Orphan Care in China

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1 Introduction

Orphan care in China was once provided by the central government as a means of social control. The centralized welfare delivery guaranteed some of the poorest orphans to be protected by the government. Since the economic reform, the central government started to relinquish its control over social welfare delivery, new forms of orphan care were introduced into China, sharing the responsibilities and burdens for caring the orphans. Yet, many issues and problems exist in social delivery due to a lack of finances, professionals, and policy support. In this chapter, we will discuss the background of social welfare changes in China, as pertains to orphan care, focusing on the different types of orphans as a result of social issues, service delivery, barriers and solutions. It is claimed that during the reform, the burden of orphan care in China may not be reduced in the coming future, and we offer suggestions to cope with that.

2 Social welfare system in China

The social welfare system in China used to be taken as social relief, i.e. providing service to selected groups who were extremely needy, leading some scholars to label it as "remedial social welfare" (Liu 2006). Based on this understanding, Chinese social welfare was different from that in most western countries. In the past 50 years, the social welfare system has experienced changes in resource allocation and provision. To provide some background, the next section will focus on the broader picture of social welfare in China.

2.1 Unequal allocation of welfare between the privileged vs. marginalized groups.

China is a communist, centralized country with a population of 1.3 billion. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the central government has controlled resources in order to promote the industrialization of the country. The planned economy was the mainstream for the country and the urban, industrial development was prioritized, then a number of policies were implemented for the benefit of workers and urban people. Among them was the policy of the registered system, which divided Chinese citizens into urban and rural populations, labeling people as either work unit employees or farmland peasants. The division of citizens into two groups indicated the establishment of a binary social structure. In order to control costs, salaries for employees were low and stable for a very long time. As a control and compensation for the low salaries, the government provided a number of tangible supports to the employees, such as medical care, food allocation, housing, education, employment, pension, labor protection, and marriage and maternal protection. Due to the fact that welfare provision was closely related to the status of being employed, the employees largely relied on their work units, and gradually, the welfare system evolved into work unit welfare, and hence the welfare of occupation, which means welfare is attached to the occupation one is having (Li and Wang 2007). Therefore, the welfare system in the planned economy enlarged the differences between urban and rural peoples in China, with urbanites

receiving more than their rural counterparts, which was described by some scholars as an urban-rural binary and discriminatory welfare system (Guo and Lin 1990). Under this system, urban residents were included while only rural residents who were poor from unexpected sufferings or events were included (Li 2007). The social welfare system was featured as social relief and government control, targeting the childless elderly, orphans, and people with disabilities (Su 2007).

Since economic reform and the transition from a planned economy to a market economy, the traditional state-work unit structure has been broken. In the urban areas, more and more workers have lost their jobs and were thus separated from their work units and means of support. The state did not provide any social welfare to help workers cope with unemployment. In rural areas, the breakdown of the collective economy worsened the situation for rural people, leaving them unprotected and marginalized from the welfare system (Leung 1995).

In order to cope with the situation, the government decided to implement a new welfare structure. The government will provide all of the expenses for social welfare, establish a social welfare system which can serve all the citizens, including all the rural and urban people, and encourage the development of market-oriented welfare institutions (Su 2007). In its implementation, difficulties have emerged, such as insufficient social welfare legislation, lack of funding, contradictions between the demand and the need, and the lack of systematic administration in social welfare (Li 2007; Li and Wang, 2007). With the breakdown of the centralized welfare system in China, more and more NGOs and different governmental departments have assumed responsibility for the of delivery welfare services to people in need (Li 2007; Sun and Lu, 2007).

2.2 Basic information about orphans in China

Definition and types of orphans

In China, the definition of orphans has changed over time and the legal definition is not as clear as the international one. For instance, on Aug. 1, 1992, the Ministry of Civil Affairs released an announcement as a part of the Law of Adoption, indicating that orphans referred to children under 14, whose both parents were dead. On March 29, 2006, another document, "Suggestions on Enhancing the Assistance Work for Orphans," issued by Ministry of Civil Affairs jointly with 14 ministries of the central government, stated that orphans are those under 18 who had lost their parents through death or abandonment and are unsupported by others. Under this, there are two major kinds of orphans: actual orphans and form orphans. "Actual orphans" are the children whose parents have died or have been missing for more than four years. They are easy to be recognized. "Form orphans" are those who have one or more parent living, but they are not protected or looked after by their parents due to abandonment, poverty or imprisonment. In reality, there remains confusion in defining who are included in official definitions of orphanhood (Cheng 2003).

