

Volunteering in China

I. Overview

1. Civil society organizations (CSO) in China

China is undergoing the transition from a planned to a market economy. One of the basic features of Chinese society in this transition period is that the government is returning to the society the responsibility that should have been borne by the society, the role of the society is being separated from that of the government. A basic indicator of this separation in role is the emergence and continuous increase in public participation, especially the participation from civil society organizations (CSO).

It is required that non-profit sector should be established and developed in China as soon as possible by the facts that,

- state-owned enterprises have taken on reforms
- the organizational reform and changing function of government institutions
- the increasing demand for social services due to the improvement in people's standard of living
- various social problems need to be solved, which have been caused by an aging population, mobility and urbanization and which arises from poor coordination among population, economy, resources and environment
- the need to set up a new ethical system tailored to the socialist market economy.

2. Volunteer service and the basic national development strategy of China

At present, the Chinese society is adopting the CSO and public participation approach to shoulder these social responsibilities.

The Chinese Government has shown considerable concern for sustainable development including public participation and regards it as one of the two basic strategies in China's national development. Focusing on the implementation of the sustainable development strategy, all social groups are actively participating in the activities advocated by the government.

The Chinese government has taken measures to encourage public participation in poverty alleviation, environmental protection, sustainable development and seeking cultural and ethical progress. Different kinds of CSOs are mobilizing volunteers to participate in activities in their respective fields. Volunteer service is deemed as an important component of public participation in implementing this strategy. *At present, many Chinese volunteer activities start from the participation in carrying out sustainable development strategy and in building a civilization with high cultural and ethical levels.*

Along with the implementation of sustainable development strategy, some new social organizations, such as environmental protection organizations, women's participatory organizations, are establishing in China. Chinese volunteer activities are now becoming a very important means of public participation in social development, cultural and ethical progress and sustainable development. Within the framework of the state development strategy, public participation in China will further develop, together with volunteer service as society transforms.

The various volunteer activities now underway in China, whatever they were originally aimed to, are all more or less related to sustainable development — the theme of contemporary development. This also shows that volunteer activities must conform to the historical trends if they are to develop and obtain extensive social support, although they were engendered more than a century earlier than the idea of sustainable development.

Sustainable development is a radical change in the mode of human development. It is impossible to realize sustainable development without the common participation of all social circles. Through the extensive public participation and the perfection of CSOs, the Chinese society is bound to complete its basic transition.

To set up a healthy and integrated society, and to overcome the problems facing us in promoting social progress and integration, we need to make efforts from the grassroots level. Advocacy of public participation is not only part of the sustainable development strategy but also part of China's national strategy. We hope to shape the soul of civil society and CSO through advocating volunteerism and conducting volunteer activities as part of the efforts to promote the progress and integration of the human society.

II. Development of Volunteerism and Volunteer Activities in China

1. Overview

Volunteerism and volunteer service in China dates from before the introduction of reforms and opening up policies. Starting in the mid-1960s, to fulfill the international duty of a socialist country to other countries of “the third world,” China provided massive international aid (military and economic) to many developing countries in Asia and Africa. Together with such aid, the Chinese Government sent a large number of volunteers abroad to participate in corresponding projects.

After the introduction of reform and opening-up policies, the earliest volunteers within China came from UNV, providing geographical, environmental, health, computer and language volunteers. Later, other foreign organizations also sent their volunteers to China through various schemes.

In the late 1980s, China's own volunteer service and volunteers emerged. The earliest Chinese volunteers after the implementation of reforms and opening up policy emerged at the level of community service, and community volunteer organizations were gradually set up. In the early 1990s, another volunteer team took shape in the Communist Youth League (CYL) and formed its own national volunteer organization. At present they are the two largest, the most active and influential volunteer contingents in China, each having its own organizational system and

connected with certain government agencies.

Besides, other Chinese social groups have their own volunteers and volunteer activities, including the China Charity Federation and local organizations, the China Veteran Science and Technology Workers Association, and the All-China Women's Federation.

At present, the number of community volunteers, young volunteers, trade-union volunteers, women volunteers, science and technology volunteers, medical volunteers, poverty alleviation volunteers and environmental protection volunteers has exceeded 10 million (China Social Work Federation, 1999). Moreover, some international volunteers also came to China, taking an active part in China's volunteer activities such as community volunteer activities, young volunteer activities and environmental protection activities.

