

**Rural labour migration  
in China:**  
*Challenges for policies*

Zhan Shaohua



Management  
of Social  
Transformations



# Rural Labour Migration in China: Challenges for Policies

Zhan Shaohua

Associate Professor, Institute of Sociology,  
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)



**MOST-2 Policy Papers series uses a novel methodology aimed at enhanced dissemination and usability of research results for policy-making.** Designed according to scientific policy analysis principles, this methodology is based on a generic structure for producing documents.

The generic structure first enables different types of documents to be produced from the same original content. For instance, collections of the summaries of the various sections from the Papers produce Policy Briefs (5 pages condensed versions). Both Papers and Briefs are available in print and in electronic versions.

The structure also gives all documents the same appearance, so ease of reading improves with familiarity of the format. A better indentation of the text further improves the location and utility of the information: the content of each section in the document becomes a fully-fledged knowledge item that's easy to spot, extract to be better studied, compared and put into perspectives.

This logic serves as the foundation for the interactive Policy Research Tool that MOST is currently developing. The online tool will provide free and speedy access to policy-relevant comparative information, giving users the ability to create research profiles based on subject categories, produce customized reports with select content from the original documents, and easily compare cases and assess the relevance of the policy options available.

MOST-2 methodology helps respond more efficiently to different types of information needs and facilitates knowledge feedback and analysis, thus improving the use of research results for policy-making.

*The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of UNESCO.*

*The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.*

Published in 2005 by the United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organisation  
1, rue Miollis  
75732 Paris Cedex 15  
France

SHS-2005/WS/25 - // CLD 21464

© UNESCO 2005  
Printed in France

# Contents

- Foreword** ▶ **5**
- 1. Introduction** ▶ **9**
- 1.1 Summary **9**
  - 1.2 Key facts **13**
- 2. Context** ▶ **17**
- 2.1 The country **17**
  - 2.2 Rural labour migration and policy challenges **18**
  - 2.3 Agents and stakeholders **22**
  - 2.4 Resources **24**
- 3. Legal framework** ▶ **25**
- 3.1 Current policies **25**
  - 3.2 Policy experiences **27**
  - 3.3 Policy options **29**
  - 3.4 Concrete recommendations **30**
- 4. Change initiative: an ongoing UNESCO project** ▶ **31**
- 4.1 Project Initiatives **31**
  - 4.2 Intended effects **37**
  - 4.3 Aspects of implementation **37**
- 5. Proposed policy implication** ▶ **39**
- 5.1 Lessons learned **39**
  - 5.2 Potential problems or barriers **40**
  - 5.3 Potential harmful consequences **40**
  - 5.4 Plans for implementation **40**
  - 5.5 Duplicability/transferability **41**



<b>6. Monitoring and evaluation during implementation</b>	<b>▶ 43</b>
6.1 Preliminary evaluation	<b>43</b>
6.2 Indicators for assessment	<b>44</b>
6.3 Feedback	<b>45</b>
6.4 Control	<b>45</b>
<b>7. References</b>	<b>▶ 47</b>
7.1 Sources	<b>47</b>
7.2 Further reading	<b>49</b>

# Foreword

This publication is the result of a study conducted by a young Chinese researcher, Zhan Shaohua. Zhan is a member of the research team led by Professor Huang Ping of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), which has been UNESCO's main partner for the "Together with Migrants" project in China.

This paper, prepared by the UNESCO Beijing Office, summarizes the progress made since 2002 on the "Together with Migrants" project and offers new perspectives for the future of the project in terms of policy recommendations.

\* \* \*

UNESCO initiated the "Together with Migrants" research-action project in 2002 within the framework of the overall UNESCO programme on poverty alleviation and will continue to implement the project until 2007. Our strategy consists of supplementing existing research and analysis through fieldwork experience and in testing the proposed solutions, drawing on the results of the project in a "problem-solving" fashion to deliver policy recommendations to relevant institutions able to make effective changes in the regulations and policies connected to migration issues.

The overall objective of the project is the integration of migrant workers into the urban social and economic fabric through concrete services including training in basic and life skills, vocational training, career counselling, family planning, and health and rights awareness. The main target group is young and female migrants, as they face double discrimination as migrant workers and as women.

We have identified four main goals for the project:

- 1.** The first is to address urban poverty, as well as social and economic exclusion faced by young and, especially, female migrants. The project aims to facilitate their integration into urban society, and to improve their living conditions through concrete social services, activities and vocational training that can empower them, improve their awareness of their basic rights, and enhance their capabilities and self-development. Utilizing a demand-driven and participatory approach, the activities of the project are



designed according to the needs expressed by the migrants themselves. Many migrant workers face social and economic exclusion. By building solidarity networks between migrants, enhancing their rights-awareness, and aiding their social and professional integration as new urban dwellers, the project aims to reduce these inequalities.

**2.** The second objective of the project directly follows the first: to impact policy-making at both the local and the national levels. Indeed, addressing poverty and social exclusion is a long-term effort that can only succeed in China as a whole if it is implemented nationwide by the government on all levels. As an international organization, it is UNESCO's mission to advise and guide UN Member States towards balanced, equitable and sustainable development. This project is in absolute accordance with the Chinese Government's will to establish a well-balanced and sustainable society. UNESCO contributes expertise invaluable to the government in such crucial matters.

**3.** The third objective involves protection of human rights, such as the right to work and to safe working conditions, right to information, right to adequate living and housing conditions, access to health care, right to security, and education.

**4.** Finally, the fourth objective of *Together with Migrants* is to fight public discrimination towards migrant workers. To this end, UNESCO raises awareness of the migrants' situation in China through mass media, debates, exhibitions and film screenings. The purpose of these events is to combine artistic expression and public opinion debates with research and daily fieldwork on the fight against poverty. UNESCO aims to create a bottom-up movement within Chinese society, so that people may recognize that migrants are citizens as well and that they contribute greatly to the advancement and development of the country. Our hope is that this movement may also influence policy makers, advocating the implementation of concrete policies, aimed at improving migrant workers' living conditions and respect for their rights.

The Institute of Sociology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) is our main partner for this project in China. Their team of researchers (including Zhan Shaohua), led by Professor Huang Ping fully participates in the coordination, the "follow-up", the monitoring and final assessment of the project in China, and in particular the interaction between analysis

of the results of action, general research on migration issues, and recommendations for policy-making. At the local level we work with 22 local partners such as the All-China Women's Federation, Public Security Bureau, Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences, etc.

As the urban explosion is taking place in China on a national scale and exposes migrants to complex and highly divergent challenges, this project focuses on 8 pilot sites throughout the country: Beijing, Shanghai, Dalian, Chengdu, Kunming, Diqing, Chifeng, and Zhuolu and an additional site in Mongolia. These sites have been selected to include sending, receiving and transitional areas in an effort to capture the full spectrum of challenges confronting migrants. In each pilot site, working partnerships are built between social scientists, NGOs (including local Women's Federations), and local authorities in order to promote and facilitate the provision of various training, counselling and health services for migrants.

The main actions of the project consist of:

- 1.** Increasing migrants' awareness of legal issues, health, education and employment conditions;
- 2.** Developing a support network between young female migrants for information sharing, social and psychological support, and collective action;
- 3.** Improving migrants' skills with concrete training based on their needs and interests;
- 4.** Developing awareness among inhabitants of "sending areas" about possible difficulties associated with migration;
- 5.** Coordinating action with policy makers in order to improve the general situation of migrants.

Only three years into the project, it has already seen great success:

- ▶ Thus far, 80,000 female migrants have benefited from the project's activities;
- ▶ Training of local officials and local partners in each pilot site have been organized in order to promote the participation of local agencies, establish networks within or between the project sites, and a better understanding of the rural-urban migration issue and our project;
- ▶ Three annual national workshops on the project have been held with the support and participation of China's municipalities, Ministry of Public Security, State Council, Labour Bureau, private sector, etc.



► Moreover, in addition to our field activities in our 8 pilot sites thus far, we have entered the research and policy impact oriented phase of the project, as we are now able to draw conclusions from our work and results.

One of the greatest achievements of the project to date is the production of the following research and policy recommendation papers delivered in February 2005:

1. *Poverty Reduction among Migrants: Concepts, Practice and Policy Implications*
2. *Basic Rights of Migrant Workers: Impact Factors and Improvement Strategies*
3. *Community Rebuilding: New Strategy for Future Work*
4. *Poverty issues of migrant labour in market conditions*
5. *Establishing the Network between Origin and Destination of Rural Migrants*
6. *Development Opportunities and Limitation of Informal Employment to Female Migrants in China*

In the future, UNESCO will pursue its supporting integrative activities and capacity-building action; implement a new project focused on “Migrant Children in Need”, and will continue the advocacy campaign “Together with Migrants”. Involvement of researchers, policy makers, artists and civil society organizations will be pursued through artistic events. We plan to continue strengthening the triangular partnership (local authorities, social scientists, NGOs) and social mobilization around rural labour migration issues.

The final product of the project will be a white paper consisting of a set of recommendations for policy makers using the recommendations and policy papers already published. This white paper will be published by 2007, after in-depth consultation between local, provincial and national authorities (Leading group on poverty reduction, Public Security Bureau, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection...) as well as United Nations Agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, ILO, UNAIDS, UN-HABITAT, WHO, FAO, UNICEF), members of the private sector (Chinese and foreign companies) and the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1

### *Summary*

Rural labourer migration has become one of the significant socio-economic phenomena in China, the most populous country in the world. The number of rural migrant labourers has increased greatly after the “reform and opening up” started in the late 1970s and early 1980s, especially after Deng Xiaoping’s speeches in southern coastal China in 1992, and the relaxation of *Hukou* System (residence registration system), which no longer prohibits rural labour migration, but still restricts migrant labourers’ access to public health care, pension system, legal aid, social services, etc. Besides the government’s actions, other structural factors have also led to the large-scale rural labour migration in China – 114 million in 2003 – including numerous “surplus” rural labourers, income gap, regional disparity, etc. In recent years, the government has gradually come to appreciate rural migrant labourers and to a large extent realized the importance of rural labour migration. However, even though many policies have been issued to protect rural migrant labourers and to promote rural labour migration, five challenges/problems have not been adequately addressed: first, the issues of poverty and poverty reduction among migrant labourers, especially in terms of incapacity and social exclusion of rural migrants, need to be taken more seriously by policy makers and social actors in future; second, there is a policy gap between rural and urban poverty reduction, i.e, the current policies of poverty reduction do not address rural migrant labourers, who are working and living in urban areas but have no urban *Hukou*; third, regional diversity in rural labour migration has not been fully considered by government policy; fourth, few policies consider rural labour migration issues in terms of gender; and last, it is necessary and advanta-

geous to forge a “win-win” relationship between rural migrant labourers and local developers. It is important to note that these challenges are not unrelated but rather intertwined. To confront these challenges, project or policy makers can find and utilize existing resources among NGOs, government, academics, rural migrant labourers, and other social actors. Currently, agents involved in/affected by rural labour migration include: governmental agencies at both central and local levels (such as MOLSS, MOA, OPRD, etc.), international organizations and local NGOs, academics, migrant labourers and their families, employers and volunteers.

### **Legal framework**

Since the early 1980s, governmental policies have gradually come to allow rural labourers the freedom to migrate to urban areas. Within the framework of current policies, rural (migrant) labourers can, i) move into cities and obtain permanent residency in small cities and townships, ii) seek non-agricultural jobs in urban areas, iii) appeal to urban authorities like labour agencies for help and protection; and iv) enjoy more social services than before, such as training programmes, children’s education, health care, etc. Moreover, the Chinese Government has shifted to a comprehensive approach to development rather than focusing solely on GDP growth. This so-called “New Paradigm for Development”, launched by the Chinese Government in October 2003, aims for a more balanced, comprehensive and sustainable development. Under this new strategy, policies concerning rural labour migration can be expected to undergo more positive changes in the coming years. However, despite the positive effects of these new governmental policies, a large number of rural migrant labourers are living and working in poverty in terms of incapacity and social exclusion, especially female migrants, a particularly vulnerable population that has not been specifically addressed within the existing policy framework. Moreover, thus far governmental policy-making has not adequately taken into account that on the one hand, there is abundant social capital among migrant labourers, and on the other, migrant labourers have different needs in different areas and at different times. To solve the problems, the policies concerning rural labour migration should: first, focus on poverty reduction among migrants and local development; second, address the needs of female migrants; third, take into account social capital among

rural migrant labourers and integrate it into or link it with policies; last, to take regional diversity into consideration and encourage local autonomy and creativity in policy-making and policy implementation.

### **Change initiative: an ongoing UNESCO project**

To explore practical solutions to the above challenges, UNESCO, in cooperation with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, launched a six-year project (2002-07) entitled *Urban Poverty Reduction among Young Migrants* (subtitled *Together with Migrants* in 2003). The project is an action-research, involving social science researchers in designing, monitoring and evaluating the actions, which include skill training, practical education (such as law, health awareness, etc.), network building, social capital promoting, etc., executed in eight selected pilot sites. Generally, the project advocates and examines more positive and practical policy changes to reduce poverty among rural labour migrants in terms of incapacity and social exclusion, especially from a gender perspective; to promote local development through rural labour migration, and to establish “win-win” partnerships between different regions (sending and receiving areas; western, central and eastern regions; underdeveloped and developed regions). To reach its goals, the project has adopted the following measures/strategies during project implementation: first, to select a single local agency as the main local partner in each pilot site to take charge of policy implementation; second, to forge a triangle partnership network consisting of governmental agencies (officials), academic institutions (researchers) and NGOs/NPOs at both national and local levels; third, to publicize and promote the project in a comprehensive way, utilizing publications, media, academic seminars, art events, etc.; fourth, to draft policy papers/reports on the findings of the pilot sites, which will be published and also discussed with policy makers at both national and local levels.

### **Proposed policy implications**

Drawing lessons from past policies concerning rural labour migration, it was found that a good policy cannot be effectively implemented in certain contexts because no specific governmental agency has been designated to address the issues or the designated agency cannot or will not work with other related agencies; or because they have not allowed for



rural migrant labourers' participation in policy implementation. Concerning the new policies recommended by the UNESCO project in particular, two obstacles can be foreseen: one is that local governments, especially those approached by the project, may regard the new policies as unfavourable or unrelated to local development, and the other is that local governments may not understand the new policies correctly and thus be unable to implement them effectively. Moreover, the proposed policies could have a potentially harmful effect on local development and add to the burden on migrant labourers if they are misunderstood or implemented inappropriately. To avoid these negative ramifications, the policy makers can first integrate the proposed policies into the new development paradigm and identify them as indispensable components in building a harmonious society; second, before and during policy implementation, projects can be launched to train the officials or other actors in order to facilitate an understanding of the new policies; third, one specific governmental agency should be designated to be responsible for the new policies, and in the meantime, it may be required that the policies be implemented jointly with other related agencies; fourth, academic institutions or research teams can be selected to monitor and assess the implementation of new policies; finally, during policy implementation/monitoring & assessment, beneficiaries' (rural migrant labourers) opinions and feedback should be seriously considered.

### **Monitoring and evaluation during implementation**

The proposed policies possess three strengths (a strong duplicability or transferability, a focus on local development, and rural labourers' participation), two weaknesses (inadequate attention to class stratification of rural migrant labourers and on the needs of migrant labourers upon returning home), two opportunities (realization of the value of migrant labourers' contributions, new development paradigm) and two threats (income gap and regional disparity, "brain-drain"). The proposed policies can be assessed according to both qualitative and quantitative indicators. Qualitative indicators include the policies' contributions to local development and gender equity, and various stakeholders' responses to the policies, such as local governmental agencies, NGOs/NPOs and rural migrant labourers. Quantitative indicators can be set up in terms of flow of financial resources,

administrative resources and beneficiaries during policy implementation. While evaluating, monitoring and assessing the policies, to receive and collect the feedback, the policy makers or experts can hold meetings, discussions, interviews and surveys to collect feedback from governmental officials, NGOs, local researchers, migrant labourers (especially female migrant labourers), and other stakeholders such as urban residents, potential rural migrant labourers, employers, etc. To regulate the process of policy implementation, the policy makers or experts can experiment and examine the policies in limited areas at first. After assessment and adjustment, the improved policies can be applied to a wider area. Moreover, to guarantee their flexibility and adjustability, the policy makers should make it possible for some parts of the policies to i) be designed and adjusted by local governments and authorities, ii) be adjusted according to stakeholders' suggestions, especially migrant labourers; iii) be in accordance with the strategies of local development.

