# Chapter 2
# New Life

## 2.1 Peasants in Policy

In China, issues related to peasants are far more significant than those to agriculture, because it involves the development and therefore, interests of 80% of China's population. The goal of policy regarding peasants' problem is to ensure that this large social group play their role fully in the process of China's modernization and to benefit from this process.

Socialism with Chinese characteristics is based on China's specific national conditions, which refers to the large number of peasants. One of the major functions of Chinese socialism is to promote the development of rural area and rural residents. In the past, peasants were stuck with an old system, which make them lose development opportunities even if they had made tremendous contributions to China's modernization. They were degraded to the position of the nation's second-class citizens compared with urban residents in terms of employment, income and welfare, therefore becoming the ultimate losers of dual economic and social structure. Such socialism is thus unwelcome by peasants and is doomed to failure. Hence, accelerating reform and development, rationalizing the relationship between urban and rural areas, solving the agricultural problem and promoting rural work all revolve around one thing—how to treat the peasants—which requires concrete and realistic mechanisms and policy-making, rather than inane and senseless propaganda. It now appears that to correctly address the basic requirements of peasants in the new historical conditions, peasants' interests must be protected, their creativity unleashed, their development opportunities must continue to increase and their income must continue to grow steadily. Improper treatments towards peasants were the result of an imperfect economic system before the reform. Peasants' rights were not properly protected and their enthusiasm and creativity were stifled. In addition, peasants were believed to be prone to have capitalist tendencies, which was often the subject of political criticism and accusations. More importantly, the unsuitable rural development model, which was strictly implemented, inhibited the development of industry

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and commerce, causing massive deforestation and focusing predominantly on crop output. But how could peasants be motivated to partake in the construction campaign by such economic and political policies? That is probably why the agricultural sector developed slowly despite the zealous government campaign (with slogan-style propaganda) across the country.

Peasants are treated properly by the reform via the reformed political line, economic system and development model. However, under the new political and economic conditions, how to treat the peasants properly still faced a series of new problems. Government attention to agriculture and peasant issues experienced both its high and low over the last 15 years. Before 1985, peasants' income grew speedily due to the increase of agricultural production, which showed the enthusiasm of both peasants and the government towards agriculture. As a result, everyone was content. From 1985 to 1988, agricultural production (mainly grain and cotton) appeared unstable, peasants' income continued to increase (although not as much as in previous years), and so it could be concluded that peasants were quite satisfied but the government was quite nervous. Since 1989, the agricultural production has increased to a new record whereas the peasants' income stayed the same. In other words, it was a good time for agriculture development, but not a good time for peasants. Last year saw a big harvest and peasants' income increased. Nonetheless, some problems begin to emerge in rural areas over recent years. Since 1990, one major problem was the 'difficulty of selling grain', which happened every year and was more prevalent last year. 'IOUs' are found everywhere, and even in circulation, and peasants refuse to be silent anymore. The second problem is increasing burden from various stakeholders under strengthening governance—orders are ignored and peasants' complaints are heard everywhere. In addition, it was not rare to see that the property and personal rights of peasants are brutally violated by judicial means, even resulting in some unnatural deaths. These problems made peasants distrust reform and existing policies, and even led to direct accusations of the party and the government, which evolved into social conflicts. It is urgent and important to address peasant issues under the conditions of reform.

It is obvious that there are some problems with rural work. The most important one is the indifference to peasants that namely, much more attention has been paid to agriculture instead of peasants' interests and requirements. For example, agricultural production and peasants' income are two prominent targets of rural work. Given the strategic role of agricultural commodities and the fear of instability of grain and cotton production few years ago, the government has made great efforts to promote agricultural production, and finally conquered the instability. However, the government did not take effective measures to improve the terms of trade of agricultural products. The prices of agricultural production increased slightly while the prices of materials grow substantially. The decline of comparative profit led to an unusual phenomenon of high output not being accompanied by high income. Obviously, the government ignored the increase of peasants' income, which was a

very important and comprehensive work goal. It is a 'helpless' option for peasants to develop non-agricultural industry and work for it under a dual structure system. This is exactly the way of rural modernization, for otherwise there is no hope for China's modernization. However, we have long been used to the kind of thinking that urban areas outweigh rural areas. People were unable to treat fairly the "creation" of the peasants, which possesses profound historical meaning, and even to wrongfully accuse them of displacing other people's benefits and undermining the national economy and harming social harmony. Peasants also took the blunt of the rebuke when the economy appeared to be unstable. The special difficulties that township enterprises and migrant peasants encountered in recent years are powerful proof of this. Peasants are given less opportunities to work in these areas, which leads to less income. Moreover, the peasants have long endured heavy social burden and civil rights infringement. If the problem was discovered sooner, it would have not become so prevalent. In the end, it was the result of the government's tolerance of the infringement of peasants' rights by certain governmental agencies and organizations. Although files were issued and meetings were held, the results were not put into practice. As peasants have a high degree of dispersion and a low level of organization in their economic and social life, they are less able to resist unreasonable government actions. However, do we therefore see their interests jeopardized and do nothing? If this trend continues, where is the purpose of the Communist Party and the superiority of socialism? Many state-owned large and medium enterprises with increasing losses can pay their employees' salaries and bonus as usual by using state loans, which was done in the name of social stability. By contrast, peasants with unstable incomes were subject to various mandatory requests. How can we ensure social stability like this?

The support from peasants who collectively account for more than 80% of China's total population exerts great influence on the process of reform, the speed of modernization and the realization of strategic objectives proposed by the 14th Party Congress. At present, we are not supposed to relax our efforts and be blinded by the early success of the reform because an array of new problems have arisen. Agricultural trade under the condition of agricultural growth is getting worse. Peasants lose development opportunities as they have been unfairly treated in rural non-agricultural process. A number of governmental and organizational behaviors have violated peasants' rights in the name of reform. These are the outstanding social and economic problems in rural areas. To summarize, the development of peasants received disproportionate attention from the government. The lessons of history and reality remind us that we must proceed from the peasants' interests when dealing with agricultural and rural issues, trying to create more development opportunities for peasants and paying equal attention to peasants' interests as to agricultural output.

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## 2.2 Challenge from Immigration

In more than 20 days, two dozen investigators visited three counties in southern Jiangsu as well as factories, construction sites, bazaars and rental houses in Shanghai; interviewed more than 600 peasants from Anhui, Jiangsu, Henan, Sichuan and other provinces; collected over 600 questionnaires and dozens of letters and articles; chose 100 individual interviews as cases for in-depth analysis. In addition, the investigation team also had more than 20 meetings with relevant departments and enterprises in counties.

Our observation was that the peasant flows have reflected the positive results of reform and development, but also revealed the uncertainties that exist in rural areas. We did not pay much attention to these problems in the past. Some preliminary observations now serve as reference.

### *2.2.1 More Than Half of Peasants Become Migrant Workers in Order to Counteract the Decline of Living Standards*

Most migrant workers said that it would be hard to make a living and maintain current living standards if they did not go out of their village to seek work. Most of the interviewed peasant workers stated that if they do not work in the cities, their living standards would decline and even become unsustainable. Many peasants from Henan and Anhui provinces go out to work to sustain their livelihood only. A worker from north Jiangsu said his children would drop out of school but for his earning from being a migrant worker. It is generally estimated that more than half of the peasants migrating do so to avert the fall of living standards rather than to achieve a higher goal in life. Peasants from underdeveloped areas choose migrant employment, which appears to be a compulsory economic choice. Although the statistics may show that the per capita income of these peasants is still rising every year, the following issues were at play. First, the average figures within the province or region have covered up the economic difficulties of some peasants. Second, income growth was less than peasants' expectation and their life satisfaction has noticeably decreased. Many workers went out simply because they were driven by low satisfaction with life and fear of a potential life crisis.

### *2.2.2 Unusual Reasons for Migration*

Overall, economic interest was the main motivation for migrant workers, but there are also many unusual reasons. Some peasants said that life at home is not only

difficult, but also upsetting, so they thought they might as well go out once and for all. Most of the troubled interviewees were married and aged above 25 years. 'Upsetting' referred to two aspects. First, the person himself/herself or the family was subject to some unfair treatments or violations, such as the violation of contracting land, unreasonable allocating fees and dispute with village cadres, neighbors or families over fines for some reasons. The second aspect was the dissatisfaction with the rural reality, especially the corruption and misconduct of local officials. Most complaints went to rural grassroots cadres and administrative and law enforcement officers. Some peasants even said that a few cadres did not fulfill their duty as a member of the Communist Party. Peasants feared attending meetings because that often meant some money would be collected from them. Some told us they had no idea where the money they paid had been spent. It was said some money was used for managing factories but they collapsed, while village cadres grew rich quickly at the same time. Some said village cadres conspired with local scoundrels to suppress villagers. Some said that they could not act against village cadres as they have a police force and defense team under their command. Overall, villages were not satisfied with village cadres. Peasants also complained about heavy and random charges, as well as failing social security, such as the 'preparation fee' and 'lost income', which were charged for carrying out an arrest. In addition to train fare, migrant workers needed to pay the 'labor export fee' (24 yuan per person). Only 95 or 90% remittances are sent home via the post office, 5 or 10% is charged for postage or funds or some sort. Approximately 30% of interviewers had been pickpocketed or robbed; some were robbed every year when they headed back home. It was generally reported that the security in Sichuan, Anhui and northern Jiangsu province was quite bad while Shanghai and southern Jiangsu were safer. Hence, peasants were worried about the money they sent or carried when they boarded their home-bound trains.

We feel that, in some way, the large-scale migration of peasants from western underdeveloped areas was the result of rural social conflicts. It was a result of the conflict between peasants and rural cadres, including peasants' dissatisfaction and disappointment with the government.

This dissatisfaction and disappointment has, to some extent, become one of the psychological motivations of peasants for going to work. Although the number of peasants who are of such sentiment does not account for the majority, the findings of the interviews suggest this is a significant group mentality.

### *2.2.3 Instable Factors of Migrant Workers*

According to the investigation of several cities and counties, migrant offenders accounted for more than 50% of total criminal offences in local arrests. Migrant crime bore the following characteristics. First, daily necessities such as rice, oil, meat, bicycles and clothing were the main items that were stolen, while production tools or products were also stolen for money. In addition to theft, the most serious

crime was fighting, especially mass brawls. Second, criminals formed relatively highly organized gangs, staffed with members who were friends or relatives. Fights between two often became gang fights, with the two opposing sides of different geographical origins. Third, most migrant offenders were without a steady job or income, with their profession ranging from scavengers and street vagrants to being unemployed. According to the report of Wu County, there was little difference between the migrant workers with a formal occupation and locals in terms of crime rate. Migrants work in state-owned or collective enterprises performed best while construction workers were the worst behaved. Many migrant workers had their own views about the causes and conditions of criminal offenses. Three factors can be concluded to play a role: first, migrant workers were economically weak, therefore the risk they took in the city was much more than that at home, namely in terms of unemployment, delayed payment, fines and sickness. According to interviews, there were approximately 50% of interviewees whose period of unemployment in a year was no less than a month; 70% of interviewees had encountered various degrees of wage arrears or reduction; some even received nothing in exchange for their labor for several months. Worse still, they had no unemployment insurance or government relief and received little support from friends or families, so they had to steal or rob to make ends meet. Some peasants shared their own experiences with great candidness. Second, some workers had a strong sense of oppression or injustice; some migrated to work with a grudge borne at home, or felt some kind of discriminatory treatment in the place they worked. Some factory workers felt that it was not shameful to steal while working, because they worked hard but received much less salary; some told us honestly that they deliberately broke some tools while working; some workers intentionally damaged parts of what they had just built or decorated before leaving the venue. Third, as the vast majority of workers believed that they would not receive support from the local government, they dealt with problem in their own way, which was to fight. And this attempt evolved into gangs with their relatives or even became part of the underworld. Some workers said: “We leave our hometown for money, but there is no solution to problem but to fight when we are in trouble, or else we’d have to put up with it forever”. Most fights took place not because of something serious but because of a tiny miscommunication or misunderstanding issue. Overall, on the one hand, migrant workers lacked communication channels to resolve disputes; on the other hand, the fighting reflected their inner grumpiness and psychological imbalances.

In terms of mentality, approximately less than 20% of workers had no nostalgia for their hometown or have completely adapted to the new environment. Most workers harbor contradictory feelings. On the one hand, they were closer to hometown emotionally; on the other hand, they were dissatisfied with the underdevelopment of their hometown, especially those indifferent local cadres and bad social ethos. They hoped that the development of their hometown could improve so that they have no need to work outside. With regard to the place to which they had migrated, they said, on the one hand, they were attracted by more work opportunities or higher incomes in developed areas; on the other hand, they felt they were discriminated against and regarded as second-class citizens. Some youth workers expressd their feelings by

singing popular songs, for example, “the bustling city belongs to others”, and “it is hard to leave my footprint in the city”. As for the future, most interviewees did not have a clear plan. A small group of peasant workers became mentally distorted, and some said, “I wish one day all peasant workers would leave the cities and let the urban people experience a life without peasant workers, and see if they would still discriminate against us.” Others said, “I wish I could bomb the cities as I am so mad at them, but I could not do that as I have to stay here for money.”

In terms of their social behavior and emotionally, we feel that migrant workers were unstable and restless. Thus, it is necessary to improve their environment for living and work by structural reform and policy design.

### *2.2.4 The Poor Performance of Government Interference*

From an objective perspective, more than 90% of peasants migrated to urban areas through various kinds of personal relationships, of which family is the core organizational resource; namely, the person who migrates depends on his family members first, and his neighbors or friends in the local village second. This self-organizational trend is growing. By contrast, levels of organizational migration are small and there is no obvious upward trend. From a subjective perspective, the service provided by government departments received low ratings and even aversion from migrant workers, especially the labor service department and employment agencies. Some peasants know little about these departments or agencies; some think these places are useless; some even point out that they are deceptive. Once the migrant loses his job, he will almost never find a job through these departments or agencies again. The first reason is high introduction fees. Applicants are required to pay RMB 10–30 whether they accept the work or not. In addition, even if the applicant accepts the job offer, the environment and treatment of the actual work is far from what is being described in the original offer. We feel that these governmental or non-governmental employment departments or agencies do not offer what migrant workers really need.

The reasons for this mismatch are as follows. First, these formal agencies are for-profit; they are not providing a public service for migrant peasants. There are commercial frauds and profiteering behaviors in the current marketing system, which make peasants worried. Second, most governmental employment agencies in developed areas made it clear that they only provide services to migrants who are directly introduced by local labor agencies, which is a way to curb the influx of irrational migration. In fact, this ‘closed policy’ makes more unemployed workers migrate blindly. At present, it is necessary to increase the efforts into transforming employment departments so that governmental participation in orderly migration would be strengthened.

The majority of workers tend to find jobs through friends or relatives owing to thr associated low cost and high reliability. Apart from the poor performance of organizational migration, this self-organization approach has its own advantages,

which cause it to be welcomed by peasants. Now a popular belief has emerged that spontaneous migration should be objected to and prevented. We believe that, firstly, it is wrong to be against spontaneous migration. Approximately 50 or 60 million rural workers are employed through spontaneous migration. There will be a lot of problems in terms of social stability and economic growth if migrant employment cannot be resolved. Secondly, any attempt to prevent spontaneous migration will be in vain as the development of market economy system is an irreversible trend, in which the free flow of labors is a typical characteristic.

That being said, spontaneous migration does indeed have negative effects. The role of government is to help peasants improve their decision-making ability by activating the information supply in the labor market and providing peasants with adequate information. At the same time, governmental agencies are supposed to improve services to help more migrant workers. Peasants ought to be guaranteed the right to freely choose whether or not to take the advice or offer given by the government service.

### *2.2.5 Migration Is Conducive to Birth Control*

In recent years, migrant peasants are often accused by the public of having more children than the family planning policy stipulated. Indeed, there are a small number of peasants who migrate for the purpose of having more children. However, overall, migration is conducive to controlling population growth in the long run for the following reasons. First, as investigators interviewed a number of families, especially women of childbearing age, most of them said they now think it is better to have fewer children, which is a change of notion vis-à-vis before migrating. Second, the investigators also interviewed some of the unmarried young women (i.e. migrant women); many of them had delayed getting married, and some had done so voluntarily. Some 21-year-old girls said that they would have already been married and had children if they were at home but now they have not yet considered such an option. These migrant girls were from undeveloped areas and migrated to a relatively well-developed urban environment, which made them accept the modern lifestyle unconsciously, including the concept of marriage and having children.

The most prominent problem is about the management of family planning of migrant workers. According to our observations of the management of places that take in migrants, some basically turn a blind eye; some have a requirement for regular pregnancy tests where the medical report needs to be sent to the original rural planning department; and in some cities, women of childbearing age are required to go back home every 6 or 10 months for fear of fraudulent reports and if they do not, the government takes drastic measures, such as expropriating houses, and arresting family members—mainly practiced in Sichuan, Henan, and Anhui provinces. On the one hand, these practices facilitated family planning; on the other hand, it triggered migrants' discontent.

Some women have to travel long distances to return home twice every 6 months, which is quite costly, and some even lose their job because of this. These migrants

think that it is unnecessary to strengthen management with excess requirements. Since many peasants are unsatisfied with the family planning work, the government has a responsibility to explore a new way of management that is convenient to migrating peasants, otherwise their discontent will only increase.

### *2.2.6 Preliminary Observations*

1. In terms of a social basis for peasants' migration, the dominant factors are the deepening of reform and the opening up policy, and the accelerating process of modernization, driven especially by industrialization and urbanization. On the whole, this migration of people embodies economic development and social progress.
   However, we shall also see there is a secondary aspect, namely that regional, group and individual differentiation have heightened in the process of the reform and modernization. Imbalances exist in the allocation of rural resources and interests, particularly in the build-up of a market-based system since certain problems such as the distortion of functions of rural institutions as well as corruption have been exacerbated. Migration is a product of social problems under certain conditions. Meanwhile, migration itself also brings about new social problems.
2. Migratory peasants have more a personal experience of the drawbacks of the old system, because their special identities per se have reflected the confrontation and friction between the old and the new system. Many of their grievances and complaints are in fact an alternative way to make sure their voices are heard far and wide.
3. Many previous efforts in our research and policy-making often focus on the problems of migratory means and process; for example, too many people onboard the train, too many people flocking into the city, and too many migratory people without plans. However, the economic and social issues behind the migration as well as the internal problems amongst migrant workers are less noticed. To solve the migratory problem, one could start by addressing the migration itself, such as using certificates or strengthening the system. More importantly, one needs to promote economy and ease social conflicts in rural areas so that peasants will have a sound environment for development.
4. In terms of improving management of migratory process, the fundamental objective is to make the peasants truly feel that governmental management and measures are not only there to help reduce the cost and risk of finding a job in a new environment, but are also a good way to protect their interests. The key to solving this problem is to manage and regulate relevant governmental departments, preventing them from being commercial and corporatized. The effect of Wuxi and Wu County's management practice is very good, through simplified procedures, with a reasonable charge and temporary residence permits system implemented; for example, the "one certificate" system.

(This article is a research report finished by Zhao Shukai in May, 1996, who worked in the Research Department of Rural Economy of the Development Research Center of the State Council. The article, entitled "Inspections on the migration of peasants", won the prize of Excellent Research Report of the Development Research Center of the State Council.)

## 2.3 Migrants' Irregular Behavior

At present, there are a large number of rural people migrating to work in cities. In the city, the management of rural migrants has evolved from a general social problem to a public issue, which has generated a wide range of public demands and has become an important part of the public policy agenda of many municipal governments.

Public issues as a result of migrant workers can be divided into two types: one is infrastructural pressure due to the increase of total amount, such as the supply tension of housing, transport and water; the other refers to social anxiety caused by irregular behavior, especially the deteriorating security situation. From the late 1980s to early 1990s, the former was a focus for public, but the focus has been shifted to the latter since the 1990s.

This article is an empirical study of the irregular behavior and management of migrants, the judgements of which are based on literature review and fieldwork carried out by this research team in recent years. Although the irregular behavior of rural migrants has attracted public attention in the past, there has been deviation in the existing assessment system. In terms of the management of rural migrants, the main drawback is the imbalance between prevention and service. Irregular management and unreasonable policy design are often the reasons for the irregularities. The key to urban social integration is choice of policy approach for the large number of migrants.

### *2.3.1 Troubled Migrants and Crime Rate Assessment*

Migrant workers (rural people migrating to cities for work) are a major component of urban migrants, but they are also the target group of urban migrant management.

People noticed the existance of criminal workers at an early stage, namely, workers with a crime problem. However, the growing number of workers with other types of problems are less noticed. These migrant workers in the second type are defined as 'troubled workers' in this article. The troubled worker and the criminal worker represent two different concepts.

The basic background of the 'troubled worker' is as follows: although the total number of rural migrants has not increased in recent years—it has even declined in some areas—the number of migrants living under abnormal conditions has

increased. These migrants have left the rural areas and moved to the cities or elsewhere; however, they have no legitimate job or regular source of income, or they have other problems. Thus, we call these people 'troubled migrants'.

1. The different types of the 'troubled worker' are as follows. First, unemployed or laid-off, but staying in the city, known as the 'unemployed worker'. Second, employed currently but violated the one-child policy, defined as 'workers with procreational transgression'. Third, employment is not the purpose, or employment activity is not normal, as a result of family conflict and dispute with local officials, some peasant even choose to beg and petition in the city rather than stay in their home villages. The problem of the rural migrant worker derived from the rising popularity of floating employment. The rapid expansion of this group appeared in recent years, which has led to the difficulty of floating population management, especially the increase of those experiencing detention and repatriation of foreign population.
2. The rise in the number of troubled workers. In recent years, the growth rate of troubled workers has been faster than that of total migrant workers, especially in Shanghai. People without legal identification, employment or source of income are the main objectives for detention. The total number of those experiencing detention and repatriation of floating population published by the city government, and relative annual changes of proportion kept by public security show a growing trend of migrant workers. Throughout the 1980s, the average annual number of detention did not exceed 10,000 people; for example, the number of those experiencing detention and repatriation of 10,000 people accounted for approximately 1% of the total non-native population in 1998. In the 1990s, the foreign population increased rapidly, but the capacity of detention increased even faster, reaching a total number of 40,000 in 1993, accounting for 1.4% of the total non-native population. In 1996, the amount of those experiencing detention and repatriation reached 80,000, accounting for 2.8% of the total non-native population; in 1997, the figure exceeded 0.1 million, accounting for 3.6% of the total non-native population. A sampling survey showed that the total migrant population in 1993 was at its highest, but compared with the number of migrant workers in 1997, the amount was only less than half. This shows that the total number of migrant workers in recent years has been controlled or basically stable, but the problem has become significantly worse. Furthermore, the stability of total number of migrant workers does not mean that the core issue of government management has been solved. Of course, there is another possible situation, which is that the total number of migrant workers grew gradually, but if this were true, it would have revealed that the government management is weak in terms of getting control of the overall picture.
3. The deterioration of the constitution of the 'troubled worker'. According to the administrative department, the share of the elder, the disabled, or refugees compelled by disasters, did not increase significantly; these groups accounted for approximately 2% of the total those experiencing detention and repatriation throughout the 1990s generally. This indicates that the relief work in migrant-exporting areas was successful, which did not cause a large amount of refugees. Notably, in the increased number of people experiencing detention and

repatriation, many were those who had labor ability but were restricted of personal freedom because of various illegal acts. In 1989, the number of petty offenders was 4600, which increased to 8500 in 1993; 14,000 in 1996; and 21,000 in 1997. The growing number of troubled workers is an important trigger for urban social problems. The most important thing in terms of mitigating the effect of migration is to address the root problems of migrant population, rather than focusing only on the reduction of its sheer total number.

### *2.3.2 An Empirical Analysis of Migrant Offenders*

In terms of the criminal characteristics of migrant workers, previous research was conducted mainly through the the investigation of security department. Research groups asked migrant criminals to complete questionnaires in a coastal prison in order to observe and analyze problems directly. It was a specialized prison for petty offenders, where the number of non-local prisoners was 401, accounting for 39% of the total.

1. **What is migrant crime?**

The first research question is whether the case constitutes migrant crime or not. Migrant worker refers to non-native rural people who migrate to urban areas for the purpose of work. It is not deemed to be a migrant crime if people commit a crime within 3 days after arrival in the city, which is the basic feature of moving of crime. People who live in restaurants or hotels for 3 days to 1 month are not migrant workers, but people who live on construction sites are migrant workers. According to the above criteria, there are 233 migrant offenders in prison, which accounted for 58% of the 401 non-local prisoners.

2. **The characteristics of migrant worker's identification**

The public administration's efficiency of handling valid documents is a characteristic for identification of migrant workers. (1) In terms of temporary residence permit, there are 29.6% of total have handled, 58.1% have not done yet, and 12.2% are being processed. The registration rate of migrant workers is lower than that of the foreign population, at about 70–80%, which indicates that people with criminal tendencies tried to evade the documents system deliberately. (2) Only 18.7% of people were registered in the labor department for employment cards and employment permits. However, this registration rate was almost the same as the total number of foreign migrants. In 1996, there were only 0.1 million non-native migrant workers registered in the labor department; the registration rate was approximately 17%. In terms of employment, when asked, "have you found job after arrival in this city", 183 respondents gave an affirmative answer, accounting for 67.0% of total, which implied that unemployed workers were not the majority in the number of non-native offenders. In addition, non-migrant workers have higher

rate in terms of criminal records compared with that of migrant workers, which were 24.1 and 3.1%, respectively.

3. **Types of crimes committed by migrant workers**

Migrant workers' crime is highly concentrated in usurpation of property, which is an important difference compared with crime committed by non-migrant workers. Migrant worker's property-related crime accounted for 93.0% of the total crime committed by non-natives. Additionally, there were 8 people (2.8%) who committed hooliganism and intentional injury crime because of the default wage. The proportion of non-property-related crime by migrants was only 5.2%, which is much lower than that committed by native people (25.8%). In terms of property crime, larceny accounted for the highest proportion at 65.1%, and robbery and plunder accounted for 20.8%; others crimes included fraud.

In terms of their motive for crime, when asked, "what were your main ideas before the crime", there were 51 people who answered that they had no money for survival, they had no choice but to get money by illegal means, which accounted for 20.2% of total respondents; 21 people answered they wanted to earn money in an easier way, accounting for 8.3%; 8 people (3.2%) answered that they were used to committing crime; and 103 people answered "hard to say", accounting for 40.7%.

4. **Economic situation of migrant criminals before crime**

Questionnaire analysis revealed that two-thirds of these criminals had carried with them several hundred Yuan or more when they first arrived in the city, they could live for at least 10 days without survival worries while they were unemployed; the rest of workers arrived with less than 100 Yuan and would have fallen into survival crisis if they could not find a job within a short period of time. Over 40% of the total manual workers (198) carried with them less than 100 Yuan. Approximately 15% of respondents had already lived in difficulties at the time of committing the crime, namely, with less than 10 yuan left in their pocket; the economic conditions of nearly 50% of respondents were not good, 20% of them carried with only 10–50 yuan; the rest of them had 50–200 yuan.

Approximately 35% of crimes were not relative to a poor economic situation, 15% of respondents carried above 1000 Yuan when they intended to commit a crime. When asked "what kinds of reasons led to your poor economic condition, with less than 10 Yuan?", 108 people responded. Of these, 39% answered that they had no job and had used up the money they brought from home; 22% of respondents answered that most of their money had been used for entertainment; 26% answered they were unpaid or delayed for payment; other reasons made up 13%.

We should not see the crime committed by the non-native population as migrant crime. People without legal identification, employment or a source of income occupy a certain percentage of the total crime committed by non-native population. Although there are a number of foreign criminals who have not registered for a temporary residence permit, we cannot jump to the conclusion that crimes committed by people without legal identification, employment or an income source, are

mainly non-native crimes. Economic factors weighed heavily in crime committed by non-native population; the deduction and default of wages as well as unemployment are the major reasons for life difficulties among non-native people. When making public policy, we are supposed to not only focus on the increase of crime committed by non-native people on the superficial level, but also to explore social factors behind it, in particular taking into account the impact of a defected system.

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## 2.4 'Troubled' Population in Migration

'Troubled' migrant workers are people, who have left rural areas to move to urban areas or other places, but they have no job or source of income, or they have encountered various kinds of problems after migrating. With the rapid expansion of floating employment, some cities are facing pressure in terms of the management of migrants. Limiting or reducing the total number of migrants is not an appropriate way to deal with the problems caused by migratory expansion.

### *2.4.1 Challenges in Urban Social Order*

In cities, the management of the foreign population has evolved from a general social problem to a public issue, which generates a wide range of public demand, and becomes an increasingly important part of the public policy agenda for city governments. Public issues created by foreign population refer to two types: one is the problem of the urban environment and public facilities. The expansion of the migratory population has increased the pressure on facility utilization and tension in resource supply. Specifically, (1) the supply of water, electricity and public transport are significant problems in some large cities. City management complains about the shortage of public goods, which is the result of increasing demand owing to population expansion. In addition, these demands require financial subsidy under the existing city systems. (2) In some areas of the city, especially in the urban fringe, the prominent problems are illegal building and private rental without management, which affect the city and make the security situation more complicated and difficult to manage. (3) Migrant people have different consumer needs, affordability and habit compared with urban local people. The second problem is about social security in city. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, environment and public goods were key aspects. After 1990s,

security was the major concern of the public, the key point of which is crime committed by migrant workers. It is in this light that the crime committed by migrant workers is chosen as the main topic of this paper.

### 2.4.2 Characteristics of Migratory Crime

In 1997, according to the number of criminal cases recorded in cities, the proportion of the crimes committed by migrant workers was rising.[1] After 1995, the number of criminal cases committed by the foreign population accounted for 50% of the total, in 1998, there were 11,028 migrant people who had committed a crime, accounting for 62% of total (10,519).[2] A similar situation also appeared in Shanghai, Guangzhou, in which some cases were even worse. Notably, in the situation that there was no increase but a decline in the total number of migrants in cities, the proportion of crimes by migrant workers rose.

Initially, the majority of migrant crime committed was property crime, representing an important distinction from non-migrant crime. In general, theft, impulsive robbery and fight are main types of migrant crime.

The targets of crimes are familiar people or goods in places of work or residences nearby, particularly the materials, products and private property. Robbery and intentional injury often occur in the case of living difficulties or impulsive revenge. Property crime such as theft and robbery are main types of crime for non-migrant criminals among the non-native population; this occurs at a high volume. However, fraud, drug trafficking, trafficking of women and children and other crimes are mostly committed by non-migrant workers.