Along with China's reform and opening up and economic construction, some international organizations began to aid and support the localization of NGOs and their volunteers. In the environmental sector, NGOs play a very active role and many volunteer activities supported by NGOs have been carried out. These activities have become very important to China environmental protection and an important form of public participation in sustainable development and environmental protection. Their motive and basic concept of volunteerism originates from their recognition of the importance of sustainable development and their concern for the future of human beings.

2. Community Volunteer Service in China

The community volunteer organization is attached to the Ministry of Civil Affairs system and the organizations at different levels are connected with the corresponding civil affairs departments. The grassroots organizations are connected with the neighborhood committees and placed under the leadership and guidance of corresponding organizations. The street office is the grassroots urban administrative unit while the neighborhood committee is an urban grassroots autonomous social group.

2.1 Government policy

Since the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee, China has adopted the policy of reforms and opening up and its economy has developed rapidly. With the improvement of living standards, residents' needs for social service dramatically increase. Accordingly, the Ministry of Civil Affairs set forth the idea of developing urban community service in 1986.

In August 1993, Chinese government further clarified the position of community service and community volunteers and promoted the development of urban community service.

2.2 Field of activities

Community volunteer organizations are active mainly on the streets, which are the basic legal community-based organizations in Chinese cities. This basic community is divided up into a number of neighborhoods. The street office is an agency set up by an urban local people's government with neighborhood committees under it. From the very beginning of their emergence, Chinese community volunteers received support and guidance from the government in their work. Chinese urban communities too, had close contacts with the government from the very beginning, and existed as a link between the government and the residents.

In its initial period, Chinese community volunteer service was targeted at elder people, the needy and handicapped. Community volunteers keep on expanding their service fields. With the increase of community needs, community volunteer teams expand gradually and more resources have been tapped. As a result, volunteer service projects have become more diversified and extensive, developing from simple care at the initial stage to comprehensive community service emphasizing both material and spiritual concerns and meeting the needs of both special and general social groups.

2.3 Main features of community volunteer teams in China

a. Community volunteer organizations have been established often with their own regulations.

Such organizations as "Community Volunteer Service Steering Committee," "Community Service Volunteers Association," "Community Service Volunteers Branch," "Volunteer Service Neighborhood," and the "Volunteer Service Protection Group," have been set up by district, sub-district and neighborhood committees in many cities. According to the latest statistics of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, there are more than 6,600 community service volunteer organizations and over 6 million community service volunteers. The volunteer members come from all walks of life.

b. Improve volunteer management systems so as to strengthen the management of community volunteer activities.

A set of systems and measures are being set up on Chinese community activities with regard to organization, membership management, form of service, work regulations, team management, coordination between street offices and volunteers and the appraisal system of volunteers.

c. Various forms of community volunteer activities have been widely carried out.

In terms of service recipient,

- public welfare services are provided for the elderly, the handicapped, the disabled,

- convenience services are provided for community residents,
- logistics services are provided for enterprises and institutions in the community.

In terms of service level

services are provided by single households, residential buildings or neighborhoods, association branches or streets.

Forms of service

- two-way service, i.e., mutual help between two households;
- one-way service, i.e., one household providing service for another;
- comprehensive recipient-specific service, i.e. Work units, neighborhood committee or neighbors and relatives providing service for particular people;
- services at fixed sites, i.e setting up fixed service outlets to provide services for residents whenever needed.

In terms of service methods.

- providing immediate service for residents who are in urgent need;
- emphasizing services commonly needed by residents;
- making concerted efforts to provide services which are difficult to perform;
- prioritizing services needed by people who are service recipients of civil administration departments.

d. To attract young volunteers into the community service.

Since the launch of young volunteerism by the Central Committee of the Chinese Youth League in 1994, the team of young volunteers is growing with great progress being made in the training of youngsters and enhancement of urban public-interest activities. As the young volunteers share the same purpose with the community volunteers, many young volunteers in many places have taken part in the local community activities aimed at reducing poverty, aiding the disabled and helping the poor. In the long run, community service will become the base and foundation for the young volunteers' activities.

e. To help people in trouble solve their problems.