Basic situation for orphans in China

On Sept. 29, 2005, the first national survey on the situation of orphans in China conducted by the Ministry of Civil Affairs was released to the public. The findings indicated that there are 573,000 orphans under 18 years of age. The data describes the distribution and social support to this group. The majority, 86.3% or 495,000, are living in rural areas. Four provinces account for 30% of the total: 50,000 are in Henan province and more than 40,000 are in

Hunan, Anhui and Jiangxi provinces. In these four provinces, 95% of the orphans are living in rural areas (Shang 2005). The findings also show that over half are receiving national systematic support, among them 53,000 are granted the urban minimum living allowance, 125,000 receive the rural five protection allowance[1], and 116,000 are supported by the rural poverty allowance. The amount of the allowance varies in different areas, as the rural and uban allowance varies and different areas have different standards for the allowance. It ranges from 60 yuan (RMB) in very poor rural areas to 390 yuan (RMB) in Beijing. Still, there are 200,000 orphans not protected or covered by the national systematic support or relief (Shang 2005).

Interestingly, UNICEF indicates that the number of orphans in China is over 21 million (UNICEF News). It seems that there is a big discrepancy between the national and international figures on Chinese orphans. While there is not published data to account for this discrepancy, one possible reason may be that the two different definitions of orphans. In contrast to the legal definition in Chinese law discussed above, according to UNICEF, an orphan is a child under 18 who has lost one or both parents, lives in a household with an adult death in the past 12 months, or who lives outside family care. Comparing these two definitions, it is clear that the national one is limited, and the international one is broader.

2.3 Welfare for the orphans

The targeted groups of child welfare service in China are mainly the dependent, homeless children who are orphans, abandoned children, children with disabilities and runaway children. Since 1949, there have been three periods of development of child protection policies in China.

The first stage was from 1949-1978. During this period, service delivery was organized by the government on different levels in the form of institutionalization. On the basis of the previous institutions set up by the regional Guomindang government, the Communist government established caring homes for orphans. According to data by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, during 1949-1954, there were 666 welfare institutions caring for the elderly and orphans, with 25,960 orphans living in them. At the beginning of the 1960s, as a result of food shortages and disasters, the population of orphans and abandoned children increased, and institutionalized care grew. In 1962, there were 772 child welfare homes, accommodating 65182 orphans (Bai and Wu, 1996). During the cultural revolution, a large number of child welfare homes were closed down, so by the end of 1978, there were only 49 child welfare homes with 3665 children (National Statistics Bureau 1985). Due to the closing of the homes, more and more dependent and homeless children became street kids. The central features for this stage are as follows: 1) institutionalized care was more relief and accommodation and more political than welfare; 2) the service quality was relatively poor, meeting only the basic needs of the orphans, and focusing on political education while neglecting educational and psychological needs, and 3) the funding was provided mainly by the government, with the state covering all the expenses of the child welfare homes (Wang 2007).

The second stage was from 1979 to the early 1990s and was a period of primary reform of child welfare care. First, the number of child welfare homes increased sharply. From 1979-1992, 15 new child welfare homes were set up and 2500 more orphans were taken in

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[1] Five protection allowance is a special allowance for the rural people who are old, childless, fragile and poor, covering five aspects as food, clothing, fuel and funeral.

(National Statistics Bureau 1994). The second change was the inclusion of runaway children by the welfare homes. The third change was a transition from relief to welfare and the inclusion of education and a development orientation in terms of service delivery within the institutions (Cheng 2003). The last change was a move to multiple funding sources for child welfare homes; in addition to state funding, more stakeholders became involved in funding service delivery, such as foreign foundations and individual donors (Wang 2007).

