Social protection community services

International Labour Office

People's Republic of China

In recent decades, China has rapidly extended social protection to a large number of people through various mechanisms, including social protection community services (SPCS).

SPCS include two types of services:

- **Access to social protection and active labour market policies (ALMPs), including scheme registration and benefit payments:** Services are made available within residential communities, thereby simplifying and expediting access to social protection.
- **Social and home-based services, such as health care and domestic assistance:** Services help older persons, people with disabilities and children to live independently, in safety and in dignity.

A growing number of residential communities provide SPCS as an essential component of their community services (CS). In 2014, a total of 311,000 community organizations provided a wide range of services, including SPCS, to residents in 45 per cent of urban communities (MOCA, 2014, 2015). In addition, some rural villages also provide these services.

National social protection floors (SPFs) guarantee access to essential health care and basic income security for children, persons of working age and older persons.

185 countries have adopted the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), an approach to achieve universal social protection.

This note presents a successful country experience of expanding social protection.

Click to watch the video
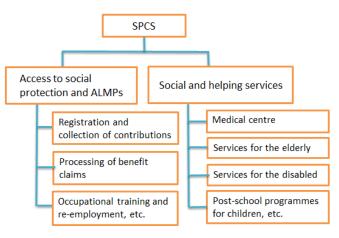
Main lessons learned

- Making social protection administrative services accessible within communities can improve coverage, especially for people who are self-employed, unemployed, outside the workforce or have no formal work contract.
- In China where the services sector is not fully developed and many households cannot afford expensive private services, social protection provides not just income security, but also services like medical care and domestic assistance to older persons, people with disabilities and vulnerable groups.
- SPCS facilitate employment generation by providing training and generating public and private services in the care economy.
- SPCS are public services, serving the lowest administrative units i.e. communities. They are supervised by the government and enforced through partnerships between the public and private sectors and civil society, with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) playing an ever increasing role.
- The expansion of SPCS is facilitated by China's Five-Year Plan 2016-20, which emphasizes increasing household income and consumption, universal social protection and development of the services sector.

Social Protection in Action: Building Social Protection Floors   May 2016

1. What do SPCS consist of?

SPCS were initially introduced in a few Chinese regions in the late 1980s. Given their effectiveness and efficiency in responding to the emerging needs of residents, SPCS became a national policy supervised by the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MOCA) in close cooperation with others. However, no standard package of SPCS is imposed, allowing each community to decide on which services to provide, in line with its own needs and supply capacities. However, two types of services are generally included, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1. Services provided by SPCS

Access to social protection and ALMPs can be illustrated by the experience of people in Xiangtan district in Hunan Province. Residents no longer have to visit various district administrative offices, which are often located in areas far from their homes, to register for schemes, make inquiries and claim benefits. These functions can now be done within the community, irrespective of the type of benefit sought and the responsible agency (SIA Bureau of Xiangtan, 2015).

Examples SPCS-provided social services include:

- general medical services provided twice a week by a doctor in the Puhui community;
- shopping and other necessary assistance for older residents and those with disabilities by a team of 128 volunteers in Mingchunyuan community;
- regular social activities for persons with disabilities in Shuangliu and Jichang communities; and
- an after-school programme for children, developed jointly by the Lead Social Workers' Group and Yayuncun community.

SPCS are also found in some rural villages. For instance, Xiazhai village with its 1,058 residents runs a home-based care programme for all of its 228 people above 60 years of age. The programme consists of free meals twice a day, live-in rooms at a very low price and regular medical attention. Similar programmes can be found in most of the 300 other villages in Jindong District of Jinhua City (CCTV-4, 2015).
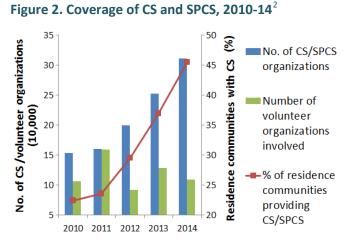
2. What are the major features of SPCS?

- **Leadership and guidance:** The development of CS, including SPCS, is guided and supervised by the Government in support of several official documents, such as the Five-Year Plan 2011-15 (State Council, 2011) and the Guidance on Improving Community Services for Disabled Persons prepared jointly by 14 ministries in 2000.

- **Autonomy and responsiveness:** To a large extent, each community decides the content, scope, delivery, and financing of benefits provided. Given the autonomy and flexibility, as well as the knowledge that communities have about their own needs and financing capacities, communities can respond promptly to emerging requirements with a set of targeted SPCS.

- **Convenience:** Through SPCS, social protection administrative services are grouped together and made accessible within residential communities even when they belong to different ministries. This facilitates participation in and effective coverage of social protection. It is particularly important for the coverage of children, older persons and working-age people with no job, no stable job or no employer. It is estimated that about half of 731 million urban residents fell into these categories in 2013 (NBS, 2015).

- **Multiple resources:** SPCS are supported by multiple financial and human resources from the government, autonomous neighbourhood committees, volunteers, NGOs, charities and the private sector.[1] Of these, volunteers have become a growing and indispensable force. According to the Civil Affairs Bureau of Beijing, there were 1.35

---

[1] Each residential community consists of several autonomous neighbourhood committees comprised of the residents that perform administrative functions.

million and 1.5 million registered volunteers in Beijing in 2013 and 2014, respectively.