## 1.2

### *Key facts*

#### ***Facts about Rural Migrant Labourers in China***

- ▶ In 2003, the number of rural migrant labourers reached 114 million, accounting for around 20 per cent of rural labourers.
- ▶ The principal reason for migration from primarily rural to urban areas is to seek non-agricultural work opportunities and escape poverty.
- ▶ Migrant labourers mostly come from China's underdeveloped western and central provinces such as Sichuan, Anhui, He'nan, Gansu, and mainly head to urban areas, south-eastern coastal locations and metropolises like Beijing, Shanghai, as well as nearby townships, surrounding counties, small cities and provincial capitals.
- ▶ By 2020, it is estimated that another 100 to 150 million "surplus" rural labourers will join the rural labour migration.
- ▶ Labour migration from rural to urban areas has contributed about 16 per cent of the total growth of China's GDP over the past 20 years.

- ▶ Since China's entry into the WTO, rural-urban migration has expanded significantly. In 2001, the rate of urbanization was 37 per cent. It is expected to reach 50 per cent in 2030 and 70 per cent in 2050.
- ▶ 70 per cent of migrant labourers are between 16 and 35 years of age, and most have received up to a junior middle school level of education (9 years in school). Most migrant labourers earn a monthly income from 300 yuan (US\$ 36) to 600 yuan (US\$ 72). About one third of migrant labourers are female.
- ▶ Most migrant labourers are employed in jobs which are generally considered dirty, dangerous and difficult, and which local inhabitants are unwilling to take. Today, migrant labourers in China significantly contribute to the development of industries, such as construction, commerce, food, services and sanitation. They play a chief role in the general improvement of life for urban residents.
- ▶ Quoted from *Together with Migrants*, p. 36. partly revised by the author.



Source: Huang Ping & Frank N. Pieke, 2003

***A Historical Review on Policies  
concerning Rural Labour Migration: 1949-2000***

---

- ▶ 1949-1958: Planning rural labour migration. In this period, rural labourers were encouraged to participate in urban development. As a result, about 40 million rural labourers were recruited for the urban industrial sectors.
- ▶ 1958-1983: Prohibiting rural labour migration. Under the systems of *Hukou*, purchase & sale of food products, Food Coupons, and the People's Commune, rural labourers were prohibited to leave their home villages for seeking jobs or running businesses without official permission.
- ▶ 1984-1988: Allowing rural labour migration. In 1984, an official document was issued to allow rural labourers to enter cities for employment. This "big" change was closely related to other socio-economic and institutional changes, such as continuous harvest and agricultural production, the collapse of the People's Commune System, and the reform of the system of purchase & sale of food products.
- ▶ 1989-1991: Restricting rural labour migration. During this time, the central government regulated the national economy to combat inflation. Policies were issued at central and local levels to restrict rural labour migration.
- ▶ 1992-2000: Regulating rural labour migration. The policies at central level allowed, regulated, and even encouraged orderly rural labour migration, but some local policy makers of large cities and coastal areas imposed regulations to restrict rural migrant labourers' in-flow and job seeking.
- ▶ After 2000: see below (Section 3).



## 2. Context

### 2.1

#### *The country*

China is the third largest country in the world, covering 9.6 million square kilometres and located in East Asia. China has 22,800 km of land borders and is contiguous to another 15 countries. Its topography can be described as generally high in elevation in the west and low in the east. The country is geographically comprised of: mountainous terrain 33.3 per cent, plateaux 26 per cent, basins 18.8 per cent, plains 12 per cent, and hills 9.9 per cent.

By the end of 2004, China's population reached 1.3 billion, the largest in the world. Noticeably, in the last two decades, the proportion of rural inhabitants has decreased greatly from 82.1 per cent in 1978 to 59.5 per cent in 2003 due to rapid urbanization. However, with the growth of population, China's rural population remains large, 768.5 million in 2003. Therefore, per capita arable land has diminished; only 0.1 hectares on average in 2003, less than half of the average in the world.

In the late 1970s, China began its transition from a planned system to a market economy. Concerning rural reform, the System of Household Responsibility has replaced that of the People's Commune. As a result, the collective-owned farmland has been allocated to and cultivated by household units. After the success of rural reform, the government began urban reform in the mid 1980s covering the systems and policies of employment, finance, tax, etc. Meanwhile, the central government made policies geared toward "opening up" to the international market and attracting foreign investments, especially in the eastern and coastal regions. As a result of the reform and opening

## 2.2

## *Rural labour migration<sup>1</sup> and policy challenges*

When the *Hukou* System<sup>2</sup> was introduced in China in the late 1950s, there had not been any large-scale voluntary rural-urban labour migration for almost two decades. In the early 1980s, rural labour migration remained relatively low with an estimated “floating population” of around 2 million. (Zhao Shukai, 2003)

The year 1984 is a milestone in the history of rural labour migration in China. Rural labourers were officially permitted to move to cities to seek jobs or run small businesses. Consequently, rural labourers were highly motivated and the number of migrants reached 26 million by 1988.

Mr Deng Xiaoping’s speeches in southern coastal China in 1992 gave rise to another wave of investment and rapid development in China, especially in southern coastal areas. This generated a great number of employment opportunities and brought a great increase of rural labour migration so that the population of rural labourers reached 62 million in 1993 and 70 million in 1994.

1. In this paper rural labour migration primarily refers to the voluntary movement of rural labourers, who leave their home villages for urban areas (ranging from township towns, county towns and other small cities within or outside the province of original residence, provincial capitals and the metropolis), seeking non-agricultural work opportunities, usually temporary or seasonal, at least three months a year, sometimes together with their family members.
2. The *Hukou* System is one of the social control/administration systems set up on the basis of households, whose members, either in rural or urban areas, must register at the local public security office as a legal resident. After registration, the households are issued a *Hukou* certificate, in which all members of the family are listed in detail as legal residents, and they are thereby more closely controlled by the local street office in urban, or village committees in rural areas (Huang Ping, 2000). Noticeably, the *Hukou* System, which was established in 1958, has been adjusted and reformed step-by-step in the last two decades and has less control over residents than before, even though it has not been eliminated yet.

In the late 1990s, the “Three Rural Problems” (rural production, rural community and rural people) reached a point of severity in China, especially in central and western regions. As a consequence of these problems plus the pro-urban, pro-eastern governmental policies, the income gap further widened between rural and urban residents, as did regional economic disparity between western, central and eastern regions. In this situation, many rural labourers, even those not considered “surplus”, had to seek non-agricultural activities in cities (Huang Ping and Frank Pieke, 2003). As a result, the number of rural migrants has kept rising from then on: 94 million in 2002, and 114 million in 2003.

Rural-urban labour migration has become a significant socio-economic phenomenon, and rural migrants have accounted for more than 10 per cent of China’s total population. The central government has attached much importance to it, and especially since 2000, many policies have been made to protect the rights of rural migrants and even promote rural labour migration. However, some challenges or problems, especially that of poverty reduction among migrants, have not been adequately addressed or not addressed at all. They include:

### **Poverty among migrants**

Migrants are more vulnerable than permanent residents. In China, migrant labourers can earn more cash than those who stay in their home village and work on farmland, but they encounter more difficulties in cities in terms of legal rights, health care, lifestyle change, skill training, housing, social integration, etc. Research shows that many migrants fall into poverty after moving into cities (Wang Fenyu & Li Lulu 2001; Zhan Shaohua, 2004). Poverty among migrants must necessarily be regarded as a multi-dimensional issue rather than simple economic poverty. The issues of limited rights and social exclusion of rural migrants need in future to be taken into consideration more seriously by policy makers and social actors (Zhan Shaohua, 2005).

### **Policy gap in poverty reduction**

In China, poverty is categorized as rural poverty or urban poverty. Remarkably, the Chinese Government has made much progress in rural poverty reduction: the number of people in rural poverty has decreased



from 250 million in 1978 to around 30 million in 2000.<sup>3</sup> Those living in urban poverty are officially defined as urban residents whose income is below the official minimal standard of living. Most of them are laid-off workers from State-owned Enterprises (SOEs), which have been reformed in the name of “increasing efficiency” since the mid-1990s (Tang Jun et al., 2003). To reduce urban poverty, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Ministry of Civil Affairs have issued policies to provide training programmes, employment, relief, etc., for the urban poor. However, these policies neglect the rural migrant labourers who are living and working in cities. Some scholars argue that there is a policy gap between rural and urban poverty reduction (Huang Ping, 2004a). Indeed, rural migrant labourers have less access to public health care, pension system, legal aid, social services, etc. than do urban residents because they lack an urban *Hukou*, thereby making them more vulnerable and likely to fall into poverty. As rural migrants living in poverty in urban regions, they are reached by neither rural nor urban poverty reduction programmes.

