Migration, urbanisation, climate change and children in China—issues from a child rights perspective

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Contents

Key messages in this report ................................................................. 1
1  Introduction ....................................................................................... 4
2  Methodology .................................................................................... 6
3  Migration, urbanisation and climate change in China—driving forces of population mobility ................................................................. 7
4  Urbanisation .................................................................................... 9
   4.1 The official urbanisation rate vs reality ....................................... 9
   4.2 Hukou system and urbanisation ................................................... 9
5  Types of urbanisation ...................................................................... 12
   5.1 Urbanisation because of labour mobility .................................... 12
   5.2 Urbanisation because of land acquisition ................................... 12
   5.3 Urbanisation because of environmental reasons ....................... 13
   5.4 The gap between official statistics and the reality ....................... 13
6  Climate change .............................................................................. 15
   6.1 Trends in climate change ............................................................. 15
   6.2 Migration resulting from climate change ..................................... 17
7  Child right perspective and child rights approach towards policy ..... 18
   7.1 Children to be covered in this report ......................................... 20
   7.2 Rights to Survival ...................................................................... 23
   7.3 Right to protection ..................................................................... 28
   7.4 Right to development: education services in the context of urbanisation .............................................................. 31
   7.5 Children’s problems in the context of climate change in China .... 42
   7.6 Summary: the key problems in child rights associated with migration, urbanisation and climate change in China .................. 44
8  The corresponding policies by the Chinese government ................. 48
   8.1 Hukou registration: rights to live ................................................. 48
   8.2 Rights to survival: ................................................................. 50
   8.3 Rights to development: education ............................................. 52
   8.4 Rights to protection .................................................................. 56
   8.5 Setting up dedicated child protection department in the government .... 60
9  Conclusion: Gaps in policy and implementation, and policy suggestions ...... 61
Appendix 1 Terms frequently used in migration studies on China .......... 67
References ......................................................................................... 68
List of Figures

Figure 1 Urbanisation, migration and climate change in the context of industrialisation ................................................................. 8

Figure 2 Type of Schools attended by students of different family backgrounds ...... 40
List of Tables

Table 1 Migrant children in Chinese cities (1 November 2010) ........................................... 20
Table 2 Left-behind children (2013) ......................................................................................... 21
Table 3 Left-behind children ...................................................................................................... 22
Table 4 Medical technical personnel by healthcare institutions per 1000 people (persons) .......................................................................................................................... 26
Table 5 Schooling of migrant children and rural left-behind children in 2015 ............. 33
Table 6 Illiterate Population Aged 15 and Over by Sex and Region (2009) ............... 41
Table 7 Illiterate Population Aged 15 and Over by Sex and Region (2014) ............... 41
Table 8 Population aged 14 and above by education level (No. of persons) ............ 42
Table 9 Urbanisation, climate change and children’s rights ...................................................... 45
Table 10 Child vulnerabilities by types of natural disasters, environmental damages and climate changes ......................................................... 46
Key messages in this report

The 2010 Census data shows that about 35.8 million children (0-17) were migrant children, of whom 17 million lived outside the county where their Hukou was registered in. Another 69.7 million children were left in the villages by their migrant parents. The reason that people move from rural to urban areas is often that urban employment becomes more attractive to the rural population, and farmers' land being acquired, or climate change making agriculture less reliable. Rural families migrate to cities voluntarily or involuntarily, temporarily or permanently. Some children move with their parents, and others remain in rural areas as ‘left-behind’ children.

Child migration or being “left-behind” as a result of urbanisation and climate change poses serious risks to children’s life, development and wellbeing. It is important for China to offer protection to all children for the wellbeing of children and for the good of society as a whole. A number of important policy measures have improved the lives of migrant and left-behind children, particularly regarding access to, and quality of, healthcare and education. A rights approach can help to identify child issues and provide benchmarks. Further improvements in services and extending welfare coverage are needed to secure the rights of all children.

These recommendations focus on policies which directly impact on the lives of children affected by migration. Other policies which might affect the causes and processes of urbanisation and climate change also have the potential to improve children’s wellbeing. The recommendations relate to the following policy areas:

1. Policies to guarantee rights to live
   a. **Children without hukou.** Policy to support the rights of the many children who are not registered, granting them the same entitlements as urban local children is urgently needed.

2. Policies to guarantee rights to development (nutrition, health and health insurance)
   a. **Urban health services for migrant children.** The health of migrant children depends on removing remaining barriers of access to urban healthcare services.
   b. **Mental health services.** Targeted services in urban and rural areas to support children to cope with the pressures of migration or separation from their parents would provide long-term benefits to children. Mental health services would also be effective if they were well connected with education where bullying may happen.
   c. **Rural childhood nutrition and development.** Improving programs that provide nutrition, such as school meals, would give rural children a better start in life.
3. Policies to guarantee rights to development (early education, compulsory education)

   a. **Quality education.** Promoting equality of quality and access to compulsory schooling and expanding senior secondary schooling would improve educational for rural and migrant children. Equality of access is also important, for rural children who might need to travel long distances to school, and for those migrant children who are excluded from urban schools.

   b. **Enhance awareness.** All children should learn about their rights, means of self-protection and social support against the risks that would harm their safety and health.

   c. **Access to education for migrant children.** Local education policies which deny children access to education in order to discourage migration should be redesigned to bring them in line with the national educational policies of free education for all children.

4. Policies to guarantee rights to protection

   a. **Poverty reduction.** Expanding poverty alleviation measures would reduce poverty in rural areas, for migrant families and among vulnerable children.

   b. **Safety.** The expansion of the emerging child protection system will help keep children affected by migration safe from violence, neglect, accidental injury and sexual abuse, as will the provision of youth centres for migrant children to attend while their parents are working.

   c. **Resilience.** Programs to help children affected by migration gain confidence and improve their resilience in difficult circumstances would be useful.

   d. **Natural disaster responses.** Care of children needs to extend beyond their immediate physical needs to their rehabilitation and mental health in the wake of natural disasters. This is particularly challenging when children are separated from their parents as a result of migration.

5. Policies to guarantee rights to participation

   a. **Rural basic infrastructure and services.** The wellbeing of rural children would be improved through access to basic services such as healthcare, water and sanitation facilities.

   b. **More research** is needed in relation to the impact of climate change and environmental damage on children to better document the extent and seriousness
of the issues. More research is needed that reflects children’s perspective so that they become active participants in policy formation.

6. Policies to improve governance
   
a. To enhance governance and improve children’s lives, develop **child-friendly communities and child-friendly cities** in a similar manner as developing old age-friendly and environmentally friendly cities.

After all, many of the challenges to children’s rights outlined in this report will only worsen as children’s lives are increasingly affected by natural disasters caused by human actions. Children’s need for supports will continue to expand unless broader efforts are undertaken to limit the risks of natural disasters and contain the climate change effects.

The policy developments that would improve children’s ability to secure their rights are not straightforward. Many of these issues occur in multiple policy domains and effective policy responses would require the collaboration and coordination of many different stakeholders. This is not the task of government alone, but something that requires inter-sectoral co-operation between the state, non-government organisations, and civil society. But China is experiencing massive urban growth and severe environment challenges which often result in natural disasters and local climate change, e.g. heat island effects, extreme weather conditions. The issues raised in this report, if not properly addressed, have consequences for society as a whole. Most important, however, is the right of China’s children for improved services immediately.

Further support of research into policy regarding each of the themes identified in this report would provide a greater understanding of how to build an effective and efficient policy and service system, and could provide detailed policy recommendations on how to ensure the human rights of children.
1 Introduction

Both urbanisation and climate change can result in migration. These two factors are different as well as intertwined. Urbanisation means the population shifts from rural areas to urban areas, including rural people moving into cities physically, or as a result of urban expansion to previously rural areas (McGranahan & Satterthwaite, 2014):

- Urbanisation can result from rural poverty or farmers’ pursuit of urban employment opportunities, living standards, or lifestyle. These types of migrants tend to move away from their home villages and go to work and live in cities.
- Urbanisation can result from industrialisation of rural areas in which no physical mobility of the population is needed.
- Urbanisation may also result from climate change and environmental degradation in which rural populations moves into cities because of inhabitable environmental conditions.

However, migration as a result of climate change does not have to be from rural to urban areas. Farmers may also move to different rural areas to continue farming.

Since the economic reform in the 1970s, many people have moved from rural to urban China. In 2016 the total number of migrant workers reached 281.71 million (National Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Also, the resettlement of people for climate change and environmental reasons are also growing. Up to now, about 100 million people were resettled, or are in the process of resettlement. It is well known that if not well planned, a project which is meant to help people to improve their livelihoods may marginalize them and cause prolonged social tension. According to the current agenda, there are still many millions of people waiting to be resettled in China before 2020 (Li, et al., 2014; Li, et al., 2016). A growing number of children migrate with their parents or are left behind in rural areas. The 2010 Census data shows that about 35.8 million children (0-17) were migrant children, of whom 17 million lived outside the county where their Hukou was registered in. Another 69.7 million children were left in the villages by their migrant parents. Regardless of whether the parents migrated voluntarily or involuntarily, children rarely migrate or stay behind out of their own choice. In the process of migration and resettlement, families can be split, sometimes in two or more locations. Children are therefore exposed to a whole range of risks, including poverty and deprivation, other forms of social exclusion, neglect, and even abuse.
Given the importance of urbanisation and migration for children in China, and in line with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda\(^1\), it is important to learn from China’s experience. This involves understanding more about the impact of urbanisation and climate change, in particular natural disasters and damaged environments, and migration more broadly on family structures and children, and to use this knowledge to support strategy development and program investment, both globally, and specifically for China. In addition, as China signed up to the Paris Agreement in 2016 to combat climate change, it is crucial to understand the trends of massive migration associated with climate change and its impact on children, what the Chinese government and society have done to address the challenges, and what further steps are needed to minimise adverse consequences for children will make an important contribution to the realisation of child rights globally.

This report examines the impact of urbanisation, climate change and migration on children through a lens of children’s rights, as advocated by UNICEF and recognised by China in the Paris Agreement. In this paper, we first examine general trends in urbanisation and climate change, and the various types of migration. We then discuss how children are affected, how migrants have coped and how Chinese governments at various levels have responded to children’s needs. We conclude by discussing the strengths and the weaknesses of the current Chinese policy system.

The paper has two intentions: 1) to form a policy advocacy message to help China to form better strategies for future improvement in the policies and implementation of child rights protection; and 2) to identify useful lessons and practices for other countries. Therefore, we do not only focus on the challenges, but we also try to determine strengths in the current system.

We argue that mobility or immobility as a result of migration, urbanisation and climate change would unavoidably put children in a vulnerable position. Even when they may face better opportunities in the long term, their life transformation in the short term may benefit enormously from the protection of child rights. While it is good to see that children are the targets of poverty reduction policies, there is also need to treat children as an integral part of their families and the society in which they live. Countries seeking social and economic development must address the effects of human mobility on children.

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\(^1\) The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a guideline for current international development. Its core content covers 17 goals and 169 specific targets spanning various aspects including economy, social affairs and environment (United Nations, 2015, [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld) access date: 05/05/2017).
2 Methodology

This paper provides background and intends to produce a mapping of the key issues, policies to address these issues and the possible gap for policy changes and further research. Therefore, we have not aimed to produce a systematic literature review, though we have included important publications in each aspect of the study in the mapping.

As this is a background paper, we have not carried out original research in this report even though some elements in this report are based on or past research in related fields. The data we quote in this report comes from several sources:

1. Data published in existing research publications. These publications either use official statistics or survey datasets held in academic institutions.

2. Data published by the National Statistics Bureau. This type of data is mainly used to produce charts or tables which may produce easier understanding.

We also consulted government and media web pages for policies at national or local levels to produce the sections on policy changes. Media has been actively used by the Chinese governments to publicise and interpret policies. We stuck to the official media pages for policy interpretations.
3 Migration, urbanisation and climate change in China—driving forces of population mobility

Urbanisation, and climate change are important forces behind China’s population mobility. They are intertwined and may work independently or jointly towards increased number of people moving to settle down in other parts of the country. This section explains the trends of urbanisation, climate change and their linkage to population mobility.

Since the economic reform in the late 1970s, the Chinese economy has gone through a major transformation. One of the key changes is the liberalisation of the economy which, directly or indirectly, results in greater labour mobility, including massive urbanisation, and population dislocation and resettlement. These changes are intertwined with each other, posing challenges for existing policy and institutional arrangements. In this section, we explain the interconnected relationships between these multiple factors (see Chart 1).

Understanding of China’s migration trends, particularly those associated with urbanisation and climate change, should be put in the context of economic development for which industrialisation has been the primary driving force. Chart 1 depicts the relationship between migration, urbanisation and climate change from the perspective of industrialisation, which demands for more land and resource supply, and cheap labour. The land demand and environmental consequences of industrialisation also indirectly lead to a further push for urbanisation of different parts of the population, such as peri-urban farmers and eco-migrations and resettlement.

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2 In this report, environmental damage is deliberately separated from climate change. This is because environmental damage, such as resource depletion and air pollution, are a result of human actions. Although these activities may also contribute to climate change, to avoid misinterpreting human actions as a natural force, we include environmental degradation and pollution in the chart related to industrialisation. This does not mean that there are no other causes of environmental and pollution problems, they will be addressed separately in the corresponding sections in this report.
**Figure 1 Urbanisation, migration and climate change in the context of industrialisation**

- Economic development--Industrialisation
- Labour
- Land
- Resources
- Pollution
- Skilled labour
- Unskilled labour
- Urban expansion
- Urban growth
- Input
- Environment and climate change effects
- Warming & natural disaster
- Resource depletion
- Eco- and climate change migration
- Rural-rural migration
- Rural-urban migration
- Urban-urban migration
- Types of migration
- Land loss migration
- Labour migration
- Source: Drawn by the authors
4 Urbanisation

In 1949, the urban population accounted for 10.6 per cent of the total population in China. As the Chinese labour market became gradually liberalised, populations flowed from rural areas to urban areas on a large scale. The population in rural areas has been continuously shrinking since 1996. In 2012, the non-agricultural population exceeded the agricultural population for the first time in China (Chen, 2015, p35). The urban proportion of China’s population grew from 17.9 percent in 1978 to 56.1 percent in 2015, an annual growth of 1.0 percent. At the end of 2015, the long-term residents in cities reached 771.2 million, an increase of 22 million from the end of 2014. Rural long-term residents numbered 603.5 million, a decrease of 15.2 million. China has 653 cities, more than 140 of which have an urban population of more than 1 million. The Chinese government estimates that by 2020, 60 percent of China’s population, or 870 million people, will be living permanently in cities and 580 million in rural areas (National Bureau of Statistics PRC, 2016).

Spatially, migration can be from rural to urban, urban to urban, and rural to rural areas. Temporally, migrants can be permanent, temporary and seasonal. Not all rural-to-urban migrants want to stay in cities when they initially come. This was notably the case for first generation migrants who often considered cities as places to make money; they migrated with the intention of returning to their villages when they had made enough money (Li, 2006). However, the wish to return was not always fulfilled in the end and people ended up staying longer than they initially expected.