The third stage began in the early 1990s and continues to the present. This is a period of comprehensive reform for the child welfare system. From 1999 to 2004, the numbers of child welfare homes and residents almost doubled (National Statistics Bureau 1994). With the increasing development of the child welfare system, problems became apparent, such as the separation of orphans from the mainstream educational system, decreased attention to the psychological and mental development of the children, interruption of children's socialization and development of social skills, and poor quality of service provided within the institutions, insufficient funding, and abuse cases by the workers (Zhang 2003; Human Rights Watch 1996). Another change during this period is that the central government enacted policies regarding the right to protection for children and social welfare for orphans and children with disabilities, such as, the enactment of the Law of Adoption and the establishment of guidelines for work with orphans and children with disabilities by the central government. Recent efforts have been on promoting relative caring and foster homes supplemental to child welfare homes (Wang 2007). This current environment will be the focus of discussion in the following sections.

3   Problem overview

There are mainly three types of orphans who have been paid attention by the public and the government, i.e. orphans that are abandoned by their parents due to the one-child policy, having disabilities or family poverty; orphans whose parents have died of AIDS; and orphans with parents in jail or prison.

3.1   Orphans abandoned

There is no official data on the exact numbers of children abandoned by their parents annually. However, there is some data that can be referenced for understanding how seriously the situation is. At the end of the 1980s, the Ministry of Civil Affairs declared that the number of abandoned children accommodated by the state-owned child welfare homes was between 5,000 and 6,000, and the numbers increased to 66,000 by the end of 1999, among the abandoned children, the majority were girls or babies with disabilities (Ministry of Civil Affairs 2006). The numbers of abandoned children was increasing sharply between 1999 to 2003, and according to data released by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the number in child welfare homes, both state-owned, or privately owned, rose from 45,000 to 54,000 and then to 78000 in 2005(Ministry of Civil Affairs 2006).

It is clear that there are more and more children abandoned by their biological parents, and they form the majority of the residents in child welfare homes in China (Ministry of Civil Affairs 2006). Most of the mentally and physically healthy children will be adopted by adults inside and outside China. Those who suffer from diseases or disabilities tend to stay in the homes for the rest of their lives, and they lack the opportunity to go school or interact with people in the community. Studies on children growing up in child welfare homes indicate that they lack a sense of safety and intimacy, are less confident in social participation (Gao and Yang 2007; Cheng 2003), and tend to be lonely, self-centered and lack a sense of security (Zhu and Cai 2007). These outcomes have the potential for creating more problems in

adulthood, such as difficulty securing employment and marriage (Xu 2007; Gao and Yang 2007).

As for the causes of abandonment, research has shown that there are two primary reasons. Many scholars find that the government's one-child policy was the single most significant cause of child abandonment in the 1990s (Johnson 1996; Johnson et al. 1998). According to this policy, married couples are allowed to have only one child, while rural couples can have a second chance if their first child is a girl. Since having a son is important for elder care in rural families, couples whose second child is a girl may choose to abandon her in hopes to try again for a son (Chan, Liu and Zhang 1997), while the situation in urban areas is better due to the fact that urban people have been strictly constrained by the work unit in family planning, and enjoy better welfare support for the elderly (Cheung 1998). The other major cause for abandonment is related to the economic situation of poor families and the inadequate social welfare coverage for these families. In many cases, due to poverty, the family cannot afford maternal checkups and care, which may result in a child with medical needs. When a child is born with a disability or serious disease, they are too poor to afford proper medical care and treatment, so they may abandon their medically needy infant in either a hospital or near a child welfare home, hoping someone will take care of the child (Cheung 1998; Xu 2007).

