

Mission Report

Date: 17th – 19th October 2016

Location: Qinghai Province

EU-CHINA SPRP: Marzena Breza, EU RE Comp 3

Accompanied MoCA Staff (Ministry of Civil Affairs of P.R.C):

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Main Goal: recognize arrangements of social assistance policy from provincial to prefectural levels as well as practical organization of social assistance institutions (benefits and service delivery) for most vulnerable group i.a. ethnic minorities.

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Information presented below is based on the materials shared and discussions hold during the 3 days local study visit.

Qinghai Province takes the grassroots level civil affairs administration as the frontier and basic living allowance (*Dibao*) as the foundation of social assistance work, therefore, its *Dibao*-based social assistance efforts featured in capacity building for civil affairs staff, and coordination among local authorities. However, due too many people are living in remote plateau area, the province is facing challenges concerning identifying beneficiaries and carrying out regular means-testing for them. In addition, the newly established administration team for civil affairs is neither professional social workers nor familiar with newly issued social assistance policies; therefore, lack of skilled social assistance staff is also a commonly faced challenge. The province witnessed a shortage of participation of long-term volunteers and social forces. In some areas, there are relatively low attentions paid to support the disabled. In some areas, local governments are experimenting to help people with work capacity to be integrated into labor market and providing home-based services to the elderly. In general, the *Interim Measures for Social Assistance* issued by the State Council provides the legal framework for the social assistance work in Qinghai Province, and is supplemented by action plans, opinions, regulations and rules issued by local governments. During the visit, the EU delegation shared practices of its member states and identified challenges that for further exchanges in the future activities of the C3 EU-China SPRP project.

Detailed Report:

Qinghai Province, located in the northwestern part of China, is composed of two cities and six autonomous regions. The two cities are further divided into districts and six autonomous regions into counties. Qinghai Province has approximately 6 million populations with around 54% urban residents. The EU delegation headed by Ms. Marzena Breza conducted field studies to three areas, i.e. the Chengdong District of Qinghai's capital city Xining, Gonghe County of Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Region, and Jianzha County of Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Region.

During the visit to Hainan Region, the delegation was introduced about the region's efforts in the capacity building of civil affairs staff, systematic set-up, and policy implementation. Hainan Regional Government issued *Opinions on Further Strengthening Basic-Level Civil Administration Work*. In response to the new policy, the 36 towns of Hainan Region took the lead in setting up civil administration office with 3 to 5 full-time and part-time staff to provide one-stop services for various social assistance programs such as basic living guarantee, temporary assistance, medical assistance, employment support and relief measures for the homeless. Regular trainings were hold to brief

township civil administration staff new policies and build up their service capacities. The region established patrol system to inspect local authorities, promulgated *Work Responsibilities of Township Civil Administration Offices of Hainan Region* and other regulations and measures to define responsibility, requirements and standard work procedures for civil affairs officials, realized well-connected data and system management among civil affairs organs at various administrative levels. Local authorities joint efforts in providing poverty alleviation. For example, human resource department arranges public affairs jobs to people from Dibao household with work capacity, housing administration provides low-rent flats to Dibao beneficiaries, and education bureau allocating special grants and loans to students from poverty-stricken households. The delegation noticed that the region has also made special efforts in having a more strict means-testing, more transparent application and approval process, and capital management of the Dibao fund. For instance, at the regional level, Dibao center that subordinates to the Civil Affairs Bureau is set up with corresponding organs outreach to all township governments, which are responsible for identifying, means testing and reviewing Dibao applicants and beneficiaries. Village committees or neighborhood committees as commissioned by the township governments handle applications. Two or more people are assigned to carry out on door investigation and income check. Social supervision is invited via establishing reporting mailbox and hot lines among residential areas. Examination groups and review councils are established by the county, towns, villages or communities to perform collective research and examination of applicants. Special account is established and socialized distribution is implemented to operate Dibao fund to avoid embezzlement and false claim. The region grades and offers differentiate social assistance based on beneficiary's age, health condition and family income.