4.1 The official urbanisation rate vs reality

The official statistics on urbanisation are often disputed. The administratively defined categories of migration status may not fit the more complicated reality. The official urbanisation rate is calculated with the following formula: urban permanent residents / total population. To understand the statistics and the reality, we need to look at the role of the household registration, or hukou, system and several terms used in population statistics by the public offices.

4.2 Hukou system and urbanisation

The household registration (hukou) system in China plays a big part in the issues faced by voluntary migrants. The system, introduced in the 1950s to control population mobility, was designed to differentiate rural and urban citizens according to their place of origin. Until very recently, urban hukou granted urban citizens a range of economic and social rights (such as access to employment, social services and social protection) that were not available in the city to a rural hukou holder (Chan, 2015). Until the end of the 1990s, a rural person could only become an urban citizen if they were formally employed full-time by an urban employer. In practice, the official
quota made it very difficult for an urban employer to get permission to hire a rural person. Despite the restrictions imposed by the *hukou* system, rural to urban migrants started to work in cities in the 1980s. Many workers were hired on the black market. These unsanctioned migrant workers faced the possibility of detention and eviction at any time (Zhu, 2008). In early 2003, the detention and eviction practice was stopped, making it much easier for migrants to work in cities. However, they did not gain access to urban social services (e.g. urban education and healthcare) and social benefits (such as housing subsidies, unemployment benefits, disability benefits and various old-age benefits). Despite the fact that more than 10 million extra migrant workers came to cities every year, only a small proportion were formally “urbanised” and eligible for the urban social protection system (Li, 2006).

A New Urbanisation Plan (NUP) was introduced in March 2014. Fearing that the 2007 Global Financial Crisis would cause an economic slowdown, leading to serious unemployment, the Chinese government introduced strategies to sustain economic growth and push for a structural transition. Urbanisation was identified as one supporting strategy. The logic was that if rural migrant workers could settle down in cities permanently as urban citizens, they would spend more on housing, services and consumer goods, which would increase aggregate demand (Chan, 2014). At the same time, the small scale of rural households’ agricultural production was criticised for being unproductive (Cao and Birchenall, 2013). Urbanising more farmers might facilitate the introduction of large-scale farming, operated by farming companies or specialised large farming households, in order to achieve economies of scale in agricultural production. In this plan, reforming the *hukou* system is an important part of the process. This is designed to “transfer the rural migrants into urban residents in an orderly manner” (State Council, 2014). As a result, migrants would be entitled to equal access to the basic public services provided to urban residents and would enjoy equal employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

The NUP lays out quite specific population strategies for different types of cities:

1. Cities of 0.5–1 million people – permanent residency with low restriction
2. Cities with 1–3 million people – permanent residency with relatively high restriction
3. Cities of 3–5 million people – permanent residency with high restriction
4. Cities of over 5 million people – permanent residency with very high restriction, and caution about further population growth
5. The largest cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou – tightly controlled population inflow; permanent residency with very high restriction.
The strategies also come with a government-set quota: 100 out of nearly 300 million migrant workers will receive urban citizenship (or receive urban *Hukou*) by 2020 (Development and Reform Commission, 2016). The rest of the migrant population will receive resident permits upon meeting requirements to register as residents (China Hainan Reform and Development Research Institute Task Force, 2016). However, it is important to note that without clear market signals, the number is arbitrary: why it is 100 million, but not 200 or 300 million? If these people can survive in cities without even claiming public resources, it means that they directly or indirectly serve the city’s demand for labour. The artificial labelling of people only sends signals that the government endorses the creation of second-class citizens by leaving some rural migrants without urban rights. This practice will create new tensions but may not add to economic growth.

The NUP allows cities to develop their own interpretation of the terms under which a person changes from having temporary to permanent residence. Cities have indeed responded differently. The largest cities will introduce a scoring system, which makes it even more difficult for migrants, in particular rural to urban migrant workers, to settle down permanently. As discussed in Li, et al. (2016), many cities including some medium-sized cities, have also proposed policies that favour high-skilled workers at the expense of low-skilled workers. As a result, it is more difficult for many people to settle down in these cities. In 2016, a new policy was introduced which explicitly stressed that, except for a few mega-cities, all other cities should make it easier for migrants to settle down in cities. Apart from facilitating the local farmers to be urbanised, people who do not hold local *hukou* should also be facilitated to settle down (State Council, 2016).
5 Types of urbanisation

5.1 Urbanisation because of labour mobility

The most important form of urbanisation in post-reform China is the voluntary migration of rural to urban migrants, in which villagers move of their own volition to cities to take up urban jobs. This is more or less a household-level decision undertaken in response to individual circumstances, and primarily driven by the employment opportunities, higher income and different lifestyles in cities. These largely voluntary migrants still possess land in rural areas and are officially registered as part of the rural population. For the most part, family members who would not have work in the city remain in the rural area, as urban living costs are high. A small number of established migrants may bring their parents to cities if they have bought houses; if these parents work, they are also counted as migrant workers. Some couples bring their children, who are not working. The 2014 estimate of 269 million rural–urban migrants does not include these non-working family members (Tang and Feng, 2015).

5.2 Urbanisation because of land acquisition

About four million farmers lose their land every year in China. All land in rural areas is owned by rural collectives. Farmers contract to use land through the household responsibility contracts (first signed in the 1970s) under two forms of tenure: farmland (including agricultural land, forest and grassland) and homesteads (for building houses of no more than 200 square metres). These contracts can be reviewed and renewed at the end of the contract term. The collective land is retained to build public facilities and rent out for village-based businesses. Only homesteads and collective land can be used for construction. Farmland can only be used for farming.

There are some local experiments with land swaps between farmland and homesteads, but the overall principle, that the total area of farmland is not reduced, remains the same. Farmers can lose their land in several ways. In the past, mostly in the 1980s and 1990s, some eagerly gave up their farmland once they had the opportunity to settle down in cities, unwilling to keep paying taxes and fees to the local government. Their land was then contracted to other villagers. These days, farmers do not have to pay a tax for farming and can sublet their farmland to other farmers or farming companies for a fee. In some villages, farmers may decide to sublet farmland collectively to farming companies or more capable farmers who can operate at larger scale. Some of the original leaseholders then go to work in cities and others just retire.

In contrast, land acquisition takes place when urban governments wish to acquire rural land to lease to urban businesses. The rural collectives, represented by rural “cadres” (party secretary,
village head and village committee members), bargain with these urban governments for compensation. Once an agreement is reached, farmers receive compensation, and are moved to newly built resettlement housing in urban areas, becoming in effect formal urban residents.

5.3 Urbanisation because of environmental reasons

Also referred to as eco-migration or environmental migration, this involves the dislocation and resettlement of people living in nature reserves, ecologically fragile areas, or, more often, in places where the natural environment is damaged or changed, resulting in poor natural conditions. As a result of environmental change, it is impossible for people to continue working and living in the same place and so they are resettled in a more habitable location. Causes of this type of migration include construction of water dams, forest and water body conservation projects, environmental disaster, relief or avoidance, and recovery from land degradation³.

This type of migration has become the second largest group of migration in China. The Chinese government started to resettle people on a massive scale in 2000. Examples of the major national projects which led to large-scale migration include the Three Rivers Sources (sanjiangyuan) Project to protect water sources for the Project of Transferring Water from the South to the North (nanshuibeidiao), which affected 10,000 families; and the Da Xinganling and Xiao Xinganling Mountain Areas Projects in Northeast China to protect forests, which affected 140,000 households (Li, 2013). To date, about 100 million people have been resettled or are in the process of resettlement. According to the current agenda, there are still many millions of people waiting to be resettled in China before 2020 (Feng, et al. 2016).

5.4 The gap between official statistics and the reality

There are several concerns regarding the urbanisation statistics adopted by the government, which show the proportion of permanent urban residents as a proportion of the total population (Yang, et al., 2017).

The first is about the criteria for counting urban residents. As discussed earlier, urbanisation means people live in cities but also work in non-agricultural sector jobs. However, in reality, there are more varieties than the “rural” and “urban” dualism, which affects the accuracy of urbanisation statistics. For example, some farmers in peri-urban areas lost their house to urban real estate developers and move into high-rise buildings in cities. But they do not have to give up farming.

³ While some of this environmental change might be connected to climate change, migration specifically resulting from climate change is dealt with separately below.
They live in high concentration housing like urban residents, but they continue to work on the farm. They also maintain their rural hukou as they still hold the land usage rights and are part of the collective economy. However, in the statistics, if they have lived in the resettled urban housing estates for more than six months, they would be counted as “urban” even though their migration status is not really urban (Wu, et al., 2016).

The second is associated with the “quality” of urbanisation. In essence, urbanisation should not only be about people moving to live in cities, but it should also be about migrants being treated equally as urban citizens. Considering that rural to urban migrants do not yet have urban hukou and do not have access to urban social services and social protections like urban residents, they are not fully urbanised (Wang, 2006; Wang et al., 2008; Liu, et al., 2016). Based on this argument, the urbanisation rate should be counted differently. A new urbanisation rate is therefore introduced: urbanisation rate based on urban household registration = urban hukou holder / total population. According to this definition, urbanisation rate in China is only about 35 percent\(^4\). The State Council 2016 document suggests that by 2020, the urbanisation rate based on urban household registration would reach 45 percent. The policy also stressed that urbanisation in the coming years should prioritise helping existing migrant workers who are already in cities to gain urban household registration. It also set a specific target of a minimum of 13 million people per year (>1%).

\(^4\) This contrasts to an urbanisation rate using a broader definition of 56.1%.
6 Climate change

6.1 Trends in climate change

China has experienced climate warming in the last 100 years, and this trend has been particularly strong in the past 50 years. It has been more pronounced in winter than in summer, and the rate of increase more pronounced in the lowest temperatures than in the corresponding highest temperatures in each period concerned (Cruz et al. 2007). Recent studies have offered further evidence of higher air and surface temperatures (Bin et al. 2010; Dai, et al. 2010; Li and Yan, 2009; Zhang, et al., 2010). Changes in temperature extremes are consistent with this warming trend, and the more extreme temperatures can be found in the north-eastern, northern and north-western provinces of China (You, 2011). Long-term changes have been detected using tree ring studies, which confirm that the warming trend in the past 50 years has been abnormal (Shi, et al., 2010). It is estimated that by 2030, temperatures in the north-west will be 1.9–2.3°C higher and in the south-east 1.6–2.0°C higher. On the Tibetan Plateau, they could be 2.2–2.6°C higher. A further assessment published in 2011 supports these predictions (The 2nd Climate Change National Evaluation Report, 2011).

Temperatures are not only higher, but warm seasons last longer. One study found that the number of summer days increased at a rate of 1.18 days per 10 years between 1961 and 2003 (Li, 2006) and similar results emerged using traditional calendar cycles (Qian, et al., 2011). At the national level in the past 100 plus years, trends in annual rainfall changes have not been obvious. Reductions in annual precipitation began in the 1950s, while in the decade 1991–2000 there was some increase. However, if examined by region, the variations are significant. Since 1990, for instance, northern provinces have been more likely to suffer from droughts and southern provinces more likely to suffer from floods (Yang, et al., 2012). While most areas in the north, the eastern part of the north-west and the north-east faced an annual rate of decline of 2–4 millimetres, in the south and south-west regions, precipitation increased significantly, by 2–6 millimetres annually (Bin, et al., 2010). Recent studies provide supporting evidence, for instance, that the number of days of heavy precipitation increased significantly and the number of consecutive dry days decreased. The Yangtze River basin, south-eastern and north-western China had the most obvious upward trend in all indicators on precipitation, whereas the Yellow River basin and northern China experienced the opposite. A forecast in 2007 predicted that in the next 50 years annual precipitation would increase. By 2020, annual rainfall is expected to increase by 2–3 percent and by 5–7 percent by 2050 (over 2007 levels) (National Development and Reform Commission, 2007).
A summary of some of the characteristics of extreme weather in China noted that the number of days with extremely high temperatures had risen and the number with extremely low temperatures had fallen (Ren et al. 2011). The percentage of intense precipitation days and the size of drought areas have both grown over time, and although stormy weather is expected in summer in China, rainfall is considered to have become more concentrated (Ren, et al. 2011). These changes pose particular challenges for farmers and might have contributed to decisions to discontinue farming and migrate.

The 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assessment highlighted that a projected rise in sea levels could inundate large areas of coastal lowland and greatly increase the number of people at risk from storm surges (IPCC, 2007; Lai, et al. 2012). Between 2001 and 2010, the average sea level reached a historic high, 25 millimetres above levels in 1991–2000 and 55 millimetres above in 1981–1990 levels (State Ocean Administration of PRC, 2010). Some areas such as the Yangtze River delta and its adjacent northern region have suffered from inundated land. One estimate for the contribution of global warming to sea level rise in China is 0.14–0.16 millimetres per year (Ren, et al., 2011).

The IPCC’s assessment pointed to climate change-related melting of glaciers and to the large numbers of people in China who depend on glacier melt for their water supplies (Stern, 2007). Glaciers are projected to retreat and continue to melt in this century (Piao, et al., 2010), but the resultant increase in glacier runoff should be temporary and may stop if the glaciers reach a new equilibrium.

Urban effects have added to the severity of some climate change impacts. For example, cities on the whole have higher temperatures than rural areas. The ‘heat island’ effect5 is stronger during the day than at night (Zhang, et al., 2011); it is lower for indicators calculated by average highest temperature and stronger for indicators calculated by average lowest temperature. In some large cities such as Beijing, ‘dry island’ effect6 helps to make the heat island effect more tolerable (Wang and Gong, 2010).

Land surface temperature has a direct impact on air temperature, and it is also one of the key parameters in the physics of land surface processes at regional and global levels (Zhang and Wang, 2008). Large built-up areas, higher population densities, and areas with water and grassland, all influence land surface temperature (Chen, et al. 2006; Wen, et al., 2011; Liu, et al., 2011). The patterns of land usage may also help generate the urban heat island effect, for

5 Heat island is a built up area that is hotter than nearby rural areas because of human activities.
6 Dry island is an area that is drier than nearby rural areas. Humid cities are considered to be worse.
example, fragmented open spaces may help to relieve urban heat islands (Wen, et al., 2011). The conversion of rural land (mostly irrigated cropland) to urban land results in significant changes in near-surface temperature, humidity, wind speed and precipitation, and contributes to the urban heat island effect (Gu, et al., 2011; Chen, et al., 2006). However, when built-up areas include open spaces, the urban heat island effect may also be relieved (Liu, et al., 2010).

6.2 Migration resulting from climate change

As a result of uninhabitable conditions, people may decide to move out of their home villages to become labour migrants. However, not all people have migrated. People who are not able to migrate might be trapped in poverty. In some western and central provinces where areas become uninhabitable because of frequent droughts, migration projects have been introduced – these include constructing houses, re-employment, infrastructure and providing basic services – and these projects are jointly funded by local authorities and central government.