In terms of the characteristics of crime, firstly, it was seasonally characteristic, and most crime occurred before Spring Festival. Some migrant workers intended to make money illegally before going back home. Because of this, the period of time before Spring Festival has a high level of security. Before the Spring Festival in 2000, there were three news reports named "boss owed wages, workers take the risk" published by Shanghai Xinmin Evening News on January 30. In the first case, one migrant worker killed the boss and his wife because he failed to get his wages after many attempts; the other one robbed his boss's 6500 Yuan as wages; and, in the third one, several migrant workers kidnapped a self-employed owner for their 50,000-Yuan salary. All of these cases reflect a problem: a boss is able to report the crime if his life is being threatened, but migrant workers have no ways to lodge a complaint. In addition, at the summer ploughing or harvest season, some migrant

[1]Zhao Lixin. (1997). The characteristics, causes and measures of the crime of floating population under the condition of market economy, *Population Journal*, (1).

[2]Beijing Evening News, February 16, 2000.

workers also make illegal money from farming before going back home. The second notable characteristic is that crime cause is closely related to individuals' economic situation. Some migratory crimes were the result of long-term unemployment and unpaid wages. Some were due to heavy workload with very low payment; some derived from other people's solicitation. Therefore, the number of migratory crimes would decrease if the living conditions of migrant workers were improved. Thirdly, in terms of crime location, most migrant workers live on construction sites, company dorms or rental rooms due to the nature of their work. People who have the intention to commit a crime would not have opportunity to do so if proper supervision occurred at these places.

Regarding the subjects of the crime, they are often small items. Unlike with professional criminals, the main items stolen by migrant workers are daily necessities, such as clothes, food and bicycles. However, such petty crimes bring about bigger crimes. For instance, *the Yangcheng Evening News* reported on February 1, 2000, that a migrant worker from Hunan killed his two fellow villagers for 1000 Yuan. *The Beijing Evening News* reported on January 5, 2000, that two scavengers from Hebei killed 5 people for 500 Yuan within 3 days, and the first victim was a scavenger too. Finally, gang crime increased significantly in recent years. *The Beijing Evening News* reported on January 14, 2000, that a criminal gang composed of 10 members from Anhui Province has robbed 5 times, killing 1 person, seriously injuring 1 person and hurting 8 people, looting 20,000 Yuan worth of property. The reality has showed that the security in the cities is closely linked to their citizens; in other words, cities do not enjoy peace independently as they did several years ago. Cities' stability is increasingly linked to rural areas. Famers are becoming an increasingly important factor for cities' security in various aspects.

### *2.4.3 Social Factors in Migratory Crime*

In terms of migrant crime published in the media, according to each isolated case, we need to notice the non-personal factor behind the crime in addition to the personal factor with an increasing number of criminals. It is believed that the grim employment situation and outdated system are important factors for the increase of migrant crime.

First, the increase of the floating population is the result of employment difficulty. Although the employment situations in both urban and rural area are grim, more and more peasants go out in the hope of finding a job. It appears that two opposite situations are at play: on the one hand, more and more rural laborers are going out for work; on the other hand, the floating population number is increasing, such as the number of unemployed people. Although in the second half of 1998, migrant workers had been advised not to work outside owing to floods, the Ministry of labor issued an emergency notice due to the increase of migration during the

'spring rush' in 1999, the amount of migrant workers had increased by 10% compared with 1998 according to the estimation of relevant transport departments. In 2000, migration started in advance unexpectedly, it firstly appeared to be a 'convergence' situation, namely, returning migration and outward migration collided, which was unusual in comparison with previous years; there was the returning migration of peasants who had failed to find jobs in cities just after the peak of outward migration. By deducting those returned migrant workers, in 2001, the net total number of peasants going out had increased by 6% compared to 2000.

The unemployed people reluctant to go back home constituted a specified migrant group. These migrants had left rural areas to cities but had no normal professional skills and sources of income, therefore becoming the object of detention and repatriation of security departments. People who had no legal residence permit, income sources and identification are objects of those experiencing detention and repatriation for security departments. Before 1998, the number of people who had been accommodated and repatriated in Beijing was around 40,000–60,000 people, the number of which reached 149,359 in 1999,[3] during which, in one month alone, 123 carriages of people were sent home via railway, consuming a provision of 5 tons of steamed buns. Although this situation was affected by the reinforced management during the preparation of the 50th National Day, it reflected the increase of floating population. During the 1980s, less than 10,000 people were sent back home in Shanghai. However, this figure increased to 40,000 in 1993; 80,000 in 1996; and more than 0.1 million in 1997.[4] Notably, the structure of people for detention and repatriation changed. More and more it included people with normal labor ability who had lost their work or even committed a crime, rather than people who are elderly, vulnerable, sick or disabled. To summarize, the total number of migrant workers has been controlled in recent years, but relative problems have emerged. Furthermore, the stability of the total number does not mean security problems have been resolved.

Second, the existing social security system has defects as it provides no insurance for migrant workers' rights. The present social security system was designed for protecting urban citizens rather than migrant workers. This situation has been improved through the labor law of 1994, which protects the interests of migrant workers with the provision of injury insurance. Some cities even began to extend pension insurance to cover migrant workers. However, the key parts of the social security system, namely unemployment insurance and unemployment benefits, have not been applied and will not be applied in the next five to ten years. The unemployment insurance and benefits are important for social stability and security. Migrant workers are temporary laborers who tend to lose their jobs easily, even

[3]Beijing Evening News, February 16, 2000.

[4]Zhang Shenghua. (1998). *The present situation and prospect of floating population in Shanghai*, East China Normal University Press.

with a contract. Many city governments often tried to make them leave with coercive means migrant workers altogether in order to stay clear of problems such as unemployment. Migrant workers have to beg or steal as their income sources have been cut off. In all the methods to make a life, they preferred to rob, and then steal, and finally beg, because they think the robbery was the easiest, and they are not worried of losing face as they feel when begging. Therefore, the increase in crime, particularly robbery, is closely related to unemployment with no social compensation. It is said that unemployed migrants could go back home to live on farmland. However, they may lose face if they go back home with no money. They migrated to the city for the purpose of making money, but they are likely to commit crime if they experience a survival crisis.

Third, the crime has the feature of 'self-rescue' due to the frequent violation of personal legitimate rights and interests. Most of them emerged in the process of employment. The employer may charge a deposit illegally; seize identity cards or temporary residence permits; refuse to sign the labor contract or pay their wages overtime; delay paying wages without reasons; lack protection facilities; provide insecure working and living conditions; refuse to pay medical treatment fees; insult and assault workers repeatedly; refuse to provide disability compensation; and dismiss disabled workers with work-related injuries. Although the vast majority of migrant workers chose to say nothing, a few of them asked for help through legal support, which would not directly lead to serious consequences. However, there are still a few migrant workers who are inpatient and know less about laws, who tried to protect their rights in illegal ways, namely, to 'self-rescue'.

There are three types of 'self-rescue' migrant crime. The first refers to gang crime: migrant workers fight their boss with their fellow countrymen as a result of their boss refusing to to pay their wages, which is likely to constitute property crime, hooliganism (old criminal law) or affray crime (new Criminal Law) and the crime of intentional injury. The second type is the theft of products, raw materials, components or production tools in the work place in order to be sold, which is seen as an alternative means to get paid, but has, in effect constituted the crime of theft, which is also the reason why migrant workers tend to steal in their pleace of work rather than in other places. The third type of 'self-rescue' crime involves retaliating against the worker's boss and his family through violent means, which can easily lead to the crime of murder, intentional injury, robbery or kidnapping. Although there has been improvement in terms of the management of migrant workers, the basic concept is still outdated in terms of the use of economic, administrative punishment; outdated protection work and service; and the ignorance of migrants' rights. Urban society becomes unfamiliar to migrant workers because of these old concepts, which make it hard for them to have the basic awareness of the law that a normal citizen has, on the one hand; on the other hand, they tend to have identity crises and mental crises as the result of the sense of frustration and discrimination felt in daily work, which become potential criminal motives. These crises will lead to extreme antisocial behavior when they reach a certain level.

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## 2.5 Distinctive Survival Means of Migrant Workers

### *2.5.1 Migrant Workers' Impact on Social Security*

According to the introduction and discussion of departments in the place where the survey took place, the poor performance of non-native or migrant workers with respect to security can be classified mainly into two types: one is theft, the other is affray.

Migrant workers' crime has obvious characteristics: first, objects of theft are mainly daily necessities and commodities with low values, which are not the objects targeted by professional thieves, such as rice and flour, meat, oil, clothing and bikes. In addition, some production tools or products are stolen in order to be sold. Second, it is seasonal in terms of the time at which the crime occurs: a peak season of theft occurred before the Spring Festival or busy farming season. Third, stealing can escalate into more serious cases or sometimes murder, usually as a result of stealing being discovered by somebody else and the criminal finding it difficult to escape.

According to the conversations with some experienced migrant workers, some of whom even acknowledged they have had stolen before, the reasons for stealing are divided into four types: first, because of extremely low income, life difficulties and pressures, migrant workers therefore have to steal for living. Second, stealing is not only a means of income, but also a means of revenge on society or others. Third, stealing occurs at the sight of money. It is occasional that migrant workers take something away from construction site or factories even if they are not in a difficult situation. Fourth, where stealing is committed by the petty thief; this mainly focuses on planning and action. Most of these thieves have no legitimate occupation; a few are even employed for the purpose of easier opportunities at which to steal. Stealing actually becomes their way of life. Crime committed by waste-purchase and disposal workers accounted for large proportion of total crime.

Fighting, especially group brawling, is an open social conflict as well as an important interference to social security. In terms of the participants, fighting occured among the migrant population, as well as between migrants and local people, with the former making up the majority. Most of fighting occurred at construction sites or on the street, and less often in factories. In terms of the scale, the most common dynamic is the group fight, which usually evolved from a fight between two, gradually becoming fight between two sides determined by geographical origins. Helping fellows in a fight is seen as a kind of 'moral duty' or 'sub-culture' among migrant workers. A typical scenario is that the fight occurs in group, which is oftentimes organized, with each group having their own core

leaders. Some fight groups are highly organized and the conflicts between those groups are so intense that they sometimes use instruments, which just looks like a small scaled military conflict between two countries during a war.

Among the interviewees, 109 people (16.2%) answered they had 'seen' a fight between migrant workers and local people; 181 people (26.9%) had 'seen' a fight among migrant workers, a number of these interviewees admitted their own involvement in these fights.

The causes for fighting can be divided into three main categories: the first is a result of an attempt to save face and preserve one's dignity. This kind of fight is typically the result of a disagreement over something petty, such as a miscommunication. The second cause refers to the insufficient communication and coordination of duties at work among different groups. The most common of which is the dispute over tool distribution, which leads to the different construction speed and qualities between teams. The third cause is the dispute over economic interests, such as the dispute between employer and employee regarding wage deduction.

According to the information from security departments in Wuxian and Wuxi, criminals who have no legitimate employment, residence permit and income sources were responsible for mainly migrant crime. These people are a specific part of floating population, who are difficult to control since they are migratory. According to the statistics of security department in Wuxi County, there were 2800 people who had committed crimes in 1994; 2300 were non-native, and 70% of them had no legal employment, residence permit or income source. The crime rate of migrant people with a formal occupation and income is almost as same as that of local people.

According to the information provided by the relevant department in Shanghai Changning District, migrants who have no legitimate employment, residence permit or income source occupied 5% of the total non-native population. This kind of migrant can be divided into two categories: one includes those who are temporarily unemployed, for whom wandering is the main lifestyle, since their income is too low to pay for rental. Because the wandering state of migrants in this category is phased and transitional, the migrants are easy to manage and rule. The other category includes those who habitually wander; these kinds of migrants have basic demands to get employment, and intend to get rid of the government control. Some of them live on theft, extortion and robbery, which are highly damaging to society and are hard to control. Therefore, the condition of the criminal subject should be analyzed when examining the crimes of floating population, and we should not say migrant people are all doing bad things in cities because of a few cases. In fact, the biggest characteristic of crime-oriented population is mobility under any social condition; even if there is no large scale of floating employment of peasants, criminals still commit crimes during migration.

### 2.5.2 The Characteristics of Migrant Workers' Security Being Threatened

The ways in which migrant workers face public security issues lacks public attention.

First: stealing and robbery. There are 252 (37.3%) migrant workers of a total (676) who answered that they had been stolen from or robbed, and some experienced this more than once.

Second: extortion. Unlike stealing and robbery, extortion acts by means of grand reason, excuse, has a certain openness and legitimacy.

Third: bullying. This damage is not economic, but rather about personality and dignity; for example, someone who has been beaten or humiliated, including infringements upon women. This kind of bullying is not only committed by social offenders, such as local or migrant people who do not care of any laws or regulations, but also people with formal management posts.

We have had a few observations on the social stability of migration under the context of social transformation and institutional transition in China.

1. Overall, migration promotes social stability. The basic factor affecting social stability is economic life, and employment status is the basic factor affecting economic life. Since the reform and opening-up, China's rural employment suddenly became a serious problem since the per capita resource in rural areas was very limited. Migration is not only important for rural development, but it is also the basic guarantee for social stability. It is not difficult to imagine that if there is no way for rural laborers to work locally, nor are they allowed to migrate to work, a large number of peasants would therefore have to live on farms with less lands, possibly even with no land. Hence, it is an essential precondition that migration promotes rather than undermines stability.
2. Viewed from a very specific angle, migration does pose some threats to the social stability in urban areas. However, these unstable factors have more profound background in time. On the one hand, China is now in the process of transferring from the planned economic system to the market economic system, and social allocation is now transferring to diversification and marketization. The social management mode for resource allocation by government has changed. On the other hand, China's modernization process is accelerating. The original concept that famers are responsible only for farming has collapsed, human-oriented migration has happened actively, and the original instability no longer exists; as such, the present social instability derived from social and institutional transition, and the overemphasis on the temporary disadvantage of migration is a surficial understanding of migration and social transition.

3. Migrants' irregular behavior is the result of their peripheral status, namely their institutional particularity. Migrants are a group who lack both protection and constraints. Having left home, a peasant loses their original 'community protection'; at the same time, they start a new employment life with no formal identification, so they also have no 'workplace protection'. Similarly, they do not have to obey to the norms or rules required by community and neighborhood because of their marginalized status. Because they belong to nowhere, their rights are more likely to be violated when there are conflicts in the interests among different social groups. As a result, they tend to protect themselves through illegal ways. Owing to this, they are seen as an 'unstable factor' within society. The only way to resolve this problem is to reform the population management system, so as to change their peripheral status in society.
4. Work should be carried out in three areas in order to mitigate the negative impact of rural migration on social stability. First, system reform related to employment should be accelerated, government management and the labor market should be standardized, and the loss of benefits of migrant workers caused by the defected institution and management should be reduced. In particular, employers, management departments and relavent personnel should treat migrant workers fairly across institutional and non-institutional aspects, so as to change their social environment. Second training for migrant workers should be strengthened. This kind of training is not about professional skills, but rather about public education, the content of which should include education on legal concepts, legal rights, and adaption to industrial civilization and city life. Third, a strong stance should be taken against a few criminals. The common characteristic of criminals is mobility. However, there is no intrinsic link between floating employment and floating crime.

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## 2.6 Management Logic of Government

Migration has ostensibly affected the original order of urban life, respresenting a challenge to government management. The fundamental requirement of migrants is citizen rights. In the face of such challenges, the management of city government needs to be examined, and more importantly, needs reform.

### *2.6.1 Evaluation of Migrant Workers' Crime*

In many previous surveys, migrant criminals have typically accounted for approximately 50% of the total criminals; in some places, they have made up more

than 60%, especially in Beijing, Shanghai, the Pearl River Delta region or other big cities. However, it is not enough to assess the extent of crime among the migrant population by looking at the proportion alone; some specific factors behind these figures should also be taken into account.

First, the concept of crime and what can be regarded as a crime should be considered. One measurement is the number of criminals captured by security department, another is the number of criminals convicted by the court. Taking Zhejiang Province as an example, the data provided by the security department was 19.4% higher than the data offered by the court. In fact, these 19.4% of criminal workers had merely committed serious breaches of public security regulations, such as stealing, prostitution, taking drugs and fighting, which were not criminal acts according to penal law.

Second, according to the data provided by security departments, a number of crimes were not included, such as independent investigation of crimes conducted by procuratorial organs, including embezzlement, bribery and dereliction of duty, which were mostly committed by local people and accounted for 6.5% of the total prosecutions. This means that local crime rate was underestimated by about 6.5% by the public, and the crime rate committed by migrant population was overrated.

Moreover, the method of comparison between the crimes committed by local people and the crimes committed by migrant population is questionable. The comparison method, which compares the total crime rate of local people with that of migrant population, is very common However, this is not a scientific method in that the internal demographic constitution of 'local resident population' and 'floating population' is different, especially in terms of their nature. The resident population comprises a social group of men and women, both old and young; however, men and young people are the overwhelming majority among the migrant population. Thus, one should first identify internal demographic structures in order to make a scientific comparison of crime rate of the two population groups. It is obvious that the crime rate of local people would still be higher comparatively, but if it were weighted according to the constituent demographics, it would be significantly lower than the present figure.

The actual crime rate of the floating population would be much lower if the abovementioned factors were taken into consideration when analyzing the gravity of the crime of the floating population.

### *2.6.2 Management Department: Structure and Action*

The systems of organization and management of the floating population were established in many cities, consisting of management networks in cities, districts and streets. Especially in some large cities, the establishment of a department to manage the migrant population within government is very common. For example, a city-wide floating population management and coordination working group, and its administrative office, was established in Shanghai city as well as in the towns, districts and streets of Shanghai; these institutions were non-permanent.

1. The management mode of urban grass-roots security department. In order to understand regular city government departments (public security departments mainly), and how to manage the migrant population at the micro level, the research group observed about 2100 migratory people were with temporary residence permits at a police station in Yantai, which was responsible for 22,429 residents; those observed accounted for 10% of the total. A small proportion the of total residents were not accounted for since they were not included in the management system; this was estimated to be about 30%.
   A total of 18 police officers were in the police station, the section for temporary residents' registration had two full-time transient population management personnel, one a police officer, the other one an accountant seconded from a shopping mall in the police station's jurisdiction. Nine policies are applicable for both permanent and temporary residents, including migrant population. The following are the main procedures for migrant population management at the police station:

   (1) Investigating: this refers to understanding the situation of temporary residents under a given jurisdiction. Since the majority of the migrant population did not actively register for temporary residence, investigating temporary residents and requesting them to register is therefore an essential part of temporary residence management. The migrant population who have not registered are easily found and engaged in management through this means. The searching work is mainly conducted by police rather than administrative staff in the temporary residents' registration section.
   (2) Issuing a permit: the temporary registration office is the only place responsible for issuing temporary residence permit because certain technical tasks, such as fingerprinting and recording, can only be completed here. In terms of process, the duty officers will first check the ID of temporary residents, then set up files for them, before filling in the registration form and activating the residence card. Men are required to leave 10 fingerprints on a fingerprint collection card.
   (3) Background check: in the transient population management, only men will be checked secretly, without informing the migrant people themselves. A background check means the duty police station sends a letter to the applicant's original police station to check his identification and previous crime record.
   (4) Verification and return: these are both carried out by administrative staff. Verified twice a year, in mid-year and at the end of year, the migrant person is checked for his or her temporary residence permit at the local police station. Verification includes renewed explanation of the situation of temporary residents.

The migrant population is designed for crime prevention. This management system is based on the historical condition that the social structure was relatively isolated in the era of planned economy, and social mobility (especially the regional flow) was undeveloped, so it was not designed for managing migration on a large scale. Therefore, this kind of mechanism for the management of residents is not

sufficient for the large-scale migration in the present transition period, particularly in areas where there has been a large influx of migrant population into the cities. Below are some of its drawbacks.

First, the management content is oversimplified. The management of the security department is a kind of security management, which mainly aims to prevent crime as a starting point, and migrants are seen as potential criminal groups in some cases. This kind of management is the responsibility for security departments. However, it is not enough for governmental management as migrants' problems are not related to security issues alone. Second, there is the issue of weak management. The allocation of personnel to the ministry of public security is solely based on the number of permanent residents. If the migrant population reaches a certain scale, even more than the local registered population, then the management personnel may be unable to fulfil their original responsibilities. In addition, their provision of corresponding services will be compromised, which will be discussed later.