During the visit to Chengdong District of Xining City, Hainan Regional Bureau of Civil Affairs and Gonghe County Bureau of Civil Affairs respectively introduced the social assistance work at different administrative levels. Xining City, where 0.38 million people with 37% from ethnic minorities and featured by a large number of migrant, unemployed or impoverished population, introduced urban Dibao program in 1996 and rural 2007. In 2015, the Dibao line became consistent with poverty line and is adjusted on the provincial level according to the inflation rate. The City strives to raise the Dibao line for nine consecutive years from 103 Yuan in 2008 to 403 Yuan in 2016. The social assistance works of Qinghai Province are organized in four administrative levels, i.e. city, district, street, and community. In urban area, district level is responsible for decision making on social assistance benefits. In rural areas, county level gives the final decision on the eligibility of applicants, who are previously reviewed at township level and supported by village meeting that organized by village leaders. The City has realized online registration and income verification via IT database. The IT system is also supporting the one-stop windows. The City conducts household checking on Dibao applicants; however, due to the shortage of staff, the on door means testing either faces risks of being not thorough or resulting in the prolonging Dibao allocation. The delegation has noticed the City highlighted the medical assistance. The City established the rural and urban medical assistance systems in 2004 and 2005, and the scope of assistance has extended to cover all low-income groups. The City improved the medical assistance system by pushing ahead the "one-stop" real-time settlement service in designated hospitals, and secures effective connection among basic medical guarantee, serious illness insurance and commercial insurance. The City also gives full play to the joint forces of various systems by providing outpatient service assistance, insurance assistance, classified assistance and "one-stop" medical assistance service. The City has improved temporary assistance platform. With the purpose of lifting low-income groups out of difficulties, the City established the temporary assistance system in 2008. Since then, improvements were made to the system in aspects of expanding coverage to those temporarily facing basic living difficulties due to fire disasters, traffic accidents or family members' sudden serious diseases, ceiling of the assistance is increased from 3,000 Yuan to 20,000 Yuan, and adopting more assistance methods including funds, materials and referral services. In 2016, there have been nearly 16 thousands urban and rural

low-income households benefited from the temporary assistance program. In addition, the City integrated comprehensive assistance platforms to improve the living standard of poverty-stricken people. For example, heating subsidies for Dibao households, extra grants for college students from poverty-stricken families, and exemption of electricity fee and cable fee for eligible households. However, due to the limited amount of social workers, the City is facing challenges of lacking support from trained volunteers and inputs from charity organizations. Although the City already had experience of delivering home services by non-governmental organizations based on the purchases by the government, the percentage of NGO's participation needs to be increased.

During the visit to Huangnan Region, the delegation conducted field study to Jianzha County Homes for the Elderly and had in depth exchanges with officials from Huangnan Regional Bureau of Civil Affairs, and Jianzha Bureau of Civil Affairs. Huangnan Region is composed of 11 towns, 21 townships, 36 neighborhood committees and 261 villages. It has a population of 0.27 million of which ethnic minorities account for 93.80% and Tibetans 68.61%. Due to the special composition of its local population, special support is offered to ethnic minorities, e.g. nursing home for certain ethnic group, which improves mutual understanding within one community with the same background. Subsidies were allocated to low-income household in farming and stockbreeding areas. According to the introduction, Huangnan Region's social assistance efforts are in line with the general provincial policies and limited in any innovation. Based on Dibao programs, the Region's social assistance work was supplemented by medical assistance and temporary assistance. A sizable fund was invested in warfare facility maintenance and renovation projects. However, the Region had low level of support to the disabled in working age, and lacked employment measures in supporting social assistance beneficiaries. Although with attention paid to increase care-giving service to the senior, local nursery houses still faces challenges such as lacking trained professionals, diversified activity programs and standard rooms or services.

During the three-day field study, the EU delegation headed by Ms. Marzena shared experiences and practices with local authorities. For example, Ms. Marzena introduced the European practices of taking NGO as a key partner of social assistance delivery actor and its relevant standards, day care centers as main approach to the aging process and demand for care services, measures to improve institutional care and home based services, professional activities to encourage beneficiaries to join labor market and so on.

Information collected and drafted by Marzena Breza, C3 RE; November 16, 2016.