

# Help offered to left-behind children

Guideline urges more involvement by NGOs and clarifies officials' responsibilities

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Measures rolled out by the authorities to improve the care of children left behind by parents who move away from home and that of other juveniles facing difficulties have provided a timely lift for the millions of children in China and NGO leaders like Liu Xinyu.

A guideline published by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and 10 other government departments on May 27 called for improvements to institutions devoted to helping and protecting juveniles and children left behind by parents who move away from home to find work.

It also encouraged more NGOs to take part in the protection, care and provision of services for children faced with difficulties in life, with the authorities set to purchase more services from NGOs.

Liu, who is chairman of On the Road to School, a Beijing-based NGO devoted to helping children, said the measures will enable better protection of left-behind children by giving incentives to all sectors of society, including NGOs, to extend a helping hand.

"We look forward to full implementation of the new policies. NGOs can play a unique role in caring for the mental health of left-behind children," he said.

NGOs could also pilot new models in the care and protection of children facing difficulties, and enable the authorities to promote those models among larger groups of children, he said.

There were 6.97 million left-behind children in China last year, down 22.9 percent from 2016, according to the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

Gao Xiaobing, vice-minister of civil affairs, told a news conference last year that the decrease could be attributed to factors such as more children migrating to cities with their parents and more migrant workers returning to their homes.

There were 288 million migrant workers in China last year, with more than half born after 1980, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. Many had little option but to leave their children at home because of the difficulties they faced in registering for schools in cities.

According to a report by On the Road to School and a research team from Beijing Normal University, more than 40 percent of left-behind children meet their parents no more than twice a year.

The plight of left-behind children made headlines nationwide after



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“NGOs can play a unique role in caring for the mental health of left-behind children.”

**Liu Xinyu**, chairman of On the Road to School, a Beijing-based NGO devoted to helping children

four siblings left without parental care died after ingesting pesticide in Bijie, Guizhou province, in 2015.

The guideline also clarified the responsibility of “children directors” on village committees and “children supervisors” at township-level authorities to ensure officials take responsibility for the care and protection of children at the primary level.

Ni Chunxia, deputy head of the Ministry of Civil Affairs’ child welfare department, said one challenge for officials is discovering cases of children in serious difficulty.

“With the children scattered in

villages, streets and various townships, we need a special work force to locate them. That is a premise for the follow-up measures to help them,” she said.

“That is why we need to bolster our strength at the primary level to ensure timely discovery of the cases and make sure they are reported to higher-level authorities.”

Ni also underscored the importance of ensuring parents assume their responsibilities as guardians of their children.

“The emotional demands that the children are in most dire need of

could only be met by their parents,” she said. “We need joint action from different departments to discipline parents who fail to assume their responsibilities.”

Liu, the NGO chairman, said it would be futile to offer care to left-behind children without enabling their parents’ participation.

“We must also prevent the stereotypes that left-behind children are children faced with problems,” he said. “Other than a temporarily difficult life, they are no different from other children. We must not build prejudice against them.”

## POLICY RESPONSE

# Public transport, ‘superfungi’ and university enrollments on agenda

By XU WEI

Several ministry-level departments, including those for transport, education and health, have responded recently to issues of public concern.

**Plan seeks to reduce use of private vehicles**

Chinese authorities will boost the development of sustainable transport in the next three years, with measures to increase the supply of public transport and reduce the use of private vehicles, according to an action plan published on Friday.

The plan, jointly issued by the Ministry of Transport and 11 other government departments, called for public transport to offer better service and be more efficient to increase the popularity of sustainable transport.

The development of urban rail transit networks will be accelerated, and intercity transport networks will be made more efficient and convenient, the plan said.

The authorities will offer incentives to car owners who switch to public transport. For areas plagued



with frequent congestion, the government will explore traffic control measures that will only allow private vehicles on the road at certain times or in specified locations.

Parking management will also be bolstered, with the use of mobile payment to be promoted at public parking lots.

**National network to monitor fungal diseases**

The National Health Commission said on Thursday that a national monitoring network for fungal diseases will be established to improve the ability of medical institutions to treat them.

The commission said in a notice that the network will carry out regular checks on the pathogen spectrum and drug resistance of fungal

infections, and monitor the clinical application of special or restricted antifungal drugs.

