2016”, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1>

Once this contact has been made, the first goal is to enable and assist the ‘person in need’ to find his or her own solution – with the help of the person(s)’ own social network, volunteers or a civil

society organisation. This first contact often revolves around the need for clarification about rules and regulations, information about government services and assistance in the application thereof or may entail helping someone regain oversight of a difficult situation and set up a plan. The SWT initially aims to help someone regain faith, take responsibility and by means of self-reliance make specialized (government) support or services redundant. When this is feasible, the first contact could remain the only contact. When this seems infeasible, the SWT enters a next phase: assessment of the case – from an integrated approach – whereby both generalists and specialists are involved. Usually this process is structured based on one of these two models:

Figure 3: Models of assessment by the SWTs (Social Community Teams)



Source: Adapted from “Peer Review on Social Community Teams against Poverty, The Netherlands 2016”, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1>

In these two most common models, the SWT consists of a group of professionals from municipalities, social workers and/or volunteers who are considered so called ‘generalists’: rather than being specialized in a specific field (like health or finance). They aim to look at situations from a more general and holistic perspective. As described above, during the first contact between the SWT and a person, the main role of the generalist is usually to listen to someone’s needs, get an overview of the situation, provide information or assist in ‘simple requests’. Some SWTs do not yet speak of a person in need when further or frequent contact does not seem necessary. When the generalists consider further need for support, they consult the specialists (often referred to as the experts).

In model 1, unlike the generalist in the SWT, the Team of Experts consists of a fixed group of specialists from various fields such as medical experts, debt counsellors, youth workers, etc. On a periodic basis, the generalists from the SWT and specialists of the Team of Experts come together to discuss the various cases. Depending on the severity of the problem and the possibilities of the generalist to find a solution, a case can be assigned to one or more of the experts to offer specialized support. The SWT and the Team of Experts are as such two cooperative teams who co-decide jointly on the cases.

Model 2 differs in two main ways. The first difference is that instead of a Team of Experts there is a Network of Experts. Rather than a fixed group of specialists who periodically discuss the cases with the generalists, the SWT has access to a network of organizations specialized in a specific field which they consult – either for advice or to transfer a case to. Depending on the organisation, a different specialist may be involved each time. The second difference is that in model 2 the generalists decide when and to what extent to consult or involve a specialist.

Social Community Teams are not exclusively established to address poverty. Many SWTs were initially set up to meet the increasing demand for community support and care – predominantly related to health. With the decentralizations the integrated approach has become the main focus which, in essence, means that one looks beyond a single need – like poverty – and vice versa – aims to signal poverty when dealing with issues in other domains. A majority of professionals indicate that poverty-related needs play a predominant role in their interaction with clients. By means of illustration, according to a recent survey conducted among social workers, it was reported that in at least 50 % of interactions with clients, poverty played a role. 43 % further indicated that poverty may not be the

primary reason for the application for a social service or an indication of need, but indirectly affected the situation.

Further consultation with policy makers from municipalities indicated that these numbers can be even higher in the so called ‘multi-problem’ families or situation. When there is more than one problem, poverty or indebtedness is nearly always part of the problem. Vice versa this also means that poverty and debt never come alone. In some municipalities the experience of the SWTs is that 80 % of their clients have financial and/or poverty related problems. Considering the rise in both the percentage in, and complexity of, poverty this emphasizes the significance of applying an integrated approach and at the same time stresses the importance of incorporating sufficient expertise in the field of poverty within the SWT.

3.2 The Financing of the “Participation Society”

The ‘Participation Act’ devolves large parts of the social security system and of long-term care - care of the elderly, youth services, job retraining - to municipalities, at which level they are expected to be better tailored to local circumstances. The idea is that the local level is better equipped to strengthen a feeling of ownership, responsibility and capability because it is much closer to the people. This transfer of services to the municipal level is also motivated by budgetary concerns. Anticipating efficiency gains resulting from the transfer, the budget is on average reduced by 30 %.

The transfer of social assistance provisions and active labor market policies to the municipalities is not a recent phenomenon in the Netherlands. It started earlier, in 2004. The amount of funding for social assistance that municipalities should receive is based on an estimate of the expected number of social assistance claimants in the municipality. The formula uses the past number of recipients and, in larger municipalities, other demographic and regional labor market factors as well. Municipalities have to close the gap if they spend more, but they may keep money that is not used and transfer the remaining funds to their next year’s budget.

3.3 The Implementation of the Policy

Many municipalities in the Netherlands already work with social community teams. Some have been doing so for a relatively long time, others have just started. Some municipalities have multiple teams, while others have none. Movisie – a knowledge institute in the social domain – conducted a survey among 224 municipalities (56 % of total municipalities) in 2014 to capture the ‘State of Play’ in the Netherlands before the final implementation of the Decentralizations. The report, published at the end of 2014, summarizes the situation in the Netherlands as follows²⁵:

- Progress: 69 % of the municipalities work with SWTs and 17 % will start doing so in the near future. 14 % have no plans to do so yet. The municipalities who do not intend to set up a SWT plan to organize care and support differently or will continue with their current policies.
- Use: The larger municipalities have clearly made more progress in working with SWTs: such teams are active in 93 % of the G32 (The network representing 37 mid to large municipalities in the Netherlands: >20.000 inhabitants)
- Coverage: most municipalities have one SWT, sometimes even still in the form of a pilot. Working with such teams does not yet cover the entire municipality.
- Preparations: 55 % of the municipalities prepared a quantitative neighborhood analysis before starting to work with a SWT. There is a clear distinction between large and smaller municipalities: 92 % of the G32 performed a neighborhood analysis prior to starting, compared to only 48 % of the smaller municipalities.

²⁵ Movisie (2014), Sociale (wijk)teams in vogelvlucht. State of the art najaar 2014.

- Focus: The SWTs are designed to focus on various forms of ‘needs’. The most frequently mentioned model is a broad comprehensive team in which all requests for support are handled. Another frequently occurring model is a broad comprehensive team that focuses exclusively on complex or multiple problems. A large majority of municipalities applies one model for all SWTs, only 6 % use more than one model. 39 % of SWTs focus largely on simple questions.
- Composition of life-domains: in the composition of the SWTs the life-domain of (mental) health is overrepresented. For instance, MEE (a Dutch organisation for the support of disabled or chronically ill persons) is represented in 86 % of the municipalities. More than 50 % of the teams include a district nurse and in another 31 % of the cases the teams cooperate with district nurses. Justice and Housing, for instance, are only represented in approximately 10 % of the SWTs. Public Social Services are said to be involved in 54 % of the SWTs. (The overrepresentation of health-related workers can be explained by the fact that the earlier formations of SWTs occurred in this sector. It was only later that municipalities decided to broaden the scope and workings of SWTs to other life-domains).
- Access: in 86 % of the municipalities clients are referred to the team by their doctor (general practitioner), the district nurse or other service providers. In 76 % of the municipalities citizens can present themselves directly to the team. 67 % of the municipalities indicated that the SWT also proactively reaches out to citizens.
- Agreements about input, output and outcome: 70 % of the municipalities made an agreement with the SWT about their effort, for instance the number of full time equivalents (input). More than half of the municipalities agreed on target definitions in terms of social change (outcome). Increasing (labor) participation of citizens does not rate very highly as an objective. In 20 % of the municipalities output agreements have been made with the teams. (It has to be noted that in 2015 SWTs seemed to pay more attention to this and have incorporated ‘client participation’ as one of their main objectives. It is still an ongoing development though).
- Evaluation and monitoring: Municipalities indicated a belief that evaluation is important. In at least 98 % of the cases they plan to conduct evaluations of the SWT. However, most of the time they do not yet know how to organize this. 39 % of the municipalities that indicated a wish to monitor the SWT, did not yet know how this should happen or were still developing a method for monitoring.