- **Coordination:** Close cooperation and partnership among public, private and civil society organizations at the community level contribute to the success of SPCS. Within a decentralized office, a shared database makes it possible to provide all the relevant benefits and services to beneficiaries, thereby allowing local administrators to improve coordination and the quality of public services for the people.

- **Employment generation:** Due to the development of SPCS and other types of community services, over 1 million jobs were created in residential communities in 2011 (MOCA, 2011).

The popularity of CS and SPCS has stimulated further development of community organizations as important service providers (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Coverage of CS and SPCS, 2010-14[2]

Source: MOCA, 2010-14.

3. Why are SPCS needed?

The main reasons why SPCS are needed include:

- The impacts of the one child policy combined with the ageing population and growing urbanization (see figure 3) have reduced the capacities of families to provide regular care to older family members or those with disabilities, as was the traditional practice. The situation is more acute for rural families as working-age members often

migrate to cities for work, leaving elderly parents and young children behind in remote villages.

- The reform of State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) released them from the responsibility of taking direct care of their employees, former employees and their families in all aspects of family life, such as education, health care and housing. These responsibilities had to be reassigned.

- The services market in China is underdeveloped. To cite an example from Guangdong, the supply of institutional beds for older persons as a share of total elderly people was only 1 per cent, while 17.5 per cent of older people wanted to live in institutions (WCFA of Guangdong, 2010).
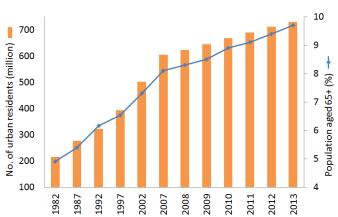
Figure 3. Ageing and urbanization, 1982-2013

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (NBS), 2015.

- To realize the goal of making basic universal social protection a reality, decentralized and convenient social protection services became necessary.

4. What's next?

China's experience demonstrates the crucial role of SPCS in the large-scale and quality extension of social protection. SPCS are expected to grow further in the future as the number of people above 60 years of age increases from 200 million currently to 300 million by 2025 and 400 million by 2033 (NWCFA, 2012 & 2015).

The expansion of SPCS is further facilitated by China's Five-Year Plan 2016-20, which places an emphasis on increasing household income and consumption, universal social protection and development of the service sector.

---

[2] Volunteer organizations are civil society organizations or NGOs whose members usually belong to the residential communities.

REFERENCES

Central Committee of Communist Party of China. 2015. 中共中央关于制定国民经济和社会发展第十三个五年规划的建议 [Opinions on fomulating the 13th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development] (Beijing).

CCTV-4 (Chinese International Official Channel 4). 2015. 远方的家（273）[Our homes in distance, No. 273] (Jinhua). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEWE0RCnO-o.

China Disabled Persons' Federation. 2015. 2014年中国残疾人事业发展统计公报 [Statistical bulletin on the development of the undertakings for disabled people in 2014] (Beijing).

Liu, Chuanyan & Xu, Genshen. 2012. 人口老龄化背景下社区老人服务需求现状调查研究 [Survey report on the needs of old people for community services] (Beijing).

MOCA. 2011-2015. 2010至2014年社会服务发展统计公报 [Statistical Bulletins on the development of social services, 2010–2014] (Beijing).

—; et al. 2000. 关于加强社区残疾人工作的意见 [Guidance on the Improvement of Community Services for Disabled Persons] (Beijing).

NBS. 2015. 中国统计年鉴 2014 [China Statistical Yearbook 2014] (Beijing).

NHFPC (National Health and Family Planning Commission). 2015. 中国家庭发展报告2015 [National report on the family development for 2015] (Beijing).

NWCFA (National Working Committee for Aging Issues). 2012. 2013年底中国老年人口总数将超过2亿[The number of old people will exceed 200 million by the end of 2013] (Beijing).

SIA (Social Insurance Administration) Bureau of Xiangtan. 2015. 个人参保缴费查询、养老金发放情况查询等业务下沉到街道(乡镇)人力资源和社会保障经办窗口办理 [Administrative services like checking contribution payment and claiming for pensions are now accessible from all urban and rural communities of Xiangtan] (Hunan).

State Council. 2011. 中国老龄事业发展"十二五"规划 [The 12th Five Year Plan for the Development of the Old-Age Related Undertakings] (Beijing).

—. 2011. 社区服务体系建设规划（2011-2015年） [Development plan for the development of community services over 2011-2015] (Beijing).

WCFA (Working Committee for Aging Issues) of Guangdong. 2010. 广东老年人数过一千万, 养老床位占老年人1% [The number of old people exceeds 10 million in Guangdong, but the number of institutional beds for the elderly is only about 1 per cent] (Guangzhou).
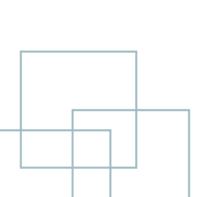
Yang, Zhijin [杨志锦]. 2015. 十三五重点产业清单：服务业未来占比有望达55% [List of the most important industries for 13th Five-Year Plan: the service sector is likely to amount to 55 per cent of GDP by the end of 2020] (Beijing).

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE