

## **“Left-behind Children” Phenomenon in China: Case Study in Chongqing**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the “left-behind children” phenomenon in Wuxi County, Chongqing, China. This research utilizes several interviews with government officials, NGOs, and the left-behind children through questionnaire and observations including official written reports. The activities on LBC were categorized into 4 models: care model, society support model, rural school education model, and policies support and empowerment model. Given the exploratory nature of this LBC model in Chongqing, we have several recommendations in further improving the plight and phenomenon of this group of population.

**Keywords:** *left-behind children (LBC), China*

**JEL classification:** *H75, I38, P3, Z13*

### **1. Preamble**

With the advent of globalization, migration has become a worldwide phenomenon which has caused “Left-behind Children 留守儿童” (LBC) issues all over the world, especially in developing countries. For instance, 7 per cent of Mexican children in 2002 have migrating fathers, yet multistage estimate suggests that 17 per cent of children born into two-parent homes are expected to experience a migrating father at least once during childhood (Rosalia Cortes, 2007). In Thailand, Bryant (2005) estimates that about half a million children aged up to 14 years are left behind. A case study based on 1996’s data found that in certain rural areas of Bangladesh, a range of 18 to 40 per cent of rural households have at least one migrant member working elsewhere (Yeoh and Lam, 2007). Moreover, there are approximately 9 million Filipino children under the age of 18 who are left behind by one or both parents to work tentatively or live permanently abroad (Reyes, 2008).

Since the “Reform and Opening up Policy” started in the 1970s in China, the acceleration of economic development and rapid urbanization has caused millions of peasant workers to migrate into cities. The rural population who migrated to urban cities has risen to 151 million by 2009 in China (NBS, 2009). However, the unique dual economic structure and related household register system in China restrained rural labour’s settling down in city and hundreds of them had to move alone without their family. Thus there is a huge group of LBC left in the countryside, with their population estimated at 58 million in China representing 28.29 per cent of total population of rural children (All Women Federation, 2008). These statistics are still rising rapidly. The LBC are facing various problems in their life, such as in the aspects of education, security, personality, psychology, etc., which limits these LBC’s development. The issues of LBC do not only have a bad impact on society, but also create some serious risks on next generations of China.

In the last decade, the Chinese government has introduced policies, laws and regulations to provide better care for LBC in the countryside. This paper concentrates on Chongqing, being the youngest municipality located in southwest China with 32.57 million people in 2008 including 7.5 million out of residential areas (CRC, 2010). Chongqing has the highest rate (49.9 per cent) of LBC among rural children all over the country (Duan and Yang, 2008). Since 2008, Chongqing has put the left-behind children (LBC) into the Ten People’s Livelihood project, and explored series of ways to manage LBC, one of which is called “Chongqing’s model”.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Left-behind Children**

LBC are defined as children with one or two parents who have moved elsewhere and were left behind at the place of household registration (Duan and Zhou, 2005). There were no heated controversies over the definition of LBC, but diverse scholars have various opinions about LBC’s age range. According to the “Convention on the Rights of the Child”, China, the term children is defined as “every human being below the age of eighteen years” (CRC, Article1). In All-China Women’s Federation’s survey in 2007, they defined the LBC as children seventeen years old or below (All-China Women’s Federation, 2008). Some others define the age range as between 7-18 years old (Lu, 2006; Zhang, 2010) whereas Duan and Zhou (2005); and Duan and Wu (2009) refer to their age as fourteen and below. In this paper, we define LBC as children of up to 16 years of age according to the LBC definition of the Report of Chongqing Women’s Federation.

The concept of LBC was first proposed by Yi Zhang (1994) who discussed the issue of children who have been left in their country when their parents work abroad. However, the idea of LBC slightly differs today where it refers to the migrated peasant workers’ children in rural area and attracted public attention in 2002. According to the *Guangming Daily* report “Nongcun Liushou Ertong Jiaoyu Wenti Jidai Jiejue 农村留守儿童教育问题亟待解决” [Rural left-behind children’s education problems need to be solved], where four million peasants in each province of Anhui, Henan, and Sichuan work outside of their hometown, bringing about over ten million LBC, and these children are facing physiological and psychological problems (Ye and Fan, 2008). *Chutian Metropolis Daily* published articles on young left-behind girls who were raped or molested which accounted for one third of the 48 cases a year in one court of Suizhou, Hubei, and since that media outcry, it became a hot issue. In 2004, the Chinese Ministry of Education held a conference on “Research on Rural Left-behind Children in China”, and thus began the academic research on LBC. About 30 materials have been published in 2004 and 85 literatures in 2005 (Duan and Zhou, 2006).

