

Mission Report

Date: 26-27 September 2018

Location: Xincheng District, Hohhot City, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region

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

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

Ms. Jiang Wei, Deputy Director, Department of Social Assistance

Ms. Liu Quan, Director, Multilateral Division, Department of International Cooperation

Ms. Xue Qiuji, Officer, Center of Monitoring and Verification for Low Income Families

Accompanied EU experts:

Christian Moutier (France)

Camille Lambinon (France)

Pavel Janecek (Czech Republic)

SPRP Beijing Office:

Ms Iwona Rogacka-Hu, C3 Assistant, EU-CHINA SPRP

Main Goal: recognize arrangements of social assistance policy at provincial, prefectural and township level as well as practical organization of social assistance institutions (benefits and service delivery) for most vulnerable group.

Xincheng District is the one of the place where SPRP C3 is running pilot sites.

The Social Security Research Center of Nanjing University and the prof. Lin Mingang as a director of the Research Center is a third party responsible for the pilot project.

The third party during that time has provided two documents concerning pilot site:

1. The evaluation of Social Assistance in the comprehensive reform experimental area of Xincheng, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region – Baseline Report;
2. Comprehensive reforms on Social Assistance – “Simplifying administration and delegating powers, exercising fair supervision and improving service efficiency” – pilot venue work program of Xincheng District, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.

Launched in 2015 and organized within the EU-China Social Protection Reform Project, the intergovernmental cooperation program between EU governments and China’s MoCA is focused on China’s social assistance practices. Through activities such as high level exchanges, social assistance workshops, meetings and researches, it is commented by Ms. Jiang Wei, the Deputy Director of Department of Social Assistance of MoCA China, that Chinese MoCA have drew experiences from EU countries, significant policy suggestions have been made for shaping actual practices in the future.

Under such background, EU RE Comp 3 led a delegation accompanied by Chinese MoCA staff and EU experts for a field trip to Xincheng District in Hohhot City of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region to investigate the pilot program conducted by local civil affairs department titled “Comprehensive Reform of Social Assistance in the Social Security Reform Project in the

Xincheng District”. According to Ms. Zhao Yanru, Director of Civil Affairs Bureau of Xincheng District, by the end of 2019, the Social Assistance practices in Xincheng District will become a model for the comprehensive civil affairs reform of the entire region.

Identified challenges: the existing social assistance practices in Xincheng District of Hohhot, as in many other cities in China, is more about cash benefits than the EU countries practices that are often service-oriented assistances. Although due to insufficient working staff, the civil affairs bureau is less effective than the third party organizations, there isn’t any consistent forms of non-public sector organizations’ participation in care-giving institutions which hinders the dynamic management of the pilot project.

Detailed Report:

Status quo of Xincheng District and its reform program:

Xincheng District, covering an area of 700 km² is situated in Hohhot, the capital of Inner Mongolia. It has a total population of 640,000. There are 36 ethnic groups including Han, Mongolia, Manchu and Hui minorities. The district has 1 town, 8 sub-districts, 24 villages and 53 neighborhood communities. In Xincheng District, basic living standard (in Chinese term *Dibao*) for urban residence is 670 Yuan/person/month, 468 Yuan for rural. Exceptional poverty standard (in Chinese term *Tekun*) for urban residence is 1600 Yuan/person/month, rural 806 Yuan. Support standard for orphans or depended children is 1,500 Yuan/person/month. There are 8 categories of social assistance recipients.

As for social assistance comprehensive reform pilot program, the district authorities have divided their work into five steps: studying and formulating relevant regulations and guidelines→developing standard online approval process→obtaining funds from the government local society’s workforce→improving existing temporary assistance policy→unifying the procedures for all levels of the system. As a result, all of the areas in the district are assisted in line with the same, standardized procedures, and have implemented the online standard approval process. The district authority is striving to create a model for comprehensive reform of social assistance in the new urban area that can be replicated and promoted by June 2019. In the future, the district will focus their efforts on the following five aspects: 1) to streamline administrative procedures 2) to realize internet administration 3) to realize the transformation from simple program assistance to a diversified of social assistance 4) to broader the group and number of recipients 5) to delegate powers of approval to the most basic government level.

The delegation also visited the Xincheng District Comprehensive Care Service Center that located at Baoheshao Village of Baohe Town. As the only public-funded institution in Xincheng District, the Center is mainly responsible for the “*Wubao Recipients*” (a Chinese abbreviation for five guarantees family from rural areas, i.e. the aged, the infirm, old widows and orphans who are taken care of by the people’s communes in five ways i.e. food, clothing, medical care, housing and burial expenses). The center takes care of “*Sanwu Residence*” (a Chinese term for people without source of income, working capacity and obligations) in towns and the lonely elderly and special care recipients. The Centre, built with the national standards for nursing house in the village, has day care service and in the evening the recipients can go back home. However, after hearing Ms. Breza’s

introduction on some related practices of EU elderly care institutions, Ms. Wu commented that these EU practices are inspiring and the local authority has realized that some people would like a combination of home and nursing house. It is in their plan to add such kind of service to the district's care house. In fact, big institution in the cities already provide this kind of service.

All layers of the government have their proportion of input. The average cost for basic living is around 10,000 RMB for each elderly per year, and add on to the allowances given to the recipients, the local government also provides subsidies/support for daily operation, e.g. water, electricity and heating. There are three steps for the application process to the service center in accordance with its administrative sets-up: application initiated at the community→review at local village committee→approval from government of Xincheng District. In some cases, village community takes initiative in investigation, finds out the person in need for such assistance, and encourages them to apply.

Ms. Breza shared inputs on EU practices in elderly care system, non-public sector organizations' participation in social assistance filed and government's focused efforts on supporting people to be active in labor market, and expressed that the mutual help within household tradition in China is worth being continued. Ms. Jiang commented on Ms. Breza's introduction that more NGO's are participating in the social assistance program and becoming an increasing contributing force. China's social assistance system is in its period of switching from general sets-up towards a more specified system that is targeted, classified and dedicated. In terms of social assistance measures, China is in transition period from income/cash assistance towards service-oriented assistance. There are room for improvement for China's social assistance to be more professional with more diversified groups and higher proportion of participation. China's social assistance works still have a long way to go and that is why China-EU SPRP could be beneficial to China on drawing experiences for its comprehensive reform of social assistance in the social security reform.

** Information presented is based on the materials shared and discussion holds during the 2 days local study visit. Information collected and drafted by Marzena Breza/Iwona Rogacka-Hu, C3 RE on November 2, 2018.*