3.2 Orphans from parents dying of AIDS

AIDS is creating a new kind of orphan in China. The phenomenon came to catch the public attention by the end of 1990s. In China, the term "AIDS orphan" refers to a child under the age of 15 whose parent, or parents, has died as a result of the AIDS virus. According to UN-AIDS estimates, by the end of 2005, there were 15 million AIDS orphan in the world and by 2010 that number will rise to 25 million. According to UNICEF, there are 78,000 AIDS orphans in China, and by 2010, that number will increase to 260,000 (Qian, Bi and Lu 2007). The main cause for so many AIDS victims are infection of the blood supplies, primarily in areas like Henan, Hubei and Anhui, while in some other areas, it results from drug addiction and unsafe sexual practices (Xu, et al. 2007). The major difficulties AIDS orphans face include emotional suffering from the loss of parents, lack of financial support resulting in poverty, discrimination by the community, vulnerability of being affected by HIV, and poor access to social services (Huang and Yang 2007). As a new phenomenon, there is insufficient policy support and regulation for the welfare of this group, and as a result, there is a care gap for AIDS orphans in the current service delivery system.

3.3 Orphans with parents in jail

In the current orphan service system, another new kind of orphan is emerging. The public attention to this group resulted from two main sources, the first of which are juvenile criminal officials. Many reports indicate that many juvenile criminals are coming from families with one or both parents in jail (郭欣 2006; 陶健 2006). Another source of information is the educational systems. Researchers have found the basic rights for these children are not properly protected and many children drop out of school after their parents are jailed, while some run away from home and become street urchins and thus become targets for gangs and recruited to criminal activity (Zheng 2006). In 2005, there were 1.56 million prisoners in jail, 30% (close to 1/2 million) have dependent children, with the total number of the dependent children for these prisoners over 0.6 million (Chen 2005). This is a huge group, much more than the previous two types. These children are in a vulnerable situation, as they have to rely on themselves and are not a targeted population served by civil affairs departments or the department of justice for assistance (Zheng 2006).

4   Services for each type

In response to the varying causes of orphanhood, there are different types of service. As we mentioned before, as the reform of social welfare for orphans is still going on in China, different stakeholders are involved in service delivery, and they contribute to the whole service system from different perspectives and quality of service vary on different missions and rationales behind their service delivery.

4.1   Orphanage service

Orphanage service used to be monopolized by the government in the sole form of institutionalization, i.e. the orphanage homes. However, as the reform deepens, more forms of service such as kinship care and foster care are being offered. All of these currently constitute orphanage services in China.

Traditional orphanage homes

Orphanage service has the longest history and plays the main role in service for orphans in China; the service is funded by the government and forms the basic function of the civil affairs departments in local areas. There are some privately run homes, which are complementary to the government-run orphanage homes. For instance, in Beijing, there are 83 privately-run welfare homes, among them, 77 are for the elderly and 6 for the children (Beijing Civil Affairs Bureau 2006).

A typical orphanage home is organized as an affiliation to the department of civil affairs in the local government. Administratively each orphanage has a director and two or three vice directors in charge of different affairs. There are several offices including an office of primary education, office of rehabilitation, office of students, and office of treatment. The building houses facilities for feeding and playing, sleeping, education, and rehabilitation and medical treatment, and the number of therapists, teachers, doctors and nurses employed are based on the numbers of beds.

There is a screening and review procedure for taking in any new orphans, the agency needs to verify the identity of newcomers, ensuring that they exactly meet the requirements of the agency. Basically, the main goal for service is to meet the basic needs of the children, i.e. food, clothing, and shelter. Services also include education, in which formal schooling may take place within the institution or outside it, depending on accessibility to the community and the home's resources. For children with diseases and disabilities, the home provides resources to treat their medical needs and sets up rehabilitation plans for them.

Rehabilitation services include music therapy, directive education and language training to help the children improve their physical functioning. For formal education, the home will send the children to nearby schools, so that they have the opportunity for contact with the outside world. For medical treatment, the home provides treatment to the disabled and ill children, and also basic prevention for healthy children. Meanwhile, the home also searches for some alternative care, such as foster care inside and outside the agency, combining institutionalized care with family care (Feng 2004).