### Regional diversity

Chinese migrant labourers disperse from the countryside in a variety of ways. They move from rural to urban areas, from interior to coastal areas, and from western and central to eastern regions. However, within this general trend, there is much variation in terms of places of origin and destination. For instance, among the receiving urban areas, rural labour migrants can move into small, medium-sized as well as large cities, which can have an impact on rural migrants in different ways. As for rural places of origin, there exists remarkable disparity between provinces in central and western regions. In provinces like Anhui, Sichuan, etc., large-scale rural labour migration started in the early 1980s, while in some provinces, especially ethnically diverse regions, labour migration began relatively late or has yet to occur (Huang Ping & Zhan Shaohua, 2004). Furthermore, research shows that rural labour migration facilitates a mixture of social, economic and cultural phenomena: the features of regions where rural

3. The *White Book on China Poverty Reduction and Development*, released by the central government in 2000.

migrants come and go. However, so far these regional diversities have not been fully considered by governmental policy makers.

### **Gender issues**

Women account for about one-third of China's rural migrants and this proportion keeps a rising trend (Li Yinhe, et al., 2000). Research shows that on the one hand, in comparison with male migrants, they may face greater adversity in the process of migration, and thus become more vulnerable (Tang Can, 1996), and on the other, female migrants make valuable contributions to their families and local development, and sometimes their migration experiences help to improve their social status and promote gender equality. However, the current policies concerning rural labour migration have not adequately taken gender issues into account.

### **Local development**

The central government has acknowledged that rural labour migration can make a valuable contribution to both rural and urban development. However, despite the positive effects of labour migration, it has its negative impacts, such as "brain-drain" in rural areas of origin and "over-urbanization" in receiving urban areas. Therefore, it is important to forge a "win-win" relationship between rural labour migrants and local urban development. Considering the regional diversity mentioned above, policy makers and projects must make locale-specific strategies for local development in terms of labour migration. Therefore, it is important to select pilot sites in different regions when a project is designed to monitor/assist the process of local development with respect to labour migration.

It is important to note that these challenges are not unrelated but rather intertwined. Central and local government have begun to focus on rural labour migration, and many policies have been issued to deal with its adverse ramifications, including those mentioned above. Stronger efforts are needed, however, especially in light of the new development paradigm (see below), and because China's development process faces new complications, such as the rural-urban gap, regional disparity, demand for employment, need for poverty reduction, etc. Therefore, concerning rural labour migration, more policy initiatives are needed to adjust China's approach to development in the coming 10 to 20 years.

**Governmental agencies**

- ▶ Ministry of Agriculture (MOA). MOA can be responsible for rural labour skill training and data collection and statistics. In 2004, MOA launched a project named the “Sunshine Project” to provide non-agricultural skill training programmes for rural migrant labourers before they leave their rural home areas.
- ▶ Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MOLSS). MOLSS is responsible for monitoring the labour market, especially the urban labour market. Concerning rural labourers in urban areas, MOLSS can provide employment services and reform the system of social security to cover migrant labourers.
- ▶ Office of Poverty Reduction and Development (OPRD). In 1986, the central government established the OPRD under the State Council to take charge of rural poverty reduction. Since the late 1990s, the OPRD has begun to provide rural labourers with non-agricultural skill training programmes in impoverished rural areas and helping them to find jobs in urban areas as migrant labourers.
- ▶ Others. Ministry of Construction (MOC), National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Ministry of Finance (MOF), Ministry of Health (MOH), etc., must also consider rural labour migration when they are involved in the issues of labour migration. For example, MOC must take migrant workers into consideration because nowadays most construction workers are rural migrant labourers.

These governmental agencies operate not only at the central level but also at provincial, prefectural, county and even township levels, and have similar responsibilities for migrant labourers/rural labour migration in local contexts.

**International organizations and local NGOs**

International organizations have intervened in Chinese rural-urban labour migration since the mid-1990s. Most have launched development projects or research programmes in cooperation with local partners, including local NGOs/NPOs, government and private sector, and provided them with

financial support. International organizations like UNESCO as well as international private funds like the Ford Foundation have significantly assisted local development and exerted influence on governmental policies.

In China, there are two types of local NGOs concerned with internal migration. The first are grassroots and community-based organizations, which operate on a volunteer basis. Most of them seek financial and public support from international donors, media, etc., so that they can directly work with migrant workers. The other NGOs are more closely related to the government, yet have relatively wide latitude in routine work and project activities. Examples are the Women's Federation, trade unions, voluntary organizations, associations, etc. To some extent, they occupy the role of intermediary between China's government and civil society.

### **Academics**

China's academic contingent took an interest in rural labour migration beginning in the late 1980s, including universities, and local research institutes, and "think-tanks" like the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), the State Council Development Research Centre, etc. Through their efforts, including research, academic seminars, publications and public debates, they brought the issue of rural labour migration to the attention of public policy makers.

### **Migrant labourers and their families**

Migration has dubious benefits for migrant labourers and their families. It is a gainful opportunity but also carries the risk of descent into poverty. Therefore, the families of migrant labourers must also be a target group of governmental policies and intervention projects. It is also important to note that migrant labourers can help and empower themselves/each other when policies or projects create an empowering environment for them.

### **Employers**

Governmental authorities must ensure that employers of rural migrant labourers respect the migrants' legal rights, and also encourage them to provide decent living and working conditions for migrant labourers.



## **Volunteers**

Since the issue of migrant labour concerns civil society, more and more people have begun to work with migrant labourers as volunteers, such as college students, lawyers, doctors, researchers, etc.

### **2.4**

## ***Resources***

The role of China's central government is undoubtedly the most powerful concerning the issue of rural labour migration. They can issue policies, provide financial support, and mobilize the administrative systems from top to bottom. It is the NGOs, however, that have the creativity and flexibility to explore alternative strategies and measures in various local contexts. Academic researchers can provide knowledge, techniques, and skills for policy-making and project intervention; moreover, they can rouse public awareness of important issues like rural labour migration and as a result have an impact on policy-making. Last but not least, the migrants themselves are an invaluable resource in the effort to improve their quality of life. Policies as well as projects must mobilize human resources among the migrant groups so that migrants can be helped by fellow migrants.



# 3. Legal framework

## 3.1

### *Current policies*

Since the early 1980s, governmental policies have gradually come to allow rural labourers the freedom to migrate to urban areas. Since 2000, many policies have been made to protect the rights of rural migrants and even promote rural labour migration. These positive changes include:

#### **Relaxing the *Hukou* System**

Since 1984, the *Hukou* system has grown steadily more lenient. Noticeably, on 1 October 2001, China's central government began an experimental reform of the residence registration system in more than 20,000 small towns (*Beijing qingnian bao* [Beijing Youth Daily], 28 September 2001). Also, local governments began to reform their individual *Hukou* systems and made urban residency more easily obtainable for rural migrant labourers. Changes in the *Hukou* system:

- ▶ Small towns and townships have granted residency to locally employed rural labourers who have got jobs and places to live there;
- ▶ Medium-size cities and some provincial capitals no longer limit the number of rural labourers allowed to apply for permanent residence status;
- ▶ Mega cities such as Shanghai and Beijing have adopted a soft policy of "widening the gate and raising the price", which still limits the number of rural labourers for permanent residence status.

#### **Ensuring fair treatment of rural migrants**

In early 2002 the State Council issued the "No. 2 Document of 2002", which designated migrant workers "members of the working class" rather

than peasants, formally acknowledged their contributions to urban development since the early 1980s, deciding therefore that no unreasonable limits or biased policies should be inflicted upon rural migrant labourers. The document also set out four principles for new policies: fair treatment, reasonable guidance, improved management, and better services. In January 2003, the State Council Office's "No. 1 Document" drew from these four principles the following commitments:

- ▶ Abolish any excessive unfair restrictions on rural labourers seeking either temporary or permanent employment in urban areas;
- ▶ Ensure that employers of migrant labourers act in accordance with the law concerning contracts and punctual payment of wages;
- ▶ Improve the working and living conditions for rural migrant labourers, especially women, including health care and personal safety;
- ▶ Provide legal and skill training for rural migrants: training is strictly voluntary, and no unreasonable fees should be charged;
- ▶ Provide access to education for children of migrant workers equal in quality to that afforded the children of urban residents;
- ▶ Improve administration of migrant populations, including family planning, education for children, labour employment, health care and legal aid.