## 2.2. Dual Economy Theory

The dual economy models posited a relatively advanced sector and a relatively backward sector. These have alternatively been called capitalist and subsistence, formal and informal, modern and traditional, industry and agriculture, urban and rural, primary and secondary, and good jobs and bad jobs (Fields, 2007). The major economists of dual economy theory are Lewis, Rains, Fei, Jorgenson, Harris and Tobago. Lewis is the pioneer of the dual economy theory. In “Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour” 1954, he stated that the main sources of economic development proceeds are subsistence agriculture, casual labour, petty trade, domestic service, wives and daughters in the household, and the increase of population in the country. In most but not all of these sectors, if the country is overpopulated relative to its natural resources, the marginal productivity of labour is negligible, zero, or even negative. He noted that dual economy appeared in developing countries and it is the starting point of economic development. The Harris-Todaro model states that the rate of migration flow is determined by the difference between expected urban wages (not actual) and rural wages. It explains why peasants still decide to try to work in urban areas even through there are serious unemployment problem in urban areas (Zhang, 2008). The dual economy theory has further demonstrated that rural-urban migration in China is unavoidable, is the product of economic development, and a phenomenon of long term rural-urban migration.

### 2.3. Migration and the “Hukou 户口” System in China

Urbanization has been one of the most important features of China’s development since the inception of the reform programme in the late 1970s (Dillon, 2009). China’s massive rural to urban migration began with the reform policies, which is also known as the household production responsibility system. The reform has changed the socioeconomic conditions which include widened rural-urban divide thus further encouraged peasants to move to urban areas, and increased agricultural productivity. On the other hand, there appear to be relaxed restrictions on rural-urban migration thus opening the door for rural workers to seek jobs in cities (Song, 2004). China has been experiencing a huge influx of rural workers into urban areas, often called “floating population” (internal migrants in China), referring to the large and increasing number of migrants without local household registration status (Guo, 2009). In 1998, the population of rural labour force migration was 44.24 million (Lu and Song, 2004). It increased to 131.81 million in 2006 (*Chinese Farmer Development Report*, 2008) and reached 150.97 million by the end of the second quarter of 2009 (NBS, 2009). Over 80 per cent of them are below 40 years old and with middle school education (*Chongqing Daily*, 2008). According to the survey, 69.88 per cent of rural to urban migrant workers are married (Ren, 2009).

In addition, the group of migration in China is growing bigger and the age of migration is getting younger. The numbers of “floating population” will slowdown the rising population from 6 million to 3 million per year, reach 0.35 billion in 2050 (National Population, 2010). There is a new main group of migrants which is called “new generation of peasant workers” that refers to the peasant work migrants who were born after 1980s, and most of them are the first generation of LBC. They followed their parents’ path when they grew up, left hometown to seek jobs in cities for better living and income. The “new generation of peasants” was 30 per cent of total migration in 2005, and increased to 58.4 per cent (84.87 million) in 2010 (National Population, 2010).

The Hukou system is an administrative measure that registers households according to place of origin. It essentially is a household registration permit, akin to an internal passport. It contains all of a household’s identification information, such as parents’ names, births, deaths, marriages, divorces, moves and colleges attended. Most important, it identifies the city, town or village to which a person belongs. It was established in the 1950s in order to prevent the rural population from spontaneously moving to cities. Under the Hukou system, people born in urban areas are officially registered as “residents” (*jumin* 居民) and those in rural areas as “peasants” (*nongmin* 农民). “Residents” and “peasants” are two distinct categories of social status

that entail different rights, and “peasants” cannot obtain urban Hukou status unless mandated by the state (Biao, 2007).

Nevertheless, permission to enter urban areas and stick to a hard-working job does not mean migrant workers have the same welfare benefits as citizens with urban Hukou. The Hukou system remains a formidable obstacle for the overwhelming majority of migrants who want to live with their families in the city (Biao, 2007). First of all, the majority of migrant workers in cities, usually do not have long-term urban residencies (or household registration status), medical insurance or other benefits (Guo, 2009). Second, education is among the most important barriers for migrants’ children, city schools are generally held responsible only for providing education for children of registered permanent residents, whereas they will charge “temporary schooling fees” for others (Amnesty International, 2007). Even when the migrant children intend to enter a school in the city, they have to return to their place of origin (as defined by Hukou) to pass the examination for entry to a higher level of education, the reason being the entire school enrolment system is place-based. Third, many rural labour force meet “discrimination of household registration” (*hujū qīshì* 户籍歧视) in the labour markets of the cities. “Discrimination of the household registration” means the migrant workers have been unfairly treated compared to residents, for instance, rural labour force are usually distributed in industries with low wage and terrible work environment (for example construction) (Yuan, 2007).

## **2.4. Previous Research Findings on LBC**

### **2.4.1. LBC’s population**

The studies on LBC’s population include number, gender, distribution and biomorphous characteristics. There were various number of LBC’s population due to the different definition on age rank in academic. The *China Youth News* reported that rural LBC was 70 million in 2004 (Ye and Fan, 2008). According to Duan, there were about 22.9 million LBC below 14 years old in China in 2000 (Duan and Zhou, 2005), or 26.48 million LBC (0-4 years old) in 2005 (Duan and Wu, 2009), while in Li’s research, there were 79.81 million under 18-year-old LBC in China (Li, 2005). Although the figures of LBC are different, all academics have the same understanding that the group of the rural LBC is huge and expanded rapidly in years. In 2008, the All China Women’s Federation have reported their research based on the 2005 by-census (or mid-decade count) of one per cent of the population, the research estimated there are about 58 million rural LBC, 28.29 per cent of total population of rural children, one-third of rural children are left behind (All-China Women’s Federation, 2008). This number is now widely used in research. In addition, the research found different age groups of LBC. 27.05