The features of this kind of service can be summarized as follows: The agency is in charge of fundraising, determining admission procedures, identifying new residents, recruiting new staff, and providing daily care. As a government agency, the ultimate goals for orphanage homes are to accommodate homeless children, and function as social control to make the society stable. The emphasis is on taking in as many orphans as

possible, and settling them, while less on improving quality of service. The institution focuses on providing standard service, which at times may result in the neglect of the diverse needs of children. Orphanage homes stress the institution-centered model, i.e. service delivery happens in the institutional setting. The agencies gain sufficient funding and resources from the government and society to maintain the home to operate, meanwhile they must obey and follow the government instructions and administration. There are some advantages of this type of service that make them the cornerstone of orphanage service in China. They serve as the vehicle of social control, as a return, the funding and staff are stable, the benefits and working conditions are relatively preferable, and professional promotion is ensured. The disadvantages range from poor quality of service and poorly trained staff (Xu 2007) to the institutionalized working model that emphasizes administration rather than service, which fails to meet the diverse needs of children (Wang 2007; Xu 2006).

Foster care

The concept of foster care was imported from western countries (Xu 2006). In the early 1990s, the idea of the foster family was introduced into China as a supplement to the government run, institutionalized care for the orphans. Foster care in China refers to caring for orphans in a temporary family, in a natural family setting, as studies find institutionalized care limit the mental, social and psychological development of orphans (Wang 2007; Xu 2006). Currently, almost half of orphanage homes have initiated foster care for their residents (Wang 2007). Gradually, foster care has evolved as a valuable form of care for orphans.

There are two kinds of foster care, one is foster care inside the agency and the other is outside the agency. Foster care inside the agency refers to staff from the agency establishing a family with several children, providing a family environment. It aims at providing a more individualized and better service to the children. The other form is to recruit parents outside the agency to form a family with several children. After training, the parents play their roles as father and mother in their home setting, and provide daily care for the children as family members. Many studies indicate that foster family care provides a better service and stronger chance for the children to grow healthily (Wang 2007; Xu 2006). Some families develop close, intimate relationships among family members (Wang, 2007). However, compared to orphanage homes, the foster system lacks sufficient resources such as trained and skilled professionals and access to facilities. Therefore, it is hard to ensure a level of rehabilitation and educational equality offered in orphanage homes (Wang 2007).

4.2 Service for the AIDS orphans

Service for the AIDS orphans appeared in the late 1990s, as the illness became more prevalent and the number of families impacted increased. There are several models development in service delivery. To sum up there are three main models.

Henan model

Henan province is one of the focal places where AIDS infection rates are high, and consequently, AIDS orphans need support. The provincial government takes the major responsibility of care for these orphans. Three ways of caring were developed: 1) foster family. 2) adoption, and 3) institutionalized care. Foster family refers to the care taken by the kinships or families that can help to care for these orphans, the local government will pay the family a fixed sum of allowance to cover the child's living expenses. The allowance varies in different places in the province. Meanwhile, the local government encourages people to legally adopt these orphans. According to the official data, from 1996-2004, 55,000 Chinese

orphans had been adopted by American families, and 5,500 by Canadian families (Si 2006). For those who do not have a foster family, the local government will arrange for them to live in the orphanage homes and share the institutionalized care. The service provided focuses on the daily life caring and financial support. The minimum requirement is to keep the basic living standard for these orphans so that they are not homeless.

Yunnan model

In Yunnan, AIDS infection results more from drug addiction. Apart from foster family and institutional care, the local government has applied four ways to assist the AIDS orphans. First is to provide a minimum living allowance to the urban orphans, and regular relief for rural orphans, which may range from 60 yuan (RMB) to 390 yuan (RMB) monthly. Second is to conduct joint projects with civil organizations and international charitable agencies to provide relief help to these orphans, such as education and emotional support. The third is to negate all school fees for the orphans to ensure their education. The last one is to establish a resettlement center for assisting AIDS orphans in the city. The center provides residence to these orphans, is in charge of collecting data regarding the number of orphans in the area, provide training for the staff working with AIDS orphans, encourage and guide people to adopt orphans, supervise the foster families to provide better care for the orphans, and direct the township level and street office level government to work on assisting AIDS orphans. The center serves to integrate resources in the area and to monitor the process of service delivery.