### **New concrete measures**

To honour the commitments stemming from 2003's "No. 1 Document", the central ministries have issued a series of concrete policies and launched projects to ensure fair treatment and improved social services for rural migrant labourers:

- ▶ **Training programmes.** In September 2003, the State Council devised *The National Plan of Training Rural Migrants in 2003-2010*, to provide hundreds of millions of migrant workers with introductory training in the areas of law, health, job-seeking, and vocational skills. In March 2004, the MOA launched the "Sunshine Project" to train new rural migrants in their rural home areas, with a concentration on the poorest of these areas.
- ▶ **Education services for migrants' children.** In September 2003, the State Council published a document on a plan to improve basic education services in cities for migrant children, who numbered over 6 million in 2003 (*People's Daily*, 6 September 2004). The document assigned urban

governments and their public schools the responsibility of educating the migrants' children.

► **No more delayed wages.** In September 2003, MOLSS and MOC jointly issued a document to "Solve the Problem of Delayed Wages of Migrant Workers in the Construction Industry". In September 2004, the two ministries established explicit regulations for the payment of migrant construction workers.

► **Health services and work-injury insurance.** In January 2004, the MOH issued a document on the improvement of health services, the prevention of work-related illness, and the providing of treatment of work-related illness among migrant workers. In June 2004, MOLSS issued a document underscoring the necessity for work-injury insurance for migrant labourers, to be provided by employers and enterprises, especially in high-risk industries, such as construction, mining, etc.

Within the framework of current policies, migrant labourers can, i) move into and obtain permanent residency in small cities and townships; ii) seek non-agricultural jobs in urban areas; iii) appeal to urban authorities like labour agencies for help and protection; and iv) enjoy improved social services, such as training programmes, children's education, health care, etc.

## 3.2

### *Policy experiences*

The current policies have produced positive results. First, rural migrants in cities must no longer worry about being sent back to their home villages by urban governmental agencies; second, by the end of 2004, 331 billion yuan (about US\$ 4 billion), 98.4 per cent of all previously delayed wages, have been paid to migrant labourers in the construction industry (*Beijing Daily* 10 January 2005); third, the "Sunshine Project" trained 2.4 million rural migrant labourers in 2004, and 87 per cent of them succeeded in finding non-agricultural jobs (*Peasants' Daily* 25 February 2005); fourth, under the guidance of central government policies, more and more urban local governments now provide legal protection and social services for migrant labourers. Last but not least, migrant labourers' social standing has greatly improved and they are increasingly recognized as contribut-

ing to development rather than regarded as “trouble-makers” in urban areas.

Moreover, the Chinese Government has shifted to a comprehensive approach to development rather than focusing solely on GDP growth. This so-called “New Paradigm for Development”, launched by the Chinese Government in October 2003, aims for a more balanced, comprehensive and sustainable development. In this new approach to development, the five relationships must be balanced, especially the gaps between rural and urban areas and between eastern and western regions. In early 2005, the central government considered the elements of a harmonious society, and found social justice and social inclusion for different social groups to be among the most important. In Premier Wen Jiabao’s Government Work Report, released on 5 March 2005, he stresses that migrant labourers’ salaries must not be delayed and the payment for them can be increased without decreasing efficiency. Under the new paradigm, policies concerning rural labour migration can be expected to undergo more positive changes in the coming years.

Despite the positive results seen thus far and the expected continuation of these results, serious issues remain to be addressed. They exist mostly as a result of structural constraints, not current policies. These problems include:

- ▶ The average salary of migrant labourers is quite low compared to urban labourers. A large portion of a migrant’s earnings are sent back to their home villages, leaving very little for housing, food, etc. Thus they become more vulnerable to health problems and social exclusion. Moreover, migrants’ wages are unlikely to increase over time owing to the abundance of labour in China.
- ▶ Migrant labourers are largely uneducated and most have not participated in training programmes for non-agricultural employment (NBS & MOLSS, 2001). The central government has given some attention to this issue, such as the launch of the “Sunshine Project” in 2004. However, migrants’ demand for training programmes cannot easily be met when another 150 million “surplus” rural labourers are projected for the coming five to ten years, and as yet no training programmes exist in the area of entrepreneurship, which, if provided for migrant labourers who return home, could benefit local development in rural areas.

- ▶ Poverty among migrant labourers remains a serious issue. In order to effectively alleviate it, it must be understood as multidimensional, encompassing lack of basic needs, incapacity, social exclusion, etc.
- ▶ Gender issues in the migrant population are in urgent need of redress, as it is found that they are more serious in this population than among urban residents. (Du Jie & Nazneen Kanji, 2003).
- ▶ Migrant labourers seek social support through their social network, consisting of families, relatives, village or township associates, friends, etc. However, current policies have paid scant attention to the importance of social capital in migrants' quality of life.
- ▶ The current policy-making process functions from the top down, and the policies have not adequately taken regional diversity into account. Some policies that have shown positive results in some regions have been entirely ineffective in others. For instance, in the city of Chengdu in Sichuan Province, one of the pilot sites of the UNESCO project (see below), training programmes cannot satisfy the migrants' needs because they have no free time for training or are disinterested because Sichuan is one of the provinces where most rural migrant labourers have years of migration experience but to a large extent the training programmes just target new migrant labourers or those who may become migrant labourers in the future.

These challenges can be summarized as that of a large number of rural migrant labourers who are living and working in poverty, especially female migrants, who have not received attention within the existing policy framework. Thus far, government policy has yet to recognize the role of social capital among migrant labourers or the regional inconsistency in migrants' needs.

### 3.3

### *Policy options*

In light of the current policy framework and its problems, the following policy suggestions are given:

First, policies concerning rural labour migration should focus on poverty reduction among rural migrants in urban regions, to close the gap between policies aimed at urban and rural poverty reduction and bring relief to a population thus far overlooked.



### 3.4

### *Concrete recommendations*

Second, policy must accommodate female migrants' needs and address gender-specific issues faced by the migrant population.

Third, policy must acknowledge the importance of social capital within the migrant population in order to generate a leverage effect, i.e., the policies can enlarge its effects and influence through utilization of social capital.

Fourth, policy must allow for regional flexibility, increased focus on the development of China's largely underdeveloped inland provinces, and encourage local autonomy and creativity in policy-making and implementation.

Based on the above policy suggestions, concrete recommendations can be given as follows:

First, the Chinese Government should mobilize more resources, including private funds, to provide rural migrant labourers with non-agricultural training programmes, with a diverse methodology capable of meeting the needs of migrant groups in various regions.

Second, the Government should launch projects to assist female migrants in particular. These projects should address their specific needs, improve their social status, and encourage recognition of their contributions.

Third, the governmental agencies should allow and help migrants to build their own social networks, organizations and communities in urban areas so that migrants can to a large extent organize and support themselves.

Fourth, local governments should make policies and launch projects, financed to some degree by the central government, to solve problems relating to rural migrant labourers in local contexts. For instance, in western regions, especially ethnic autonomous areas, projects can be adjusted to fit local needs and cultural norms.

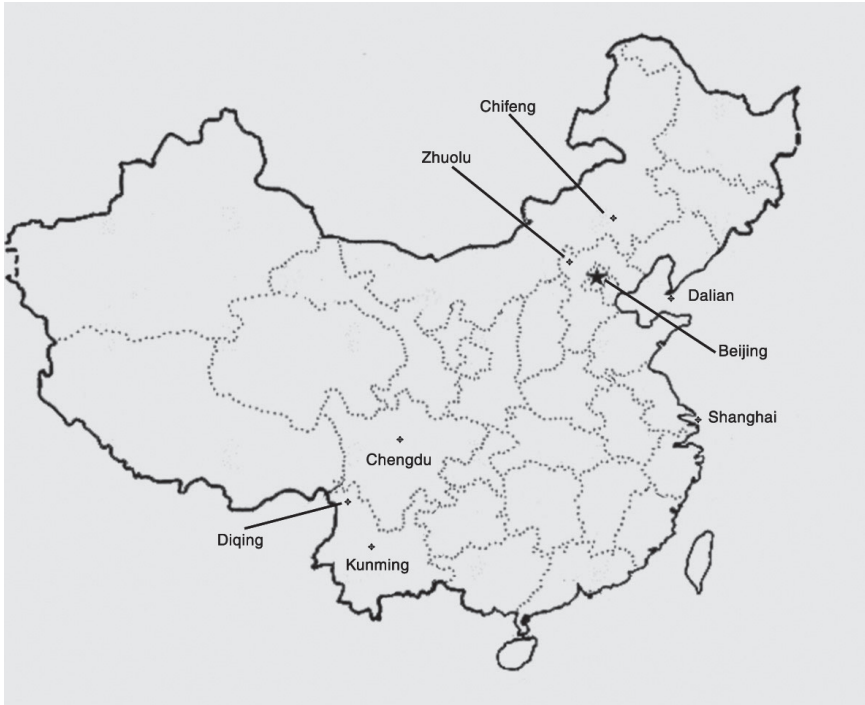
# 4. Change initiative: an ongoing UNESCO project

## 4.1

### *Project Initiatives*

In 2002, UNESCO, jointly with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, launched a six-year project (2002-07) “Urban Poverty Reduction among Young Migrants” (subtitled “Together with Migrants” in 2003). The project is identified as an action-research, which takes action to search for and examine practical ways to solve the problems relating to rural labour migration while simultaneously, social science researchers design, follow, monitor and assess the process of action.