A nationwide network of medical institutions will conduct real-time monitoring of high-risk pathogenic fungi and fungal disease outbreaks and be responsible for issuing early warnings and adopting measures to prevent and control major infections.

The commission also required members of the network to report cases as soon as high-risk pathogens and drug-resistant “superfungi” are detected in routine tests.

Peking Union Medical College Hospital will be responsible for the planning and daily management of the network, the commission added.

The World Health Organization has listed antimicrobial resistance — the ability of bacteria, parasites, viruses and fungi to resist medicines — as one of 10 threats to global health this year.

**Regulation to protect children’s personal data**

The Cyberspace Administration of China unveiled a draft regulation on Friday to beef up the protection

of children’s personal information and prevent cases of illegal disclosure.

The regulation, published to allow public feedback this month, said that before network operators collect and use children’s personal information, they must first inform the children’s guardians in a clear manner and obtain their consent.

They are also required to clarify the purpose, scope, method and duration of collecting, storing, using, transferring or disclosing the child’s personal information, and the personal information collected, stored and used by network operators must be deleted in a timely manner if a request is made by a child or a guardian.

Operators must initiate an emergency response plan if they find that information has been disclosed, damaged or lost. If the damage is severe, they must report it to the authorities and affected children and their guardians.

**Transparency ensured for college entrance exam**

The Ministry of Education has urged university enrollment watch-

dogs at the provincial level to ensure transparency and fairness in enrollment procedures.

The ministry said in a statement on Friday that it has signed responsibility agreements with provincial authorities to ensure a transparent college enrollment process. China’s national college entrance exam begins this Friday.

The ministry warned university enrollment authorities against wrongdoing such as lowering enrollment thresholds for individual students.

The agreements also define the responsibilities of university enrollment authorities and education authorities at the provincial level in work related to the upcoming entrance exam.



## Policy digest

**Better oversight for public resources deals**

China will advance the integration of platforms for public resources transactions to enable more efficient allocation and better oversight, according to a guideline published on Wednesday.

The guideline, issued by the National Development and Reform Commission and approved by the State Council, calls for efforts to make the allocation of public resources more efficient and encourage innovation in the oversight of transactions.

The transaction platform for public resources will be expanded to cover natural resources, equity rights to assets, and environmental rights, the guideline said. Previously, the platform only covered bidding for construction projects, the transfer of land use and mining rights, transactions involving State-owned property rights and government procurements.

The guideline also requires the publication of a national catalog of public resources transactions, with local authorities to come up with their own catalogs based on the national catalog.

The rules for transferring equity rights in natural resources owned by the people, franchise rights and environmental rights, such as those dealing with pollution discharges and carbon emissions, will be refined to allow for bidding and auctions.

A mechanism to ensure fair competition will also be implemented stringently to prevent regional protectionism and industrial monopolies.

It also called for accelerated development of an online transaction system for public resources to enable better information sharing and interconnectivity.

Modern information technologies, such as big data and cloud computing, will be used to monitor and analyze transactions so that violations of regulations or the law can be spotted quickly.

**Incentives to boost domestic services sector**

The State Council has come up with tax incentives and fee reductions to boost the growth of sectors including elderly care, child-care and domestic services in a bid to expand employment and boost domestic consumption.

The measures were decided at an executive meeting of the Cabinet presided over by Premier Li Keqiang on Wednesday.

According to a statement released after the meeting, earnings from the sectors will be exempted from value-added tax and enjoy a 10-percent reduction in taxable income between June 1 and the end of 2025.

Those providing real estate or land for any related services will be exempted from deed tax, property tax, urban land use tax and six types of fees, including real estate registration fees.

The cabinet will also conduct research to improve VAT policies to further support the development of such services, and more companies devoted to domestic services will be exempted from VAT.

The supply of community facilities for the services will be increased, with the shortage of facilities in old residential areas to be remedied through repurchasing or renting by the authorities, the statement said.

Private investors providing community based elderly care services can have their tax thresholds lowered, with community institutions also receiving incentives to develop boarding, day care and home-visit services.

The meeting also came up with steps to encourage colleges and vocational schools to launch majors in domestic services and enroll more students in such courses.

A campaign will be launched to improve the skills of domestic service workers employed on flexible contracts, with the cost of training to be covered by unemployment insurance.

It added that commercial banks will be encouraged to offer small, unsecured loans to businesses in the domestic services sector with good credit records.