There is one publication with details the results of the SWT’s so far, called “Transition Committee Social Domain”. It analyzes 17 practical cases. Based on the documented cases as well as various consultations with relevant stakeholders – such as municipalities, civil society organizations, and research institutes – the following can be regarded as the main and broadly recognized results and outcomes:

- Poverty and debt-related problems are being signaled earlier as questions arising from different life-domains are discussed by a diverse team of professionals. Financial problems hence come to the surface even when another ‘problem’ caused the initial contact.
- Because SWTs are rapidly deployable and flexible, problems or the escalation thereof are more often prevented and waiting times can be reduced.
- A higher take-up of social benefits due to greater reach of the target-group.
- Cooperation with civil society organizations enables broader and faster outreach to previously ‘invisible poor’ as these organizations operate close to the people, conduct house visits and/or work at places visited by the target group (like food banks which hand out food packages to deprived people/families).
- The target group finds SWTs more approachable than ‘official governmental institutions’ and hence experience less barriers – like shame or the feeling of being misunderstood – to timely asking for help.

- The engagement of ‘experts by experience’ enables SWTs to better emphasize with the target group, signal and find sustainable solutions to poverty and reflect upon their strategies.
 - Cooperation with diverse local partners enables a broader and less bureaucratic supply of services and solutions. Retailers for instance are often eager to provide services in kind, sporting facilities may offer free participation for poor children or financial institutions may encourage their employees to assist families with debts.
 - Citizens in need do not have to repeat their situation multiple times to various professionals. One central access point can lead to one plan for one person or family, which is coordinated by one case manager. This diminishes ‘poverty fatigue’ where being poor feels like a full-time job having to deal with multiple institutions, experts and forms.
 - SWTs are able to stimulate the individual’s power to take charge over finding sustainable solutions. Because of their direct, personal and face to face contact with people, a stimulating relationship can be established to help someone take back control and become less dependent on institutional support.
- However, there are a few challenges that the SWTs are facing, especially in the area of poverty reduction:
- Many SWTs indicate that they lack specialization in the field of financial problems/poverty although they experience that a majority of the target group has financial problems.
 - Related to the above a predominant challenge is how to determine the qualifications that are needed to signal and understand/analyze the situation of people experiencing poverty and how to develop the necessary competences in the teams to do so.
 - Once poverty has been detected and understood, one needs to have the competencies, tools and room to empower people to pull themselves out of poverty and stimulate social inclusion. How to do so, remains a great challenge: What does a SWT need to know or possess to co-create solutions with the concerned person(s)?
 - SWTs experience the legislation and communications about the application and eligibility of financial and fiscal services (such as income support, tax-benefits and remission) to be complicated and not easily understandable by the target group – or are not fully acquainted themselves. According to some SWTs a large part of their time is spent on assisting people in their (digital) application for financial or fiscal benefits, seeking information about or explaining regulations and legislation applicable to their clients.
 - Another experience of the SWTs is that the current legal framework of government services, such as debt-relief, inadequately relates to the needs of support. Due to increasing waiting times or strict entry requirements (often not prescribed by law but by local policies) people are caught between a rock and a hard place and come to the SWT for help.
 - Ideal interventions would prevent poverty or at least prevent an escalation of financial problems. SWTs experience a challenge in working more preventatively as most cases come to the surface when poverty already plays a large or long-term role.
 - How to reach the ‘invisible poor’ – who do not come out and speak about their financial problems or are not signaled (timely) by professional or institutions of care?
 - Unemployment, low work intensity and low income are strong factors when it comes to poverty. SWTs experience a lack of mandate, relevant partners and/or expertise to invest in more or higher employment. For instance, some SWTs are entitled to provide income support themselves where others are merely allowed to assist in the application thereof. Or some have direct contact with employment agencies where others are instructed to direct their clients to the regular social service.

- Lack of macro-level influence: SWTs point out they would like to have more influence on a higher level in aspects affecting the social problems of their target group, like social housing. SWTs are expected to provide services whereas in some areas they believe that if on a higher level things were planned differently there would be no need for these services.

The recent Dutch participation society model gives us an insight of the progress of a developed and of high quality social assistance scheme using innovative ways to cut back costs, delegate authority to the municipalities and push more people into work. It is, in fact, a transition from the welfare state based on equality and collective solidarity to the participation society based on individual responsibility and freedom of choice.²⁶

4. THE CASE OF THE KINGDOM OF BELGIUM'S PUBLIC CENTERS FOR SOCIAL WELFARE (OCMW/CPAS)

The most important local actor in the combat of poverty and social exclusion in Belgium is the “Public Center for Social Welfare” (OCMW/CPAS), a public institution that exists in each Belgian municipality. An OCMW/CPAS is an autonomous local government body with a democratically composed council, reflecting the balance of power in the municipal council. The legal mission of the OCMW/CPAS states: “Every person is entitled to social services so as to enable him/her to live a life corresponding to human dignity”. Every citizen of Belgium has the right to social assistance and social integration, according to the Belgian Constitution.

Each municipality has, to complement the municipal council, a separate OCMW/CPAS council, appointed by the municipal council, which in turn is directly elected. OCMW/CPAS councils are directly elected in the municipalities with language facilities of Voeren, Comines-Warneton and the six of the Brussels Periphery. The council is composed of 9 to 15 members depending on the population of the municipality.

The OCMW/CPASs are responsible to implement at federal level the regulated minimum income scheme for people of active age. The minimum income scheme is financed partially by the federal government and by the local government. This funding mechanism creates national and local solidarity and responsibility. Besides social assistance, the OCMW/CPAS have the mission to organize the necessary services at local level to guarantee a life in dignity for every inhabitant of the municipality. The OCMW/CPAS can decide to organize these services itself or to delegate the implementation to a third partner. But the OCMW/CPAS always stays responsible for the coordination of the social services. Examples of social services provided by the OCMW/CPAS include financial and material help, medical help, legal advice, psychological and social support, guidance to socio-cultural activities, etc. They can set up services such as homes for the elderly, cleaning services, social housing, early child care, hospitals, etc.

The strengths of this model are:

- The professionals who work in the social service of the OCMW/CPAS, dealing with social assistance, are social professionals (with the legally protected title of social worker). They learned to deal with social law, they know about the social map of welfare services. According to the global definition of social work they promote “social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people”. So they work with a rights-based and integrated multi-level approach, in their helping relation with people in poverty.
- An accessible public service (working with generalist social workers, who can do quick instrumental social interventions) and more intensive, integral support specialist services, if needed, in a back

²⁶ “The realisation of the participation society. Welfare state reform in the Netherlands: 2010-2015”, Lei Delsen, Institute for Management Research, Department of Economics, Radboud University, 2016.

office (employment counsellors, debt mediators, etc.). The need of financial help is often a first step for a larger empowering and integrating process (Depauw & Driessens, 2014).

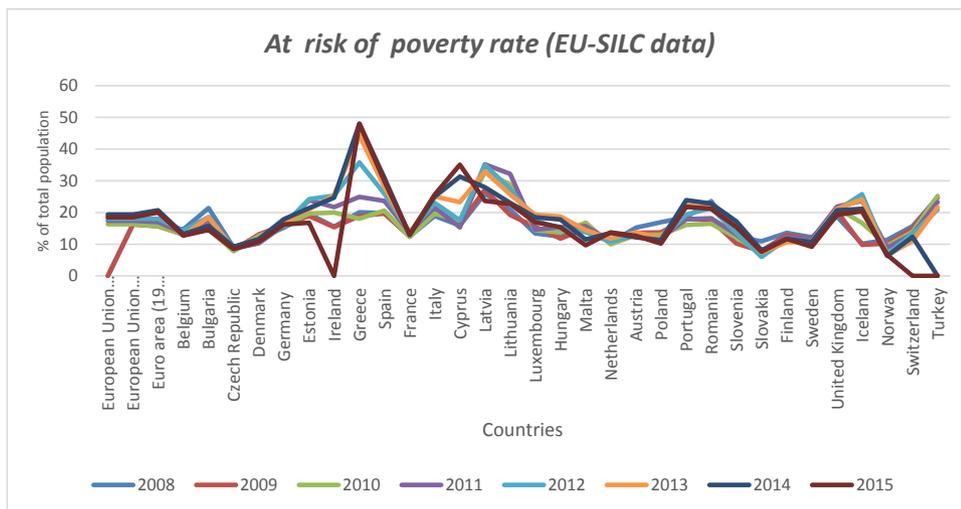
- Mix of social interventions and methods: with a focus on individual case management, combined with group work.
- OCMW/CPAS in a coordinating function, working together with private non-profit organizations, organizations working with volunteers, associations where the poor take the floor (grass-root organizations working with poor people) and specialist social organizations.