2. In terms of management mode of the community, a large amount of work originally carried out the by public security department is done by sub-district neighborhood committees. For neighborhood committees, there is a piece of work that requires them to put in more effort, namely the management of family planning of migrant population. Therefore, the research group conducted an observation in the management procedure of conducting family planning for migrants. The object are migrant childbearing women aged from 15 to 49, who were from other provinces, places and towns. The management process is divided into the following steps:

   (1) Investigating: this means finding out and locating the migrant women of childbearing age residing in a given jurisdiction. Many of them have no incentive to register. However, they may come after finding out that they are unable to get a business license without having registered at the family planning department. Neighborhood committees seek them out if they do not register. The staff of neighborhood committees have said they need to search for and persuade them, household by household, which has become a routine since migrants keep coming and going.
   (2) Collecting family planning certificates: this certificate is issued by the local population and family planning department. Every province has its certificate with its own title; for example, the certificate of Shandong province is named 'Shandong family planning certificate for migrant population'; however in the Fujian province, it is named 'birth control certificate'. In the management process, neighborhood committees need to first collect certificates from migrant childbearing-age women; women without this certificate will be required to get one at their local population and family planning department or ask their families to run an errand for them. However, many of them are not willing to do as it requires a deposit, normally 200 Yuan, sometimes 500 Yuan or even more. The deposit will be taken for several years as migrants work in the city; therefore, it is in fact equivalent to charging a fee. Unlike other places where migrant women

were issued family planning certificates no matter they were married or not, Yantai Municipality issued a certificate of unmarriage for migrants.

(3) Signing a contract: this requires a deposit of 100 Yuan, the receipt of which is issued by population and family planning department at the place of original registration.

(4) Examination: the director of the neighborhood committee carries the family planning certificates to the street office, the industry and commerce administration and the police station, in orderto have certificates stamped at these three departments.

(5) Filing, sending letters and allocating the card: neighborhood committees set up files after examination. There are three sets of archival files, one is a package called 'family planning for migrant women', inside which are certificates, contract, letters and physical examination forms; another is a card called 'migrant women of childbearing age', and every woman receives one that records their basic information. These three sets of files constitute the file management of migrant childbearing women. A letter is sent to migrated health department in exchange for 'the receipt of incorporated management of the floating population', which provides notification that the migrant has been incorporated into a new family planning management system. A card named 'family planning card for women of childbearing age' is allocated to migrant women and the card is covered with the person's photo and basic information. All the procedures mentioned above represent the whole management process.

(6) Physical examination: this is part of the usual administrative process after incorporation. It is conducted twice a year, in March and April in the first half of the year, and August and September in the second half of the year, respectively. Exams are conducted at a family planning publicity and technical service station, with exam form stamped and collected in file bags and 10 Yuan charged.

(7) The neighborhood committee will return the certificate and deposit, and collect the card and contract when migrant women of childbearing age leave the area of registration; this is a symbol of the end of the management process.

The floating population is conducive to reducing the birth rate, which is an indisputable conclusion. Since migratory life makes more unmarried women tend to marry late, and late marriage is naturally conducive to reducing birth; at the same time, the flow of life also makes married women have a tendency to have fewer children, because compared with rural women, they have a relatively modern concept of childbearing. As early as the middle period of the 1990s, we noticed this problem in the survey. However, for the family planning management department, especially the government in the inflow area, the problem is not actually that simple. The problem of whether the floating population has resulted in fewer births is not important for them since it is difficult to evaluate, and it not related to their performance appraisal. What they care about is the procreational transgression in

the floating population, which is difficult to solve. For example, according to our investigation in Yantai, unplanned births generated by migrants accounted for over 80% of the total. In Shanghai, this figure reached 90% of the total (2000 cases). There is a gap here between academic researchers and governmental departments in approaching the issue of unplanned births among the floating population. The former points out that "migration will reduce unplanned birth generally" while the latter said, "what about those unplanned births here?". We should not ignore the practical problems faced by government departments.

3. The management mode in the urban–rural fringe area is different from that of the urban area. In the city, management is conducted by the formal security department; however in the urban–rural fringe area, the number of allocated polices cannot finish the heavy workload of security management; because of this, a number of temporary management staff are employed.

In this case, the management of migrants in the urban–rural fringe area is in fact conducted by community organizations rather than the government, and governed by some temporary agencies and staff without legal authority. The research teams had conducted a participatory observation of the community management process in Town H and Village HW of Shanghai for two months.

(1) Management mode in town

Institutions and personnel: Town H had over 20,000 migrants, the same to the number of resident population; the temporary residents' registration rate was approximately 75%. The floating population management department in town was named the 'floating population management office', cooperating with the 'community security enforcement team', which was defined as 'two brands, one team' In accordance with the provisions, the duty of the management office is to coordinate town government departments to guide the management work, and to manage migrants in township enterprises, the new land site and the new residential area directly, including temporary residential management, housing management, business management, family planning management, epidemic prevention and health management and so on. The floating population management office is a public institution with three full-time staff. The relevant departments should allocate staff to participate in management work in accordance with the provisions; however, apart from the staff at the family planning department, there are a only a few staff who did so. The director of the management office estimates that about 20% of the total migrants are unemployed. The main contents of management work at the township level can be assessed by us through keywords in meeting minutes, which provides a clearer understanding (see Table 2.1).

The main work of the township migrant population management office in 1998, January–February, was to investigate migrant population, to record their information on computer, and to select 30 outstanding representatives out of all migrant workers among the total and to visit migrants who stayed in Shanghai for the festival. March was the month of publicity and integrated management; March 5

**Table 2.1** Keywords used in meetings, statistics from floating population management office in township from March to November, 1998

| Keywords in speech of floating population management officials | | | Keywords in speech of integrated office, various functional departments officials | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percentage (%) | | Number | Percentage (%) | | Number | Percentage (%) |
| Registration | 10 | 10.87 | Registration | 3 | 6.25 | Registration | 1 | 1.89 |
| Housing rental administration | 14 | 15.22 | Housing rental administration | 5 | 10.42 | Housing rental administration | 15 | 28.30 |
| Temporary housing administration | 1 | 1.09 | Temporary housing administration | 1 | 2.08 | | | |
| Security issue | 4 | 4.35 | Security issue | 1 | 2.08 | Security issue | 4 | 7.55 |
| Check and repatriation | 3 | 3.26 | Check and repatriation | 1 | 2.08 | | | |
| Family planning | 9 | 9.78 | Family planning | 6 | 12.50 | | | |
| Health certificate | 5 | 5.43 | Health certificate | 3 | 6.25 | | | |
| Charge fee | 23 | 25 | Charge fee | 6 | 12.50 | | | |
| Floating population | 22 | 23.91 | Floating population | 1 | 2.08 | | | |
| Rectification | 1 | 1.09 | Rectification | 2 | 4.17 | | | |
| | | | Job evaluation of floating population | 3 | 6.25 | Job evaluation of floating population | 1 | 1.89 |
| | | | Banning “Four Small” | 4 | 8.33 | Banning “Four Small” | 12 | 22.64 |
| | | | Half-year summary | 1 | 2.08 | | | |

was the campaign to raise law awareness. April–May were for regulating "business activities by migrant workers"; June–August were for visiting migrant builders working at high temperature. September–October were for the investigation on private housing rental; the management of private rental permits and security licenses; and to clamp down unlicensed hair salons. The residential migrants had a high level of mobility, and, at the start of the year, the department of family planning distributed 'white cards' to over 3200 migrant women of childbearing age, who had lived there for over three months, and had registered their information. However, after three months, 40% of the total migrants had left when management staff revisited them.

(2) Management mode in village

Institutions and personnel: village HW was disappearing, foreign companies needd a lot of cheap labor, and more than 1000 migrants worked in foreign companies in this village. The village had a 'police station' that, in fact, was a duty station that served as an office for both the village security defense team and director of the local security squad, both of which were not a formal police force. There was a police officer who was responsible for residential registration rather than daily management and patrol. The defense team was originally the village protection team, who were safeguarding farmland. The defense team had 13 staff members, going on duty in daytime or at night, mainly working at night patrol and carrying out certificate inspection. Staff were equipped with uniform and batons and handcuffs. The defense team helped the police to issue temporary residential permits and to charge fees. The work costs of police station depended on the migrant population, which was named 'floating population support informal staff'.

The contents of management: since 1996, the management department of floating population in Shanghai put forward the policy of "double control management", which referred to the control over the number of migrants and their residence. On one hand, an important aspect of this policy was to remove illegal constructions, which were located on the outskirts of city where migrants lived. The director of the local security squad said that they removed 496 buildings in 1996; however, more than 600 buildings were built just one year later. There was a family who had rented out 40 buildings and more than 20 of them were illegal buildings. In this village, it was common to find illegal structures in families with their rooms rented to migrants. Because a large area of land had been expropriated for construction use, the lands of about 60 villagers had been without a source of income. In return, they only received 324 Yuan per month for subsistence, known as 'job-waiting due to land requisition', and these people need rental for their living. According to calculations, all the villagers would lose two million Yuan rental if all migrants were to leave. In 1997, the number of migrants in villages reached 3500; the village police station collected 196,000 Yuan of migrant management fee; and 40,000 Yuan had been given to village administration.

(3) The malpractice of management personnel

From the point of view of management institutions, at the town level, floating population management departments is merely a public institution, which has no administrative power in a strict sense. At the village level, village committees employ a group of young peasants, and buy several uniforms that look like police uniforms for them to put on, thus establishing a so-called 'police station'. These people are tasked with managing migrants, which includes giving fines, and even arresting and imprisoning outlaws. In the management of the floating population in various specific aspects, the defense team is the management personnel with whom migrants have the most connection. Since many management tasks were assigned without rules, the defense team was highly random in its conduct of daily management. As such, non-standard behavior happened from time to time, including: first, nonstandard appearance, rude language, drinking and sleeping on duty; second, the implementation of task not being in compliance with the procedure, such as repatriating and arresting without inquiry and/or investigation; third, releasing people in exchange for backhander payment or giving the laser labels to others freely. The labels were used to attach to the temporary residence permit on receipt of due fee required by the administrative departments; and fourth, violating the rights of floating population, particularly personal rights.

The defense team's irregular behavior is not simple individual behavior, because they are part of the community organizations at the grass-roots level, which means their management power has been abused. If these behaviors lack institutional constraints, it will lead to opposition between the floating population and local management institutions. The deeper impact lies in the contempt of migrants against social norms in inflow places, because the defense team's management behavior itself is the negation of the legitimacy of the governance principle.

