



Child welfare policy for orphaned children in China

Never Stand Still

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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

Age	(Boys %	Girls %)	Gender ratio boys to girls		
			Total	Urban	Rural
0 - <3	1.4	2.5	0.56	0.32	1.33
3 - <6	3.8	2.8	1.36	0.83	1.50
6 - <9	9.0	6.3	1.43	1.14	1.46
9 - <12	14.4	10.2	1.41	1.10	1.45
12 - <15	18.6	13.1	1.42	1.08	1.46
15 - <18	9.6	6.5	1.48	1.17	1.55
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

	Per cent of orphans
Kinship care	62
Foster care	13
Institutional care (80% with disability)	12
Other forms of care	13

Source: National census of orphans 2005.
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

	Per cent of orphans in care of SCWI
Immediately fostered (no institutional care)	42
Less than 15 days in institution	15
More than 15 days in institution	6
Institution only—no foster care	36
Total	100

Source: National Sample Survey of Eight State Child Welfare Institutions 2001.

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

Shang, X., Fisher, K.R. (2013), *Caring for Orphaned Children in China*, Lexington Books, Lanham.

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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