The community service in Shanghai has solved the difficulty of access to medical service for more than 70,000 elderly. Shanghai offers food services to over 4,000 elderly people; installed aid-seeking bells for more than 2,000 old people living alone and set up workhouses for over 2,000 unsupported people of advanced age. In Beijing, over 90% of community committees have established associations of volunteers which provide more than 6 million man-times of voluntary care, rehabilitative care, psychological consulting and house service.

- f. **To work under the guidance of the government.** Community service in urban China emerged in the late 1980s, which was offered under the guidance of the government with streets as its major target, neighborhood committees as its basis and aimed at enhancing the material, cultural and ethical progress of the people within the same community.

2.4 Development of community volunteer service

The growth of communities and the number of community volunteers shows that both community volunteers and community volunteers' organizations have a great potential of future expansion.

It must be admitted that neither the planned economy nor the market economy can solve all the problems such as environmental issues and social concerns facing us in the new century. Nor can such problems be resolved by purely relying on the market or the government. It is an important alternative for the future social development to build the society organized by the general public with the aim to improving social structure and promoting social integrity. The three primary components of future society will be government, market and society.

3. Young Volunteers Activities in China

Young Chinese volunteers are under the leadership of the Chinese Young Volunteers Association (CYVA) led by the CYL Central Committee. CYVA was set up in Beijing on December 5, 1994, signaling the start at an organized and orderly phase. China young volunteers usually involved in activities cooperating with government sponsored social programs. They organize their service on a project by project basis. CYVA has an advantage in organizing large-scale projects. The CYL Central Committee has set up a special steering committee to guide young volunteer service.

3.1 Major activities

The young volunteers organization has launched a series of key projects. Meanwhile, it amplifies its service network throughout the country and strengthens the standardized management of membership enrollment, training, evaluation, recognition and encouragement system to guarantee the development of young volunteer activities systematically. Since 1997, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League and CYVA adopted two methods of recognition: time-based recognition and special recognition based on outstanding deeds and service hours, with the emphasis on non-material awards.

In order to bring the volunteer service into the orbit of law and make it an endeavor involving all the members of society, some provinces and municipalities in China has made some useful attempts in their legislation work. Many people appealed to provide legal protection for volunteer service.

3.2 Scope of service

Chinese young volunteers are gradually expanding their service range and diversifying their ways of service as the volunteer activities develop.

- (1) Provide volunteer services to some special and important social members, which includes handicapped people, old people without kinship, senior scientists, veteran Red Army soldiers, retired teachers and families with extreme material difficulties. Long term “one-to-one help” volunteer services are provided to them.

- (2) Provide services to key areas, such as old undeveloped revolutionary bases, frontier or border areas, economically backward regions and disaster stricken areas. Specialized volunteer services are provided to them, such as voluntarily going to teach in the backward regions. In 1994 when Guangdong province was stricken by the most severe flood ever recorded in the recent 100 years, the Brigade of Guangzhou Young Volunteers organized a “Guangzhou Young Volunteers’ Medicare Service Team” to “go to relieve the people in the stricken area” in only a week’s time.

- (3) Initiate large scale volunteer activities, provide service to big events.

- (4) Provide urgent and necessary services

3.3 Features of Chinese young volunteers activities

(1) Organization, operation and personnel recruitment

Chinese Young Volunteers are organized in the principle of “adhering to free will, acting according to one’s ability, laying stress on practical results and perseverance.” The recruiting of young volunteers relies upon Youth League organizations and volunteer organizations, mass media, public recruiting and internal publicity efforts.

Among the young volunteers, students in colleges and universities, though only accounting for 1% (3 million) of Chinese youths, are a special group of youths and play an important role in volunteer activities.

(2) Organizational mechanism

At present, the major organizations of Chinese young volunteers include Young Volunteers Association, Young Volunteers Service Station, and the Community Young Volunteers Service Team. A top-down network has been formed to carry out the various activities organized by the CYLC Central Committee and Chinese Young Volunteers Association.

(3) In terms of development

The major sources for the funds of young volunteers activities are administrative subsidy and support, and the young volunteers organizations in some areas also receive support from Youth and Children Development Funds.

(4) In terms of the difficulty in carrying out volunteer services

Statistics showed that the greatest difficulty for volunteer organization in achieving goal is the lack of funding. This is followed by lack of acceptance; no incentive system; and lack of guidance, training and volunteers.