Violence in local governance methods is worthy of attention. Violence exists in management, and it had proved to be an important means for staff to solve some management difficulties, but it also leads to new management problems, mainly hostility from migrants. Some migrant workers reported that four staff from the defense team of the police station entered their dormitory to check residence cards, when a woman refused to cooperate since she thought that they should come with police. Because of this, the defense team grabbed several girls with electric batons to pestle them, and beat them in the face. In addition, when some defense teams entered the salon to conduct inspection, they asked female workers there to sit on their laps. Such abhorrent behaviors have become important factors in triggering new security problems.

In the view of the management department, the most effective management method on the floating population is the so-called 'joint law enforcement operation', which is initiated by a department, and invites other departments to get involved in, in order to find out and address prominent problems existing among the migrant population. The present research team participated in such an operation once, launched by a local police station, with participants including hundreds of village cadres, the defense team and family planning staff. The objects of the operation include rental houses, market stalls, restaurants, salons and all kinds of shops—all those places where migrants work are on the check list. Specifically, they

will check whether the migrants' paperwork and documents are complete or not, and whether they have committed crimes. As the joint operation is conducted in three villages of that township, villages need to spread costs, and participants are generally required to hand in 20 yuan per person. The main features of this joint law enforcement operation is a kind of impact—within a few days, or a shorter period of time, it will have an obvious effect. However, soon after all will be unabated again, when those outlaw-oriented people gradually return, their illegal housing continuing to generate rental, and their illegal stalls back to business as usual.

Some employers and communities paid a great deal of attention to the legal education of migrants. At a different period of time each year, the law sessions were provided in the form of video and lecture. The videos 'Being Orderly' and 'A Promise for Tomorrow' were recorded purposely for the floating population, but few of them watched these vedeos because they were the talks of officials, lacking vivid and specific edifying features. There were some migrant associations and club activities, which were important places for leisure activities for the migrant population, mainly helped by young volunteers. However, with limited spaces and few activities, only a very small number of migrant workers were able to participate.

For the migrant population, what they most needed was basic protection of rights, such as personal rights not being violated, and their payment guaranteed. In the spring of 1998, a Taiwanese-owned clothing company in H town of Shanghai closed, and the boss left without honoring his 40 employees their four-month payment. Workers reported this issue to local foreign trade office; however, they were driven out and were told instead: "you are migrants, your boss left, you should go, too." Staff in village offices tended to be more unfriendly; they even asked the defense team to take physical measures, such as using batons against the migrants. Finally, the staff lawyer filed a lawsuit to the court to recover the wages they deserved.

Now, charging fees and issuing permits are major means for migrant policy. Policymakers think that these are the basic policy options for managing the disordered behavior and entry control of the floating population. However, migrants as a policy target group have no corresponding concept of identity, especially regarding the noncooperation mindset in policy execution, which has decreased the regulating efficacy of policy. From the perspective of the migrant workers, they are mainly dissatisfied with the control and restriction from the city government, the absence of due service to migrants, and the lack of institutionalized channels and support for voicing their demands and protecting their interests.

The disadvantage of public administration is the result of flawed policy design. The migrants are more like living in a policy vacuum as no government service is designed to target them, and in many cases, they think live in world without government. Migrants do not view city governments as their own government; they often ask for services from fellow townsmen, sometimes even secret organizations. In addition, the shortage of policy resource for migrants, which delayed the management process despite there being various policies or orders. In some cases, it constitutes an embarrassment that policy goals are without corresponding policy tools. Some kinds of management lack financial support, human resources, and even the administrative system under the statutory conditions. The prominent

problem is that, some local governments lack the sense of innovation and rely on ad hoc agencies and temporary staff to implement highly legal and policy-intensive policies, thus making public management face the legitimacy issue of the management personnel. In addition, while malpractice or inappropriate behavior of management personnel also lead to new conflicts, sometimes even escalating into local governance crisis.

The essence of public administration is the authoritative allocation of social resources, and requires social integration mechanisms in two aspects, namely social values and public interest. From the point of view of public administration of migrants in the city, the key to integration is that the policy needs to reflect the value concept of the 'migrant population as new citizens', rather than 'temporary residence' under the old system. From the point of view of system reform, people living in the previous planned economy era also experienced a process of urbanization. Not only the migrants but also citizens became new members of urban society with the same rights under the new market economy system. Viewing public management on floating population from these perspectives, it is clear that there is room for improvement in terms of government conduct.

(This article is a research report finished by the Research Department of Rural Economy of the Development Research Center of the State Council, written by Zhao Shukai in June, 1998, under the title of "Crime of Migrant Peasants and Public Governance".)

## 2.7 Exploration Amidst Crisis

In early April, the general manager of the Sino-German joint venture Yangzhou Yaxing—Benz co., Ltd., and his four family members were killed in Nanjing. The killers were four migrant workers from north Jiangsu province. This case exerted a great influence on society, and was thought provoking for the general public. Officials think the big lesson of this case is a lack of security in residential areas, whereas we believe it is also necessary to observe and deal with the current crisis phenomenon of migrants based on a certain social context.

Since the outbreak of 'the tide of migrants' in early spring of the year 1989, massive rural labor flow continued for and beyond. The social issues caused by the flow of migrant were mainly traffic problems before the mid-1990s, and then it turned into security problems after that time. In recent years, traffic problems eased substantially; even during the Spring Festival, railways and roads were still competing to attract more passengers. However, security problems still existed, and these have become more serious in late 1990s, and are more concerning than traffic and infrastructure issues. People were surprised to find that, not only ordinary public security cases involve migrants, but also vicious cases can be aggravated by more migrants.

People involved in public security cases were mainly migrants in many cities. Reality indicates that urban security was not just related to local people anymore, and cities cannot simply pull up the drawbridge and enjoy a quiet life as they did

several years before. Urban stability has more and more direct relation to the status quo in rural areas, and various factors that affect urban security are linked to migrants. In order to solve the crime issue, the government not only needs to strengthen prevention and consolidate law enforcement, but adjustment in the urban management system is also required.

**First: Strengthening the Information Service for Migrant Workers**

Peasants seek employment in cities because they wish to keep the cost of risk to the minimum and therefore this decision can be seen as a rational personal choice. However, they have restricted access to job information, and their excessive dependence on information dispersed through personal and interpersonal network leads to great blindness and high cost in terms of job seeking. At present, employment information for migrant workers is spread by commercial employment institutions. While those institutions aim to gain profit, they tend to exaggerate job opportunities and work conditions, which misleads massive numbers of peasants aspiring to work outside of local villages. The government thus has responsibility to improve employment information services via mass media, and release regional and industry employment information on a timely basis. Then the majority of the rural labor force who are willing to work outside could be informed of the grim macro employment situation, and they could make their decision more carefully. Making sure that the blind outflow of labor ends before they get out of villages creates both an optimal scenario for peasants and for society at large. Otherwise, if some peasants regret their initial decisions after they have already moved into cities, then most of them might not have the ability to return to their rural hometown. Based on the Beijing railway station's survey last year, we were in contact with peasants who were regretful about working far from home but were unable to return home, and some even cried at the railway station.

**Second: Exercising Due Caution in Implementing Policies and Measures to Lay off Migrant Workers, Thus Reducing Migrants' Sense of Being Discriminated Against**

Now, many companies make industrial restrictions for the migrant labor force limiting the job categories in which they can apply for work, which is actually discriminatory in nature. Some companies took a strong stance when dismissing their migrant employees, which could cause miseries for migrant workers as they suddenly found that they had no source of income in the city. Moreover, it could deepen their sense of discrimination and even anti-social sentiments, which could well become potential instability factors. This kind of practice is inconsistent not only with reform guidelines under the market economy in the long term, but with society stability of cities in the short term. It is easy for employers to lay off migrant workers but it is extremely difficult to make them leave the city and go home. As long as they stay in the city, they must come up with a means to support themselves, whether legal or illegal.

**Third: Standardizing Management Practice and Strengthening the Service Function of the Government**

In recent years, many local governments have introduced management regulations on migrants, and have achieved some fruitful results. However, the drawbacks are obvious as well. First of all, management regulations are imperfect, and include complicated procedures, poor policy coherence, overlapping regulations, law evasion, and illegal management. Second, management mechanisms are unsound; operation mechanisms are unreasonable; departmental interests affect law enforcement; managerial staff have poor capability and a dependence on the temporary rectification, thus resulting in the policy effect being hard to maintain. From the standpoint of migrants, government management means handling certificates, and that means a fee will be charged. The fee standards are not set too high, but, in practice, the rules are not strictly observed. It is hard for migrant workers to get access to any more services apart from paying fees to relevant local government departments. Due to the high fees, although migrants realize that local managing departments require them to get certificates, they still try to evade them.

Now, it seems that the most important work is in strengthening protection for migrants' legal rights. However, this is precisely what is being ignored. As regards to the employment guidance of migrants, labor disputes and even social security, the government should pay more attention to help relieve migrants' difficulties, so that they can feel that the city governments are also their own government. Once their legal rights receive powerful protection from local government departments, not only will the approval rating of the work of the government surge, but also the crime numbers caused by their using illegal ways to protect personal legal rights will plunge.

**Fourth: Opening 'Urbanization' Channels for Migrants**

More and more migrants have settled down in cities, but their marginalized status has not changed significantly. According to Beijing's floating population census, the residence time of migrants shows an obvious upwards trend. At present, the population who live for over half a year make up 63.6% of the total number of the floating population; among them, those living for more than three years occupy 19.4%; and 10.4% of population have lived for over five years. In the meantime, the number of the floating population with their families living in Beijing keeps growing as well, totaling 310,000 households or 700,00 people. In addition, there are now many non-floating members of the 'floating population'. Most of them have become city residents in fact, as well as taxpayers, and they not only have a strong need for their lives to improve, but also have clear requirements for protecting their rights. Nonetheless, they are still treated as a 'foreign population' and a 'temporary residence population' within the system, they do not get an identity change, and they still face a series of institutional difficulties, such as lodging, employment, children education and social security.

We suggest that government should further consider adjusting the management mechanism for urban residents. For those rural populations who have already had a

stable life in the city, the government should offer them formal citizenship. For example, migrants who work for five or seven years could get a 'Green Card', and once they get their Green Cards, they could enjoy the infrastructure and public service in the city in the same way as other fellow urban citizens. In this way, migrant people could be saved the trouble of travelling between urban and rural areas with the fear of expulsion due to their identity issue.