Hubei model

In Hubei in the past several years, the local government explored a community-based model to care for AIDS orphans. The model relies mainly on the kinship family and financially depends on the government and individual enterprises' funding and community care. These AIDS orphans are taken care by their kinship families, the local government provides all the living allowance to the foster families, and the local businesses contribute funds to help subsidize the support. Meanwhile, great efforts have been made on community acceptance and care for these orphans so that they can interact and integrate into the whole communities. This model has been identified as the best one for orphans to be integrated into the community supported by the public and the local government (Huang and Yang 2007).

4.3   Care for children with parents in jail

As mentioned above, children with parents in jail also face a number of difficulties, but there are no regulations or policies addressing their needs. However, there are some NGOs providing services to some of these children in need.

One of the famous one is the sun village in Beijing. Sun Village was set up in 2000, mainly providing service to the children with parents in jail. It is self fundraising and offers institutionalized care for these children during the absence of their parents, to ensure that their rights for education and care are protected. There are four departments in the village, the department of administration, fundraising and development, children management and property management. There are eight staff working here in charge of the daily operation, fundraising, public education, advocacy, promotion, education and monitoring. There are more than 130 children aged between 3 months to 18 years old living there. All the children will go to school in the nearby community, the Village provides all the service free of charge, including schooling, clothing and daily needs. The children will visit their parents in jail three to four times a year, the Village will cover all the expenses. Within the Village, there is a small clinic, with a full time doctor, and a counselor providing psychological counseling to

the children. As of now, the Village has branches in Xian, Xinxiang and Longxian accommodating more than 200 children (Xu 2007).

4.4   Barriers and problems in service delivery

In review of the services delivered to orphans in China, a number of barriers and problems in terms of policy-making, implementation, and service delivery can be identified.

Policy gap: theoretical policy vs. practical policy

From our previous discussion, a number of policy gaps are apparent. China has ratified the Children Rights Convention, and the Chinese government developed its agenda for child development. Still, operational regulations and policy regarding implementation of the Children Rights Convention within the Chinese context are lacking. In 2006, the government exacted "Instructions on strengthening work on assisting orphan and disabled children," providing a basic framework for orphan care. The instruction was the first policy on orphanage care since the economic reform in the 1990s, demonstrating the active stance of the government in orphan care. It states the goals for orphan care as comprehensive development, clarifies the identification of different kinds of orphans, ensures the systematic construction of orphan care, claims to be open to all social forces to be involved in orphan care, and demands more professionalization for care work. Theoretically, the instruction is an ideal policy to regulate orphan care.

Unfortunately, there are no operational guidelines that can be applied to the practice. For instance, how to deal with other institutions in helping children with parents in jail? Who takes up the main responsibility to look after the AIDS orphans who are infected, the health department or civil affairs department? Who is responsible for supervising and monitoring the service quality by GOs and NGOs? How can the service deliverers be professionalized? What are the standards of service quality for orphans? What can be done to guarantee the quality of service in the agencies and in the foster families? To the extent these questions remain unanswered, there is still much to be done in policy advocacy in this field.

Issues and problems in service delivery

Some scholars have found that in present day orphanage homes, there remain some major issues impacting care. First of all, institutionalized care may be harmful to children's healthy development. The institution is a centralized and closed system, it limits children's connections with the outside world, and cannot provide intimate, family care. To some extent, it interrupts the socialization process for the children (Zhu et al. 2007). Secondly, there are some internal problems in the operational process within the institutions: 1) the majority of the staff in orphanage homes are recruited from society, without any requirement for professional credentials, knowledge, or skills. For many homes, there are no therapists, psychological counselors or social workers (Zhu et al. 2007; Xu 2006; Wang 2007); 2) according to the statistics from Ministry of Civil Affairs, the ratio of staff to residents in orphanage homes varies from 1:2.99 to 1: 4.18, much higher than that of 1:1.5 in many western such as Japan and UK (National Statistics Bureau 2006); and 3) staff frequently turn over, making services and care inconsistent. Also, reports of abuse and neglect of the children by staff illustrate a problem of both management and oversight in these homes (Wang 2007; Zhu et al. 2007; Human Rights Watch 1996). Thirdly, the cost for maintaining the homes is high. The current orphanage homes accommodate more than 60,000 orphans, with 160,000 staff (Ministry of Civil Affairs 2001). To maintain such a large structure incurs large expenses. The major funds for the orphanage homes come from the government. From 1990

