Child welfare policy for orphaned children in China

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Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion Seminar, LSE, 15 October 2014

Acknowledgements: Xiaoyuan Shang
Outline

Chinese social policy context

Alternative care principles and types

Research approach

Orphans profile

Case study examples – foster care, kinship care, NGO

Implications for mixed child welfare policy
Chinese policy context

570,000+ orphans – 1-2 parents died or cannot be found

Extended family responsible

Ministry of Civil Affairs if no extended family

Developing, transition country

• Changing values, less informal care

• Government support systems only in developed areas
Principles of good alternative care

UN Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children (UNGACC 2009)

- family based care
- preserving identity
- permanency
- child participation in alternative care processes
Forms of alternative care in China

Informal kinship care

Foster care

Adoption

Family group care

Residential care
Research questions

How many orphans children are in China, cared for by the state or in their communities?

What are the main forms of alternative care in China? Do they provide adequate care and protection to orphaned children?

What are the living experiences of these children in different alternative care, and what role does the state, kinship care, and other parties play in fulfilling their rights?

What are the official policies for supporting these children and how are the policies changing?
Methods

National Census of Orphans

National Sample Survey of State Child Welfare Institutions

In-depth research sites - 39

- Questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observation
- Children, families, officials, schools, social networks, organisations
Research sites
Reasons orphaned

Illness

Accident

Natural disaster

Abandoned

➢ Broader social policy implications
### Age and gender of orphans by location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>(Boys %)</th>
<th>(Girls %)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - &lt;3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - &lt;6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - &lt;9</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 - &lt;12</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 - &lt;15</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - &lt;18</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**  
56.8  
41.4  
1.37  
0.87  
1.47

Source: National census of orphans 2005

Notes: n=563,053; missing=10,319; *percent of all orphans, including missing, so does not total 100
# Alternative care of orphans by type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Per cent of orphans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kinship care</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster care</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional care (80% with disability)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other forms of care</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: n=563,625. Percentages rounded.
State child welfare institutions

Hold the formal guardianship of orphans without extended family

Historically cared for children in the institution. Now mixed:

- Arrange adoption, foster care, family group care
- Institutional care for transition, temporary, permanent, medical and disability support
Foster care policy changes

Deinstitutionalisation

- Local response to high number of orphans and financial constraints – central government funding insufficient for institutional care
- Promoted as good practice by international NGOs
- Child welfare goals
- Changing role of the state – community, NGOs
- Regulations for quality foster care (2003)

Still not formalised in policy as preferable to institutional care
## Duration in SCWI before foster care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Per cent of orphans in care of SCWI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immediately fostered (no institutional care)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 15 days in institution</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 15 days in institution</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution only—no foster care</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Notes: 10% sample children n=380. 243 children used foster care.
Rural informal kinship care

Formal and informal social contract

- Grandparents required to care for orphans
- Paternal and maternal uncles and aunts accept responsibility
- Occasional government support – social security, education

Gender bias

- Responsibility more frequent for orphaned boy
- Marginalisation of mother if father dies

Risks to children’s rights

- Losing grandparent carers
- Poverty and stress in kinship care households
NGO children’s welfare services

Range in quality and services

• International, domestic
• Charity, religious, social service, child rights orientations
• Registered, unregistered, individual household
• Institutional care, group care, foster care, adoption

Government role formalising from 2013 but ambivalent

• Guardianship – unregistered birth
• Good practice alternative care
• Regulating quality
Further case studies

Kinship care in Autonomous Region – cultural considerations

Foster mother villages

Children affected by HIV – villages with unsafe injecting drug use or plasma donation
Social welfare responses

Basic Living Security Allowance for Orphans (2010)

Other household social security

Land assets for rural orphans

Health care – urban family responsibility; Rural Cooperative Health Care

Education – 9 years free compulsory schooling
Implications for mixed child welfare

Child welfare policy and local implementation gaps

- Prevention and protection for welfare children in families
- Access to education, health and disability support
- Law and governance of alternative care – guardianship, registered birth
- Support for extended family carers and community

Formalise alternative care

- Finance, quality, principles of alternative care:
  - family based care; preserving identity; permanency; child participation
Resources


Chinese social policy projects
www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/research-areas-and-strengths/?search=&category=20#search-result

Disability policy projects
www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/research-program-/disability-and-mental-health/research-

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