per cent of LBC are 0-5 years old, 34.85 per cent are 6-11 years old, 20.84 per cent are 12-14 years old and 17.27 per cent are 15-17 years old. There are 30 million LBC in school age (6-14 years old) in rural areas. The majority of LBC are distributed in West and Middle of China. In 2002, eastern China has input 86.23 per cent of migrant workers, 77.4 per cent of them were from middle and western China (Fan, Xing and Cheng, 2010). All-China Women's Federation indicated that LBC are 52 per cent of total rural LBC population in the Sichuan, Anhui, Henan, Guangdong, Hunan and Jiangxi provinces (All-China Women's Federation, 2008).

The academic study on biomorphous characteristics of LBC involved the family structure of LBC. Duan and Zhou (2005) have summarized four types of LBC's family structures: 1) both parents migrate out, stay with grandparents; 2) one parent migrate out, stay with another parent; 3) both parents migrate out, stay with other relatives; 4) both parents migrate out, stay alone. According to All-China Women's Federation's survey, 22.66 per cent of LBC stay with mother only, 25.56 per cent of LBC live with grandparents. The majority of 0- to 11-year-old LBC are taken care of by grandparents, while most of the 12- to 17-year-old LBC stay with mother (All-China Women's Federation, 2008).

#### *2.4.2. Education studies on LBC*

The education studies on LBC mainly focus on the research of LBC's study, moral character and psychology. Firstly, most of the LBC record poor results in their studies, high rates of repetition and being drop-outs, undisciplined, and less ambitious (Qu, 2009; Women's Federation of Meishan municipality, 2004). A survey by Sichuan Agricultural Survey Team investigated in 2003, found that 47 per cent of the students performed poorly in their studies, 41 per cent were in the medium to low range and only 12 per cent performed better than average (Zhao, 2004). According to Duan and Zhou, the drop-out rates of LBC are not far different with other children in primary school, but it rose sharply in secondary school (Duan and Zhou, 2006). One-third of 15- to 17-year-old rural LBC began to work in urban areas after graduating from secondary school (All-China Women's Federation, 2008).

Secondly, Lin Guo's research on several aspects of children's physical well-being, found that LBC are weak in their anthropometrics, such as height, weight and self-evaluation of health (Guo, 2009). Moreover, there are some reports in news about the negative consequences on the health of LBC. For instance, the "fake milk formula" had infected 171 infants – all of them are LBC in Fuyang municipality of Anhui Province where 13 among the 171 died (Yeoh and Lam, 2007).

Thirdly, there is a significantly higher proportion of LBC suffering from psychological and behavioural problems. A study involving 250 junior high school students who have been left behind for at least half a year in Jichun County, Hubei, found that 16.6 per cent of these students felt abandoned, 12.3 per cent of them had problems expressing difficulties or obtaining help, and 6.5 per cent of them felt “anguished” about being left behind (Yeoh and Lam, 2007). Left-behind children often develop behaviour at two extremes: either they are withdrawn or excessively aggressive (Li Lijin, 2004; Qian, 2004; Zhao, 2004).

#### *2.4.3. Sociological researches on LBC*

Most sociological researches on LBC focused on LBC’s security. LBC are more likely to be victims of accidents and crime (Chan, 2009). According to All-China Women’s Federation report, LBC face the highest risk of abduction (All-China Women’s Federation, 2008). Likewise, a survey on sexual violence in Zhechuan in Henan province showed that 34 per cent of the 62 rape incidents in the county involved LBC, and most these LBC were aged between five and 12 (Chan, 2009). Secondly, some LBC even turn to crime due to lack of supervision and positive goals (Chan, 2009). Data from the police in Fujian showed that about 60 per cent of the children who were arrested for public disturbances, pick-pocketing and theft are LBC (Wang, 2006). In 2006, 40 per cent of the 1,708 detainees at the Hunan Provincial Juvenile Reform Centre were left-behind children (*China Youth Daily*, 2008). According to the head of the research department of the Supreme Court, there has been on average a 13 per cent annual increase in youth delinquency since 2000 and 70 per cent of these delinquents are LBC (Chan, 2009).