The established Belgian model of the OCMW/CPAS provides citizen’s indirect involvement in the social assistance process, through the democratic process of electing the local authorities’ representatives. Moreover, the model relies on the generalist social workers and places great importance on the quality of the services they are offering.

5. THE CASE OF GREECE’S SOCIAL SOLIDARITY INCOME (KEA)

Following a deep and prolonged depression, during which real GDP fell by 26% from its peak in 2007, the economy is projected to grow again in the course of 2016 and 2017, but a full recovery will take time. Competitiveness has improved markedly, but exports and investment remain weak. The unemployment rate, at 23%, is still high despite a moderate decline since 2013. The depression has pushed many people into poverty and income inequality has increased. Years of recession and unemployment have had profound effects on the welfare of Greece’s population. Greece’s poverty rate more than doubled from 20 percent in 2007 to 48 percent in 2014. This is the largest increase in anchored poverty among all the European Union (EU) Member States over this time period. While household incomes have declined across the entire distribution between 2009 and 2013, the drops have been largest among Greece’s poorest households.

Figure 4: At risk of poverty rate 2008-2015



Source: EU-SILC data

In 2014, a pilot GMI program (“Elahisto Egyimeno Eisodima”) was introduced in Greece, starting with 14 local authorities. Elections were held in 2015 and a change of government occurred. The new government decided to focus on fighting extreme poverty in 2015 and a revamped version of the guaranteed minimum income program, the Social Solidarity Income (“Kinoniko Eisodima Allilegyis” - KEA), was launched in July 2016, to provide a basic social safety net for the poorest

households. Guaranteed minimum income programs are the basic foundation of most Western European welfare states, and Greece is one of the last EU Member States to introduce such a program. The KEA is being rolled out gradually across the country, with implementation under way under a first phase in 30 municipalities. It is expected to cover the entire country in 2017. It is a well-designed program underpinned by a modern, state of the art information system. It has an activation objective by incentivizing formal employment and by linking beneficiaries to social and employment services.

5.1 Policy and Eligibility

The KEA program - conceived at the central level of government, at the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Social Solidarity - aims to address extreme poverty issues on the one hand and to offer a range of social inclusion services to the very poor individuals or households while making sure that the beneficiaries actively seek employment, on the other hand. The KEA program is not addressed solely to the unemployed, but also to the low paid, underemployed or occasionally employed individuals or households. Therefore, it bears a few similarities to the RSA program in France, however its main difference is that there's no link between the KEA benefit and the minimum wage as it aims to provide just a very basic income to the extremely poor households, while also promoting employment to the beneficiaries.

The households that apply for the KEA program are subjected to a rigorous means-test that includes all possible sources of income (wages, pensions, welfare benefits, rents, dividends, interest accrual, agricultural production etc.) as well as all sorts of assets than include both real estate and movable assets. The value of the real estate assets must not exceed a certain threshold that is set at 90,000 euros for a single individual, increased by 15,000 euros for each added member of the household up to a maximum of 150,000 euros. Likewise, the value of the movable assets of the household must not exceed the amount of the minimum guaranteed income set for that type of household, multiplied by six and the value of the means of transportation of that household must not exceed a certain threshold, the "objective expenses" set by the tax authorities.

As in the case of the RSA in France, the benefit level formula is like a negative income tax, however the threshold is set at a much lower level. As the household's income increases up to a certain level (the guaranteed minimum income threshold), the amount of the benefit decreases. Income from wages (as a tool to fight in-work poverty and in order to promote employment) is being discounted by 20% for the purpose of the means-test and for the computation of the benefit level. Likewise, if an unemployed applicant finds a job while benefitting from the KEA program, the wages from the first month of employment will not be taken into account for the calculation of the KEA benefit and for the second and the third month of employment, only 40% of the income from wages will be taken into account in order to compute the level of the KEA benefit.

For the initial phase of the program, the maximum monthly amount of the benefit, or the guaranteed monthly income is set at 200 euros for a single individual, 100 euros is being added for each extra adult member of the household and 50 euros for each minor member of the household, apart from the case of the single parent household, where the first child gets a maximum of 100 euros. The amount of the monthly benefit is calculated as the difference between the minimum guaranteed income threshold per semester (1,200 for single individual etc.) and all the incomes of the applicant household obtained during the same semester and divided by six.

The submission of the application by an individual or a household institutes a contract between the state and the beneficiary. The beneficiaries of the program may be offered other benefits by the social welfare services of the municipalities, such as free school meals, partial rent subsidy, utilities bills discounts etc. They may also be offered a job placement or a work experience or training role, and if they are able to work, their participation is compulsory. Likewise, the beneficiaries, if unemployed and able to work, must duly renew their unemployment card at the local job centers (OAED) and

must also visit the Community Centers of their residence. Finally, the beneficiaries bear the responsibility to inform the local authorities for any change in their assets or income within 15 days.

The KEA program, as previously stated, covers only 30 municipalities out of 325 throughout Greece for the time being, meaning that only applications from households residing in the selected municipalities are accepted. It is expected that in 2017 the KEA program will be rolled out at national level. Moreover, the beneficiaries of welfare housing programs are excluded from the KEA program.

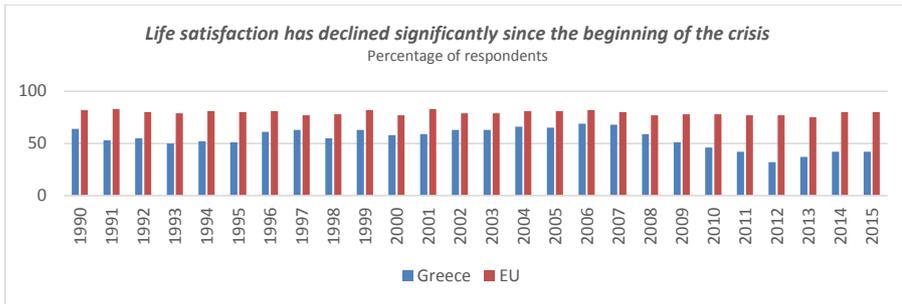
5.2 Financing the Social Solidarity Income (KEA) and the Particularity of the Greek case

Since late April 2010, Greece's capacity to relatively cheaply borrow from the capital markets seriously deteriorated, as the publication of the revised GDP data showed that an intermittent period of recession had started in 2007 while public deficits doubled when compared to previous figures. The credit rating agencies downgraded Greek sovereign bonds to junk status, having as a result the increase of yields on Greek sovereign bonds. As a member-state of the Eurozone, a currency devaluation was out of the question and the Greek financing problem became a European issue. A first 'bailout' program run jointly by the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission occurred then, and the government stood firm to service the country's debt.

However, the failure of the Greek government to implement the austerity measures required by the bailout deal and the worsening recession led to a second 'bailout' deal in 2012, coupled with a selective default of the Greek state to its sovereign debt, by forcing private bondholders (including banks, domestic pension funds and private individuals) to accept a 53.5% reduction in the Greek sovereign bonds' face value, lower interest rates and extended maturities. The reliability of the Greek state as a financial partner was rubbished, the financial position of the Greek pension funds and banks significantly worsened while many individuals lost their life-time savings and Greece officially departed the capital markets, relying instead on the second 'bailout' deal, the Second Economic Adjustment Programme for Greece, financed by the European Financial Stability Facility and to a lesser extent by the IMF.