to1996, local governments invested 5.15 billion in orphanage homes and the central government invested 7.4 billion (State Council News Office 1996). Despite this large investment, it is still financially difficult for the orphanage homes to meet their expenses, as the costs for care provision rises, particularly for rehabilitation and medical treatment (Wang 2007; Zhu et al. 2007). Therefore, it is crucial to explore some new models to care for the orphans in China.

Foster care has its issues too. One is that quality control for foster care is weak with a lack of monitoring of care by professionals so that services lack effective oversight and incidents of abuse have happened, such as some cases reported in foreign mass media (Shang and Xu 2003). Another issue is that the foster system lacks access to rehabilitation facilities and skilled professionals, which may affect the physical rehabilitation of the children (Wang 2007). These issues, if unchecked, will hinder the further development of foster care in China.

5 Social Work Role
According to the International Federation of Social Workers,

- The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.

- Social work grew out of humanitarian and democratic ideals, and its values are based on respect for the equality, worth, and dignity of all people. Since its beginnings over a century ago, social work practice has focused on meeting human needs and developing human potential. Human rights and social justice serve as the motivation and justification for social work action. In solidarity with those who are disadvantaged, the profession strives to alleviate poverty and to liberate vulnerable and oppressed people in order to promote social inclusion. Social work values are embodied in the profession's national and international codes of ethics (IFSW 2008).

Social work is based on the concept of human rights and social justice, helping people in need to solve their own problems and promote the well-being of all humanity. The profession's core values are equality, respect, and democratic participation. Its basic principles are treating clients equally regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation; empowerment; autonomy; and participatory decision making. All these values and belief can be applied to the social service for orphan care.

Social work as a discipline and profession is quite new in China, developing in the late 20th century (Liu and Cheung 2003). Currently, there are more than 220 universities have social work programs and have produced more than 10,000 graduates on the bachelor level and approximately 150 on the master level (Wang 2007). Doctoral level social work programs do not exist in China yet. Most universities provide a generalist education for graduates, focusing on values, skills and theories of social work, not on different streams, such as social work with women, family, children or other populations. According to our daily observation, there are a few social work graduates working in child welfare homes in Beijing and Shanghai, mainly as managers or directors of service office. There is now a demand for the university to extend its social work education from generalist to the specialist orientation and to meet the needs in child welfare protection.

Orphan care by nature is a kind of professional service which can help to treat children with respect and dignity, explore their potential to solve the problems they are facing, physically, mentally and psychologically, so that they can integrate into the social life and function well. The first author of the paper offered some training to the staff in Beijing 5th welfare homes, finding that staff there were willing to learn more about social work knowledge, as they felt that social work can help them to develop new insight into their daily work and skills they learned can be very helpful in their work with their clients. Based on our interactions with the staff in welfare homes, we forward that social work can contribute to the whole service process through:

- *Policy advocacy.* Social workers can work closely with the clients, to understand their needs for policy change. Applying a bottom-up approach, social worker can serve as the agent to lobby the policy makers on different levels.

- *Community development.* Helping the clients to return to the larger society is the ultimate goal for social service for orphans. Preparing the clients is one aspect, the other aspect is to get the community ready to accept the clients back. Therefore, social workers need to work closely with the community, to foster and advance an environment of care and support, so that clients may enter fully into life and work.

- *Public education and training.* For raising public consciousness on issues like AIDS and human rights, social workers could contribute educating the public, so that people can be sensitive to the clients and more caring and accommodating for them. Another aspect is to offer trainings to foster families to support healthy family environments and to engage in preventive work for high risk populations in communities.

- *Service delivery for the clients.* This is the biggest duty for social workers to undertake inside and outside the institutions. Applying professional knowledge and skills, social workers can help to address clients' emotional, psychological and behavioral problems through various methods such as case work, group work and case management to establish and maintain quality services to children. Community work can also be implemented to mobilize more resources for the service inside and outside agencies.