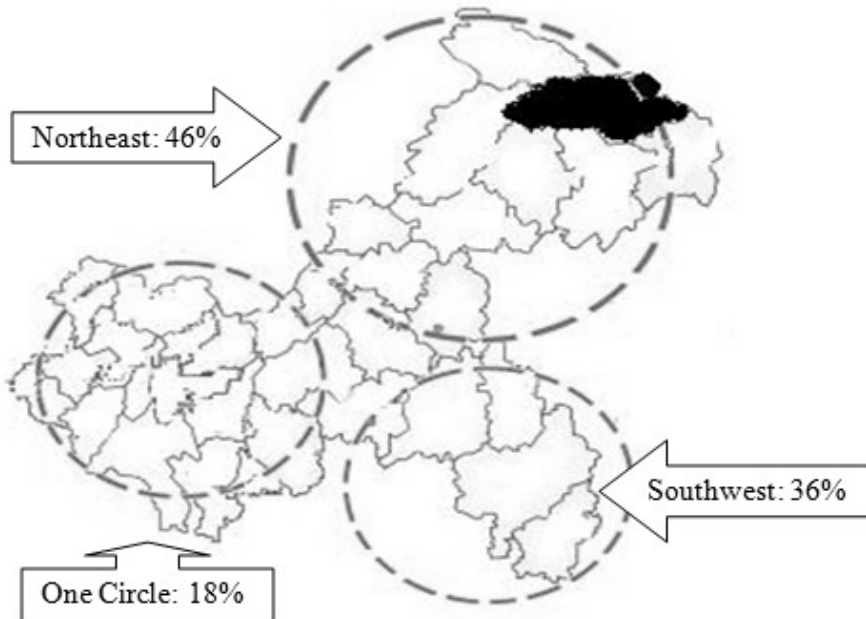
### **3. Chongqing**

#### ***3.1. LBC Status in Chongqing***

Chongqing has around 32.57 million population in 2008, including 23.5 million peasants, and 2.35 million 0- to 16-year-old LBC (Chongqing Women’s Federation, 2009). The large number of LBC exists due to rural labour force output and urbanization in Chongqing. One third of rural population (about 6.2 million) migrate out for work (Fu and Liu, 2008), and continue to increase to 400,000 every year (Ren, 2009). The urbanization rate accelerated since the central government of China started the “western development” policy in 2000. This caused the percentage of urban population to raise from 29.5 per cent in 1996 to 50 per cent in 2009, while the rural population dropped to 13.84 million in 2009. Urbanization has expanded the gap between rural and urban, thus more and more peasants experience

out-migration for better income. Chongqing has the highest proportion (49.9 per cent) of rural LBC of the rural children all over the country. Rural LBC represent 53 per cent of the total population of rural children in 2009 (Duan and Yang, 2008). Compared to the Fifth National Population Census in 2000, it rose to 0.88 million (60 per cent) (Chongqing Women's Federation, 2009). Second, LBC are unevenly distributed in Chongqing. Chongqing has 40 counties, where 9 counties contain 100,000 rural LBCs, and another 5 counties with over 80 per cent rural LBC of the total rural children (Chongqing Women's Federation, 2009). Figure 1 shows that the government has divided Chongqing into three regions: one circle (central) with two wings. The circle (central) includes the city and 23 counties. The two wings are Northeast and Southwest Chongqing, each involved 11 counties and 6 counties respectively. LBC are distributed with 18 per cent in the central region, 46 per cent in Northeast and 36 per cent in Southeast (Zhen and Wu, 2009). Moreover, the majority of LBC are primary school's age. According to Chongqing Women's Federation, 18 per cent of LBC were 0-6 years old, 55 per cent of LBC were 6-12 years old, and 27 per cent of LBC were 12-16 years old. Male

Figure 1 LBC Distribution in Chongqing's Three Regions



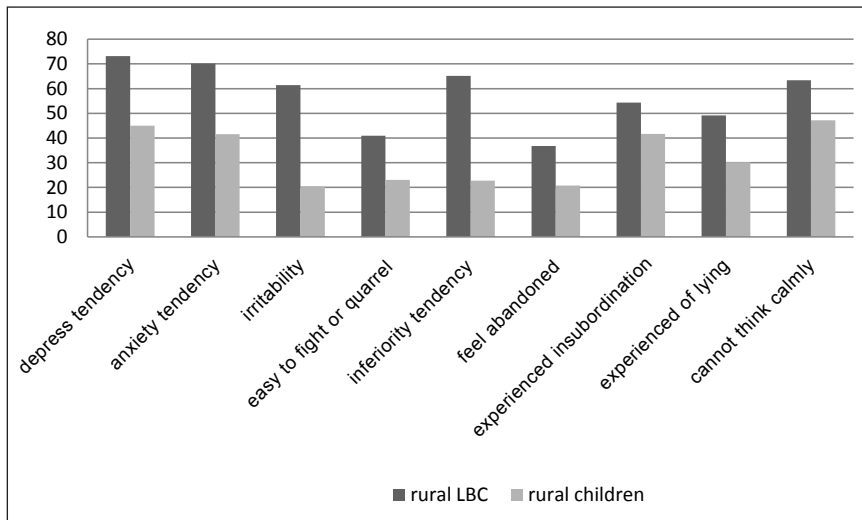
Source: Zhen Yonghui and Wu Mingyong (2009), *School Education Deficiencies of Left-behind Children and Its Countermeasures in Chongqing Rural Areas*, Beijing City University, No. 5.



LBC represented 5 per cent of total number of LBC (Chongqing Women’s Federation, 2009). The survey shows 32 per cent of LBC live with their grandparents, with both parents of 1.3 million LBC having migrated out of their homes. 65 per cent of LBC experienced single parent migration. 69 per cent of LBC have poor performance in study, 28 per cent of LBC have to walk half an hour to go to school, 34 per cent of LBC (over 700,000) have to walk more than 1 hour, and 15 per cent walk 2 hours to school daily (*Chongqing Daily*, 2010).