In January 2015 the new Greek government decided to address the issue of increased poverty within society, as a result of the deep recession and the deep cuts in public spending, taking a number of temporary measures in order to provide financial relief to the very poor. In July 2015, after the expiry of the previous programme supported by EFSF financing, Greece requested European Stability Mechanism (ESM) financial assistance, to restore fiscal sustainability, address the risks to its own financial stability and to that of the euro area, promote sustainable growth, create jobs, reduce inequalities, and modernize the State and public administration. In August 2015, the Hellenic Republic concluded an agreement for stability support in the form of a loan from the ESM for an availability period of three years. In accordance with the ESM Treaty, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by the European Commission, on behalf of the ESM, which details the conditionality attached to the financial assistance facility covering the period 2015-18. Fulfilment of the conditionality is assessed at regular reviews, taking account of the progress in reforms.

Figure 5: Life satisfaction 1990-2015



Source: European Commission, Eurobarometer

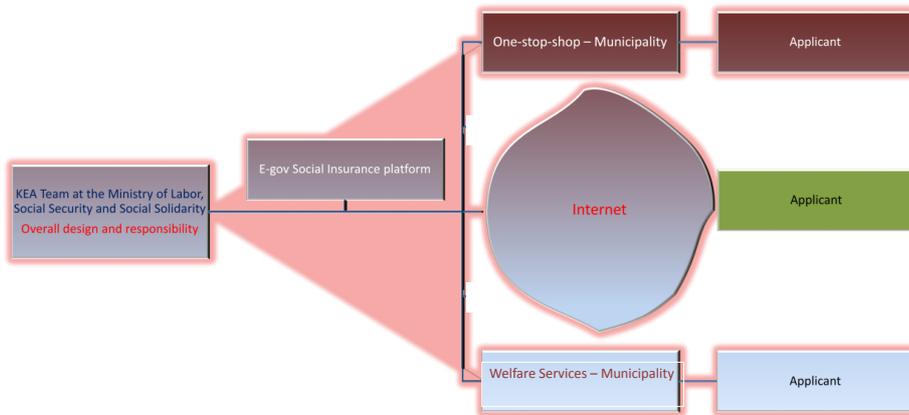
According to the Supplemental Memorandum of Understanding signed in June 2016, the Greek Government committed to complete, with the assistance of the World Bank, the Social Welfare Review (SWR), targeted at reforming benefits and generate savings of a ½ percent of GDP annually, including both cash and in-kind benefits, tax benefits, social security and other social benefits across the general government, and legislate accordingly. Overall, the main aim is to provide the rationalization of a redesigned and targeted welfare system, in order to provide the necessary funds through permanent savings for the cost of the national implementation of the Greek guaranteed minimum income scheme, the KEA programme. Its cost from 2017 is estimated at a ½ percent of GDP annually. Other sources include permanent savings identified through spending reviews or in areas of non-discretionary spending, as well as the abolition of the temporary measures of financial relief to the very poor households, taken in 2015. It’s worth mentioning that for the fiscal year 2017, the funds allocated for the KEA program amount to 760,000,000 euros, which is about 4.33% of the total budget allocated to the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Social Solidarity and some 250,000 households are expected to be covered by the scheme.

5.3 The Implementation of the “Social Solidarity Income”

The implementation of the Greek GMI scheme, the KEA programme, wouldn’t have been possible just a few years ago. The implementation of the scheme, to a large extent, depends on the relatively recently developed databases containing reliable data useful for the means-test, as well as on the also relatively recently implemented interoperability of the public sector databases and overall on the development of e-governance in the Hellenic Republic.

The application to the KEA program by a benefit claimant may be processed in two distinct ways, either directly through the website of the program by the applicant themselves, by filling in their data, or by seeking the assistance of a civil or municipal servant through the Citizen’s Services Centers, the generalist public administration one-stop-shops located in all the municipalities throughout the country, or through the municipal welfare services.

Figure 6: Overview of the application process for the KEA benefit



Source: EU-CHINA SPRP Component 3, 2nd Workshop, Adrianos Tesas.

The KEA program implementation guide is detailed in a multi-page Joint Ministerial Decision that covers all the aspects of both the shared and the exclusive responsibilities of the involved public bodies in order to properly implement this policy. The ultimate responsibility as well as the supervision of the KEA program belongs to the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Social Solidarity.

The means-test is conducted by the state-owned, directly controlled by the largest Social Security organization in Greece, IKA, and indirectly by the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Social Solidarity, company IDIKA S.A. that runs the website of the KEA program and accesses all the databases through their interoperable platform. IDIKA S.A. is in charge of cross-checking the income, real estate and other property of the claimants. It is also in charge of the IT part of the KEA program and also maintains and updates the database of claimants and beneficiaries, and also periodically provides the required data to the relevant team at the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Social Solidarity. It is worth mentioning that, when the KEA program rolls-out at national level, there will be direct on-line supervision of the program from the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Social Solidarity.

The municipalities and the one-stop-shops located at the premises of the municipalities are responsible for accepting and processing applications from claimants, for providing the required information and assistance to the claimants. The municipalities are responsible for conducting local inspections, checks and assessments of the claimants' status both randomly as a percentage of the total number of applications (the random set of applications to be checked is set by IDIKA S.A.) as well as in cases where there are substantiated discrepancies between their application and the data provided by the means-test. Finally, the municipalities are responsible for informing the beneficiaries of the KEA program on the available supplemental benefits, depending on their situation, such as free child meals, discount rates for electricity and water bills, etc. The beneficiaries may, strictly on a voluntary basis, support the work of the welfare services of their municipalities.

The Manpower Employment Organization (OAED) is responsible for informing the qualified beneficiaries of opportunities in vocational training as well as with offering them job placement and job training schemes. It keeps track of their record in fulfilling their contractual obligations, such as the renewal of the unemployment card for the unemployed beneficiaries.

Overall, the recipients of the KEA benefit have four channels of communication available with the public administration, depending on their situation. They may consult the website or register their mobile phones in order to receive a sms on whether their application was accepted as well as with the dates when the benefit is credited in their bank account. They may also check with the one-stop-shops

at the municipalities or with the municipal welfare services, in case they need further information, or in case they need to update their details. The municipal welfare services will contact them in order to let them know if they qualify for further assistance, or in case of an inspection or in case further data is needed. Finally, the unemployed beneficiaries will contact the local OAED offices, in order to receive guidance and if, available, training.

Figure 7: Points of contact with the KEA program



Source: Figure constructed based on details from the KEA Implementation Guide (2016)

It becomes clear that the Greek case reveals a model with relatively modest benefits and a centrally designed policy, the Social Solidarity Income, ensuring the consistency of the designed policy through well-defined legislation and most importantly through state-of-the-art IT services²⁷, and involving a number of different actors.

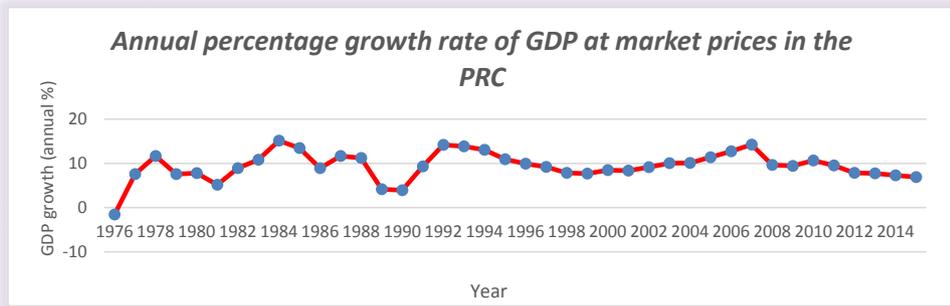
6. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The People’s Republic of China is a vast country, with a very large population, that has enjoyed almost three decades of consistently high growth of its Gross Domestic Product. This has led to the PRC becoming the second-largest economy worldwide, and also access to a huge accumulation of know-how, infrastructure and capital, a true economic and social success-story. More than 500 million people were lifted out of poverty as China’s poverty rate fell from 88 percent in 1981 to 6.5 percent in 2012, as measured by the percentage of people living on the equivalent of US\$1.90 or less per day in 2011 purchasing price parity terms. World Bank extrapolations suggest that the percentage of the population living below the international poverty line continued to fall to 4.1 percent in 2014²⁸.