During the transition from the planned economy to the market economy, the Youth League organizations in China have enabled the shift of the youth's participation motive from passion to practicality. In an atmosphere where money is everything, it is truly a pioneering effort to be able to mobilize such a large number of young people to participate in volunteer activities.

Moreover, changes have also taken place to Chinese youth in the 1990s. Their values have changed from the former rebellion and antagonism to tolerance and cooperation, and their impetuosity and impulsiveness have been replaced by rationality, practicality and acceptance of and participation in social and economic development. The values of Chinese youths, though kaleidoscopic, have always been marked by one theme, i.e. Chinese youths have always been exploring individual values and self-fulfillment. Whatever form this exploration may take, it is the fundamental basis on which China is able to mobilize such a large number of young people to participate in volunteer activities.

4. Philanthropy and Volunteer Service in China

China has a long history of charitable activities although there is no definite mode in the development of philanthropy. Under the socialist planned economy, people thought that the Government should be totally responsible for philanthropy. With the development of the Chinese economy since reform and opening up, some people became rich first through hard work and by relying on policy support of the Government. The economic development laid the foundation for the growth of philanthropy.

The China Charity Federation (CCF) was established, which won warm support from Chinese leaders.

In 1998, China suffered a devastating flood unprecedented in the past century. The Chinese people

and the PLA soldiers had fought bravely against the flood, and all circles of the society had made cash and kind contributions to the victims. CCF and local charity organs had held various activities for donations, and especially the charity performances that CCF held through media have made the Association respectable among the masses, forming another large and influential non-governmental action in the media succeeding the community volunteers and young volunteers activities. And CCF has become another power branch among non-governmental activities.

In some developed areas of China, some local charity institutions and associations were established for various reasons. Some religious groups and other organizations also set up charitable societies to engage in various charitable activities.

At present, charitable organizations in China have become diversified, with sponsors from government, religious societies, and other social groups. This has demonstrated that the social structure in China is polarizing. People can allow the growth of philanthropy that they once viewed as "hypocritical" before reform and opening up, and are now giving positive support to. Inside the polarized social structure, all social organizations will expand.

4. Other Non-governmental Organizations and Volunteer Service in China

4.1 Non-governmental environmental protection societies and their volunteer services

With continuing reforms and the Government is paying more attention to sustainable development, a group of non-governmental organizations emerged in China, aimed at protecting the environment and enhancing the environmental sense of citizens. China's non-governmental environmental protection organizations are a branch of the non-profit sector and an important force in protecting the environment and resources, preventing and stopping environmental pollution and damage. In light with the goal of sustainable development, they and environmental volunteers aim to enhance the environmental sense of the Chinese people and improve the environment so as to enhance the quality of life. This is the common characteristic of the non-governmental organizations and volunteers of environmental protection in China, though they also have their own unique characteristics.

4.2 Scientific and technological societies

Scientific and technological societies are products of social and economic development in China, and they form a part of the social and economic system (Huang Changxiong, 1999:1). Most of China's scientific and technological societies have adopted the system of independent management, with departments and units. Some nationwide scientific and technological societies

are under the leadership of the China Scientific Society, and have established contact with the departments of civil affairs, scientific research, education and others for support and supply of personnel, finance and materials. Government reforms have meant that annual financial allocations to these societies are declining and existence is becoming more difficult. In recent years, some scientific and technological societies have participated in volunteer services, especially in the areas of environmental protection and poverty relief through science and technology.

4.3 Non-governmental womens' organizations

Non-governmental womens' organizations in China are among those that established contact with international non-governmental organizations and participated in the activities on a large scale in an earlier period. As the host country, China participated in the preparatory work of the fourth UN World Conference on Women of Non-governmental Organization (NGO) Forum, offering a chance for Chinese women to take part in a series of influential NGO activities of the United Nations, and at the same time, introduced the concept of non-governmental organization and its mechanism into China.

In response to call from the National Women's Federation, Chinese women actively participated in various social endeavors and have contributed much in the fields of environmental management, environmental scientific research, prevention and control of environmental pollution, population control, protection of nature and publicity.