LBC in Chongqing are suffering from various problems. In 2008, rural LBC consist of 42.2 per cent of students in primary school, and over 40 per cent of students in secondary school in Chongqing, both being the highest rate in China (DPME, 2009). According to Zhen and Wu, 65 per cent of LBC’s performances are average in school, and 13 per cent of them are considered good in their studies (Zhen and Wu, 2009). The Department of Civilization in Chongqing has done a research on 113,973 LBC in 5 counties, 64.8 per cent of them stay with their grandparents with 69.8 per cent of grandparents above 50 years old and 92.6 per cent of grandparents have below middle school education background. Most of LBC’s grandparents have no formal education and poor health. Figure 2 shows the psychological status of LBC in 4 counties in Three Gorges of Chongqing. This study found that 73.2 per cent of rural LBC have tendency for depression, 70.1 per cent of LBC have anxiety

Figure 2 Psychological Status of LBC in 4 Counties in Three Gorges of Chongqing



Source: Tian and Zhou (2008), “Psychology Research on Left-behind Children in Three Gorges”, *Basic Education*, June, No. 1~2.

tendency, and over 60 per cent of LBC have irritable, inferiority complex and unable to think calmly (Tian and Zhou, 2008). Besides, 92 per cent of them wish to be together with parents, and more significantly so for those LBC above 10 years old. 21 per cent of them have not seen their parents for more than a year (Fu and Liu, 2008). This shows the worrying situation of LBC that needs urgent attention.

### 3.2. Chongqing Government Measures

Over the last decade, the Chinese government has embarked upon some official initiatives to overcome the LBC issues. In 2008, LBC was one of the “Ten People’s Livelihood” in Chongqing where the government spent over 5 billion on this project. The Education Department, the Women’s Federation, Commission of Communist Youth League, Committee for the Wellbeing of the Youth, Civilization Department, etc., are mainly in charge of implementation of policies. In 2010, the Chongqing government has issued the “Decision on the Work of Current People’s Livelihood”, in setting up 400 boarding schools, “family room”, “LBC care centre”, etc., and caring for the 1.3 million rural LBC and so on. The 1.3 million rural LBC were the rural LBC in the age of 6-15 years (in nine-year compulsory education period). In the same year, Chongqing government insisted on further 9 actions of care-taking of rural LBC, which involved education finance subsidies, school construction, egg and milk project, special training, family link, psychological guidance, twinning and community care. Moreover, the “Circular of Administrative Office of Chongqing Municipal Committee and General Office of the People’s Government of Chongqing Municipality on Action Plan for LBC”, involved 6 plans: constructing rural boarding school and kindergarten, innovative training model, community education on rural LBC, promoting LBC’s nutrition and health, and protection of LBC’s right. In 2011, the “decision to reduce three gap and promote common prosperity” strengthen the activities of LBC care-taking in “constructing boarding school”, “love lunch”, “egg & milk program” and “surrogate parent”, etc. Through our interview and observation during the research, the activities on LBC were categorized into 4 models: care model, society support model, rural school education model, and policies support and empowerment model.

Care Model refers to individual or group who provide material or spiritual aid to LBC. Since 2009, Chongqing Electric Power Corporation built 12 “Yu-electric Chunmiao Houses”, which have reading rooms and family room telephones (*Chongqing Daily*, 2010). From March to July in 2010, *Chongqing Daily*, Chongqing television together with seven other media have introduced “12 • 5” International volunteers column, with report focused on voluntary service. The “Children learning partner” of China Telecom provides free call

on 11896100 to listen to knowledge teaching. Until July 24, it has provided services to 234,430 children in 2011 (*Chongqing Daily*, 2011). In 2011, one businessman has brought 22 rural LBC to travel to Chongqing city.

Society support model refers to government department, enterprise, media and NGOs who offer long term and reliable support for LBC's development. In 2009, Chongqing's budget includes 2.67 billion yuan on education, eliminating the school fees for 3.6 million students, financial subsidy to 489,600 students in rural areas, and 14 million yuan to 57,000 LBC for their education. Chongqing's government plan is to build 2000 "family Internet video chat rooms" and 5000 "family telephones" in 2011.

Community Model refers to formation of a bottom-up community care environment. In the "Action plan of care for LBC" the rural children community program in 2010, plan to complete 100 rural LBC care centres in 2012, encourage volunteer to be "surrogate parent", build 1000 "LBC's homes" and provide free training to rural LBC's guardians. There was a significant attempt of community care model held by Wuxi county government and Beijing global village NGO. Rural school education model improves the LBC's education by enhancing the expenditure and public education resource on rural schools. Chongqing targets to build 2000 rural boarding schools and 1000 rural kindergartens in 2012; promote rural LBC's nutrition and health programs by supplying "love lunch", "egg and milk project", nutritional guidance, safe drinking water, etc. The government spent an estimate of 0.8 billion Yuan to launch the egg and milk project in 39 counties, and "love lunch" in 30 counties, which would benefit 5,000 schools in total. 37 counties collected 0.35 billion Yuan to maintain or construct canteen in 989 schools, and improve the canteen's environment for 440,000 students. This could also solve the problem of drinking water for 450,000 students and teachers which cost 0.14 billion Yuan. On the other hand, 4+1 model began in 18 schools from 17 counties in two wings of Chongqing in 2010. "4+1 model" is the LBC training experiment. It aims to promote ideological and political education, quality personality education, mental emotional education, behavioral health and physical education.