Figure 8: Annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices in the PRC

²⁷ Another unique case of implementation of state-of-the-art IT and of co-operation between the state and private sector in Social Assistance in Greece worth mentioning is the “Solidarity Card”, where beneficiaries of food benefit (like food stamps in the US), receive a special debit card issued by one of the largest banks in the country, that can be used solely by the beneficiaries (PIN number verification) in order to buy from any sort of food store or supermarket food items only (verified by barcode) up to the amount credited in their card each month.

²⁸ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview#3>



Source: World Bank National Accounts Data, and OECD National Accounts Data Files

The rapid economic expansion of the PRC has led to a number of issues facing Chinese society. One of the most subtle challenges is reforming the Chinese governance of social assistance within the wider framework of the socialist market economy, in such a manner as to diffuse the accumulated wealth to the less fortunate citizens who, due to a variety of reasons, may find themselves excluded, while making sure that economic growth, innovation and progress is not hampered, but further sustained.

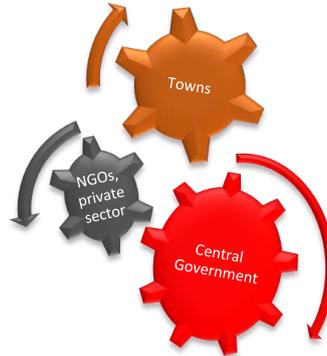
This is a challenging task, given the vast geographic size, the huge population, the uneven geographical distribution of means and population, the multi-layered, multi-sectoral character of the governance framework of the SA as well as the complexity of the problems. Based on the best-practices in the EU and taking into account the main problems facing the governance of the SA today in the PRC, as discussed with our esteemed Chinese counterparts, the main recommendations are presented below. Overall, there are quite a few options for a policy-maker; however it is the proper policy mix of the governance of SA in the PRC that will safeguard a harmonious society.

6.1 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.

Figure 9: 3 Gears: Conceptual example of the participation of civil society in the governance of SA



Source: EU-CHINA SPRP Component 3, 2nd Workshop, Adrianos Texas.

6.1.1 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.

6.1.2 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.

6.1.3 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.

6.1.4 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.

6.1.5 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.

6.2 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.

6.2.1 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.

6.2.2 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.

Figure 10: Example of Inter-departmental co-ordination at national level



Source: EU-CHINA SPRP Component 3, 2nd Workshop, Adrianos Tetas.

6.2.3 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.

6.2.4 Addressing the residence rules issues from a SA perspective

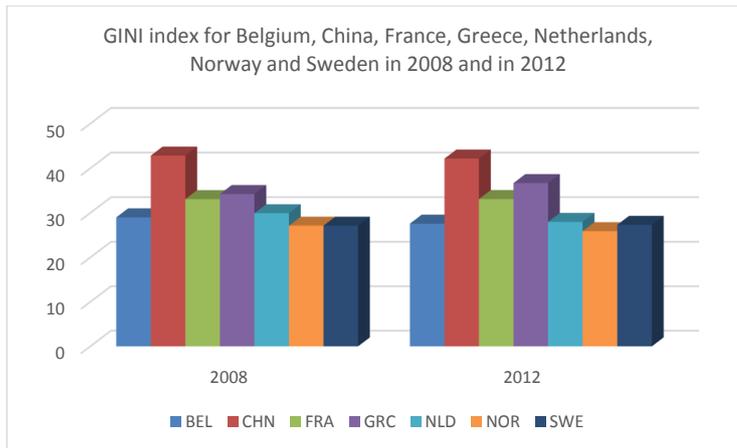
Finally, managing the residence rules (‘hukou’ 户口) with a long-term perspective, given the vast numbers of citizens seeking work in the large cities at least temporarily and taking into account the unverified number of unregistered rural migrants, should be coupled with the improvement in the data provided 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.

6.3 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.

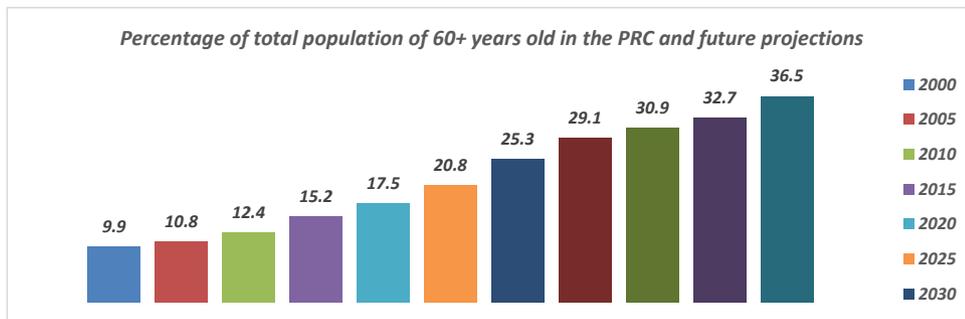
Figure 11: GINI index for Belgium, China, France, Greece, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden in 2008 and in 2012



Source: World Bank, Development Research Group.

On the other hand, the number of older people, as a percentage of the population in the PRC, is estimated to increase by 2050 at almost four times the levels found at the beginning of this millennium. Therefore, it is highly likely that the public opinion pressure for providing high quality care for the elderly will increase and high levels of investment in SA infrastructure will be required.

Figure 12: Percentage of total population of 60+ years old in the PRC and future projections



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision.

6.3.1 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.

6.3.2 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.

6.3.3 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.

6.3.4 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.

6.4 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.

6.4.1 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.

6.4.2 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.

6.4.3 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.

6.4.4 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.

6.4.5 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.

It is paramount to stress that the introduction of a number of actors in the field of SA, such as private enterprises, NGOs as well as the development of quasi-markets must be coupled with the development of monitoring mechanisms, able and willing to assess quality at both state and non-state institutions and enhance service-quality competition. Without the deployment of sound monitoring mechanisms, that make sure that the game is being played by the rules, there's a great chance that collusion between non-state and state actors will occur and the overall policy will fail to deliver the expected outcome to the concerned citizens. As elaborated above, interoperability of the public sector databases could significantly improve monitoring, however it is always the human factor that matters most.

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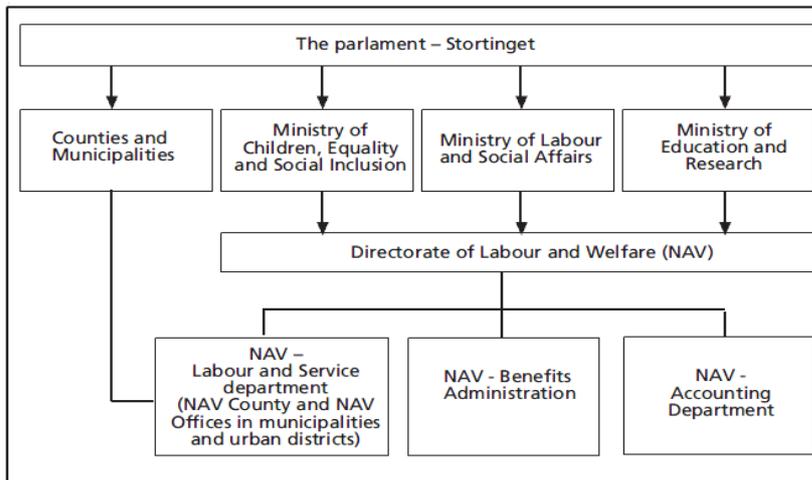
ANNEX 1: THE CASE OF THE KINGDOM OF NORWAY'S LABOR AND WELFARE ADMINISTRATION (NAV)

Norway is not a member of the EU, however it is a European country and a member of the EEA. The Norwegian Labor and Welfare Administration (NAV) governs a third of the national budget through benefits such as unemployment benefits, occupational rehabilitation, pensions, childcare, etc. The agency's main goals are to make sure that the labor markets function properly, to provide social and financial assistance to people who need it, and to get more people in employment and activity and less people on social benefits. It is responsible for labor market policies and employment services.