Eight locations in varied regions have been designated as pilot sites for the project. Four are located in western China (Kunming, Yunnan; Diqing, Yunnan; Chengdu, Sichuan; Chifeng, Inner Mongolia) and four in the east (Beijing; Shanghai; Dalian, Liaoning; Zhuolu, Hebei), in all directly involving about 80,000 migrant labourers thus far. These pilot sites can be categorized into sending and receiving areas, and into small, medium-sized and large cities/prefectures. The project has taken the following basic initiatives:



The eight pilot site locations of the UNESCO project



Training for migrants in Chengdu, 2004





Training for migrants in Shanghai, 2004



Migrant in the street  
in Kunming, 2003



Migrant girls from Lincang county, 2003



**Change initiative: an ongoing UNESCO project**

## **Poverty reduction**

The project is designed to reduce poverty through capacity-building, empowerment and social network/community building (see Zhan Shao-hua, 2005). Capacity-building has been identified as a powerful tool in poverty reduction and is employed at all pilot sites. Methods of capacity-building include skill training, health education (i.e. sanitation and HIV/AIDS), understanding legal issues, preparation for urban life, etc.

In most pilot sites, institutions responsible for rural or urban poverty reduction such as the offices for rural poverty reduction and labour agencies have been included in project activities. Thus the policy gap between rural and urban poverty reduction has been bridged to some extent at local level.

These poverty reduction measures serve not only to increase migrants' income but also to promote the development of social capital. At present and even in one or two decades, these methods will be more effective in China than those calling for wage increase or a comprehensive social security system for rural migrant labourers (Huang Ping, 2004b).

## **Gender perspective**

At most pilot sites, female migrants are a major focal point of the UNESCO project. For example, in Chifeng Prefecture, Inner Mongolia, local partner Chifeng Women's Federation has successfully implemented a three-level support system for female migrants moving from rural to urban areas. With this support system, female migrants can apply to receive social/administrative support in the form of skill training, consultation, legal aid, rights protection, and provisional food/housing. Also, female migrants are seen as actors and encouraged to organize and empower themselves. Other pilot sites such as Beijing, Shanghai, Kunming, Chengdu, and Diqing have also mainly targeted female migrants in order to promote gender equity and have impacts on policies in this regard.

Female migrants are more vulnerable than male migrants and female urban labourers. However, it would be a mistake to regard them as disadvantaged/victims in the process of rural labour migration. Actually, they are found to have a strong will to improve their quality of life, and their contributions to both rural poverty reduction and local development are worthy of note (Tanshen, 2004). Therefore, a poverty-reduction project

could expect only limited success if it failed to address migrant women or regarded them with inert charity rather than recognition of their potential.

### **Network building**

There are three types of network in use by the project. The first is a social network among migrant labourers and stakeholders (families and friends of migrants, they are necessary in order to develop social capital among migrant labourers). The second is the network of sending and receiving places, linking local government agencies and forging a cooperative relationship between sending and receiving places (Ma Chunhua, 2005). The third is a nationwide working network/partnership between the eight pilot sites, developed by the joint efforts of UNESCO and CASS. Thus far, the “sending-receiving” networks between Chifeng and Beijing, between Lincang and Kunming, and between Anhui Province and Shanghai have been successfully established.

Migrant labourers typically maintain a social network and identity in both their area of origin and urban destination. They send a substantial portion of their income back to their home villages, and often seek support from their social network back home. Therefore, authorities in sending and receiving places must work together to provide services for migrant labourers, and the policies should take this feature of migrant life into consideration. In terms of regional diversity, a project must adapt to a variety of circumstances in forming a nationwide action-research network if it aims to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the issue of rural labour migration in China as a whole.

### **Local development**

The UNESCO project concerns local development as well as labour migration, and makes efforts to integrate the two. When designing the project activities at each pilot site, UNESCO and contributing researchers, in cooperation with local partners, investigated the main challenges of development with respect to rural labour migration. For example, Shanghai is a city with an ageing population. More migrant labourers, the skilled in particular, are needed to take care of the elderly. To address this problem, the Shanghai chapter of the UNESCO project seeks to establish a mecha-

nism of recruiting, training, management, employment and services for rural migrants, to care for the elderly in Shanghai (Luo Keren et al, 2004). Diqing (Yunan Province) is another good example. As an underdeveloped area, Diqing is undergoing an influx of migrant labourers from outside and as a result it is difficult for locals to find non-agricultural jobs in the local labour market, i.e., they cannot benefit from local development largely due to the absence of non-agricultural skills (Huang Ping & Zhan Shaohua, 2004). To solve this problem, the project at the Diqing pilot site provides skill training for local rural labourers and makes efforts to integrate and work with other resources, such as the funds from the Sunshine Project.

Labour migration can have positive and negative effects on local development. For instance, rural labourers' outflow can become a "brain-drain" for sending places, but it can also bring a "brain-gain" after the migrant labourers return. Therefore, a project should cultivate a holistic viewpoint while supporting migrants, integrate labour migration and UNESCO project activities into the process of local development, thus assisting local development while meeting the needs of migrants and other social groups.

### Training of trainers

In cooperation with CASS, UNESCO developed a method of training of trainers (TOT). They train the people who will train, directly or indirectly, other trainers and rural migrants. The targeted trainers include local partners, officials, NGOs, and other social actors involved in the project. The TOT programme is designed to a) train local counterparts to understand the project's principles, strategies and methods; b) involve more governmental agencies and other social actors, build a closer working network and publicize the project among them in pilot sites; c) strengthen the network among UNESCO, CASS and the eight pilot sites to share information and best practices. Between 2002 and 2004, more than 500 people have been trained by the TOT programmes. (Please see: *Final Report of TOT Programme of the Project "Together with Migrants" in 2004, December 2004, UNESCO Beijing*)

As its financial resources are limited, the UNESCO project can only directly benefit a very small portion of rural migrant labourers. It is a more effective use of resources to "train the trainers" to create a leverage effect.

In addition, this approach cultivates partnership with local actors and gradually integrates the project's core ideas and methodologies.

While the governmental policies show improvement, the UNESCO project promotes more positive and practical policy changes *to reduce poverty among rural labour migrants in terms of lack of training and social exclusion, especially from a gender perspective, to promote local development through rural labour migration, and to establish a "win-win" partnership between different regions (sending and receiving areas; western, central and eastern regions; underdeveloped and developed regions).*

## 4.2

### *Intended effects*

The project's intended effects are as follows:

- ▶ Reducing poverty among migrant labourers;
- ▶ Influencing local policy makers with the principles and methodology of the project and encouraging them to issue policies to reduce poverty among migrant labourers, especially in regard to gender;
- ▶ Exploring alternative development strategies in local contexts in terms of rural labour migration, and replicating them in similar contexts;
- ▶ Influencing central governmental agencies and other policy makers such as the Chinese Communist Party, the People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, drawing on project experiences in local contexts, and persuading them to issue practical, pro-migrant labour policies;
- ▶ Assisting institutions and organizations to work together with rural migrant labourers in China and integrating available resources into the UNESCO project.

## 4.3

### *Aspects of implementation*

The project has adopted the following measures/strategies during project implementation:

- ▶ **Finding local counterparts.** Different types of organizations have been selected as chief local partner in the project; one for each pilot site.

Three are governmental agencies, another three are academic institutions, and the remaining two are NGOs/NPOs.<sup>4</sup> However, each selected local counterpart is required to include other agencies (governmental, academic and non-governmental) in project implementation.