Policies support and empowerment model aspire to improve the LBC's situation by changing some policies, and protect their rights. Two main implementation of policy support and empowerment model are "the rights of rural LBC protection program" and "household registration reform". "The rights of rural LBC protection program" required each county to set up the rural LBC's right protection center, eliminate the phenomenon of dropping out of rural LBC and build the safety guard system in school to prevent the injury of LBC's right. The household registration reform began in 2010. Under this new household registration system, peasants are able to change to "citizen" with some requirements, and the new "citizen" could enjoy the same social

welfare as the original citizen resident of the county. This new system may break the gap of dual economy in China, thus reducing the number of LBC. Chongqing aims to transfer 3 million peasants to become city residents from 2010 to 2011 and bring about an increase of 800,000-900,000 “new citizens” each year after 2010.

### **3.3. Chongqing NGO's Activities on LBC**

According to Nongovernmental Organizations Administrative Bureau of the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MOCA) in China, NGO has been defined as “organizations formed by citizen volunteers which carry out activities aimed at realizing the common aspirations of their members in accordance with organizational articles of association” (Lau, 2009). “Shi Chuan Town LBC fund” is the first NGO specifically, for LBC. This NGO was established in 2011, with 150 members volunteer looking after 1,000 LBC. Another NGO, “Chongqing Youth Student Volunteers Association” (registered in 2007) implemented many activities in 2008 to help LBC, such as donate materials and money, provide psychological care activities and hold summer camps. However, not all the NGOs are registered. In this study, we have interviewed 6 NGOs which concentrated their activities on LBC in Chongqing. Only one NGO has registered, the other 5 are grassroots NGOs. Usually the registered NGOs are government-organized or have some relationship with government department, for example, the “Chongqing Youth Student Volunteers Association” is led by the government of Wangzhou County. Most of the registered NGOs are organized top-down, while the grassroots NGO are set from bottom-up. The registered NGOs have close ties with government, thus easier to get funding and support from government than grassroots NGOs. Therefore, the grassroots NGOs are more independent in their operations. However, grassroots NGOs are facing many problems nowadays. First, under-developed civil society has limited the development of grass root NGOs (Ji and Zhao, 2006). Secondly, the government has strict controls over the registration of NGO, thus also making it difficult for them to get financial support. Third, grassroots NGOs usually lack social credibility. Finally, through our interviews, we are aware that the grassroots NGOs have not cooperated with government departments in many activities and there is no policy support to encourage them to help LBC.

## **4. LBC in Wuxi County**

### **4.1. Overview of LBC in Wuxi**

Wuxi is located in Northeast of Chongqing, which comprises 30 towns. The population of Wuxi is 530 thousand (2008), with 470 thousand peasant

population. Wuxi is one of the national poorest county, with GDP per capital of 5391 Yuan (2008), constituting only 30 per cent of Chongqing’s average level.

According to Chongqing Women Federation’s Survey in 2008, 71,272 rural LBC are 0-16 years old, comprising 76.15 per cent of total rural children, and of these, over 36 thousand LBC’s parents both migrate out. Table 1 shows the status of LBC in Wuxi in 2011. All of the data are collected from the education department of Wuxi through an interview done in mid to late 2011. There were 54660 LBC in compulsory education period, 29.8 per cent of LBC whose parents have both migrated, and 13050 of them being taken care of by their grandparents, while 2609 of them stay with their relatives. A total of 6661 LBC stay in school dormitory, where 77.11 per cent of them are from the middle school. The poor LBC comprised 17.8 per cent of total LBC, and around 85 per cent of them are in primary school.

#### ***4.2. Government’s Measurements in Wuxi***

First of all, Wuxi has established a joint conference system for LBC that regularly discuss and solve the problems of LBC. Secondly, the education department keep the records of the LBC personal files during their compulsory education period, provide free health check and 2,920 LBC are less than 6 years old. Thirdly, the social support model involved open family connection platform. For instance, the county has built 87 family rooms, 4 “LBC’s home” in Dahe School, Chaoyang Primary School, etc. Table 2 indicates the result of the family connection platform construction in 2011. Ninety-one schools have open family phone, and 86 schools have family chat room among 221 schools.

Fourth, the care model in Wuxi include condolence and donation for LBC where volunteers take care of LBC playing the roles of “foster mother”, “foster brother/sister” and “surrogate parent”, besides running “home visit” and obtaining donation from enterprises.