NAV was established on 1 July 2006 as a merger of the Labor Administration and the Welfare Administration (the NAV reform). A front-line service – a NAV office - was established in every municipality, based on a binding cooperation agreement between central government and local authorities. Cooperation agreements and co- location were laid down by law. Before 2006, they were divided into three main public agencies whose coordination and collaboration was limited. The three agencies were the Norwegian Public Employment Services, the National Insurance Services, and the municipality-based Social Welfare Services. The merger was one of the largest public administration reforms in Norwegian history and was aimed at addressing problems associated with increasing specialization and institutional fragmentation in the public sector and an increasing number of people who drew welfare benefits instead of participating in the workforce.

NAV's implementation period lasted from October 2006 to April 2011. In this period, NAV offices were established step-by step in all 428 municipalities in Norway. In addition, the four large cities (Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim and Stavanger), which are divided into urban administrative districts, were given labor and welfare offices in each of these districts. As shown in the figure below, NAV has a central agency: The Directorate of Labor and Welfare. The tasks are organized in three departments: the Labor and Service Department, the Benefits Administration and the Accounting Department.

Figure 13: Structure of the Labor and Welfare policy in Norway



Source: Magne Bråthen and Tone Fløtten, The Norwegian social model – an inspiration for Greece?, Fafo-report 2016:38

At a regional level, there are 19 NAV County Offices including Workplace Centers. Their main responsibility is to help reduce absence due to illness, and promote inclusion in working life of older workers and the disabled. At the local level (municipalities and urban districts), the NAV offices provide the entire range of integrated activation and social security services. These local NAV offices

constitute the frontline offices, the point where caseworkers meet the public. A common entrance was thought to better accommodate the diverse needs of long-term sick and disabled beneficiaries.

The caseworkers provide activation services. In addition to the organizational restructuring, new activation instruments as well as changes to benefit schemes were introduced to establish common targeting of all sick and disabled people. An important part in the establishment of NAV has also been to develop simple, user-friendly online services. These services are meant to provide each individual an easy access to their own case file, and enable them to add new information, submit applications, and when appropriate, calculate the consequences of their own choices. The NAV office is characterized by a holistic approach, both in breadth and in depth. This means that the responsibility reaches all the way from intake to exit. The office model serves a broad range of target groups, not just the unemployed. The organizational structure is characterized as decentralized with local autonomy.

The municipal social workers work alongside caseworkers from the Norwegian Labor and Welfare Administration in the local NAV offices. It is a condition that local authorities administer the financial assistance benefits at these local offices. This means, for example, that applications for financial social welfare must be directed to the local NAV offices. Therefore, the case of the NAV in Norway provides an example of a central agency offering integrated solutions in social assistance through decentralized one-stop-shops complemented by user-friendly on-line services. Therefore the organizational structure per se ensures the consistency of the implementation of the policy design at local level.

ANNEX 2: THE CASE OF THE KINGDOM OF SWEDEN’S “FREE CHOICE OF ELDERLY CARE”

The country has a well-established elderly care system, with the first legislation dating back to 1918 (The Poor Law) according to which municipalities were obligated to provide housing for elderly in old people’s homes.

Through legislation and economic steering measures the Parliament and the Government (the national level) formulate policy aims and directives. The county councils (regional level) are responsible for the provision of health and medical care. Finally, the municipalities (local level) are legally obliged to meet the social service and housing needs of the elderly. Like in the above mentioned areas the county councils and the municipalities have a high degree of autonomy vis-a-vis central government and can, within the legal frame, decide the degree of priority they will give to the elderly in relation to other groups

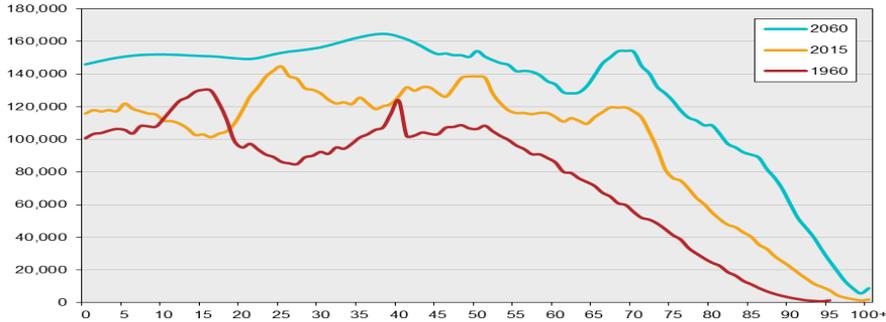
Sweden is currently among the Member States with the largest share of population of 80 or more. Projections show that in the next 30 years, the highest growth in population in Sweden will occur among people aged 65 and over. In international comparisons the Swedish long-term-care system stands out as being very generous and as providing a high level of formal care which is financed primarily by public rather than private money. There is an increasing role of informal care, with considerable support for informal carers.

Table 2 Number and percentage of people

| Year | Persons 65+ | Percentage 65+ | Women, per cent |
|------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 2010 | 1,737,000 | 18.4 | 55 |
| 2020 | 2,080,000 | 20.8 | 53 |
| 2030 | 2,345,000 | 22.6 | 53 |
| 2040 | 2,522,000 | 23.9 | 52 |
| 2050 | 2,563,000 | 23.9 | 52 |
| 2060 | 2,721,000 | 25.0 | 51 |

Source: Sweden's future population 2010–2060, table 12 (Statistics Sweden)

Figure 14: Population by age 1960, est.2015 and projection 2060



Source: Statistics Sweden, The future population of Sweden 2016–2060, http://www.scb.se/Statistik/BE/BE0401/2016I60/BE0401_2016I60_SM_BE18SM1601.pdf

The Policy and Eligibility

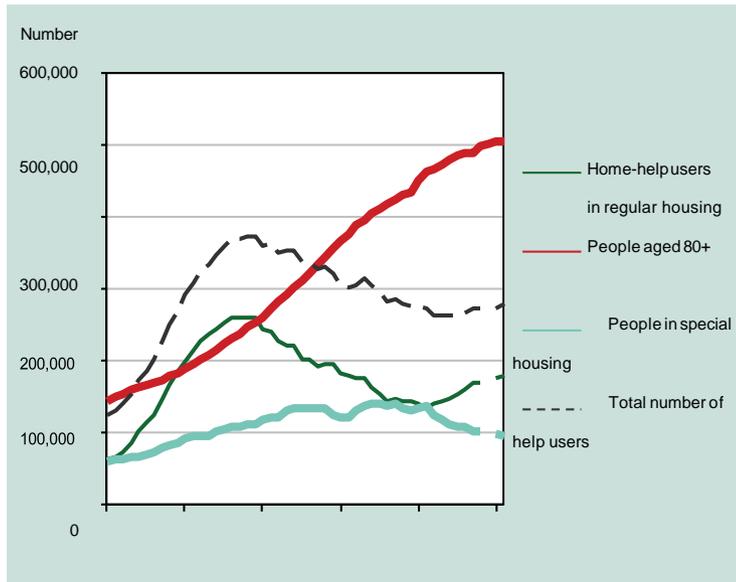
Elderly care is nowadays not an issue related to poverty or housing needs. The main reasons for someone to become in need of elderly care is related to health and physical limitations in combination with an inaccessible environment and insufficient accessibility to services. In 2011 312,800 persons (17.5%) aged 65 years received municipal elderly care. 220,600 persons received home help, meals on wheels or safety alarms while 92,200 persons were receiving their help in a special housing facility.

In Sweden, an amendment to the Social Services Act states that elderly care personnel must help you live a dignified and comfortable life. You decide what such a life looks like to you. It is therefore important that the elderly care personnel you meet ask your opinion and discuss your wishes. Your unique personal needs should determine the type of care you receive and thereby allow you to live life according to your wishes and situation²⁹.

Over the past 15 years, Sweden has experienced a fall in the need for help among the older population while the incidence of health problems has increased; it is therefore unlikely that the declining need for help can be explained by improving health. The more likely explanation is that better housing standards and better access to assistive technology have made it easier for people to manage without help.