5. Foreign Volunteer Service in China

Now in China, there have appeared some international organizations and volunteers dispatched by foreign volunteer groups. They are actively working in various parts of the country in the fields of education, public health, science and technology, environmental protection and poverty relief. After the approval of the State Council Since 1987, the cooperation between China and international NGOs has grown steadily. By the end of 1998, over 30 foreign non-governmental organizations have entered China via CICETE and the China Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO), bringing more than 200 aid programs in coverage of over 70 counties in 20 provinces, cities and autonomous regions. The programs include agricultural production, drinking-water, income generation, comprehensive community development, medical care and public health, poverty relief, disaster relief and reconstruction after disaster, education capability construction, practical technical training, programs centered on women and South-South exchanges.

UNV in China

As the government counterpart of the United Nations Development Program, China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE) is responsible for implementing UNV program in China. UNV started its cooperation with China in 1981. Over the past 20 years, UNV

has sent over 170 international UN volunteers to China, who have made remarkable contribution for China in the areas of education, especially language teaching, healthcare, science and technology, environmental protection and poverty alleviation.

China has also sent more than 160 Chinese UN volunteers through UNV to developing countries and the former Soviet Union in the field of agriculture, water conservation, medical care, computer and economic management and social insurance.

The Chinese UN Volunteers have been widely recognized and acknowledged by the host countries as well as UNV Hq for being diligent and conscious in serving the local people in need, and for their hard working and competency. The Chinese volunteers who were sending through UNV to other developing countries have played a positive role in promoting and strengthening the cooperation between China and UNV and other developing countries.

In June 1997, The National UNV scheme was initiated in China. The current UNV programme, UNV umbrella project is the core of the China UNV programme, provides assistance in poverty alleviation, environmental conservation and legal aid for the poor. More than 50 Chinese specialists have been serving as national UNV while 10 more foreign experts as international UNVs who have been working in China under the project over the past 3 years. In light of the social and economic development in China and the rising demands from various fields, the UNV program should expand with more strategic areas, such as market economics, accounting, environment protection, and poverty alleviation. UNVs will be placed in the western region of China, rural area. UNVs will work more closely with community organizations, local NGOs and research institutes.

We are also trying hard to enhance the numbers of Chinese UNVs sending to other developing countries. China is the largest developing country in the world, with abundant human resources. With more than 20 years of the practical experiences since the opening up policy and economic reform, certain technologies, skills and experiences are sure to be useful and acceptable to other developing countries. The foreign language capacity and quality of Chinese professionals both in terms of technology and management have been greatly improved, which have laid a good foundation for China to provide qualified professionals as UNVs to undertake assignment in developing countries.

IV. Major Rules and Policies Concerning Volunteers in China

The Chinese Government has not enacted a complete set of regulations concerning launching and improving volunteer activities, although it has called for volunteer service in *The Ninth Five-Year Plan and the Outline of Long-term Goals Through to 2010 for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China* and *CPC Central Committee's Resolution on Certain Issues Concerning Socialist Cultural and Ethical Construction*.

The Chinese Government has promulgated rules and regulations on management of social associations and civil non-profit organizations, and volunteer services in China were conducted via these units. The Chinese Government's policies, rules and regulations concerning volunteer service are divided into four parts: rules and regulations, department policies, rules and regulations of associations and support by state and department leaders. This is one of the characteristics of China in the transition from planned economy to market economy and legalized state.

Support from state leaders

Support from leaders is not policy and regulation, yet in China, the call or inscription by leaders for a mass movement is of great influence. The movement of learning from Lei Feng had come from Mao Zedong's inscription of "Learn from Comrade Lei Feng."

The young volunteers service has won high attention and concern from leaders of the Chinese Government. On July 26, 1996, Jiang Zemin expounded on the principle and significance of the young volunteers service during his work inspection to Tangshan city, saying that it embodied the advantages of socialist system and fine traditions of the Chinese nation, and expressed great hope on the activity. In the end of 1997, Jiang Zemin wrote the inscription "Chinese Young Volunteers" for the service. Other Party and State leaders have also taken part in young volunteers activities and gave warm support.