Education department of Wuxi County has spent 200,000 yuan to take care of 2000 LBC. Corporations/enterprises donate books, clothing, household items and money to rural LBC. Yuanda Power Company in conjunction with the government department donated 13,000 yuan, Zhongba coal mining company with other companies have given 25,000 yuan to Zhong Ba primary school to carry out a variety of activities for LBC during festivals, training guardians and surrogate parents of LBC through “mobile parent schools”. Besides, 30 female officials of agriculture department of Wuxi have been “foster mothers” of 30 LBC in Sanbao Village. Education department of Wuxi county has grouped 50 university student volunteers to be the “foster brothers/sisters” of 100 LBC, to teach the LBC, and to counsel the LBC’s

Table 1 Status of LBC with Both Migrant Parents

	Number of students	LBC (with both parents migrated)		Guardians of LBC (with both parents migrated)		LBC staying in school dormitory (with both parents migrated)		Poor LBC (with both parents migrated)		
		Number	Percentage	Grandparents	Relatives	Fosterage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>Total</b>	<b>54,660</b>	<b>16,313</b>	<b>29.84</b>	<b>13,050</b>	<b>2,690</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>6,611</b>	<b>40.53</b>	<b>2,903</b>	<b>17.80</b>
Primary school	33,354	10,165	30.48	8,132	1,708	325	1,870	18.40	2,208	21.72
Middle school	21,306	6,148	28.86	4,918	982	248	4,741	77.11	695	11.30

Source: Compiled by authors.

Table 2 The Family Connection Platform

Scope of LBC (both parents went out)	Number of schools	Number of LBC (both parents went out)	Schools (with "family phones")	Number of "family phones"	Schools (with family chat rooms)	Number of family chat rooms
<b>Total</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>16,313</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>86</b>
Below 50	134	2,890	4	4		
51-100	33	2,412	33	33	32	32
101-200	33	2,245	33	33	33	33
Over 200	21	8,766	21	25	21	21

Source: Compiled by authors.

Table 3 The Situation of Construction of Boarding Schools

	Number of students	Number of towns	Number of towns with "no boarding school"	Boarding schools	Schools "with bathroom"	Schools (with canteen)
<b>Total</b>	<b>54,660</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>58</b>
Primary school	33,354		12	41	16	41
Middle School	21,306			17		17

Source: Compiled by authors.

psychological problems. The "surrogate parents" helped 1,800 LBC, by carrying out six roles in each month: communicate, check their homework, and demonstrate life experience, psychological counseling and practical aspect of living to help them. Moreover, 3,000 teachers over 250 village (neighbourhood) committees, visit more than 5,000 rural LBC's home. They comprehensively understand the LBC's guardians' real situation, community education environment, and give recommendations in the case of LBC's education, safety, behaviour, and physical and mental health.

Fifth, the rural school education model involved boarding school construction, nutritional planning and "4 +1" model: The education department plans to invest nearly 20 million to improve the school environments, in terms of security, building and maintaining dormitory and canteens. According to the data collected from government department through the interview, Table 3 shows there were 58 schools built with dormitories, 33 of them with

bathrooms, and all of them provide a canteen each. 41 boarding schools are primary schools, a number much higher than middle schools. This situation is due to the smaller number of middle schools and high schools compared to primary schools.

An expenditure of 1.94 million yuan was incurred to provide lunch for the LBC in schools such as Wenfeng Primary School, Zhuhai Experimental Primary School, Gulu Primary School, etc. Such programme benefits 2,198 primary school students, and 1,256 middle school students (Table 4). In terms of nutrition, 1.5 million yuan was spent to provide milk for 51,399 primary- and middle-school students, 97,584 yuan to provide eggs for 3,242 village school students, and 296,700 yuan to subsidize 2 yuan for each 3,450 poor students. Furthermore, the “4 + 1” model has been successfully experimented in Xiabao Primary School, and Tongcheng Middle School was also granted a declaration of “4 + 1” model of education.

Lastly, the Community Care Model has brought about a good innovation in Wuxi. In July 2010, the Wuxi government started to cooperate with Beijing Global Village Environmental Education Center (Beijing Global Village-BGV), which was founded in 1996 as a NGO dedicated to public environmental issues. Since 2010, the project has been launched in Wuxi and piloted in three villages and six communities. The project is an innovation of social administration, ecological civilization and harmony based on relation between society and the government, and to achieve the goal of “social justice, the common prosperity of the people, so that everyone is happy and harmonious”. Today, the slogan “happy and harmony” appears everywhere on banners and posters in towns and villages, a popular place in Wuxi.

The villagers’ autonomy, shared governance, and rule by law are the key points of “happy and harmonies home” construction. Volunteer Villagers composed a “happy and harmonious association”, which manages the community of village. The three parties – government, NGO and “happy and harmonious aid association” – coordinate the construction of a new pattern of basic level of community governance. The Government provides guidance, and policy financial supports, whilst NGOs play the important role of counseling, training and establishing foundation.