- ▶ **Triangle partnership network.** At both the national and local level, the project attempts to establish a “triangle partnership network” between governmental agencies (officials), academic institutions (researchers) and NGOs/NPOs. At national level, UNESCO has established a triangle partnership between CASS (academic), All-China Women’s Federation (NPO) and the ministries like MOLSS (governmental agency).
- ▶ **Participation.** The project encourages migrant labourers (direct beneficiaries) to participate in the project and promotes self-organization and solidarity among them.
- ▶ **Publicizing and promoting.** UNESCO, at both national and local level, publicizes and promotes the project through publications, media reporting, academic seminars, art events, etc.
- ▶ **Policy papers.** Almost every year, researchers are asked to draft policy papers/reports on the pilot sites’ actions, which are published and discussed with policy makers at both national and local levels.

4. Three governmental agencies: Dalian Bureau of Public Security, Diqing Bureau of Agriculture and Livestock and Zhuolu County Government; three academic institutions: Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences in Kunming, Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences in Chengdu, East Normal University in Shanghai; two NGOs/NPOs: Female Migrants’ Home in Beijing and Chifeng Women’s Federation.

# 5. Proposed policy implication

## 5.1

### *Lessons learned*

Drawing lessons from past policies concerning rural labour migration, it was found that a good policy cannot be effectively implemented in certain contexts because no specific governmental agency has been designated to address the issues or the designated agency cannot or will not work with other related agencies; or that a good-intentioned policy cannot be effectively implemented in certain contexts because it has not considered rural migrant labourers' participation during policy implementation and as a result the targeted group rejects the policy or is indifferent to it.

Drawing on the experience of over 25 years' rapid economic growth, the Chinese Government has learned that a policy can be successful if local conditions and input of people of that locale are taken into account. For instance, in 1978, China started its rural reform and replaced the People's Commune System with the Household Responsibility System, which began in a village in Anhui Province in central China. The agricultural production increased tremendously and alleviated the food shortage suffered by locals for many years. Another good example is Township & Village Enterprises (TVEs), which are created by townships and villages themselves. The TVEs, which are the so-called Chinese peasants' "Great Creation", have enjoyed great success in the market economy and employed more than 100 million rural labourers (Pan Wei, 2003).

## 5.2

*Potential problems or barriers*

The new policies recommended by the UNESCO project may encounter two problems or barriers in implementation:

One is that some local governments, especially those in regions receiving an influx of migrant labour, may regard the new policies as unfavourable or unrelated to local development, because the policies emphasize protection and services for migrants, who are regarded by some local governments as troublesome “outsiders”.

The other is that local governments and even central governmental agencies may not understand the new policies correctly and thus be unable to implement them effectively, partly because concepts like social stigma and gender issues are relatively new to them.

## 5.3

*Potential harmful consequences*

The proposed policies are flexible to some extent. If the central government assesses policy implementation of local governments according to rigid standards, however, it could have an adverse effect on local development.

If government agencies do not fully understand the challenges faced by rural labourers during policy implementation, migrant labourers may have to shoulder more burdens, social or economic. For instance, training programmes may consume migrants’ time or money and as a result they could lose their hard-earned jobs or be unable to earn as much as before.

## 5.4

*Plans for implementation*

To overcome the potential problems or barriers and avoid the harmful consequences, plans for implementation are as follows:

First, while issuing the proposed new policies, the policy makers may integrate them into the new development paradigm, and identify them as indispensable components in building a harmonious society.



Second, before and during policy implementation, train the officials or other actors in order to facilitate understanding of the UNESCO project's ideas and principles of poverty reduction and gender equity.

Third, one specific governmental agency should be designated to be responsible for the new policies, and in the meantime, it can be required that the policies be implemented jointly with other related agencies, including the governmental as well as non-governmental actors.

Fourth, academic institutions or research teams can be selected to monitor and assess the implementation of new policies, and on the basis of their work, flexible standards can be made and applied to different local contexts.

Finally, during policy implementation, monitoring and assessment, beneficiaries' (rural migrant labourers) opinions and feedback should be considered with gravity.

## 5.5

### *Duplicability/transferability*

The UNESCO project is designed to be duplicated in a variety of circumstances. That is why it has selected 8 pilot sites with dissimilar local conditions. For instance, successful projects at Diqing can be reproduced in other underdeveloped western areas, such as Qinghai, Xinjiang, etc., which face similar region-specific challenges.

Moreover, the proposed policies can be applied to contexts. A poverty-reduction project targeting laid-off workers or another disadvantaged group, can adopt methodologies, policies or measures from the UNESCO project.

# 6. Monitoring and evaluation during implementation

## 6.1

### *Preliminary evaluation*

#### **Three strengths**

First, the policies are designed with the results of the project in different regions (represented by the 8 pilot sites) in mind. Therefore, the policies are characterized by a strong duplicability or transferability.

Second, the policies are integrated into a socio-economic structure from a local development perspective. Thus the policies can easily be implemented by local governments and other actors.

Last, the policies stress rural migrant labourers' participation and input, which can ensure a successful implementation.

#### **Two Weaknesses**

One of two identified weaknesses is that the policies have yet to identify the "poorest" of the poor among rural migrant labourers. Class stratification has emerged among rural migrants in cities during these nearly 20 years of rural labour migration. Many rural migrants have indeed integrated into urban societies and enjoy a high standard of living, and some have not. The other weakness is that the policies have not paid much attention to returned migrant labourers, who are found to have an important impact on local rural development.

## Two opportunities

One of two identified opportunities is that both local and central governments have come to appreciate the contributions of migrant labourers and have become willing to make policies that are more pro-migrant; the other is that the central government is working toward a new development paradigm and building a harmonious society, with which the proposed policies are in accordance.

## Two threats

One of two identified threats is that owing to the existing income gap and regional disparity, rural migrant labourers have to work and live in poverty in order to turn a profit; the other is that such a large number of rural labourers, those who leave are mainly relatively young and educated, thus leaving their home villages as migrant labourers can create a “brain-drain” effect.

## *Indicators for assessment*

### Qualitative indicators

- ▶ To what extent local governments attach importance to the implementation of the policies and make practical measures to ensure their success.
- ▶ To what extent other actors, including NGOs/NPOs, researchers, volunteers, etc., are willing to be involved in and make their contribution to the implementation of the policies.
- ▶ To what extent the main targeted group, rural migrant labourers, especially the women, accept and participate in the implementation of the policies.
- ▶ To what extent local authorities can cooperate with each other to implement the policies, especially between sending and receiving regions.
- ▶ To what extent the policies can facilitate a sustainable, rural-urban balanced local development and promote social justice and gender equity.

### Quantitative indication

- ▶ How much money has the government allocated for the implementation of the policies?

- ▶ How many officials and other actors are working for the implementation of the policies?
- ▶ How many rural migrants, especially the poor and female migrants, benefit from the implementation of policies?

### 6.3

## *Feedback*

While evaluating, monitoring and assessing, the policy makers or experts can receive and collect feedback from the following groups:

- ▶ **Government officials.** Meetings or interviews can be held with the officials directly involved in the implementation to survey their opinions and suggestions.
- ▶ **Other social actors.** Meetings or interviews can be held with NGOs, local researchers, volunteers, etc., who are directly or indirectly involved in implementation to survey their opinions and suggestions.
- ▶ **Migrant labourers.** Discussion or interviews can be held with migrant labourers, especially female migrant labourers, who are the supposed beneficiaries of the policies to survey their opinions and suggestions and understand the results of the policies from their perspective.
- ▶ **Other stakeholders.** Other stakeholders such as urban residents, potential rural migrant labourers, employers, etc. can be interviewed by way of questionnaires, telephone or face-to-face communication.

### 6.4

## *Control*

After a trial period of approximately six to twelve months, the policy makers and other concerned parties should evaluate the results of the policies in order to adjust or improve them. Then the adjusted or improved policies can be applied in additional cities or regions. To guarantee flexibility and adjustability, the policy makers should make it possible for policies to i) be designed and adjusted by local governments and authorities; ii) be adjusted according to stakeholders' suggestions, especially migrant labourers; and iii) be in accordance with the strategies of local development (like local five-year development planning).