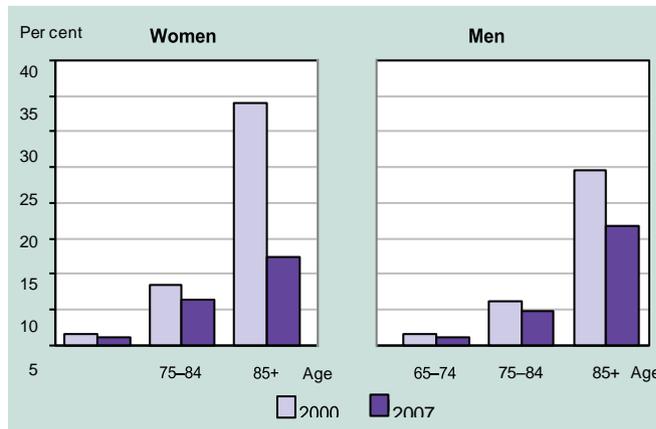
Figure 15: Home-help service users and people in special housing.

²⁹ <http://www.socialstyrelsen.se/Lists/Artikelkatalog/Attachments/18739/2012-6-19.pdf>



Source: Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, *Social rapport 2006 [Social Report 2006]*. Stockholm: 2006

Figure 16: Special housing for the elderly.



Source: Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, *Municipal Initiatives According to the Social Services Act As Well as the Health and Medical Care Act*. Stockholm: 2008. Statistik – Socialtjänst 2008:7.

The Swedish government launched a new law in 2009, The Act of System of Choice in the Public Sector. The overall purpose with the legislation is to promote freedom of choice for the users and to strengthen individual's possibilities to make their own choices. The reform is based on a clear ideological view that elderly persons, as well as other groups in need of social services, shall be able to remain in charge of their own life. Another goal is to promote a greater diversity of providers since that increases the possibility to find something that suits the user's own personal needs and interests – which also have a positive effect on quality aspects. So far evaluations have shown that this is appreciated by the users.

The legislation makes it easier for different actors to enter the commercial market of providing service and care for the elderly. The law is a volunteer tool for those municipalities who want to expose the service and care actors in the public sector to competition and thereby let the elderly choose the supplier. Today 179 of the 290 local municipalities have applied to the free choice system. Around 900 providers are active within this system. Some of them offer services in different languages; other has special knowledge of specific treatments or diets and some providers offer cultural or religious competence. One effect of the free choice initiatives is a growing demand for staff with other cultural background than Swedish. In 2012 23% of the home help were delivered by private companies and 21% of the users in special housing were living in a private company operated facility. Free choice systems for public financed assistive devices are in development.

As most patients favor care, and if possible cure, at home rather than in hospital, Sweden favors the deinstitutionalization of care and has the lowest number of hospital beds per inhabitant across the EU. Therefore, municipalities are now obliged to adapt homes where it is necessary, so that high-quality care can be provided at home. Another element of the person-centered approach is that patients are increasingly involved in research projects in order to develop knowledge of what is really desired by and useful for the target group.

Besides the development of the public finances, the delivery of elderly care of good quality in the near future is depending on key issues like staff, knowledge and technology. One aspect of the ageing population is that of the risk of increasing difficulties to recruit and keep staff, both in numbers and with competence needed. The share of the staff with adequate training improves with around two per cent each year. Today around 77% of assistant nurses have secondary school training for their work. The training of staff is supported by government programs. Also staff with special skills is needed, for example palliative care or dementia care. A recent review on the scientific Evidence on elderly care showed that there are few Swedish studies that are large enough to contribute to the development of evidence based care. The government have in budget 2013 allocated more financial resources into research on care. Training for care staff is also possible on university level.

The Government and The Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) have agreed on a number of initiatives on developing the care of the sickest elderly. Improvements in the care of the sickest elderly are about methods, procedures and organization. The processes concern a total of approximately 500,000 employees in municipalities, counties and private organizations. Therefore the agreement reward the organizations facing a systematic approach supported by quality registers as Senior Alert, Swedish palliative registry, Swedish dementia register and the Swedish registry for behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD register). Today 17,000 assessments per month are registered in Senior Alert, and 53% of all deaths are included in the Swedish palliative registry.

How to implement best practice and new knowledge to widely spread groups of recipients is another key issue. Those who work directly with persons with dementia diseases have access to an interactive internet based training programme Demens ABC The training programme is free of charge and is based on the National guidelines for care of persons with dementia diseases. So far, until spring 2013, more than 50,000 persons have completed the programme. Six similar programs, Demens ABC Plus, targeted for other groups of personnel are underway. In September a university programme for managers in elderly care will start. More than 900 persons have applied for this programme.

“Dare to ask - dare to look” is another Internet based training programme with focus on mental health of older persons. The need for teamwork in care of the elderly also assumes that there is a common basis for developing health and social care as well as to provide the elderly person with the right support at the right moment. There is a great need for a common strengthening of expertise in the field of mental health in the elderly in the various professions.

An age friendly society is directly linked to the need for practical help, social and medical care. It is also a question of dignity to adapt society to an ageing population. Design for all in buildings and the surrounding environment, accessibility to services and useful technology can altogether contribute to make it easier to cope on your own and delay needs for more extensive care.

Each year around 1,500 persons aged 65 or older in Sweden die from fall injuries compared to 293 persons of all ages killed in traffic in 2012. Hip fractures represent the third largest reason for days spent in hospital. Only schizophrenia and stroke result in more days spent in hospital. Around 75% of the outdoor fall injuries are related to the surface of the pavements. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency report that the risk for fall injuries is connected to impaired balance, impaired muscle strength, medication, impaired sight and hearing, malnutrition and the surrounding environment.

The Swedish national Institute of Public Health report that fall injuries among the elderly population in 2011 resulted in 70,000 persons admitted to hospital followed by rehabilitation and care at home at a direct cost of 5 billion SEK16.

Doing things in a different and better way can reduce care costs without adding extra money. The organization of snow removal can reduce accidents. When it is snowing 10 cm it is obviously easier to drive a car than it is to walk. The municipality of Karlskoga found that if they begin snow removal on the pavements instead of on the roads this will have a direct impact on the number of incidents where pedestrians are injured.

In 2007 the Swedish government introduced tax reduction for household services (RUT). The market for household services is growing and it is estimated that until 2011 around 12,000 new jobs has been created. With the tax reduction the customer will pay 50% of the price and the maximum reduction is 50,000 SEK per year. In 2011 148,000 persons 65 years or older used the tax reduction for household services. Around 89,000 persons (60%) of those had the lowest income (in level with guarantee pension and household supplement). For older persons it is as common to hire help for domestic cleaning as it is to receive that help from the family. Since 2007 the number of persons with few hours of home help within municipal elderly care has diminished with 2,100 persons. It seems that the tax reduction for household services so far only have, if at all, a minor effect on the demand for home help. It seems that the needs assessed services the municipalities are responsible for and the tax reduced household services together now cover a larger share of the older population.

Despite a growing interest among users for buying assistive devices the market for private owned assistive devices is still quite small. The possibilities to buy assistive devices have by tradition been very limited since provision of assistive devices is a responsibility for county councils and municipalities at a low or no cost at all. The assortment used to be quite limited and only in specialized shops. The turnover for the four largest retail chains amounted to 73 billion SEK in 2011. In the recent years assistive devices have become more exposed as consumer products and also more available for many older persons. In most counties there are shops where customers can see, test and buy assistive devices. Buying assistive devices via mail-order is frequent but Internet shopping is rapidly increasing. Since the statistics is mainly based on the public obligation to provide for the individuals need of assistive devices the statistics for private acquired assistive devices are incomplete. Partly this is an effect of the technological development. Many assistive devices are now available as consumer products. Specialized equipment can now be replaced by regular consumer products.