For this kind of migration, farmers are either relocated to other rural areas where the natural conditions are more suitable for agricultural production (as for instance in the case of the Ningxia Village Relocation [diaozhuang] Projects, where people were moved to less arid areas) (Huang, et al., 2011), or moved to urban areas. Those moved to urban areas lose their means of making a living and have to be resettled with the help of government funds. The number is growing fast. It is estimated that there are already about 100 million people being resettled because of poverty, but the majority of them were resettled because the environment is not able to support farmers to escape poverty anymore (Li, et al., 2016). Migration and resettlement are organised by local governments at the source and the destination and coordinated by higher authorities at the provincial or central level.
7 Child right perspective and child rights approach towards policy

This report analyses specific problems facing children in the process of migration resulting from urbanisation, climate change and environmental damagers, according to the framework of child rights as recognised by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this report, we use a child rights perspective to identify the vulnerability and lack of protection of children in China and try to argue that a child rights approach towards problem solving should be more effective in terms of maintaining social harmony.

There are many more aspects to child rights. In this report, we focus on the right to life and survival, the right to protection, the right to development and the right to participation (ACWF Department of Child Work, 2003).

The right to life and survival: Every child has the inherent right to life, the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, the right of access to health care services and the right to economic security.

The right to development: Every child has the right to education (including formal education and informal education) and the right to physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

The right to protection: Every child has the right to protection from discrimination, abuse and neglect. Orphans, refugee children and other children experiencing difficulties should be provided with special protection.

The right to participation: Every child has the right to participation in family, cultural and social life, and the right to freedom of expression of views in all matters affecting the child.

The actions that are based on child rights approach as developed by The International Save the Children Alliance (UNICEF, 2009) suggest that simultaneous programmes are needed in order to achieve a child rights-based approach. These include:

1. Specific and practical actions to implement the CRC (directly addressing rights violations and gaps in service provision);

2. Strengthening structures and mechanisms to promote and protect children’s rights (e.g. legislative, political, administrative and community structures, practices and mechanisms; ensuring incorporation of the CRC into domestic legal systems; monitoring progress; ensuring accountability and overcoming constraints);
3. Awareness-raising / building constituencies of support for children’s rights (amongst individuals in government, professionals, the media, the private sector, the general public and civil society).

It is important to highlight that the term “human rights” can be sensitive in the contexts of public policy, despite that the Chinese government has signed up to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1997 (ratified by China) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1998 (not ratified by China) and despite that China contributed to the development of the relevant concepts in a significant way. The compliance of these human right conventions is often under international criticism (Kent, 2013).

The does not mean that the Chinese government does not want to make improvements in protecting child rights. The sensitivity often lies in the political concern that the rights activists are trying to impose a term coined internationally onto China without considering the local circumstances in China and incite public discontent or even unrest. The fear is based on a narrow perception of the usage of human rights as a legal tool. However, the human rights approach is much more than a legal claim, it is more importantly a pathway to improved recognition of human rights. As a result, it is important to engage with the government on a more practical basis and develop a strategy to make the government understand that some of their existing practices are already addressing the protection of child rights even if they are not put under such a name and what else can be achieved further, and furthermore, in what ways, a child rights approach may help to further improve the circumstances of children, and benefit society as a whole and the interests of the government. For this consideration, a child rights approach can serve as a reminder, as policies are developed to take into account of the interests of children but may also function as a useful policy toolkit. For example, for each child related policy intervention, the policy makers may ask the following questions during the policy planning stage:

- Have the corresponding rights of children been considered?
- Is a proposed action in the best interests of the children?
- Does it safeguard their survival and actively contribute to their development?
- Have the children themselves been involved in planning and implementing?
- Is it reaching / taking into consideration the needs of all children, without discrimination against particular groups?
- Are there adequate resources available?
To do this, in the following sections, we will show in the section on the government response to this report, the political will of the Chinese government and its determination to solve the relevant issues is very strong. It can be a lot more effective if policy advocates try to point out to policy makers the utility of the rights perspective in the process of policy development. For example, use a child rights perspective to identify child issues for policy makers to assess the weakness in the system and capture the emerging issues systematically. This is different from being aware of the individual needs of children as the latter provides a much more systematic approach which does not only take into account of the needs, but also the role of individual agency, implementation and funding requirements. Comparing to the firefighting approach that only reacts to serious problems that may result in public relation crises, the rights approach to child issues may activate a whole range of child protection mechanisms early on to prevent major crises from happening.

In the context of urbanisation and climate change, many new issues have emerged for the first time or did not capture the public imagination in the past. With the support of rights framework and the better availability of data, child issues can be identified systematically and with the rights approach, the issues can be addressed in a more timely manner.

7.1 Children to be covered in this report

Migrant children

In 2010, 35.8 million migrant children aged 0-17 years were recorded in the Sixth National Census (Duan, et al. 2013). These included 9 million preschool children aged 0-5 years, 13.93 million compulsory school age children aged 6-14 years, and 12.9 million children aged 15-17 years.

From 2005 to 2010, the number of migrant children increased by an average of 2 million per year. The proportion of urban migrant children with rural hukou continued to rise from 70.9 per cent in 2000 to 76.5 percent in 2005 and then to 80.4 percent in 2010. The number of migrant children aged 0-17 years with rural hukou doubled from 14.1 million in 2000 to 28.8 million in 2010. This shows that the number of migrant children in cities increased. Table 1 shows the age distribution of migrant children and the gender ratios.

Table 1 Migrant children in Chinese cities (1 November 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Population (million)</th>
<th>Male: female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>122:100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-11</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>124:100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-14</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>120:100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-17</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>102:100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Duan, et al. 2013
Left-behind children

In October 2016, the Ministry of Civil Affairs defined left-behind children as those whose parents are migrant workers, or one parent is a migrant worker and the other parent is unable to look after the children (Gao, 2016).

In 2013, the All-China Women’s Federation (ACWF) issued the Study Report on Rural Left-Behind Children and Urban and Rural Migrant Children in China. According to the data collected through the Sixth National Census in 2010, rural left-behind children accounted for 37.7 percent of all rural children and 21.88 percent of all children in China. Specifically, 46.7 percent of left-behind children had both parents as migrant workers, of which 32.7 percent lived with grandparents, 10.7 percent lived with others, and 3.4 percent lived alone. In terms of age, 38.4 percent of rural left-behind children were aged 0-5 years (preschool), 32.0 percent were aged 6-11 years (primary school), 16.3 percent were aged 12-14 years (junior high school), and 13.3 percent were aged 15-17 years (high school). (Zhang, 2016). (See Table 2)

Table 2 Left-behind children (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At least one parent is a migrant worker</th>
<th>% of all rural children</th>
<th>% of all children</th>
<th>% all left behind children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All-China Women’s Federation</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents’ migrant workers</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(live with grandparents)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(32.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(live with others)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(10.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(no guardian)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(3.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years (preschool)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-11 years (primary school)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-14 years (junior high school)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-17 years old (high school)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: (Zhang, 2016), All-China Women's Federation (2013)

In 2016, the Ministry of Civil Affairs carried out a nationwide baseline survey for rural left-behind children.

The survey found a total of 9.0 million rural left-behind children in the country, of which 8.1 million children (89.3%) were under the guardianship of grandparents, 300,000 children (3.3%) were under the guardianship of relatives or friends, 360,000 children (4.0%) had no guardians, and 310,000 children (3.4%) had one parent who had migrated and the other parent unable to take
care of children. This makes a total of 670,000 left-behind children without guardianship (Gao, 2016). Moreover, nearly 320,000 children had improper guardianship from grandparents, relatives or friends. Some rural left-behind children dropped out of school or had no residential registration.

The survey also found the following:

- Regional distribution: rural left-behind children mainly lived in the central and western regions. Specifically, more than 700,000 children lived in Jiangxi, Sichuan, Guizhou, Anhui, Henan, Hunan and Hubei, accounting for 67.7 percent.
- Age structure: 2.5 million (27.8%) rural left-behind children were aged 0-5 years, 5.6 million children (62.0%) were aged 6-13 years, and 920,000 children (10.2%) were aged 14-16 years.
- Household income source: households of rural left-behind children mainly earned incomes through migrant work and crop farming/animal breeding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>N (million)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 years</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-13 years</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-16 years</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: (Gao, 2016)

Street children (wandering children, liulang strong)
Street children are children under the age of 14, who have separated from their families or guardian/s for more than 24 hours. They are living with multiple difficulties without necessities. According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs statistics, in 2010 there was a total of 146,000 street children. Most of these children were left-behind children.

Children without household registration
China’s one-child policy penalised families for having more than one child by limiting or removing their access to the household registration system (hukou). Any child whose birth was illegal under the one-child policy was likely to be unreported to the authorities through the required birth registration process, often to avoid financial or social penalties. As a result, there are over 13 million unregistered children (2010 Census), accounting for 1.0 per cent of the total population.

Children without hukou registration records (heihaizi) is a significant social problem in China. They cannot inherit or obtain property, receive insurance coverage for medical or social purposes, collect financial aid, or attend school, unless financial penalties are paid. These “black-listed children” are also unable to apply for government or other jobs, get married and start a family, or
join the army in their later life. In 2015, China reformed the one-child policy. The new “two-children” regulations may significantly reduce the number of unregistered children.

7.2 Rights to Survival

Impact of population mobility on family economic situation

Urbanisation and population flow have a positive impact on the family economy and child development. Compared with children living with parents in hometowns, left-behind children had younger and better-educated parents and better family financial conditions. The household capital of non-left-behind children was significantly lower than that of left-behind children with one parent working outside. (Zhou et al., 2015)

Nevertheless, there is still need to pay attention to the issue of relative poverty. In the process of urbanisation, the income gap between urban and rural households is widening. Family income is the most basic guarantee of child rights and interests. The income gap underlies significant differences between urban and rural children in terms of living standards and rights.

The widening urban-rural income gap, and the slow process of granting urban citizenship to migrants, are two major challenges in China. The trend of the income gap can be divided into two stages.

1. From 1985 to 2009, the urban-rural income ratio (=urban/rural) rose by more than 50 percent from 2:0 to 3:3. Moreover, if in-kind income and subsidies are considered as part of personal income, China may have one of the largest urban-rural income gaps in the world. Also, the urbanisation process in China is lagging far behind economic development level and industrialisation process, which means more and more people live in cities without being allowed to settle down as urban citizens. In 2009, the added value of primary industry accounted for 10.3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), but the rural population disproportionately accounted for 53.4 percent of the total population in China (Chen and Lin, 2013).

2. From 2010 onwards, the gap shown by urban-rural income ratio has been narrowed consistently and dropped to 2.92 in 2014. However, the gap in the cash amount of income (=urban-rural) is still widening. In 2008, the value gap reached $10,000 and it increased to $18,000 by 2013.

As for regional distribution, the average rural household income was the highest in the eastern region (RMB 41,786), followed by the central region (RMB 35,046), and was the lowest in the western region (RMB 33,183) (Gan and Li, 2014).
During the process of urbanisation, the economic structure of rural households has also changed from agriculture to industry and service trades. 48.6 percent of rural household income comes from wages, 21.7 percent from agricultural output and 17.8 percent from social support payments (Gan and Li, 2014).

**Residential registration, disaster and accidental injury**

- **Residential registration**

In the process of migration, some children are unable to receive residential registration because of poverty, unscheduled birth, the absence of a birth certificate, illegal de facto adoption, or absence of local residential registration by parents. These children are not eligible to enjoy the rights associated with residential registration, such as schooling, health insurance and employment. (Liang and Lin, 2014) As noted above, it is estimated that 13 million people have no residential registration (Li, 2015). These people have experienced, or are experiencing, childhood without formal legal status.

Relevant policies: On 14 January 2016, the State Council issued the *Opinions on Registering Permanent Residence for People without Residential Registration*, prohibiting the use of any excuses for not providing services that add extra conditions to the residential registration regulations. The absence of residential registration is expected to gradually be resolved.

The biggest problem is that children migrating with their parents have no local residential registration at the places where their parents work and are therefore not eligible to enjoy public services closely linked with residential registration. They are facing double exclusion via policy and hostility from urban residents.

- **Increased risk of accidental injury**

Left-behind children are facing improper guardianship and are vulnerable to all kinds of safety accidents, injuries and even death. Main types of accidental injuries for left-behind children include traffic accidents, drowning, electric shock, fighting, dog bites, food poisoning, trafficking and maltreatment (Ye and Pan, 2014).

Many studies have shown that left-behind children are more vulnerable to accidental injuries than non-left-behind children. For example, a survey in Anhui Province found that the incidence of accidental injuries was 46.8 percent among left-behind children and 33.7 percent among non-left-behind children (Zhao, et al., 2007). A survey in Jining City found that the incidence of accidental injuries among left-behind children in one year (39.8%) was higher than that of non-left-behind children (24.1%) (Liu et al., 2016).
The increased risk of accidental injuries is also attributed to such factors as the need to travel long distances from home to school. Since the dismantling of local teaching sites, combining small schools into large schools, and greater numbers of children boarding in school, rural children are undertaking longer journeys and experiencing more traffic accidents and school bus accidents (Gui, 2013).

- **Threat to life and health of children from frequent disasters caused by climate change**

Disasters can put children at various risks, such as loss of life and injury, displacement, lack of basic care and lack of basic livelihood security. The large numbers of left-behind children in rural areas mean that they are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters outside urban areas (Chen et al., 2013). For example, in the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake in Sichuan, thousands of children lost their lives or were injured and left with disabilities. As the earthquake occurred in the afternoon when children were at school, many died or were injured and 14,000 schools were damaged (Ng, 2014). Not only were children physically affected, but the earthquake had other terrible consequences for their lives. Many children lost their parents and became orphans or lost other family members. They also lost their homes. Child traffickers took advantage of children’s vulnerable state and extra police were allocated to hospitals in an endeavour to protect them (Chan, 2008).

Children’s mental health can also be affected by natural and man-made disasters or those caused by human activities (Yu, 2010). Studies after natural disasters reported high incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety, especially for children who had witnessed death, experienced bereavement, been injured or trapped, or had parents who also experienced PTSD (Chen, et al., 2012; Liu, et al, 2011; Xinhua, et al., 2010; Zhang, et al., 2012).

As climate change leads to more frequent natural disasters (Li, 2013) with stronger intensity more children will be at risk. The risks can have several perspectives. As discovered by Qi, et al. (2017), older people, women and children have a higher level of dependency on resources and are more sensitive to the negative impact of climate change. The impact can be even more severe for low-income farmers and their children (Liang and Xu, 2016). In fishing villages, the livelihoods of fishermen’s families are particularly vulnerable to natural disaster or irregular climate conditions. A survey carried out in Fujian showed that fishermen had to change their livelihoods and strategy as a result of negative climate change, which in turn affected the livelihoods of their children and could result in malnutrition (Wu, et al., 2017).
Health and medical services

Along with the economic development, China has continuously increased investment in rural medical care. The new rural cooperative medical system was introduced in 2004 and has been implemented throughout the country since 2008. This system has increased the accessibility and affordability of health care services among left-behind children who have rural residential registration and live in hometowns. From a national perspective, however, both left-behind children and non-left-behind children in rural areas are suffering because of poor quality medical services.

Studies have shown that “village doctors as frontline health care workers in rural areas might not be able to provide effective medical services to patients” (Shi, et al., 2016). It was found that only 26 percent of diagnoses were accurate, and that 64 percent of prescriptions were for medications that were unnecessary or even harmful.