Creating an environment of international cooperation

The Chinese Government greatly supports international aid including international volunteer service. While making domestic law and improving the legal system, the Government paid large attention to legal construction. The Chinese Government also greatly respects the principle of freedom of human rights stipulated in the "UN Constitution", and has actively participated in the UN human rights activities, and made efforts to promote the healthy development of international human rights cause. China respects and agrees with the human rights principles recognized in UN's "World Human Right Declaration," "Tehran Declaration," and "Vienna Declaration and Program of Action," positively valued the "International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" and "International Convention on Rights of Citizens and Political Rights," and signed the "International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" and "International Convention on Rights of Citizens and Political Rights" in 1997 and 1998 respectively. All these have exerted a major impact on developing international cooperation of volunteer services.

The Chinese Government has expanded international cooperation to promote social development. Between 1995 and 1998, China has received \$898 million in international aid, of which \$691 million were put towards social development. Meanwhile, China also fulfills her own international duties, and has donated \$21 million and 15 million yuan (RMB) to UN organizations for the same period.

The Chinese Government has not formulated a comprehensive, systematic policy concerning volunteer service and management of volunteers, such as training, management and enrolment of volunteers, nor has any relative regulations. But in department documents and regulations, some requirements were made in accordance with practical need.

V. A Comparison between Volunteerism in China and Overseas

1. Compared with its population size, China still has a relatively small number of volunteers. For example, in Israel, over 20% of its population participate in volunteer activities, with an average service time of 16 hours a month. In contrast, according to China Ministry of Civil Affairs statistics, there are 10 million volunteers in the country (8% of the population) a level much lower than that of Israel and other developed countries.
2. The philanthropy abroad has a long history. Chinese charity organizations have dedicated considerable efforts to implementing charitable programs. However, the Communist Youth League and the Ministry of Civil Affairs, rather than the charity institutions, play the main role in volunteerism, a phenomenon determined by historical tradition and the current political system.
3. Charity and volunteerism in the west are non-governmental in nature. In particular, the sponsorship of religious bodies differs from the traditional government patronage in China. Volunteerism in China is largely a supporting role to the government. For example, communal service volunteers, "young volunteers", and community volunteers mainly coordinate with the street office and the neighborhood committee of the local area, whose work is closely related with the ongoing establishment of social welfare and social security system. Since the government became concerned with the reemployment of the laid-off workers, community volunteers began to focus their attention on helping the laid-off workers obtain a new job. This shows that volunteer undertaking in China not only follows the orientation of government policies but also integrates with the social and economic development, because Volunteerism becomes vigorous only when it reflects the actual demand of society.
4. In the west, especially in the US it is justified and a widespread phenomenon that the enterprises should sponsor charitable undertakings. At present in China, business funding of volunteerism is not significant and does not constitute a major part of the NGO's finances. This is partly because most Chinese enterprises are still in their start-up phase, with a limited

budget and facing high competition and partly because neither China nor Chinese enterprises have the tradition to finance volunteerism, and the government does not request the enterprises to do so.

5. So far, apart from advocating volunteerism in national development plans and in speeches given by the government leaders, the Chinese government has not made any financial aid available to volunteers. Therefore, Chinese volunteers have immense financial difficulties; finance being one of the greatest problems to Chinese volunteers.
6. In developed countries, volunteer groups, NGOs and the government are partners in solving social problems. In developed countries like the UK and the US, there are clear legislative regulations concerning NGOs' activities and status; in turn, NGOs receive legal protection. For example, in terms of financing, there is a clear regulation for NGOs, civilian groups, and volunteer organizations. These organizations can attract financial aid in accordance with legal requirements and participate in activities approved by the law.

The Chinese government passed laws regarding the administration of social organizations and non-governmental non-profit organizations, but there is no definition about the legal status of volunteers, despite the ardent advocacy of volunteerism by government and the wide media coverage of volunteer efforts.

7. Volunteerism abroad has extended to every domain of life beyond social welfare. Volunteerism in China currently focuses on culture, sports, entertainment, individual social service, religion, international volunteers, peace, environmental protection, employment and poverty alleviation.

VI. Problems Faced by Chinese Volunteers and Proposals for Advancing Volunteerism

During the past 10 years, volunteerism in China has been fully developed, with an admirable speed and scale, as well as an optimistic momentum. However, there are still many problems and difficulties which need to be dealt with seriously.

1. Problems Faced by Chinese Volunteers

- The public lack good understanding of volunteers.
- With the progress of the economic and political reform policies, volunteer programs and volunteer organizations increased rapidly both in number and in variety, outgrowing the current laws and regulations.