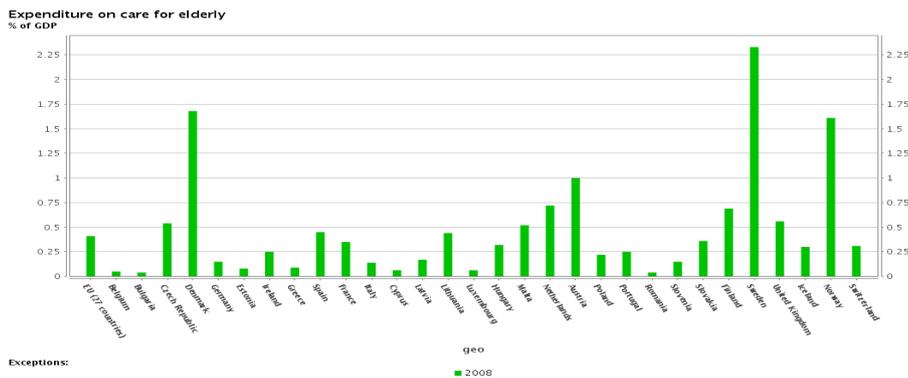
The Swedish government, during 2007-2012, has financed the national project «Technology for the elderly». The overall aim was to support development of products and services that can assist elderly people and their relatives in everyday life. The Technology for Elderly programme was coordinated by the Swedish Institute of Assistive Technology. During the first years 100 projects received support from Technology for Elderly 2007–2010. For the later period the objective was to test and develop new technology for elderly in their homes.

Financing of the “Free Choice of Elderly Care”.

Care of the elderly is almost totally financed by local taxes and grants. The user only pays a minor part of the cost (5-6 per cent). The largest share of the cost (about 82 - 85 per cent) is covered by local taxes. National taxes cover the remaining cost of care for the elderly (about 10 per cent). The fact that health care and social services for the elderly are primarily funded by local taxes further confirms the independent role of the local authorities, i.e. their independence of national government. Of course the fact that the municipalities in Sweden are free to set their local tax rates is paramount to the above-mentioned.

In 2008, the cost of elderly care at municipal level amounted to SEK 88 billion (special housing accounts for 59 per cent of this amount and care in ordinary housing for 39 per cent). Care for a person in special housing is almost twice as costly as care in ordinary housing. If health care services provided for the elderly at county council level (i.e. hospital care and outpatient care) are included, the cost doubles to approximately SEK 160 billion.

Figure 17: Expenditure on care for elderly % of GDP in 2008



Source: Eurostat Data

Municipal health care and social care services for the elderly are mainly (more than 80 per cent) financed by municipal taxes paid by residents. A contribution from national level comes in the form of government grants to the municipalities. About 4 per cent of the costs are financed by charges.

Charges for care of the elderly are regulated in the Social Services Act. The rules are designed to protect the individual against excessively high charges. They set out how incomes are to be assessed, the level of the minimum guaranteed income after charges, and the highest charge that can be made for home help services (in both ordinary housing and special housing), daytime activities and certain outpatient health care. In 2011, the level of the minimum guaranteed income after charges is SEK 4 832 per month for a single person and SEK 4 083 per person and month for a couple. In 2011, the highest charge is SEK 1 712 per month. The minimum guaranteed income is intended to cover the individual’s normal living expenses and actual housing costs. The legislation indicates what expenses, over and above housing costs, are to be covered by the individual’s minimum guaranteed income. Within the limits set in the legislation, each municipality decides on its own system and levels of charges. The individual has the right to appeal against a decision concerning a charge to an administrative court if he or she is not satisfied with the decision. Approximately 19 per cent of elderly people receiving home help services pay no fees due to low incomes.

Patient fees are regulated in the Health and Medical Services Act. Within certain limits, county councils are free to decide how much patients have to pay. Fees are differentiated to direct patients to the right level of care. There is a high-cost protection scheme whereby patients do not have to pay

more than a total of SEK 900 for treatment and SEK 1 800 for prescribed drugs covered by pharmaceutical benefits over a 12-month period.

In order to meet the increasing demands in an already strained economy, the municipalities have implemented more restrictive guidelines for the needs-assessment process. Both stricter interpretations of needs and wider interpretations of alternative help possibilities that have to be tried first (the individual has the right to receive care if "the needs cannot be met in any other way") are used. In practice that means more demands on family and relatives to provide care. Concerning help with household duties many elderly have been directed to purchase these services from private firms. In sum, users with minor needs are excluded and those with extensive needs prioritized. The fee system has also been used as an instrument to reduce service.

Since the reduction of public care services in the 1990's, there has been an increase in care provided by family members, spouses or other close kin. Elderly people with higher education tend to replace municipal home care with market help, whereas those with less education more often receive assistance from family members. These shifts in help patterns tend to lead to a reinforced layering in the care of elderly, unevenly distributed from a class perspective. It is important to note that the family members who have had to shoulder an increased responsibility for care are in practice usually woman (wives and daughters).

On 1 October 2009, almost 300 000 people aged 65 or above were either living permanently in special housing or receiving home help services in ordinary housing. More specifically, about 206 000 persons aged 65 or above had been granted home help services, while around 95 000 persons were living permanently in special housing.

The municipalities reported some 4 630 000 granted hours of home care in October 2009, which, divided by the approximately 206 000 persons who are 65 years or older and have been granted home help services, gives an average of 22 home help service hours per month. The municipality is responsible for delivering and financing home help services. But the services can be provided by some other party, such as a company, trust or cooperative. Some 14 per cent of all people aged 65 years or above and who had been granted home help services mainly received services provided by the private sector. Some 17 per cent of the granted/estimated hours of assistance reported by the municipalities for October 2009 were provided by private care providers. The corresponding proportion for October 2008 was about 16 per cent.

Contribution from voluntary organizations to elderly people in need of care have in Sweden mostly been of minor supplement. In recent years, however, the official policy has been to place increasing emphasis on the role of the voluntary sector.

Implementation of the "Free Choice for Elderly Care"

The Swedish Government has taken several initiatives to improve transparency in the health care and elderly care. In 2012 the fourth National Inquiry of elderly persons about their elderly care has been carried out by The National Board of Health and Welfare. The inquiry covers persons who are entitled to home services or is living in special housing. Generally, elderly persons are well satisfied with their help and their confidence in the staff is very high. Although, there are challenges left in areas such as social activities, opportunities to go outside and possibilities to have influence on when to get help.

To improve efficiency there is a need to create a better basis for comparing and following up outcomes. Therefore, the National Board of Health and Welfare and representatives from municipalities and county councils are working together to develop open comparisons and public performance reports on health care and social services. The aim is to promote local and national discussions on quality and efficiency through peer pressure, greater transparency and political accountability. Data on a wide range of quality indicators is collected through surveys directed at

service providers and users, and by using official statistics. The data is then presented to illustrate how municipalities and county councils are scoring in different quality areas.

Quality registers are another important tool for following up outcomes. Two quality registers have been developed in the area of elderly care. They contain data on quality indicators on fall injuries, care-related infections, malnutrition, patients' experiences of pain, etc. The registers build on modern IT solutions and give care providers the opportunity to monitor results over time and compare their own results with those of others. In order to motivate care providers to register, the government has introduced a performance-based grant system. This has increased the input to the registers dramatically, and the coverage and quality of data have improved. The next step is to promote the use of the registers for local improvements in quality by strengthening analysis capacity at local level.

The Swedish government has drawn up an eHealth strategy in close collaboration with other stakeholders with the aim of ensuring the efficient and effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to promote safer, more accessible and efficient health and elderly care services. A range of issues relating to ICT use must be solved at national level, in collaboration with all actors in the health care sector and on the basis of a common approach and nationally established guidelines and solutions. The areas for action are:

- Bringing laws and regulations in line with the broader use of ICT.
- Creating a common information structure.
- Creating a common technical infrastructure.
- Facilitating interoperable, supportive ICT systems.
- Facilitating access to information across organizational boundaries.
- Making information and services easily accessible for citizens.

It is clear that the Swedish model of free choice in elderly care constitutes an example of a well-defined policy implemented by the financially independent municipalities but foremost, it is the development of an already well-established and well-financed model with highly experienced human resources in response to the demographic challenge.



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