Table 4 shows that there is serious inequality in the availability of qualified healthcare professionals in rural and urban healthcare institutions. Rural medical and health services are limited, and village clinic services are not available in all villages. Only 93.3 percent of villages had access to a health clinic in 2014. Village clinics can only carry out the diagnosis and treatment of common diseases. In addition, left-behind children sometimes cannot get timely treatment because they do not have guardians to provide authorisation (Zhang et al., 2012).

Table 4 Medical technical personnel by healthcare institutions per 1000 people (persons)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region/Yr</th>
<th>Medical Technical Personnel</th>
<th>Licensed (Assistant) Doctors</th>
<th>Registered Nurses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>8.03</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>7.92</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>7.62</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>8.54</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>9.18</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Migrant children are entitled to enjoy free treatment for specific infectious diseases according to the national policy (State Council, 2006). Article 22 of the Several Opinions of the State Council on Addressing Issues Facing Migrant Workers (issued on 28 March 2006) stipulates that efforts must be made to strengthen the prevention and control of diseases among migrant workers and the immunisation among school-age children. The government receiving migrants is expected to strengthen the prevention and control of diseases among migrant workers, enhance health education for migrant workers and disease surveillance in places where migrant workers congregate together, implement the national free treatment policy on specific infectious diseases, include children of migrant workers in local immunisation programs, and take effective measures to increase the coverage rate of vaccines defined by the National Immunisation Program.

However, children migrating with their parents to urban areas have poor access to public services that are only available to people with local residential registration (including children whose one parent has local residential registration or parents who have work permits and have lived in the cities for a minimum number of years, as set by the local authorities). Urban medical insurance is one of the most important public services. Medical social security scheme for children (少儿社会医疗保险, shaoer shehui yiliao baoxian) have been issued in Beijing, Shanghai and Hangzhou to cover the basic healthcare costs for children, but migrant children are not covered by such policies. Medical care for migrant children in urban areas is very expensive, however, if they return to their hometowns for treatment, while it appears less costly, there are additional transportation costs and costs in time and loss of income for their guardians.

Studies have shown that the living environment of migrant children is often unsatisfactory due to low parental income and the poor conditions of rented houses. Some migrant children still have no access to clean and safe drinking water and there are no separate toilets or kitchens. Air pollution and noise pollution are increasingly serious in the lives of migrant children. All these adverse factors have led to a higher disease incidence among migrant children than among children with urban residential registration. Moreover, high medical expenses have put migrant families in economic difficulties. (Sun Shiqian, Zhang Yongmei, 2015)

**Nutrition, health and hygiene conditions**

In rural areas, the health and nutrition of left-behind children tends to be the same or slightly better than that of non-left-behind children. Specifically, the anaemia rate was 27 percent for both left-behind children and non-left-behind children; the age-specific height (-1.01 standard deviation) and
age-specific weight (-0.59 standard deviation) of non-left-behind children were worse than left-behind children (respectively, -0.89 standard deviation and -0.56 standard deviation); the intestinal parasite infection rate among non-left-behind children (39%) was significantly higher than that of left-behind children (25%); and the refractive error rate of non-left-behind children (17%) was also significantly higher than that of left-behind children (13%).

- **Inadequate nutritional intake among rural children**

Rural children in poverty-stricken areas often have an inadequate nutritional intake. This phenomenon has been improved to some extent along with the implementation of the free school lunch policy. However, there is still a big gap between urban and rural children regarding nutrition and health. In 2012, the former Ministry of Health published the first "Report on Nutrition Development of Children Aged 0-6 Years in China". The report pointed out that the low birth weight rate and the growth retardation rate were about 2-3 times higher among rural children than among urban children, and one time higher among children in poverty-stricken rural areas than among children in other rural areas. In 2010, 20 percent of children under five years of age suffered from growth retardation in poverty-stricken areas in China. (You Jing, 2016)

- **Poor school conditions**

There are a large number of boarding schools in rural areas. These schools cannot meet the basic needs of boarding students due to poor conditions regarding accommodation, safety, sanitation, medical care and management. Students have to run a long distance for access to toilets at night. To avoid this, it has been reported that students do not drink in the afternoon and evening (Ren Bo, 2012; Liu, 2016). Students cannot take a bath during their stay in school since there are no bathrooms (Ren Bo, 2012; Liu, 2016). Many boarding schools do not have dormitories, instead students rent humble and crowded houses near their schools.

Many left-behind children do not have a family to teach them good habits for living and hygiene. Consequently, they are more vulnerable to health problems (Liu, 2016). Moreover, the absence of parental care may cause harm to the mental health of children, but no adequate attention has been paid to this phenomenon by policy makers (Liu, 2016).

**7.3 Right to protection**

In the process of urbanisation and population flow, children are facing more risks and improper guardianship. This is an important policy challenge in China. Improper guardianship has put both left-behind children and migrant children at increased risk of trafficking, abuse and neglect and bullying.
Child trafficking (higher risk for migrant children and rural left-behind boys)

There is no proper guardianship for many left-behind children when their parents migrate to work. Moreover, these children have limited awareness and ability for self-protection. As a result, they are vulnerable to being targeted by lawbreakers. Street children without parental or guardianship can be manipulated by gangsters. According to the *Situational Analysis Report on Left-Behind Children in Rural Areas in China*, "migrant children accounted for the largest proportion of trafficked children, followed by left-behind children" (Shi, 2011). Left-behind boys are at particularly high risk of being trafficked (Ye & Pan, 2014).

Child sexual abuse (higher risk for rural left-behind girls)

A study found that 340 child sexual abuse cases (with victims aged below 14 years) were reported by media in 2015, close to one case per day. Ninety-four percent of these cases involved girls and six percent involved boys. This points to the significantly higher risk of sexual abuse faced by girls. Seventy percent of perpetrators were acquaintances of the children. These included teachers (71 cases), neighbours (33 cases), and relatives or family members (29 cases, e.g. fathers, elder brothers and stepfathers) (*Girl Protection*, 2016). The study also found that, in publicly reported cases, 23 percent of victims were rural children and 65 percent of victims were urban children. However, the authors cautioned against assuming that there are more child sexual abuse cases in urban areas than in rural areas. Instead, sexual abuse might be more readily identified in urban areas where children are under intensive care. In rural areas, child sexual abuse cases are more hidden and invisible (*Girl Protection*, 2016). Indeed, many scholars hold that rural girls are more vulnerable to sexual abuse due to the absence of proper guardianship (Tan Lin, 2008). The immediate cause of sexual abuse to girls is the absence of basic guardianship. Victims are often the most vulnerable girl groups, primarily left-behind girls and girls with intellectual disability. However, there are still a large number of sexual abuse cases among children under proper guardianship, because guardians or victims are unaware of self-protection due to the lack of such knowledge. This is an important reason for such cases in rural areas or areas with little access to information. (China Children and Teenagers' Fund et al. 2013).

Other factors also make it difficult for rural girls to protect themselves, such as younger age, immature cognitive ability, and lack of sex education and poor awareness of sexual abuse (Ji, et al., 2017).

- **Campus violence**

In recent years, people have become increasingly concerned with the problem of campus violence imposed on students by adults or students.
Campus bullying has the following characteristics: ubiquitous trend, diverse means, repeated recurrence, swashbuckling behaviour, hidden nature and invisibility (Li Ai, 2016).

Some scholars believe that campus bullying is more serious in rural boarding schools. For example, a study in middle boarding schools in Sichuan and Hebei Provinces by Wu Fangwen, et al. (2016) found that 16 percent of students were bullied more than two or three times per month. This was many times more than the rate of bullying found in other locations and non-boarding schools. Research shows many negative effects resulting from campus bullying including depression, anxiety, social withdrawal, and low self-esteem (Wu, 2016; Liu, 2016). Migrant children may also suffer from discrimination and abuse in urban public schools by their teachers or fellow classmates which is directly related to their higher dropout rates (Yuan, 2011).

According to a study by Ye Jingzhong and others, "52.5% of left-behind children were bullied in different forms (i.e. 210 out of 400 surveyed left-behind children)". Bullying was imposed by senior students, classmates or elder children in villages. A few left-behind children were bullied by fellow students or juvenile gangsters. The main forms of bullying included beating and scolding, robbing money and grabbing things. In the survey, some left-behind children reported that:

"we are often bullied by naughtily and arrogant classmates since nobody will help us even if we suffer bullying. If children living with parents were bullied, their parents would certainly protect them by talking with teachers or directly talking with parents of those bad kids. In fact, we can only avoid trouble with classmates as much as possible to protect ourselves from being bullied. There is a particularly thin student (whose parents work outside) who was robbed four or five times because his parents are not available, and he is a pushover. (Ye and Pan, 2014).

Abuse and neglect

Currently, there are is nationwide data on child abuse in China. Studies have shown that the total annual number of students dying of unnatural causes is about 16,000, of which the proportion of students dying of physical violence has increased from year to year. According to surveys in some regions, it can be surmised that the incidence of child abuse is higher in rural areas than in urban areas. Pan (2012) conducted a survey for 7,398 primary and middle school students in 24 cities in 12 provinces across China. Survey results revealed 28.4 percent of primary and middle school students (China Children and Teenagers’ Fund, 2013) reported abuse and neglect.

Some scholars have reported on significant neglect among rural left-behind children in China. For example, a survey by Yang Wenjuan and others in nine provinces found that the neglect rate was 47.64 ± 9.44 from grade one to grade three among rural primary school students (aged 6-8 years), and 46.61 ± 10.58 among grade four to grade six rural primary school students (aged 9-11 years), with the neglect rates reported as 48.5 t and 49.7 respectively. These results were all higher than
those among urban same-age children. Moreover, the neglect rate and the neglect degree were higher among left-behind children than among non-left-behind children (Yang et al., 2014).

A survey in rural areas in Anhui Province found that the rate of child neglect reported in the survey was 67.4 percent and the rate of child abuse was 54.4 percent. In addition, the neglect rate was 70.2 percent among left-behind children, higher than the figure of 63.5 percent among non-left-behind children (Gu, 2012).

A new study by Gao, et al. (2017) examines the extent of child abuse by rural to urban migrant parents in China. It looks at the prevalence of child maltreatment by parents among migrant families, and the individual, family and community-level risk factors associated with child abuse. A survey of 667 migrant and 496 local adolescents in Shenzhen showed that migrant adolescents are more likely to be psychologically and physically abused by their parents than their local counterparts. This was often a result of low academic performance, delinquent behaviour, family economic adversity and low parent-children attachment. Neighbourhood context was also significantly related to psychological aggression among migrant adolescents. Rural left-behind children are also facing more serious psychological abuse, neglect, emotional and behavioural problems than non-left-behind children (Cheng, 2010; Liu, 2016; Zhao, et al., 2015).

7.4 Right to development: education services in the context of urbanisation

Pre-school education in China has made significant progress. In 2014, there were 209,881 kindergartens with an enrolment of 40,507,145 young children, up significantly from the 2010 figure of 138,209 kindergartens with an enrolment of 15,468,596 young children (Ministry of Education, PRC, 2014). Pre-school education has been universalised in big and middle-sized cities. In rural areas, particularly in remote, poor and minority areas, education has also developed rapidly (China Education Centre, 2011).

Urbanisation has a far-reaching impact on the development rights of children in urban and rural areas. Particularly, urban and rural children are affected to different extents in their right to education during the process of urbanisation and population flow. Firstly, changes to education modes in rural areas have important implications for left-behind children, including the positive impact from education quality improvement and the negative impact from policy change on child development. Secondly, a large number of rural children migrate to urban areas and enjoy education services of higher quality. Thirdly, however, many children migrating with their parents to urban areas are subject to policy and social exclusion due to the lack of local residential registration. Table 5 shows the number of migrant students and left-behind children. As a meta-
analyses review by Wang & Mesman (2015) shows “both migrant children and children left-behind by migrant parents in China show significantly less favourable functioning across domains than other Chinese children”.

Table 5 Schooling of migrant children and rural left-behind children in 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Migrants from other provinces N</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Migrants from within the province N</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Sub-Total N</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Left behind children N</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary school</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of graduates</td>
<td>544,630</td>
<td>19.89</td>
<td>625,182</td>
<td>22.84</td>
<td>1,169,812</td>
<td>42.73</td>
<td>1,567,732</td>
<td>57.27</td>
<td>2,737,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New recruits</td>
<td>822,075</td>
<td>19.44</td>
<td>1,013,182</td>
<td>23.95</td>
<td>1,835,257</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>2,394,528</td>
<td>56.61</td>
<td>4,229,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Attended pre-school</td>
<td>817,159</td>
<td>19.64</td>
<td>1,003,430</td>
<td>24.12</td>
<td>1,820,589</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>2,339,703</td>
<td>56.24</td>
<td>4,160,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of students</td>
<td>4,608,081</td>
<td>19.22</td>
<td>5,527,500</td>
<td>23.06</td>
<td>10,135,581</td>
<td>42.28</td>
<td>13,836,634</td>
<td>57.72</td>
<td>23,972,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Girls</td>
<td>1,955,337</td>
<td>18.47</td>
<td>2,358,978</td>
<td>22.28</td>
<td>4,314,315</td>
<td>40.75</td>
<td>6,272,572</td>
<td>59.25</td>
<td>10,586,887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary school</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of graduates</td>
<td>298,806</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>536,237</td>
<td>21.53</td>
<td>835,043</td>
<td>33.53</td>
<td>1,655,717</td>
<td>66.47</td>
<td>2,490,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New recruits</td>
<td>489,361</td>
<td>14.62</td>
<td>710,117</td>
<td>21.21</td>
<td>1,199,478</td>
<td>35.83</td>
<td>2,147,779</td>
<td>64.17</td>
<td>3,347,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of students</td>
<td>1,375,604</td>
<td>13.91</td>
<td>2,159,776</td>
<td>21.84</td>
<td>3,535,380</td>
<td>35.74</td>
<td>6,355,741</td>
<td>64.26</td>
<td>9,891,121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Girls</td>
<td>565,377</td>
<td>12.95</td>
<td>904,086</td>
<td>20.70</td>
<td>1,469,463</td>
<td>33.65</td>
<td>2,897,555</td>
<td>66.35</td>
<td>4,367,018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education of rural children

In 2006, universal coverage of free compulsory education was achieved throughout China. Subsequently, the rural education policy has been adjusted and access to education has been affected by the urbanisation process, demographic changes and population flow. Significant changes in rural education have resulted from the considerable reduction in the number of school-age children. The new rural education policy has emerged as the rural population is shrinking in the process of urbanisation. In particular, policy developments have resulted in teaching sites being dismantled and school mergers. However, this policy has put rural children in difficulties such as travelling long distances and the high cost of going to school, even after the implementation of free compulsory education.