The reality calls for a complete new set of regulations and policies to support, direct, and administer volunteer activities, as well as to legally define and regulate the behavior and existence

of volunteers and NGOs.

But at present, apart from the general policies and the regulations on the registration of social bodies, there are no specific government policies concerning the establishment, existence, or the activities of volunteer organizations.

In many countries, there are very specific regulations about the aim, activity, administration, and taxation of a volunteer organization, whereas in China, due to the unclear regulations, volunteer organizations lost many opportunities for international cooperation.

Many volunteers and volunteer institutions hope that the government can issue specific policies and regulations to create a friendly environment to volunteerism.

- Scientific management is the precondition for organizational efficiency. The rapid development of volunteerism in China and the growing demand for social service require volunteer organizations to establish effective regulations on donation collection, management, training, and awarding.
- A well-organized volunteer organization trains its members. However, the present service-skill training programs cannot meet the demand of community service.
- Funding is one of the main obstacles to volunteer activities in China.

The other reason for financial shortages is the limited capacity of volunteer organizations for raising funds and managing financial affairs.

Some international sponsoring bodies share this perception and they have found that the fund applications or project proposals submitted by many of our volunteer organizations cannot meet the ratification requirement. International organizations and overseas foundations are important resources for the activities of Chinese volunteers. It is a major task for most volunteer organizations to broaden resource channels and tap these resources while adhering to principles. Training on improving fund-raising ability is still in short supply in China.

Related to fund-raising capacity is the ability to manage funds by volunteer organizations and the effective supervision and auditing systems. Strict and transparent management systems can help a volunteer organization or a civil body to establish professional trust in the society and to obtain wide social support and financial assistance. The general requirements of international volunteer sponsor bodies are making a project budget, spending according to the budget, strict reimbursement procedures and transparent accounting systems. Adherence to international

principle practices of financial management can mobilize international resources.

- At present a major feature of activities of Chinese volunteers is that most volunteer organizations and activities have been initiated by government or semi-government bodies and are closely related to government activities and policies.

The advantage of the above situation is that volunteerism can be rendered support by the government and other related organizations in large-scale government activities. The disadvantage is that it lacks stable long-term social support. Only after special volunteer activities and targets of service have aroused social concern through press publicity, will they be given temporary financial aid and support. Consequently, volunteerism can only proceed with intermittent support and is very difficult to develop in a sustained, standardized, effective and rapid manner.

2. Suggestions on Promoting Volunteer Activities

- The government should establish new and perfect existing laws and regulations on volunteerism and civil society organizations to ensure that the market, the government and civil society will operate within the framework of the law.

The government should give preferential tax treatment to those enterprises that are ready to fund civil society organizations and volunteerism, find sources of funds for volunteer activities and provide a legal framework that enable the private sector society and to support volunteers and volunteerism.

- Enhancing the training of volunteers.
- Reinforcing social education and enhancing residents' common recognition of volunteers.
- Utilizing volunteer resources.

Volunteers represent society's human resources. They not only provide time to service organizations but also skills. Professional volunteers can directly introduce specialized knowledge and technology. (e.g. artistic design and computer expertise) to the organizations they are in, help to broaden services offered by the organizations, and reinforce and improve the service. The pool of potential volunteers is large, so research should be directed at how to mobilize these people. Increased volunteerism increases employment, and improves social stability and integration.

- Expanding the fields in which volunteers can participate. Besides encouraging volunteers'

involvement in current activities initiated by the government, like the poverty alleviation program, aid-the-laid-off-worker program, volunteers, together with NGOs and CSOs should be encouraged to take part in environmental programs, economic and social development programs that are related to large government development programs. Participation in significant programs sponsored by international organizations is also encouraged. Thus, the effect of development programs can be enhance.

Whether China can smoothly transform its economy will largely depend upon the rate at which society adjusts and develops, and finds sustainable solutions to social problems as they occur, China's volunteers will play a key role in this social adjustment and development.

- Establishing information networks to utilize the available human and financial resources in a community. Volunteer resource centers, community volunteer caring organizations and regional volunteer resource networks as well as effective service intermediaries should be set up as channels to recruit and pool volunteers.