# 7. References

## 7.1

### Sources

- Du Jie & Nazneen Kanji, 2003. *Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction in China: issues for development policy and practice*. Beijing: China Office, the Department for International Development.
- Huang Ping. 2000. "When Young Farmers Leave the Farm: What Will Happen to Rural Development in China When Rural-Urban Migration Takes Place at a High Pace under Impacts of Globalisation?" In Cecilia Lindqvist, ed. *Globalization and Its Impact*, FRN, Stockholm, pp. 56-67.
- Huang Ping, 2004a. "Urban Poverty among Young Migrants in China". In *Together with Migrants*. Beijing: UNESCO Office Beijing.
- Huang Ping, 2004b. "Some Strategic Thinking on Rural-urban Migration in China". In *Together with Migrants*. Beijing: UNESCO Office Beijing.
- Huang Ping & Frank N. Pieke, 2003, China Migration Country Report, DFID Research Report. May 2003.
- Huang Ping & Zhan Shaohua, 2004. CIDA. Huang Ping & Zhan Shaohua, 2004. Capacity Analysis of Skills Training Systems for Migrant Labour in China. CIDA Working Paper. Beijing.
- Li Yinhe, et al, 2000. Nongmin Liudong Yu Xingbie [Rural-urban Migration and Gender]. Zhengzhou: Zhongyuan Nongmin Chubanshe.
- Luo Keren et al, 2004. "Young Migrants' Employment Situation in Shanghai and Policy Suggestions". In *Together with Migrants*. Beijing: UNESCO Office Beijing.
- Ma Chunhua, 2005. *Establishing the Network between Origin and Destination of Rural Migrants*. Working paper. Beijing: UNESCO Office Beijing.

- NBS, 2004. *China Statistical Yearbook 2004*. Beijing: China Statistics Press.
- NBS & MOLSS. 2001. *Zhongguo laodong tongji nianjian [China labour statistical yearbook 2001]*. Beijing. Zhongguo Tongji Chubanshe.
- Pan Wei, 2003. *Nongmin Yu Shichang: Zhongguo Jiceng Zhengquan Yu Xiangzhen Qiye. [Peasant and Market: China Grass-root Administrations and Townships Village Enterprises]*. Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan.
- Tanshen, 2004. "Leaving Home and Coming Back: Experiences of Rural Migrant Women". In *Together with Migrants*. Beijing: UNESCO Office Beijing.
- Tang Jun et al. 2003. *Zhongguo Chengshi Pinkun Yu Fanpinkun Baogao [A Report of Urban Poverty and Anti-poverty in China]* Beijing: Huaxia Chubanshe.
- Tang Can\_1996. Xingsaorou: Chengshi Wailai Nv Mingong De Shuangchong Shenfen Yuqi Shi [Sex Harassment: Female Migrants' Double Identities and Discrimination in Cities]. Beijing: Sociological Studies 6(4).
- UNESCO, 2004. *Together with Migrants*. Beijing: UNESCO Office Beijing.
- Wang Fenyu & Li Lulu. 2001. *Zongguo Chengshi Laodongli Liudong: Congye Moshi, Zhiye Shengya, Xinyimin [Labour Migration in Urban China: Employment, Career, New Migrants]*. Beijing: Beijing Press.
- Zhan Shaohua, 2004. "Prevent Social Exclusions of Rural Migrants: a New Perspective on Rural Development in China", in *Problems of Village and Agriculture during Market Reorientation of the Economy*. Warsaw: IRWIR\_PAN.
- Zhan Shaohua, 2005. *Poverty Reduction among Migrants: Concepts, Practice and Policy Implications*. Working paper. Beijing: UNESCO Office Beijing.
- Zhao Shukai, 2003. Interview records. Interviewed by the author.

## 7.2 Further reading

- Bai Nanshen, Song Hongyuan *et al.* 2002. *Huixiang, Haishi Jincheng? Zhongguo Nongcun Waichu Laodongli Huiliu Yanjiu* [Return OR Go to Cities? A Study of Rural Migrant Labour Returned to Rural Areas]. Beijing: Chinese Financial Press.
- Caifang. 2000. "Zhongguo Chengshi Xianzhi Waidi Mingong Jiuye De Zhengzhi Jingjixue Fenxi" [Economic and Political Studies of Restricting Rural Migrant Workers in Cities in China]. Beijing: *Zhongguo Renkou Kexue* 6(4).
- Du Yi, Bai Nansheng *et al.* 1997. *Zouchu Xiangcun: Zhongguo Nongcun Laodongli Liudong Shizheng Yanjiu* [Leave Villages: A Practical Study of Rural Labour Mobility in China]. Beijing: Jingji Kexue Chubanshe
- Huang Ping *et al.* 1996. *Xunqiu Shengcun* [Seeking Survival]. Kunming: Yunnan Renmin Chubanshe.
- Wang Jian. 2003. "90 Niandai Xiabanqi Yilai Zhongguo" [New Changes of Rural Economy and Reasons for 'Three Rural Problems' Since the Late 1990s in China] *Hongkong Fax* No.2003-8.

# Policy Papers

1. *Searching for New Development Strategies – The Challenges of the Social Summit*, Ignacy Sachs, 1995.
2. *From Social Exclusion to Social Cohesion: Towards a Policy Agenda*, Sophie Bessis, 1995.
3. *Cybernetics of Global Change: Human Dimensions and Managing of Complexity*, M. Mesarovic, D. McGinnis and D. West, 1996.
4. *Multiculturalism: New Policy Response to Diversity*, Christine Inglis, 1996.
5. *Démocratie et citoyenneté dans la ville du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Céline Sachs-Jeantet, 1997. (French only)
6. *Sustainability: A Cross-Disciplinary Concept for Social Transformations*, Egon Becker, Thomas Jahn, Immanuel Stiess and Peter Wehling, 1997.
7. *Nouvelles configurations villes-campagnes*, Ricardo Abramovay and Ignacy Sachs, 1999. (French only)
8. *Fight Urban Poverty: A General Framework for Action*, Denis Merklen, 2001.
9. *Domestic Democracy and International Democracy: Deficits*, David Steele, 2002.
10. *Rural labour migration in China: challenges for policies*, Zhan Shaohua, 2005.
11. *Intercommunality: The success story of CODENOBA, Argentina*, Nicole Maurice and Clara Braun, 2005.
12. *Anti-poverty Policies and Citizenry: The “Chile Solidario” Experience*, Julieta Palma and Raúl Urzúa, 2005.
13. *Illegal Drugs and Human Rights of Peasants and Indigenous Communities: The Case of Peru*, Carolina Navarrete-Frías and Francisco E. Thoumi, 2005.



14. *Illegal Drugs and Human Rights of Peasants and Indigenous Communities: The Case of Bolivia*, Carolina Navarrete-Frías and Francisco E. Thoumi, 2005.
15. *Illegal Drugs and Human Rights of Peasants and Indigenous Communities: The Case of Colombia*, Carolina Navarrete-Frías and Francisco E. Thoumi, 2005.

Special Edition. *Public Participation in Socially Sustainable Urban Development*, György Enyedi, 2004.

Special Edition. *Social Science and Social Policy: From National Dilemmas to Global Opportunities*, Richard E. Lee, William J. Martin, Heinz R. Sonntag, Peter J. Taylor, Immanuel Wallerstein and Michel Wieviorka, 2005.

# Management of Social Transformations (MOST)

## Policy is the priority

While it still promotes international, comparative and policy-relevant research on contemporary social transformations, MOST is now emphasizing the policy and social research interface as its major *raison d'être*. Tackling the sustainability of social transformations is the programme's main task, which implies action at normative, analytical and strategic/political levels. It must concentrate on research of direct use to policy makers and groups involved in advocacy.

MOST's main emphasis is thus on establishing and interconnecting international policy networks with renowned social science researchers to facilitate the use of social science research in policy. This means bringing together basic research with those entrusted with policy formulation in governments, a variety of institutions, NGOs, civil society, the private sector and in UNESCO itself.

The MOST programme measures the impact of research on policy, conducts policy-relevant case studies, provides expertise in development initiatives and shares information on how to design research-anchored policy.

## Tools for policy-making

The Policy Papers, dedicated to social transformations and based on policy-relevant research results of work carried out by MOST and by other sections of the Social and Human Sciences Sector (SHS), are intended for policy makers, advocacy groups, business and media.

SHS is seeking new ways of distributing knowledge to target groups, such as ministers of social development, ombudspersons, advocacy groups, UNESCO National Commissions and local authorities. It has prepared a new website for online knowledge management and meta-networking for decision-making and strategy. This knowledge repository will use innovative and refined search tools to facilitate access and intelligibility of complex research data for all potential users.