- **Education policy in response to urbanisation and population flow: chedianbingxiao, and combining schools**

The policy of “dismantling teaching sites and combining schools” was in operation at the end of the 20th century and stopped by the State Council in September 2012. (Wu, 2015) During a short period of 14 years from 1997 to 2010, a total of 371,470 primary schools were dismantled across the country. These were overwhelmingly located in rural areas, in which 302,099 schools were dismantled, accounting for 81.3 percent of the schools affected by the policy (Song, 2012, 125). These policies seriously affected the right of rural children to education (Li and Piachaud, 2006). Rural communities have protested against school closures. As recently as 2016, the proposed dismantling of a rural school resulted in public protest. The Ministry of Education had to intervene to slow down the implementation of the policy (General Office of the Ministry of Education, 2016). We may expect further changes in the relevant policies.

The original intention of this policy was to “improve the conditions of rural primary and junior high schools, enhance the quality and efficiency of education, and promote equity in education.” It was based on the assumption that centralised schooling, large school sizes and boarding schools could improve schooling conditions, allocate adequate teacher staffing, enhance the quality of education, enable rural children to enjoy high-quality education in urban areas, and narrow the gap between urban and rural education (21st Century Education Research Institute, 2013, 56). However, this policy did not take into account the difficulties facing children and families and produced a significant negative impact on the realisation of the right of children to education.

- **Impact of dismantling teaching sites and combining schools (chedianbingxiao) on educational status of left-behind children**

**Long distance to school**

According to the special audit investigation conducted by the National Audit Office in 2012, the average service radius was 14.35 km for junior high schools and 6.09 km for primary schools in
270 counties in western China, increasing by 47 percent and 59 percent, respectively compared with those in 2006 (Yang, 2014).

This means that schools are significantly further away from children who face bigger challenges attending school as a result. Rural children either have to live in boarding schools or spend hours commuting every day.

**Higher cost of schooling**

Relevant surveys show that, among the national investment in compulsory education, the township fiscal budget bears about 77 percent, the county fiscal budget bears about 8.5 percent, the provincial/prefectural fiscal budget bears about 11.5 percent, and the central fiscal budget only bears about 3 percent. In many regions, grassroots governments have woefully inadequate fiscal revenues, (Liu, 2016) and are unable to afford the additional funds needed by boarding schools (Liu, 2016; Yang, 2014, 45).

"Dismantling teaching sites and combining schools" enhanced the utilisation rate of school premises per unit area, improved the utilisation rate of schooling funds and reduced the school running cost invested by governments. A partial investment that should be made by the government was shifted as the economic cost of parents, time costs of students and the costs of social protection. After dismantling teaching sites, the average distance to school increased by 4.05 km. To ensure the access of children to education, parents had to rent houses near schools in urban areas (where students lived alone or with parents), which greatly increased the cost of education in rural families. The average annual cost was RMB 1,157.38 for boarding students. Younger boarding students were facing an increased security risk (Ren, 2012; Liu, 2016).

**An increasing drop-out rate**

Primary schools: From 2008 to 2011, the national dropout rate in primary schools rose sharply. In 2008, 633,000 children dropped out of schools, with a dropout rate of 5.99 percent. In 2011, 883,000 children dropped out of schools, with a dropout rate of 8.8 percent. The dropout rate of rural students in junior high schools was also high. According to official data, the dropout rate reached 5.47 percent across the country and was as high as 10 percent in some regions (Sun, 2014).

**Declining quality of education**

Many rural teaching sites (jiaoxuedian) were dismantled. Rural families had to send their children to urban schools. Consequently, urban schools were overloaded. Large-scale classes with over 65 students, and sometimes as many as 100 students were created. Teachers were heavily burdened. These factors seriously affected the quality of teaching (Yang, 2014; Tao, 2011).
Younger boarding students: negative impact on physical and mental health development

In the central and western regions, a large number of rural boarding schools have been constructed and have accepted many left-behind children. Forty-five percent of rural primary schools have boarding students in years one to three.

Existing main issues include:

a) Boarding facilities: Many schools have poor boarding facilities and conditions, with the lack of toilets, dining rooms, water supply, healthcare and other necessary living facilities (Yang, 2014; Liu, 2016).

b) Inadequate experience and insufficient system for management of boarding students in rural schools: There is a negative impact on physical and mental health development of younger boarding students. Moreover, there may be frequent safety incidents (Yang, 2014; Liu, 2016).

c) Barriers to the development of children: The height, weight and academic performance of boarding students were significantly lower than those of day students (Yang, 2014; Liu, 2016).

Primary and junior high school students are younger with poor self-care ability and self-discipline. Boarding students are apart from their parents for a long time, with the lack of parental care, family love and family education. The number of “trouble-maker students” is increasing significantly. Such students are involved in learning-fatigue, premature love and campus violence (Chu, 2012).

Institutional educational exclusion of migrants in urban areas

Children migrating with their parents may lose their right to education in hometowns. Also, they cannot enjoy equal educational services in the urban areas where they live.

This dilemma was a key policy debate at the turn of the century. Around 2006, policies were implemented and promoted to go some way toward addressing this issue. However, this policy position has been reversed since 2014 by new local education policies of some big cities which exclude migrant children from public education as a means to discourage migration and reduce the floating population. It is once again a key policy debate.

- Schooling

By the end of 2010, 69 percent of migrant children were attending public schools in urban areas. Nevertheless, some migrant children still had no access to education in public schools. It is estimated that about 2.05 million migrant children were attending schools specially designed for them by the end of 2010. Schools for migrant children tend to be of poorer quality regarding hardware, software and teaching quality, when compared to public schools.
According to the national education statistics in 2012, a total of 144.59 million children were receiving compulsory education across the country by the end of 2012, of which 74.15 million students were studying in urban areas, including 13.94 million children of migrant workers. In urban areas, there were 19 migrant children among every 100 students receiving compulsory education.

The top five provinces with the largest number of migrant children receiving a compulsory education were Guangdong Province (3,138,800) (2010), Zhejiang Province (1,397,600) (2013), Fujian Province (749,200) (2011), Jiangsu Province (706,800) (2011) and Shandong Province (706,600). The total number of migrant children in these five provinces reached 6,699,000, accounting for 50.13 percent of all migrant children in China.

Further analysis was conducted on the grade distribution of migrant children. Results showed that the number of migrant children gradually declined in higher grades. Particularly, the speed of decline was faster among migrant children from other provinces. Given that the number of migrants in China has continued to grow, a possible reason might be that migrant children were facing many difficulties in entering higher grades and had to return to their hometowns rather than continuing at their schools.

- **Education Exclusion Policy**
  
  Urban public schools exclude children from the floating population. Specifically, there are two types of exclusion: early educational policy-oriented exclusion and population-controlled exclusion in recent years. Dropout of children caused by early education policy is called "institutional dropout".

- **Unequal access to education**
  
  The early educational policy-oriented exclusion was mainly attributed to the urban-rural dual structure system, compulsory education system, financial allocation system and higher-level education access system, which prevent migrants from registering urban residential registration in urban areas and enjoying public services (Xu and Bai, 2009).

  Another major reason for the exclusion of migrant children by education policy was that the central and local governments developed budgets and allocated funds for compulsory education based on registered permanent residences of children. Due to poor transfer payment channels, compulsory education funds for migrant children (shared by the county-level government and the central government) cannot be transferred together with migrant children to county governments where they migrate. Local fiscal budgets had to be allocated by county governments to cover funds for compulsory education to migrant children. Consequently, public schools in urban areas had to collect fees from parents of migrant children to cover expenses in various forms of extra charges.
To meet the needs of children and parents, schools specially designed for migrant children have been established in many cities, are operated by market rules and mainly rely on payments from parents. These schools are not covered by government budgets and have no stable funding sources. The level and quality of teaching are lower than urban public schools but higher than many rural primary schools. These schools fail to meet the national criteria for running private schools. However, they provide migrant children with access to education. They often face the risk of being banned by the government. If there are no such schools, migrant children may drop out from schooling in urban areas or have to return to their hometowns for access to compulsory education and where they may be left-behind children (Wang Hui, 2015).

The educational policy-oriented exclusion was finally addressed around 2006. In 2006, China amended the Compulsory Education Law. During the amendment process, decision-making bodies reached several consensuses. First, the state assumed the responsibility for funding compulsory education, known as "state-run compulsory education". Second, the paid compulsory education was changed to free compulsory education. Third, the original funding input (primarily from county level in the three-tiered running of schools by county, township and village levels) was changed to funding input primarily from provincial governments (Liu, 2006). According to these consensus, the new Compulsory Education Law stipulates that the compulsory education funds shall be shared by the State Council and local governments at all levels according to their respective functions; governments at all levels shall separately list the compulsory education funds in their fiscal budgets, allocate the funds in a balanced manner and promote the balanced development of compulsory education; and school-age children can receive compulsory education at places where their parents or other guardians live or work and shall have the right to enjoy equal compulsory education as local children (Standing Committee of the Tenth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, 2006).

The Opinions of the State Council on Addressing Issues Facing Migrant Workers (28 March 2006) were issued accordingly. Article 21 of the Opinions stipulates that children of migrant workers shall be provided with equal compulsory education. Local governments at the receiving ends shall take responsibility for compulsory education of children of migrant workers and incorporate the compulsory education of migrant children into local educational development plans and educational budgets. Children of migrant workers shall be enrolled in full-time public primary and junior high schools. Public funds shall be allocated according to the actual number of school students. Urban public schools shall treat children of migrant workers equally as local children regarding charges and management rules and shall not charge migrant children with extra fees and other fees in violation of state provisions. Local governments in urban areas shall give support and guidance to private schools, providing children of migrant workers with compulsory education regarding school running funds and teacher training, so as to improve the quality of teaching. Local
governments in rural areas shall assure high-quality compulsory education to children left behind by migrant workers.

The introduction of this policy addressed the violation of the right of migrant children to education in previous policies (Pan, 2010). As this policy has been put into effect, a large number of migrant children are attending urban public schools and receive a higher quality education than in rural areas.

Just a few years after these national policy developments, Beijing and other big cities changed their local education policies in an attempt to reduce population inflow and avoid oversized cities. To this end, these governments reintroduced the exclusion of migrant children from public primary schools, with the ultimate aim of driving away their parents. In Beijing, for example, migrant families need to provide “five certificates” for their children to attend public primary schools. In practice, every district has developed different provisions and extended “five certificates” to about “30 certificates”, creating almost impossible school entry requirements. In 2014 and 2015, parents of migrant children made several protests against this policy (Wang, 2015).

Financial burden on families of migrant children

Although the *Compulsory Education Law* (2006) has largely improved the access of migrant children to education, there are still educational inequalities between migrant children and other urban children. In China, education is linked to residential registration. In the case of inconsistency between registered permanent residence and actual residence, migrant children have to return to the place of their registered permanent residence to participate in a college entrance examination. To ensure the access of their children to education, migrant families have to increase spending on education through purchasing private services or paying extra fees for their children to attend. “According to a survey in 2011, rural families migrating to other counties/cities had a per capita education investment of RMB 2,293, and the family expenditure for education accounted for 11% of the total household income; while the per capita education investment of local urban families was RMB 1,453, and the family expenditure for education accounted for 5% of the total household income” (Gan, 2013).

Unequal outcomes in education

- **Regional inequality in education**

Educational inequalities, particularly according to the region, are evident regarding access and quality. As Qian and Smyth (2008) note, regional differences may vary by education level. The higher the level of education, the greater the degree of inequality. This is partly due to the increasing private cost of additional schooling. Also, there are large disparities in education funding, school facilities, teacher qualifications and school achievements across provinces and
between rural and urban areas. Qian and Smyth (2008) found that differences between coastal and inland provinces in educational attainment were not as large as inequalities within provinces, which is an indicator of the strength of urban–rural disparities within a province. A survey in poor rural areas (Yi, et al., 2012) found that the drop-out rates for grade 1, grade 2 and grade 3 students in junior high schools were 5.7 percent, 9.0 percent and 10 percent respectively, between September 2009 and January 2010. That is to say, more than 25 percent of students did not complete their junior high schooling in poor rural areas. In addition to the informal fee payment system in schools, the rapid rise in wages also tempts young people out of school and towards employment.

- **Inequality in education quality**

There are many ways to talk about education quality. In this section, we only talk about education quality in terms of school rating as recognised by the national education system as shown in Figure 1. Provincial Key Schools are the best in education quality and ordinary schools are lower in quality. As Wang and Wu (2008) argue, the education system in China has gradually changed from a meritocratic competition system to a largely private competition system in which students’ level of achievement is determined by wealth, power and private connections (*guanxi*). Figure 1 shows the outcome regarding unequal enrollment of students from different family backgrounds. In urban areas, disparities between higher quality ‘key’ schools and lower quality ‘ordinary’ schools are evident in the differential enrollment rates of local, migrant, and poorer children. The increased importance of private connections and “selection fees” to get children into elite urban public schools reinforces existing social disparities.

**Figure 2: Type of Schools attended by students of different family backgrounds**
Inequalities in educational attainment and school quality are reinforced by the household registration or *hukou* system. This presents particular challenges for migrant workers and their families who have limited access to social services outside their home province. The resultant effect is that migrant families have to pay prohibitive fees to give their children an education in urban areas and even then, their children can only attend regular schools, not higher quality ‘key schools’.

**Inequality in education by gender**

Table 6-1 and 6-2 shows the gender gap in education. Comparing to 2009, the overall illiteracy rate of people older than 15 years and dropped from 7.1 percent to 4.9 percent. As shown in Table 6-1 and 6-2, women’s illiteracy rates are higher than men in both rural and urban areas. Illiteracy rates were the highest in rural areas, and lowest in cities. Towns were in between.

**Table 6 Illiterate Population Aged 15 and Over by Sex and Region (2009)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total Aged 15 and Over (million persons)</th>
<th>Illiterate Population (million persons)</th>
<th>% of Total Aged 15 and Over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>501.2</td>
<td>252.3</td>
<td>248.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town</td>
<td>208.3</td>
<td>103.2</td>
<td>105.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>259.0</td>
<td>128.8</td>
<td>130.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National total</td>
<td>968.5</td>
<td>484.3</td>
<td>484.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Chinese Population and Employment Yearbook, 2010

**Table 7 Illiterate Population Aged 15 and Over by Sex and Region (2014)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Aged 15 and Over (million persons)</th>
<th>Illiterate Population (million persons)</th>
<th>% of Total Aged 15 and Over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>407.3</td>
<td>207.4</td>
<td>199.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>107.1</td>
<td>107.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>316.7</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>155.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National total</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>475.6</td>
<td>463.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


These gendered illiteracy rates exist because, for many years, girls in rural areas were considered to be less of a priority in rural households’ education agenda, if there had been any, and when facing financial constraints, girls were the first to lose educational opportunities (Li and Tsang, 2003; Klasen and Lamanna, 2009). Other studies have examined the role of the one-child policy...
on schooling for boys and girls. Lee (2012) used China Health and Nutrition Survey (CHNS) data and found that there was no evidence of unequal education outcomes in single-child households. However, in households with more than one child, girls were less well educated than boys and were more likely to drop out of school.

Poor literacy, as discussed by Li (2011) has affected women’s chance of labour market participation. Although better education has helped women to achieve equal status at work as men, they needed to outperform men in education to make this achievement. Women with lower levels of education are more likely to exit the labour market, not necessarily voluntarily. As discussed in Li (2011), women’s status at work is highly correlated with their educational level, but this is not the case for men.