Wuxi County adheres to solving the issue of the LBC through social construction and social management innovation. In 2010, the members of “happy and harmonious association” from 30 “happy harmonious home” pilot villages have taken care of over 1,000 LBC. For example, in Yangqiao village, “happy and harmonious aid association” has recruited 108 volunteers to take care of 108 LBC. In the “happy and harmonious home” community, villagers became “foster mothers” helping the neighbourhood LBC. Through the 5 “foster mother” group discussions in 3 “happy and harmonious home” communities, it was found that most “foster mothers” have children at



Table 4 The Expenditure on LBC Programmes in March of 2011

	Number of "home visits"	Family phone		Internet video chat		Free lunch		Egg & milk programme	
		People	Expenditure (yuan)	People	Expenditure (yuan)	People	Expenditure (yuan)	People	Expenditure (yuan)
Total	844	8,807	2,642	9,036	12,390	3,454	6,908	81,565	113,248
Primary school	518	5,682	1,705	5,782	8,142	2,198	4,396	50,825	60,990
Middle school	326	3,125	937.5	3,254	4,248	1,256	2,512	30,740	52,258

Source: Education Department of Wuxi, 2011.

home, usually of the same age with the LBC whom they are helping. “Foster mothers” take care of LBC’s daily life, studies, and communicate with them. However, half of “foster mothers” are unable to check LBC’s homework because of their education limitation and most of the “foster mothers” have health issues, thus are unable to look after LBC. In addition, all LBC are very close to their “foster mother”, and prefer to stay in “foster mother’s” home, and communicate more with “foster mother” rather than their grandparents. In Wuxi, the government and community coordinate and provide services for “foster mothers”, while NGOs provide funding to charities to support “foster mothers” livelihood.

The “happy and harmonious home” project is derived from a Community assistance form of participatory social management mechanism as a big family in exploring a new path to take care of LBC. First of all, it encourages LBC to make friends with other children (both LBC and normal rural children), then forming some “children group”. After that, the relations of “children group” spread to their families. Rural children’s family could help the LBC who is in the same “children group” or live next door. Finally, the whole community will be involved in care-taking of LBC. This is a bottom-up process.

## 5. Conclusion

No doubt, the LBC’s situation is improving, at least in raising widespread concern in society. Research on 350 LBC in 5 schools of Wuxi County found that most of them have experienced love and care from the school, government and society, making their everyday lives better. However, the real proportion of LBC is higher than the official government report.

Secondly, there are some findings about the Chongqing Model. The Care model is a top-down process. LBC have been treated as passive beneficiaries rather than active actors, resulting in the negligence of LBC’s real needs. On the other hand, it is wonderful to see the numerous amount of care on LBC, even though there were reservations on the ultimate beneficiaries of the donations. The Society Support model promoted the government and society in bearing their responsibilities, but the LBC’s voices may not be totally heard. The construction of boarding school had been fully acknowledged by the society, LBC and migrant workers. However, it has some weaknesses which include lack of teaching resources, non-standardized management and difficulty in taking care of every child in a big class (over 50 students in each class in a town school). The policy support and empowerment model have explored a number of new policies, such as encourage migrant workers to come back and work nearby, and have obtained reasonably successful results.

However, we also found many problems with policy implementation, e.g., the urban school charged additional fees on migrant worker’s children. During the LBC group discussion, most LBC prefer their parents to come back, rather than they move to the city in following their parents. Due to LBC’s low self-esteem, they fear of the inability to adapt to city life. On the other hand, they love their current life and hometown. In addition, the survey by the Department of Services and Management of Migrant Population of China noted that 63.9 per cent of rural migrant workers plan to go back to hometown when they get older, only 10.4 per cent want to stay in their work place, while 66.73 per cent of peasants refuse to change to become citizen because they do not want to lose their land in hometown. Therefore, the “household registration system reform” has to improve on the requirements and link with the social welfare of the city. The Community Care model which is a bottom-up process, seems more effective in creating the “happy and harmonious home” project which is community-based.

So far, the Chongqing model is still at the exploratory stage. Therefore the policies, laws, regulations, management systems and implementation may not be perfect. However, some measurements have begun to take effect now to continually improve on these models. Here, we have some recommendations in solving the problems of LBC based on Chongqing’s situation.

First, it is to enhance the level of logistics of rural boarding schools. Secondly, to further develop the bottom-up community care model. Research found that most the villagers do not trust the government. Paradoxically, they hope to receive government’s awards and honours. Therefore, it is necessary to adhere to government-led self-governance, and ensure a better permanent mechanism. Thirdly, the government should coordinate more with NGOs, in reducing government failure. It is recognized that the government provides financial and legal policy support whilst NGOs are able to eliminate public’s fear of cooperating with the governments’ professional group in providing better service and flexible operations.

Fourthly, it is crucial to protect migrant workers and optimize the environment for employment. Narrowing the gap between urban and rural development is necessary, and modernization of rural development will further help in leading the migrant workers back and work nearby. On the other hand, relaxing entry requirements of urban school, and helping LBC integrate into city life is another measure. Lastly, China’s economic development is uneven. The western part of China sacrificed their economy to accelerate the economic development of the East through migration of labour force to the east. Meanwhile, Chongqing self-sufficiently spent large number of investment funds on people’s livelihood projects. China should play a role of macro control and further develop the western part of China.

## Notes

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