- *New program initiatives.* Creativity and innovation are features of social work. Working in different contexts in orphan care may inspire new ideas for initiating new programs for clients.

There is no accurate data indicating the percentage of the professional training staff receive in their current positions. According to a survey conducted by Beijing Welfare Home in 2008, the majority part of the staff work as nursing carers in the homes. Out of the 13 homes studies, there were 1 174 staff, 685 out of them are nursing carers, The findings indicate that average age of staff is above 40 years of age, and all staff lack professional training, have relatively low educational attainment and low pay, ranging from 300-2000 yuan (Sun and Gong 2008). Several studies indicate that a lack of professional training for the staff is a salient issue for the current orphan care in China (Shang and Xu 2003; Xu 2006; Zhu et al. 2007). It is believed that with the application of social work to the orphanage homes and other caring agencies, the quality of service could be improved and the situation of the clients will be better.

6 Implications for the future

As more and more social problems emerge, new types of orphans come into being, the social welfare system needs to respond to the new needs and demands. Due to the fact that the central government is relinquishing its control over the social welfare delivery duties, the orphan care system is experiencing a transition from one that is state monopolized to one with multiple participants including NGOs. NGOs are sharing greater responsibilities in caring for the orphans, but they lack the legislative support that authorizes these NGOs duties and responsibilities and even rights in the service delivery process. Moreover, the current lack of professional knowledge to delivery high quality service in orphanage homes, hence, social worker's intervention in the field is a good solution.

Social indicators are that the population of AIDS orphans will increase, crime rates will continue, and the one-child policy will remain in force. Logically, the number of orphans, actual or form, is unlikely to decline in the future. The resources for social services, especially for orphan care may not increase substantially. The challenges will be how to improve the quality of service for these clients, and how to make full use of the current resources to give orphans a good quality of life. All these issues will be answered by the whole society, and professional social workers first.

It is suggested in order to address these issues, more research needs to be conducted in policy advocacy, like how family planning policy will be implemented with special protection for female babies, how social welfare systems in rural areas be established so that elderly parents with daughters only can be supported, and how to alleviate poverty in rural and remote areas so that girls can be equally valued as boys. More effort needs to be made in legal knowledge and consciousness raising for the public, so that more and more people will understand how to protect themselves legally, and to assume the responsibility of child rearing. Also, medical knowledge of HIV must be delivered to people to reduce infection rates.

Social work as a profession is very new in China. Until the end of 2006, social work as a profession was not recognized by the society, it still has a long way to go for social workers to enter the social services field to make it more efficient and effective. To solve the problems orphan care is facing depends heavily upon the efforts by the whole society, especially the government and the professionals. It is the duty and responsibility of the social work profession to play a central role in the whole process.

7 Conclusion

Service for orphans is experiencing a transition of the government-as- the-major service provider to multiple service providers, i.e. more and more NGOs are participating in service provision, as government is playing a less and less important roles in social welfare delivery in China. Quality of service for orphans in all organizations, either in GO or in NGOs, are relatively poor, as they lack professional training, and social workers have no position in the agency, despite the fact that the Ministry of Civil Affairs declared there will be a special post for social workers in all orphanages in China several years ago. Still, it is not easy for social workers to work in agencies, due to the barriers of recruitment and professional promotions, because the professional promotion system has not been established yet. However, as the introduction of social worker licensing examinations in China was initiated this year, it is hoped that the situation will be changing. More positions will be set up for professional social workers in orphanages, and the effectiveness of professional service will be recognized by the public and clients, and more university graduates of social work program will be committed to serve these children in orphanages.

There is a critical role for social workers to play in service delivery in these agencies, as the service delivered in orphanage homes bears the same values and functions as social work.

To sum up, in the current orphan care, social workers are still outsiders, it is crucial for them to find a place inside. It is hoped that the central government will attend to building social work into a strong profession, as it can help to work to solve social problems and promote a harmonious society.

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