The gender imbalance of school children remains an issue. In 2012, there were 22 million female students in senior secondary schools, accounting for 48 percent of the total, and there were 23 million female students in junior secondary schools, accounting for 47 percent of the total. The causes for the high sex ratio at birth are complex, involving both cultural factors such as the stereotype of preferring males over females, and economic factors such as the low productivity and lack of social security services in remote rural areas. By 2014, the majority (70.2%) of people older than six without education were girls. Table 5 shows the population without school education over time. We can see that although China has managed to reduce the number of illiterate people as a whole, girls’ disadvantage was not reduced.

Table 8 Population aged 14 and above by education level (No. of persons)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2001 census</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2006 GHS</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2011 census</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No school education</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>20,600</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>16,300</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16,200</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>15,600</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>12,600</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: “Yearbook of China in 2016” Table: 26-46 15 years of age and older population education.

7.5 Children’s problems in the context of climate change in China

On the whole, as noted above, migration associated with urbanisation and climate change has a positive impact on both family economy and child development. Children with migrant parents, whether migrants themselves or left-behind, tend to have better health and family finances than other rural children.
Migration-associated with urbanisation and child problems

Migration on the whole challenges public administration and social service systems that were built on the assumption that people should not migrate or would not migrate in their life. When the governing body assumes that people should not migrate, it installs administrative or policy hurdles for people to move and makes it costly for them to live at the destination. This is an incentive-oriented policy approach, which is a lot easier to enforce than sending people back from their destination or physically stopping them from migrating. When the governing body assumes that people would not migrate, it may fail to withdraw past policy and administrative hurdles that may prevent people from migrating, or not be concerned that new policies may potentially prevent people from migrating easily. In this sense, migration introduces a shock to a policy system.

Migration associated with urbanisation and climate change in China faces hurdles created by administrative and social entitlement based on past policy logic, that is a policy of no mobility from the central planning era. However, as the economy has been privatised, the public administration and social service systems have been slow to adapt to changed social contexts. As a result, we can see that on the one hand people migrate, but administration and services lag behind. As children are not part of the labour force, they would not be able to get covered by the employer-provided social insurance coverage, and the problems they face can be particularly serious.

Environmental degradation and climate change and child problems

Environmental degradation and climate change are observable. Depending on how the causes of climate change are understood, and the viewpoint is taken by the policy makers, there can be very different responses. For example, the effects of heat islands and air pollution can be understood as local outcomes that are attributed to local human actions. Resulting policies would, therefore, be locally focused and try to mitigate the effects of human action.

According to Xu, et al. (2012) children are particularly vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change. Climate change poses threats to children’s health because children have different metabolism, behaviour and physiology. They also have different development characteristics. It has been found by scientists that deadly diseases for children (e.g., malaria, diarrheal disease and malnutrition) are very sensitive to climatic conditions, and the risks can be worse as a result of climate change. Increasing air pollution from the continued burning of fossil fuels also threaten children’s health, life quality, and overall development. It is estimated that climate change could cause an additional 40,000 to 160,000 children’s deaths per year in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa through GDP losses alone, in a baseline climate change scenario (Christian, 2012). In the most serious climate change scenario, the death toll may increase by an additional 60,000 to 250,000 per year by 2100. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that climate change contributed to more than 150,000 deaths and 5.5 million lost disability-adjusted life years.
worldwide in 2000 alone, and more than 88% of this burden occurs in children under the age of five years (Tillett, 2011).

7.6 Summary: the key problems in child rights associated with migration, urbanisation and climate change in China

The UNICEF child rights approach can be used to identify the vulnerability of children in China. In the context of migration and urbanisation, there are five major problems.

1) **Livelihoods of children.** Urbanisation may improve the income of migrant families, which can benefit their children. However, migrants need time to settle down. For ex-farmers, changes in the sources of income also mean that they need time to adapt. Before migrant families can fully settle down, children can be particularly vulnerable. In the context of climate change, natural disasters and extreme weather conditions may affect the livelihoods of both farmers and urban residents. These can be in the form of loss of parents’ earning ability, inhabitable environments and loss of farming incomes.

2) **Protection of children.** In the context of population flow and urbanisation, such phenomena as the absence of guardianship and improper guardianship are increasing, putting children at an increased risk. The state needs to strengthen the protection of children.

3) **Development of children,** with a particular focus on the provision of public services in education and health care. Generally, only people with local residential registration are eligible to such public services. Migrant children are not eligible since they have no residential registration in places where their parents work. Current policies need to be revised to enable migrant children to enjoy public services in places where their parents work according to their actual needs.

4) **Education of children.** In response to population flow, a set of new rural education policies has been implemented in some places, i.e. closing small teaching sites in rural areas, and combining schools (*che dian bing xiao*), which has a serious negative impact on the education of rural children.

5) **Participation.** Children’s needs may not be taken into account as family level decisions over migration are made. Children’s voices may not be heard at community levels either, in villages or in urban neighbourhoods. This is particularly serious in the context of sex abuse of girls in rural villages. In cities, migrant children face difficulties in integrating themselves into new urban communities. The urban public discourse in regarding access to public education can be hostile to children from rural areas.
### Table 9 Urbanisation, climate change and children’s rights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s rights approach</th>
<th>Vulnerabilities – urbanisation</th>
<th>Vulnerabilities – environmental degradation, natural disasters and climate change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right to live:</strong> no <em>hukou</em>, poverty and poverty trap</td>
<td>Loss of lack of <em>hukou</em> registration</td>
<td>Loss of family income or parental support as a result of livelihood changes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child abundance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loss of financial support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poverty and starvation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right to protection:</strong> lack of security (injury, maltreatment) and parental support</td>
<td>Absent of guardianship or inappropriate guardianship</td>
<td>Lack of child protection in disaster relief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No parental care and support</td>
<td>Psychological ill-being and social exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased risks for accidents and injuries (drowning, transportation, falling off)</td>
<td>Child neglect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased risks for being maltreated and being neglected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex abuse of girls</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right to development:</strong> nutrition, health and health insurance</td>
<td>Changes in eating habits and structural malnutrition</td>
<td>Mortality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accessibility of healthcare and affordability</td>
<td>Decreased lung function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lung cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asthma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Birth defects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other types of respiratory diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Physical and mental trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mental disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Disrupting health care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Renal disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Respiratory disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Electrolyte imbalance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Diarrhoea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reproductive disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Immune dysfunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Neural system dysfunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Malnutrition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Environmental degradation and climate change can have two types of impacts on human lives. It may make a place inhabitable and lead to migration. It may also directly affect people’s health. The problems faced by children of migration are similar to what we put forward in Table 6. The health impacts resulting from climate change either caused by human actions or the natural changes are quite different. Xu et al. (2012) produced a list of problems showing the impacts of climate change on children’s health. They argue that children suffer more than adults from deteriorating environment and climate change.

Table 10 Child vulnerabilities by types of natural disasters, environmental damages and climate changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exposures</th>
<th>Health Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air pollution</td>
<td>Decreased lung function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lung cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asthma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Birth defects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other types of respiratory diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mortality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floods</td>
<td>Drowning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical and mental trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Droughts</td>
<td>Mental disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infant deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heat waves</td>
<td>Renal disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respiratory disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Electrolyte imbalance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possible birth defects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased water</td>
<td>Respiratory disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diarrhoea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: produced by the authors of this report.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toxicant exposure</th>
<th>Reproductive disorder</th>
<th>Neural System dysfunction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immune dysfunction</td>
<td>Cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food shortage</td>
<td>Malnutrition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mortality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population displacement</td>
<td>Disrupting health care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loss of education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 The corresponding policies by the Chinese government

Although China has not yet formed a comprehensive child policy system that can protect all the rights issues discussed earlier, the government has always attached importance to improving the policy for children and youth. A large number of laws and regulations have been introduced. There are three lines of policies to deal with children’s problems directly: 1) citizenship in terms of legal status, poverty reduction, child protection; 2) children’s welfare policies and 3) equalisation of social services. Not all of them are designed to address issues associated with urbanisation and climate change. At times, where central regulations are not yet available, we refer to some local practices which are not yet rolled out nationwide. These are indicated specifically. To produce this research, we carried out a search of the Peking University Law database and identified a large number of laws and legal interpretations. As of 28 March 2017, there are the central government laws and regulations (127), administrative regulations (318), judicial interpretation (159), departmental rules and regulations (3,903), social group provisions (517), industry regulations (44), military laws and regulations (1) and local regulations (36,652). As some laws and regulations do not use the term “child” in the text, but rather refer to children by age group or use equivalent terms, the actual counts of legislations, policy interpretations and departmental regulations that involve children should be more than what we have counted. Since this report does not mean to be exhaustive, we summarise some main legal changes that can help to show the direction of child protection. The large volume of child-related policies and laws however, shows the complicated and fragmented natures of the policy system. Without a systematic review of these policies, given their fragmented nature, it is difficult to tell whether each perspective of children’s’ rights in relation to urbanisation and climate change are formally protected.

8.1 Hukou registration: rights to live

China’s citizenship is largely defined by Hukou status. It defines whether a person can enjoy social benefits like other residents in a city. In the past The Regulation of the People’s Republic of China on the Registration of Households (1958) stipulates that the head of a household, his/her dependents, or neighbours should report the birth of a child to the household registration authorities within one month of the birth. Babies who are abandoned by their parents should be reported by the adopters or nursing institutions.

However, the long-lasting implementation of the one-child policy resulted in a large number of unregistered children who have no access to social services and welfare provided by the
government. According to the Sixth Census in 2010, there were more than 13 million unregistered households which include a large number of children. The cause of this problem was the one-child policy, which prevented children from being formally registered with the household registration system. There has been a recent relaxation of fertility control and new supporting policies are also under development to solve the problems faced by unregistered children. The Office of the State Council issued the “Suggestions on Solving the Problem of People Without Household Registration (关于解决无户口人员登记户口问题的意见) on 14 January 2016. This regulation aims to clarify the status and rights of people without Hukou, including Chinese citizens, foreigners, and stateless people. This regulation forbade local governments from setting tighter restrictions than the national policies in terms of registering people. This is applicable to children without Hukou and children without a birth certificate.

The Hukou system was used to restrict migration in the past. It has been actively used to limit the flow of farmers into cities. The household registration is often associated with a series of social entitlements and access to social services. These entitlements include education, social and medical insurances, right to participate in community election, etc. In the past, if a child was born in a rural area and wanted to become an urban citizen, they could only do so by joining the army, attending university, or finding a formal job in order to change their identity. As urbanisation accelerated, children and their parents were allowed to settle in cities under certain restrictions. On 30 July 2014 the State Council's "Suggestions on Further Promoting the Reform of Household Registration System" (关于进一步推进户籍制度改革的意见) stipulates that people with a stable residence in county-level cities, county seats and other towns (including renting) can apply for Hukou as permanent residents. This right can be extended to their living spouses, minor children, and parents. However, in medium-sized cities, big cities, and mega cities, the criteria for settlement are difficult to meet (Li, et al, 2016). The State Council Suggestions also included a Resident Permit system which would consider the fact that migrant children need to continue studying in cities. Children coming with their parents to cities will gradually be allowed to take high school and university entrance examinations. The Provisional Regulations on Resident Permit issued by the State Council on 26 November 2015 also clearly stipulates that minors younger than 16, old people and people with disabilities can apply for resident permits with the help of their guardians or close relatives. The holder of a residence permit enjoys the right to employment, participation in social insurance, and the housing provident funds. The county-level governments should provide the following basic services to the resident permits: (1) compulsory education, (2) basic public employment services, (3) basic public health services and family planning services, 4) public cultural and sports services, (5) legal aid and other legal services, and (6) other basic public services provided by the state.
8.2 Rights to survival:

1. Poverty reduction

As the Accurate Poverty Reduction initiative becomes an increasingly important poverty reduction strategy in China, enormous amounts of resources have been devoted to impoverished areas in China.

In the 13th Five Year Plan, improving the nutrition level of children, in particular that of children in impoverished rural areas, was written into the national plan. More broadly, women and children will be the primary beneficiaries of the ongoing Accurate Poverty Reduction Agenda (APRA) and two incoming national plans, *Modernising Chinese Education 2030* and *Healthy China 2030* (2030年中国教育现代化, 健康中国2030年), as these initiatives target people living in remote areas (where women comprise the majority population), and the older female demographic. Providing support to families, and in particular women and children, is expected to remain prominent on the policy agenda.

2. Rights to medical care

The relevant policies and regulations on children’s rights to medical care are scattered in multiple domains. Both of the largest medical security systems – the Basic Medical Insurance System and the New Rural Cooperative Medical Care Systems – address the issue of child health insurance. On 24 July 2007, State Council published “Guidelines on the Implementation of Urban Residents Basic Medical Insurance Pilots” (关于开展城镇居民基本医疗保险试点的指导意见), which stipulated that students (including vocational high school, technical secondary school, and technical school students), children and other urban residents who do not have jobs, can voluntarily participate in the Basic Medical Insurance scheme. The New Rural Cooperative Medical Care is provided at the provincial level. Most of the local policies require rural children and school students to participate as dependents.

There are also regulations to protect children against serious diseases and illnesses. The Ministry of Health issued the "Notice on the Work in 2011 in Relation to New Rural Cooperative Medical Care" (关于做好2011年新型农村合作医疗有关工作的通知) on 25 May 2012. It required the government to continue consolidating the protection of children with leukaemia and other five types of serious illnesses in 2012. The Office of the State Council issued the "Five Major Reforms of the Medical and Health Systems: Major Tasks for 2010" (医药卫生体制五项重点改革2010年度主要工
作安排) to implement pilot schemes for social protection for children with leukaemia, congenital heart disease and other major diseases. The Ministry of Health, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security were to be responsible for this. On 7 June 2010, the Ministry of Health issued "Suggestions on the Improvement of the Level of Protection of Rural Children with Serious Illnesses and Diseases" (关于开展提高农村儿童重大疾病医疗保障水平试点工作的意见). It is suggested to select several serious diseases or illnesses which may have a negative impact on children’s health, and for which expenses are unaffordable, but can be improved with treatment. The New Rural Cooperative Medical Care and other medical protection measures can be used jointly to produce effective compensation and payment methods. The goal is to improve the level of healthcare for major diseases.

In the case of children's medication and medical facilities, the state also introduced relevant regulations. The National Health Commission et al. published "Several Suggestions on Guaranteeing Children's Medication" (关于保障儿童用药的若干意见) on 21 May 2014. It is designed to protect children's basic needs for medications and promote the rational and safe use of children's medicine usage. Currently, there are insufficient choices for child medication in terms of in dosage and specification. Drugs have not always undergone a thorough or robust clinical trial, and irregular prescription and inappropriate drug use are still serious issues. It is urgent to take measures to solve the problems. On 18 May 2016, the National Family Planning Commission published “The Opinions on the Reform and Development of Children's Health Services” (关于加强儿童医疗卫生服务改革与发展的意见). According to this document, children's hospitals, general hospitals and maternal and child health care institutions should be improved. It is suggested that the capital cities of each province should have one children’s hospital; other cities with more than three million people should also have one children's hospital. Urban general hospitals should have paediatric clinics according to demand; where the demand is high, the hospitals should set up paediatric wards. In each county, there should be at least one county-level public hospital with paediatrician wards; the number of wards can be set according to actual needs for services. Medical schools should also set up children's hospitals. Another perspective is to provide healthcare assistance to children from poor families. For example, there are going to be screening programs for neonatal diseases in poverty-stricken areas and rural and urban medical assistance will be improved. The basic medical insurance for urban and rural residents should be made more transferable, integrating with serious illness insurance, and the emergency rescue system to
further improve children's cost coverage of major diseases and prevent families falling under the poverty line as a result of child sickness.

8.3 Rights to development: education

The 13th Five Year Plan (2015-2020) encourages the development of inclusive kindergartens and plans to strengthen inclusive pre-schools in rural areas. The target by 2020 it to achieve a gross enrolment rate of 85 percent for children aged three-years younger than school age. The 13th Five-Year Plan also aims to “achieve education modernization by 2020”. Specifically, China aims to raise the higher education enrolment rate to 43 percent with a total of 40 million people by 2020. If the target is met, the population with higher education will amount to 210-220 million by 2020, which will double the number of graduates in 2010. Notable progress has also been made in promoting compulsory education in rural areas. Through the rural boarding school programme, a total of 8,300 schools have been built or renovated, meeting the boarding needs of nearly 2 million students from mountainous areas, animal husbandry areas, plateau areas and other remote and needed areas.

China has adopted a series of policies and measures to protect the rights of girls to education. The Spring Bud Plan is an example of such measures. Launched by All-China Women’s Federation, the plan includes actions to mobilise the society and assist the government to solve the practical difficulties faced by girls from poor families in poor areas, as well as left-behind children, through practical skills training. At end of 2012, the Spring Bud Plan had raised a total of over RMB 1 billion, donated to 1,200 Spring Bud Schools, helped more than 2.3 million poor girls to continue schooling, and provided practical and technical training for more than 400,000 girls. All-China Women’s Federation also manage a 5-year Family Education Program for Adolescent Girls, which started in 2008. The program was launched in 20 major cities across the country. More than 7 million copies of educational materials and 60,000 computer discs were distributed for free, more than 50,000 sessions of mobile classes were organised, and 156 practical learning bases were established, directly benefiting 12 million households with girls.

Preschool education (kindergarten) is not part of the compulsory education in China. However, the government introduced guidance for practice. At the turn of the century, the government decided to reform early childhood education to meet the new socio-economic trends. On 4 March 2003, the Ministry of Education and several other Ministries jointly issued the “Guidance on the Reform and Development of Early Childhood Education” (幼儿教育改革与发展指导意见), setting the goals of early childhood education reform and development. The overall goal of the reform of early childhood education from 2003 to 2007 was to combine public and private, formal and
informal education, with public kindergartens as the “backbone” and setting the standard. In the next five years, the national early childhood education development targets were: the pre-school children's education rate for children three years younger than school age to reach 55%, and pre-school children's education rate for children one year before school age to reach 80%. In large and medium cities, there should be universal access to pre-school education for children three-years younger than school age. Parents and caregivers are to receive training to improve their ability to offer good quality childcare. In urban and well-developed areas, pre-school children's education rate should reach 90%. Parents and caregivers of children aged 0-6 years should be generally subject to “scientific guidance” on parenting. On 24 November 2010, the State Council Office published “Suggestions on the Current Development of Pre-School Education” (国务院关于当前发展学前教育的若干意见). It requires that urban districts without kindergartens should introduce them in accordance with community planning and population size. Newly built housing estates should plan for kindergartens, otherwise the construction project would not be approved. Kindergartens based in urban neighbourhoods should be funded by the local governments using public education funds, which should be free to users and access should be universal. Urban kindergartens should give full consideration to the needs of migrant workers and their children. On 9 October 2012, the Ministry of Education issued a policy titled: "3-6-Year-Old Children's Learning and Development Guide" (3-6岁儿童学习与发展指南) suggesting urban kindergartens team up with rural kindergartens to offer support to rural pre-school education.

After 2010, the state further strengthened investment in pre-school education. In September 2011 the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education issued "Suggestions on the Establishment of Pre-School Education Funding System" (关于建立学前教育资助制度的意见) proposing that local governments provide financial supports to children from poor families, orphans and disabled children, so that they may attend public kindergartens. Kindergartens should also reserve 3-5 percent of funds for the reduction of fees, and to provide special hardship subsidies. Enterprises, social groups and individuals are also encouraged to donate to help children from families with financial difficulties, orphans and disabled children to gain access to pre-school education. In August 2011, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education published the "Suggestions on the Increase in Public Investment in Supporting Pre-School Education" (关于加大财政投入支持学前教育发展的通知) and proposed to support the development of pre-school education as an important responsibility of public finance. The financial departments at all levels should increase the financial input in pre-school education, actively cooperate with the education system and other
departments to further improve the institutional mechanisms and promote comprehensive reform. The pre-school education system should be public and universal. A public service system should be established to cover rural and urban areas and provide convenient, flexible, and diverse pre-school education services.

**Compulsory education** is mainly practices based on the "Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China" and the supporting laws and regulations. It is expressed in the laws that compulsory education should be a public welfare that the state should guarantee to all children and youth of school age. Compulsory education should not charge fees. The state should set up a compulsory education financing system to secure funding. In the context that rural compulsory education is at a poorer level, in April 2002 the State Council published “The Notice to Improve Rural Compulsory Education System” (关于完善农村义务教育管理体制的通知). In this system the government uses two projects: “The One to One Project for Schools in the Eastern Provinces to Support Schools in the Western Poor Areas” (东部地区学校对口支援西部贫困地区学校工程) and “The One to One Project for Schools in Large and Medium Cities to Support the Schools from Local Poverty-Stricken Areas” (大中城市学校对口支援本地贫困地区学校工程). These two projects would be used to set up an efficient mechanism including inspections, evaluations, and awards to motivate local governments, service providers and teachers to deliver the desired outcomes. In large and medium cities, donation centres should also be set up to accept public donations to education. Public campaigns will be organised to raise funds to support poor students to attend schools. The State Council published in December 2005 “The State Council's Notice on Deepening the Reform of Rural Compulsory Education Funding System" (国务院关于深化农村义务教育经费保障机制改革的通知), suggesting that the funding budget for schools in rural schools should all be delivered. Students from families receiving the minimum income guarantee should enjoy the same fee-status and subsidy-status as rural students in the same region. Migrant children taking compulsory education in cities should enjoy equal treatment as urban students. In 2008, the State Council published "The State Council Notice on Implementing Fee Exemption for Urban Students in Compulsory Education" (国务院关于做好免除城市义务教育阶段学生学杂费工作的通知) to abolish all fees for urban compulsory education. Migrant children’s education should be provided in the destinations of migration, and primarily in
public schools. County-level governments should include migrant children in their public education system, and plan and develop schools according to the inflow, distribution and trends of migrants.

**Special education** refers to the education of children with health problems. In 1988, the former State Education Commission, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Disabled People’s Association of China produced the "Suggestions on the Development of Special Education " (关于发展特殊教育的若干意见) requiring that in-cities education for developmental delays or disabilities such as intellectual disabilities be delivered in primary schools, disabled children welfare agencies, or in special schools. In rural areas, the students can go to the nearest schools, attend classes, or with specially arranged tutors. When counties or townships (towns) can afford it, they can also set up special classes or schools. The State Council’s "Education for the Disabled Ordinance" (残疾人教育条例) also set rules for pre-school education, and compulsory education. The CPC Central Committee and the State Council’s “Opinions on Promoting the Development of Disabled Persons” (关于促进残疾人事业发展的意见) was issued in 2008. The idea was to accelerate the development of education for people with disabilities by encouraging special education, teacher training and improving quality of education. The tasks include improving education assistance to students with disabilities, guaranteeing that they receive free compulsory education, and developing pre-school rehabilitation of children with disabilities. Schools are prohibited from discriminating against students with disabilities in their recruitment, enrollment and other aspects of education. However, problems still remain. On 8 January 2014, the Ministry of Education launched an "Enhancement Program of Special Education (2014-2016)" (特殊教育提升计划 [2014-2016]), raising the problems that the coverage of compulsory education for rural disabled students is not high, non-compulsory education is poorly developed, the teaching facilities should be improved for special education schools, and the number of qualified teachers and rehabilitation professionals is too small and their service quality is questionable.

**Family education** has gained more government attention in recent years. The National Women’s Federation together with the Ministry of Education issued the “Five-Year Plan for Guiding the Improvement of Family Education (2016-2020)” (关于指导推进家庭教育的五年规划[2016—2020]) on 14 November 2016. It is proposed that by 2020, a family education guidance and service system, which aims to consider rural-urban development and meeting the needs of both parents and children, will be introduced. The plan is to set up a public service network to facilitate family education, using public service and education facilities based in rural and urban communities, such
as children’s playgroups, and activity centres. There should also be family education guidance and service points (stations) in residential communities. The targeted population coverage should be 90 percent in cities and 80 percent in rural areas.

8.4 Rights to protection

1. Child trafficking

China has taken steps to address various forms of threats to children’s wellbeing, including exploitation, trafficking, violence and abuse. In 2007, China released a 5-year national Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking of Women and Children (2008-2012) (中国反对拐卖妇女儿童行动计划 [2008-2012]). Produced in coordination with the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Trafficking (UNIAP), the Plan has sought to “effectively prevent and severely combat the criminal activities of trafficking in women and children, actively provide assistance and give appropriate aftercare to rescued women and children, earnestly safeguard the legal rights and interests of women and children.” In 2008, China signed up to the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (UN TIP Protocol). Since then, the Chinese government has taken measures to revise domestic legislations and policies and make greater efforts to fight against child trafficking in order to meet the international standards. For example, in 2011, the National People’s Congress Standing Committee amended the People’s Republic of China Criminal Law to improve the section on forced labour. In 2013, the State Council took an additional step to comply with international standards by issuing the China Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2013–2020) (中国反对拐卖人口行动计划 [2013-2020]), which is an updated version of the 2007 Plan of Action.

2. Family abuse and negligence

China is in the process of developing new laws to remove the legal loopholes in offering child protection and strengthening family guardianship. The existing law on protecting minors from family abuse, such as the Child Protection Law (儿童保护法, 1991) and the Civil Law (民法, 1987), provided some guiding principles, but do not provide details on how to implement these laws. In response to these concerns, the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Public Security and several other related departments are working together to establish a legal framework and implementation mechanisms to take away the custody rights of abusive or negligent parents.
At the end of 1991, "The Fifth Amendment to the Adoption Law of 1998 of the People's Republic of China" (中华人民共和国收养法) made important and specific provisions on the protection of street children and protection of the right to custody of street children. Finally, in 2003, the State Council released the "Measures for the Administration of Salvage of Vagrants and Beggars without City Life" (城市生活无着的流浪乞讨人员救助管理办法), and the "Detailed Rules for the Implementation of the Measures" was published by the Ministry of Civil Affairs. These two documents became the most important reference in the current relief work for the protection of the rights of street children.

In August 2011, the General Office of the State Council issued the “Opinions on Strengthening and Improving the Work of Saving and Protecting Wandering Minors” (关于加强和改进未成年人保护工作的意见, hereafter referred to as Circular 39). Relief agencies are required to investigate the situation of homeless children and return children to their families as quickly as possible, and, where this is not possible, they should appoint a guardian for each child.

*The China Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2013–2020)* (中国反对拐卖人口行动计划 [2013-2020]) also provides a framework for using the current child assistance and welfare institution to offer support for homeless children and juvenile and abandoned babies. Social services such as psychological advice, behavioural correction, education and culture, skills training and employment assistance are all encouraged to join force and play a role in the actions. It is argued that supports should be available at street level so that homeless and begging children, and children who are forced to commit crimes, would be identified and saved in time. There are also more specific implementation instructions on various issues. For example, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Public Security also published a “Notice on Adoption of Kidnapped Children Whose Parents Cannot Be Identified” (关于开展查找不到生父母的打拐解救儿童收养工作的通知). The Supreme People’s Court, The Supreme People’s Procuratorate, the Ministry of Public Security, and the Ministry of Justice also published the “Notice on Urging Traffickers of Women and Children to Confess in A Given Time" (关于限令拐卖妇女儿童犯罪人投案自首的通告) in 2012 and in 2013 the “Suggestions on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children and Adolescents” (关于做好预防少年儿童遭受性侵工作的意见). These more specific regulations offered some guidance to improve the situation of children. In 2016, the State Council also published “Suggestions by the State Council on Strengthening the Care and Protection of Left -
behind Children in Rural Areas” (国务院关于加强农村留守儿童关爱保护工作的意见), which stresses the responsibilities of families to look after children and encourages migrant parents to bring their children with them when they move into cities. Local governments, village cadres and villagers are also encouraged to be part of the system that would offer care, support for left-behind children. The policy also stresses the importance for cities to open up public school places for migrant children and provide equal access to services for migrant children.

3. Campus violence

Bullying captured more social and media attention recently. In April 2016, a “Notice on Special Governing Program of Campus Bullying” (关于开展校园欺凌专项治理的通知) was published by the State Council and in November 2016, nine ministries jointly published the “Guidance on Preventing Bullying in Primary and Middle Schools” (关于防治中小学生欺凌和暴力的指导意见). Both documents call for the establishment of a reporting system that would respond to school bullying in time. Once bullying happens, schools and parents should inform each other in time and report serious cases to higher level authorities and inform the police. Care should be taken to protect the legal rights, safety and privacy of the informants and prevent the bullied children from getting hurt twice. So far, there is no formal legislation for on-campus bullying. However, these state actions can be viewed as steps towards legislation to regulate youth behaviour and stop bullying in the future.

The revised Law of the People’s Republic of China on Compulsory Education (中华人民共和国义务教育法) published in 2006 also stipulated that teachers should respect students and not discriminate against the students, nor shall they commit corporal punishment, disguised corporal punishment or other acts of insulting their dignity, and shall not violate the lawful rights and interests of the students.

The revised draft of the Protection of Minors (未成年人保护法修订草案) also stipulates that schools, kindergartens and nursery staff shall not use corporal punishment, disguised corporal punishment or other insulting acts of conduct on minors. Once identified, the cases should be reported to higher authorities. In serious cases, the offenders can be subject to legal charges.

4. Accidental injury

The Ministry of Health provided a series of technical guides in 2011 to prevent injuries of children by accidents and produce better intervention after an accident happens. These include “Technical
Guide for Preventing Children from Road Traffic Injuries” (儿童道路交通伤害干预技术指南), “Technical Guide for Preventing Children from Drowning” (儿童溺水干预技术指南) and “Technical Guide for Preventing Children from Falling Down” (儿童跌倒干预技术指南) (Wang and Shang, 2012). In terms of traffic safety, three legislations are introduced: The Safety Restriction System for Motor Vehicles to Carry Children (机动车儿童乘员用约束系统) and the National Compulsory Standard for Child Safety Seats and Relevant Products (儿童安全座椅等相关产品的国家强制性标准). In April, the State Council also published Regulations on Safety Management of School Buses (校车安全管理条例). To improve resilience to natural disasters, such as earthquakes, and make sure that schools in cities and rural areas all meet safety standards, in 2013, the Ministry of Education and twelve other Departments jointly published “Suggestions on Establishing Long-term Mechanism to Guarantee Safety for Primary and Secondary School Buildings” (关于建立中小学校舍安全保障长效机制的意见).

5. Environmental degradation and climate change

The impact of environmental degradation and climate change can be dealt with in several ways: addressing the causes of environmental degradation and climate change; offering protection against environmental and climate change risks; or addressing the consequences, which are often health related.

In terms of environmental protection, China’s policy for children is not yet well developed. However, we do see that the Chinese government has made various efforts to improve the environment and committed to implement the Sustainable Development Goals which will result in improving the environment in many different ways. Children may have the potential to benefit from these initiatives.

With the increase in environmental pollution, the number of smoggy days increased in northern China. There are some air pollution contingency plans to for children. Some city governments such as Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai introduced the Three-Colour Warning System on 22 October 2013: yellow, orange, and red to remind children, the elderly and people with respiratory, cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases, of the risks of air pollution and advising them to stay indoors if necessary. Primary and secondary schools, and kindergartens should be closed when the environment can be harmful to their health.
Another type of newly emerged concern is associated with environmental damage. Poisonous construction materials might be used in the construction of schools or public facilities. This happened when some kindergartens, primary schools, and secondary schools used poisonous materials to cover the playground surface or interior decoration, or some constructors or project owners failed to follow the standard procedure to use these materials, which caused a toxic environment for children to study and play in. These have resulted in health damage to the children studying in these facilities (Ren et al., 2006; Gao, et al., 2016). There have been serious media and public outcries against these issues, however legislation is still falling behind. Recently, the issues have been brought to the national assembly and received a response from the Minister of Education directly (Chen, Baosheng, Minister of Education, 13-03-2017). Relevant policies to address the problems are in the process of being developed. On 1 April 2017, it was announced that the construction quality standard will be introduced in Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei Province before the end of 2017 (Beijing Morning News, 01-04-2017).

8.5 Setting up dedicated child protection department in the government

In 2016, a Department for Protecting Minors (Left-behind Children) was set up to be responsible for the protection of children. Further adjustments of the governing system for child affairs were made after this. The Child Welfare Department, which used to belong to Social Welfare Division, is now with the Social Affairs Division. In this way, child welfare and child protection are handled in one department and a Deputy Director at the Division level is going to lead the work. In the context of the Chinese bureaucratic system, this move has significant meaning. It means that child welfare and protection is dealt with by higher level authorities. It also means that child issues may be reported more directly and the corresponding policy making process be given more significance.
9 Conclusion: Gaps in policy and implementation, and policy suggestions

Migration associated with urbanisation and climate change has significant impacts on both left-behind children and migrant children. For the sake of sustained development and the wellbeing and harmony of society in the long run, it is important for China to provide good quality basic services and protection to all children and guarantee the rights of children. This is especially the case for children who are suffering because of urbanisation and climate change, or from migration in general. There are a number of possible improvements which would directly grant rights to children. As we have discussed in this report, urbanisation, migration and climate change poses new challenges to the on-going system of child services and protections. As the scale of the problems increases and the awareness of the issues improve, the centre of public concern also changes over time. To this end, there are still some gaps in the current policy system. Efforts need to be made to:

- **Address vulnerability associated with migration:**

1. **Rights to live and rights to development:**

   i. To further reform the household registration system so that there are no disincentives for children to become undocumented. To prioritise the removal of barriers for migrant children to gain access to urban social services. Currently, when migrants are ill, they have to return to their home villages to get subsidised healthcare services, which would disrupt their education. Otherwise, they have to pay market rate for healthcare, which is unaffordable to many migrant workers. The mismatch in health funding flows and population flows need to be addressed urgently. Policies should be adjusted to promote the access of migrant children to education and free medical care in the receiving cities. Policies that prevent migrant children from attending local schools to drive away their parents should be withdrawn.

   ii. To expand early child nutrition and development programs, particularly in poor rural areas. Close attention should be paid to the nutritional status of children in rural areas, particularly, poverty-stricken rural areas and boarding schools where children are facing such problems deriving from malnutrition such as anaemia, growth retardation and other issues. School meals should be able to provide better nutrition for rural poor children.

2. **Rights to protection:** To develop a system of child protection that deliberately targets migrant children, in particular a network to prevent children from being neglected and abused. These involve actions at different levels:
i. At the household level, to offer parental guidance so that the parents are aware of the possible impact on their children as they migrate.

ii. At the community level, to encourage urban neighbourhoods with migrant children to develop services that target the needs of migrant parents, e.g. two working parents without support from extended family. These services may be useful to urban parents as well. By starting to address migrants’ needs, urban families may also benefit as a result.

iii. At the societal level, to build up a monitoring network to prevent migrant children from being kidnapped, abused or coerced to participate in criminal activities.

3. Rights to participate: To establish a system that would give children the voice to express their needs, report abuse and neglect. To encourage research of child issues from a child perspective. So far, most child poverty and social protection research are centred around experts and adults’ understanding of children’s needs. This is particularly problematic when parents are often absent from their children’s lives. Migrants’ children are often forced to become independent much earlier than their counterparts in other social groups. Without addressing their needs directly and seeing the world from their perspectives, children’s views might be missed out and policies may not address their immediate needs. This would be particularly important when researchers try to examine homeless children.

• Address environmental damage and climate change:

1. Policies are needed to target the vulnerable groups whose livelihoods are sensitive to environmental damage and climate change. Poverty reduction and social protection need to be in place when these groups’ livelihoods are affected by these changes. The purpose is to reduce the risks and minimise the damage and to prevent parents and their children from falling below the poverty line because of environmental damage and climate change. Adaptation measures should not only be about production, but also about child protection.

2. Policies are needed to address the social integration of resettlement communities. Migrant communities resulting from climate change resettlement are not voluntary migrants whose intention is to establish themselves in an urban setting. Climate change and environmental migrants have to move often and are not able to choose where they move to and how to lead their future life. As a result, the desire to integrate socially may not be as strong and the hosting society may not perceive them as contributors to the local economy (Li, et al., 2016).

• Empower children and their parents

1. Improve parents and societal awareness of the relevant issues: There should be better education for children, their parents and the public about neglect and abuse, better safety in
schools, and better processes to protect children and support them in cases of abuse and neglect. So far, the legal framework tends to direct at saving the children who suffer from these risks and punishing adults who inflict harm on children, including parents. The efforts to provide parental education or guidance, in particular to parents suffering from poverty or the consequences of migration, are still marginal at best. As discussed in the section on the governments’ responses to family education, there are new measures by the government trying to address the lack of parenting skills. However, we observe that these measures target children via the schools in which the children attend. This can be problematic for the particularly vulnerable groups, the left-behind children, whose parents are absent during the children’s time at school. Therefore, it is important to take into account of the role of community, and guardians. They are not only the ones to be “educated” or “punished” when problems arise, but they should also be supported, especially when the parents are under tremendous stress and anxiety themselves.

2. Improve child resilience: Some of the issues regarding protecting children against violence and sexual assault, improving healthy living habits, social integration, and human actions to affect the environment and climate change, would require better awareness from the children concerned and society at large. Therefore, the efforts should not only be about service provision, but also improving public education. So far, the Chinese government’s efforts on improving education coverage are primarily about basic coverage of regions and population. However, children in different parts of the country face different threats to their livelihoods, or even lives. The education system can play an important role in improving awareness of children and providing practical guidance to parents and children. These would require education contents to be adapted to the purpose of improving awareness. So far, there are public and environmental health campaigns which schools use as a base for improving awareness. However, these are only limited to cities that have participated in these campaigns. Also, the approach used is intensive propaganda, which is often forgotten after the campaign period. In addition, a propaganda approach might be viewed cynically, and people are less likely to internalise the knowledge and as a result, it cannot produce long lasting effects (Zhang and Li, 2011). More innovative and diverse educational approaches can potentially generate better outcomes. At the same time, it is important to note that this type of education does not have to be in formal education institutions, nor conducted only by the official education system.

- **Improve governance**

As we can see, despite the gaps in the policy, a much stronger child protection policy system has been established in the past three decades. However, the implementation and outcomes may not be as good as the policies suggest. Similar to many other policy fields, policy implementation is far from being effective.
Making improvements in children’s rights is a complex social undertaking. It requires improved **inter-sectoral collaboration and coordination** between different stakeholders. For example, migrant families cannot be encouraged to bring their children to cities without the cities removing the association between entitlement to education and other social services with the urban *hukou* status. Encouraging migration without such changes would put migrant families in difficult circumstances. Unless there are concerted efforts to deal with the social plights of migrant children in cities, child problems associated with rural children cannot be solved effectively. As discussed earlier, migration as a result of urbanisation and climate change are shocks to the policy and administration systems. This shock cannot be dealt with in isolation; coordination and collaboration between multiple stakeholders is crucial.

The impact of urbanisation and climate change is everywhere. If problems are not addressed promptly, they might cause long term damage which may be more costly to the economy or the society. Examples include poor access to health services and bullying and abuse of migrant children and street children, which may result in threats to public health and safety in the future. However, the problems associated with this floating or even ‘underground’ population can be very difficult to detect and handle; it is not realistic to count on the governments only to deliver all the services the relevant policies have referred to as being necessary. Despite governments’ strong capacity to monitor and identify the relevant problems, to address the problems, it would be more efficient to encourage non-government actors, such as social organisations, the civil society and the private sector, to collaborate in identifying issues and developing solutions. Starting in the 2010s, the state has championed social organisations as service providers, and they have become partners of the state to deliver services. This sets a precedent for future collaborations. However, there are tight controls on non-government organisations (NGOs) and civil society acting as an advocate. It is nevertheless very useful for the state to **work together with the civil society and NGOs** to discover the problems together. After all, China is experiencing large-scale urbanisation and severe environmental challenges; the pressure the country is facing is unprecedented.

Sustaining the economy as well as the society is not an easy task and so is one that requires extensive cooperation.

Based on the gaps, some concrete policies can be introduced:

1. **Rural childhood nutrition and development.** Children in rural areas are disproportionately affected by malnutrition and associated issues such as growth retardation and anaemia. Improving programs that provide nutrition, such as school meals, would give rural children a better start in life.
2. **Poverty reduction.** Significant measures have already been implemented to reduce poverty. Expansion of these measures would lead to less poverty in rural areas, for migrant families and among vulnerable children. This would, in turn, reduce the pressures on children caused by migration.

3. **Rural basic infrastructure and services.** Improving access to basic services such as healthcare, water and sanitation facilities is needed for the well-being of children in rural areas. This should include public education on good preventative practices in terms of health habits, hygiene and sanitation.

4. **Urban health services for migrant children.** Migrant children struggle to access adequate healthcare. Either their families pay high costs in cities, or they return to their home villages. Both options are challenging and expensive. The health of migrant children depends on removing remaining barriers of access to urban healthcare services.

5. **Mental health services.** Urbanisation places great strain on the mental health of migrant and left-behind children and they experience higher levels of mental ill health compared to their peers. Targeted services in urban and rural areas to support children to cope with the pressures of migration or separation from their parents would provide long-term benefits to children. Such services would be especially effective if they were well-connected with education to help address bullying.

6. **Quality education.** Promoting 'equality of quality' in compulsory schooling would improve the educational experience of children in rural areas and migrant children in urban areas, as would making senior secondary education free for all children. Equality of access is also important, both for rural children who might need to travel long distances to school, and for those migrant children who are excluded from urban schools.

7. **Enhance awareness.** The content of education should be adapted to provide all children with knowledge of their rights and to improve their understanding of safety, sex, mental health, etc. Children should be safe from bullying and abuse when at school.

8. **Access to education for migrant children.** Local education policies which deny children access to education in order to discourage migration should be redesigned to bring them in line with the national educational policies of free education for all children.

9. **Safety.** Children affected by migration are disproportionately affected by violence, neglect, accidental injury and sexual abuse. Greater awareness of these issues among children and the general public is needed, as are better systems designed to protect vulnerable children. The expansion of the emerging child protection system will help keep children safe in urban
and rural areas. Migrant children are particularly vulnerable to trafficking, especially when their parents are busy working or they have become street children. These children need safe places to spend their time, like youth centres, which might also link them to social services.

10. **Children without hukou.** Children who are not registered are denied access to any social service, health or education for their lifetime. Policy to support the human rights of these many children to the same entitlements of Chinese citizens is urgently needed.

11. **Resilience.** At this point, it is difficult to resolve all the problems overnight. Migrant children and rural children have already experienced or are experiencing the consequences of migration; programs to help them gain confidence and capacity to improve their resilience to difficulties would be useful.

12. **Natural disaster responses.** Children can be significantly affected by natural disasters. Care of children needs to extend beyond their immediate physical needs to their rehabilitation and mental health in the wake of natural disasters.

13. To enhance governance, try to develop child-friendly communities and child-friendly cities in a similar manner as developing old age-friendly and environmentally friendly cities. By putting children’s course on par with other social interests in each space or jurisdiction, it will help to boost awareness, and facilitate coordination.

14. Many of the challenges to children’s human rights outlined in this report will only worsen as children’s lives are increasingly affected by climate change. While the measures we recommend would bring immediate benefits to children’s lives, the need for these supports will continue to expand unless climate change is slowed, and broader efforts are undertaken to limit climate change effects.

15. More research is needed in relation to the impact of climate change and environmental damage on child vulnerability and protection. Despite the small number of research studies cited in this paper, not many efforts have been directed at drawing a link between child issues and climate change. The extent of the issues and the seriousness need to be better documented. More research needs to be carried out to reflect children’s perspective on child protection, so that children are not only treated as passive receivers of the social consequents, but also active participants in policy formation.
Appendix 1 Terms frequently used in migration studies on China

There are multiple terms used by different agencies and organisations for migration administration and statistics. Several of the terms describing the migrant population have overlapping definitions. The key terms include:

1. The resident population (*changzhu renkou*) includes the existing resident population and people who are temporarily travelling in other places. In 2015, the urban permanent resident population reached 770 million. The Sixth Census defined permanent residents as:
   a. Residents holding local *hukou*
   b. Residents living for more than six months in the census area, even if their *hukou* registration is lodged somewhere else
   c. Residents waiting for their permanent residency to be approved (such as newborn babies, people in transition)
   d. Residents with local *hukou* who have lived in other places for less than half a year.

2. Extraneous population or alien population (*wailai renkou*) is a term coined in the 1980s and refers to the migrant population whose current residence is different from their place of *hukou* registration. Typically, this refers to people who have lived in a city for more than six months but are registered as residents in other provinces and cities (Zhang, 2015).

3. Floating population (*liudong renkou*) refers to people who have moved from rural areas into cities and do not yet have urban *hukou*. The people are regarded as “floating” if they have not formally resettled in the place they live and would not expect to do so. There is a short- and long-term floating population. People who have lived in the destination for five years or more, become part of the long-term floating population. The short-term floating population have lived at a location for less than five years.

4. Temporary resident (*zanzhu renkou*) is an administrative term. It refers to the people who have resided for more than three days in other cities and towns than their place of *hukou* registration.
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