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## 2.8 Desks of Migrant Workers

Since the mid-1990s, in some floating population-concentrated cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, specialized private schools appeared that only recruited children who were from migrant families, and; these were called "school for migrants' children". These schools were not approved by national education department, nor did they have any legal admission charter, but those poorly built schools admitted a large number of migrants' children. From September 1998 to September 1999, we took a large ranging survey in Beijing, and found that this worrisome phenomenon was increasingly prominent, and relevant departments should consider it a serious issue.

### *2.8.1 The Rapid Development of Migrant Schools*

In farmland, abandoned warehouses, residential areas and other places near the urban–rural fringe in Haidian District, Chaoyang District, and Fengtai District of Beijing, our survey team visited 114 migrant schools. These schools had different student sizes; some had less than 10 students, some had hundreds of students, while others had more than 1300 students, with the total number of students nearing 20,000. The characteristics of these schools are:

First: a surprising number have fast development.

The earliest school found in the survey is in Bajia village, Haidian district, and was established in 1993 by a teacher from Gushi, Henan province. Early schools usually started of their own accord. Rural private school teachers or migrants who were thought to be knowledgeable, were asked to teach children who had nowhere to go to school in the cities. At the beginning, there were only few students, but later, resourceful migrants also sent their children there, so the scale of the schools grew bigger. Other people thought running such a school would be profitable and have a high demand, so they just followed suit. Running a school like this had very little

cost, because returns from tuition fees could immediately compensate initial investment as such, more and more people were willing to run such schools and they were showing an upward trend year on year, especially after 1997. In the survey, 57 of 114 schools were established in 1998, accounting for half of the total number. The number of students had grown rapidly, too. For instance, Taoyuan primary school began operation in September 1998 with 70 students; after only one semester, the number of students increased to 150, and the number of students doubled one semester after that, reaching over 300 in total. Xingzhi migrants' school located in Wukongqiao, Haidian District, is currently the school with the most students. It was founded in the autumn of 1995 with only nine students, while the number of students increased to 507 in September 1997, and over 800 students in September 1998, before amounting to 1300 in September 1999. As a result, the old dormitories were not enough, so they rented two houses, and built new campuses and even launched a new middle school.

Second: cheap tuition fees and poor facilities.

Each school had a different standard tuition fee, ranging from 250 to 700 yuan for one semester, generally about 300–400 yuan, far below the public school fees. Urban public schools also charge 'sponsorship fees' for migrant students, approximately 1000–2000 yuan per year at least, as well as the 'temporary schooling fee', which stands at about 480 yuan per year. Therefore, it is difficult for migrant families to afford such high expenditures. The price difference between migrant schools and public schools is the main reason why floating populations are willing to choose migrant schools for their children's education.

### *2.8.2 The Problems of Urban Compulsory Education System*

Now, a large number of school-age children followed their migrant parents to the cities. According to the floating population census in 1997 in Beijing, the families of the floating population living in Beijing accounted for 310,000 households and 700,000 people in total. In the last two years, Beijing has tightened its control on migrants, and government data show that the number of migrants has declined. Against this backdrop, migrant schools developed rapidly, indicating more and more families of migrants had moved into Beijing. Meanwhile, more and more school-age children are born in Beijing. According to our survey, in a school with 310 students, there was nobody born in Beijing among fifth- or sixth-graders, only 10.1% of the third- or fourth-graders, 19.6% of second-graders, and 25% of first-graders were born in Beijing. Among pre-school pupils, the number has reached 32%, which means that a growing number of children of the floating population need to receive education in urban areas. However, the majority of migrants have low incomes, so they are not able to pay for the additional fee

charged by public education. If they need to go to school, they would have to seek an alternative.

The current compulsory education system in China is hierarchical and categorized by administration and regulation; for example, rural elementary education is administered by township governments, and school-age children should receive their nine-year compulsory education at their registered residence. However, for the children who have followed their parents and moved to urban areas with their residence status still registered in the rural areas, then the original education system is systematically unable to cover them, while in the urban areas, migrant workers are only regarded as a temporary labor force, so their social needs as a special population group are widely ignored. With stronger stability in urban employment and living, the birth and residence demands of migrants' children becomes inescapable and indeed reasonable. Due to the fact that most migrants' families cannot afford the high fees at public schools, parents thus have to opt for the less standard form of school. This situation illustrates that the institutionalized disparity between urban and rural compulsory education systems does not meet social needs, since it fails to adapt to the rapidly changing social reality in urban–rural relationship in the reform and urbanization era.

Some people think that solving education problems for floating children will only make the floating population stay in cities and will attract more people come to city, which is a bad thing for urban stability. In other words, if the authority does not solve this education problem for floating children and stands aside, letting the children drop out of schools, then this could make migrants go home and would serve as a warning for people who still want to come to the city. This opinion is in many city officials' minds. The issue is that the convenience of urban management should not come at the cost of depriving children of their education, because they have the legal rights to receive compulsory education.

### *2.8.3 The Problems Existing in the Migrant Schools*

Migrant schools provide a place for children who have poor economic capacity to receive education; even an education of poor quality is better than no education at all. This is the bright side of these schools' existence. However, many problems exist in these schools as well:

1. These schools aimed to gain profits and school management staff tried to pursue maximum profit, which resulted in poor facilities at these schools. School management staff are not philanthropists, and their behaviors could be understood as marketing management behavior. They constantly minimized cost on facilities and teaching equipment, and they would not even buy some basic teaching equipment such triangles, rulers, desks and chairs of good quality. Some of the chairs schools bought were of heights that did not match students' physical conditions, forcing some students to read books by bending over their

backs, which hugely affected their physical and mental development. However, a school manager could earn a net income of more than 50,000 yuan per year when the student size totals 300 or 400. As long as the school could still be run at the lowest cost, the students' facility would be kept at a minimum level, allowing school management staff to make more money, which has become their principal 'educational philosophy'.

2. The quality of school managing staff and teachers did not qualify as educational professionals. Among the 114 schools, 31% of headmasters did not have any previous teaching experience. They worked in a verity of industries, such as contractor, vendor, accountant, chef, peasant, builder, cleaner, or babysitter, and some even were illiterate but also built schools and served as headmasters. Among the managerial staff, only 14% of them claimed to have college degrees. Teachers are also employed from different backgrounds, and most of them did not have formal teaching credentials and had never taught any students. At some schools, there was no one with previous teaching experience among its staff and teachers. For many floating children, attending school is just better than doing nothing.
3. There was a lack of standardized teaching management and organization. The person who run the migrant schools was in charge of all the things, including accounting, logistics, communication and curriculum design. Work such as the teaching evaluation and student assessment were non-existent in migrant schools.

### *2.8.4 Policy Recommendations*

The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Security twice issued provisional regulations on floating children's education, such as the nearby enrollment policy. However, those policies have not been implemented effectively, and therefore had little effect on improving the status quo. Facing a growing number of migrant schools, specific management countermeasures from local governments tended to go to two extremes: either ignore and adopt a laissez-faire attitude toward migrant schools; or close them down entirely. These two approaches are both undesirable. The first approach allows anyone without due qualification to run schools and makes migrant schools devoid of normative management, thus hampering children from getting the right education. The second approach is even more hazardous, because replacing migrant schools without solving sponsorship problems of public schools and opening up channels in the existing education system will in effect be tantamount to driving children away from schools. Therefore, we put forward our suggestions that the government should take specific measures as soon as possible, with the following two steps for deliberation:

1. Reducing or cancelling sponsorship fees of public schools

Public schools should be the main player for enrolling migrant children. City governments should try to give migrant families an access for sending children to study in regular schools, as long as the rural families have obtained a stable employment and lived a stable life in the city. Now, education facilities and teachers at Beijing public elementary schools have exceeded what is needed as the number of students have shrunk. However, high sponsorship fees for public schools is an insurmountable threshold for the majority of migrant parents, and the fees are not institutionalized by the state, so it is actually a way to make excess profit. If this threshold is not discarded, floating children will be forced to go back to migrant schools. This will lead to a lose–lose scenario, where one side is a waste of education resources, and the other side is shabby migrant schools overflown with pupils. Reducing or cancelling this threshold not only solves the education problems of floating children, but also makes full use of excess education resources, so that many unqualified migrant schools can no longer run.

2. Standardizing migrant schools

We believe the correct approaches are to establish standards, adopt differential treatments depending on circumstances, and provide supervision and guidance. In particular, the following three measures could be considered:

First, standards for running migrant schools should be introduced. This standard could be lower than that of public schools based on real conditions. The schools should be regulated and receive formal charter when certain standards have been fulfilled, otherwise they should be closed.

Second, the quality of managing and teaching staff should be monitored. Managing staff should have a junior college diploma or above, whereas teachers should have intermediate teaching qualifications or an equivalent degree. Those schools whose managers and teachers cannot meet the above requirements should be closed.

Third, schools with teaching activities that are of qualified standards should receive regular guidance and supervision from education departments, and should receive instruction for improvements once problems are found by education departments. Schools that do not follow supervision and instructions should be closed.

(This article is a research report of Research Department of Rural Economy in the Development Research Center of the State Council, finished in October, 1999. The report won the award of the Excellent Research Report of the Year in the Development Research Center of the State Council.)

## 2.9 Marginalization of Basic Education

The large scale of rural labor migration towards urban areas has existed for many years, and the second generation of migrants has emerged during this process. They were either born in their hometown before moving with their parents to cities, or were born in the cities in which their parents currently live and work. This problem

is especially prominent in Beijing. Because of its political status during the planned economy period, Beijing did not have a well-developed service industry, and the migrant workers of this city had some specific features. One of the most typical kind of migrants belonged to the industry-community type, who brought the well-developed small-scale industries in their hometowns to Beijing and formed communities on this basis, such as the Zhejiang Village, Xinjiang Village, and so on. Another type of migrant worker entered Beijing as complementarities for the city's service industry, and they mainly concentrated on industries such as catering, daily food supply, and retailing. Since native Beijing residents were not willing to undertake such jobs, they thus had no competitive advantage in this field. As a result, migrant workers rapidly entered those industries and grabbed the job opportunities. These two kinds of migrants were different from the cheap rural labor force in the Pearl River Delta, and they also differed from another kind of large scale migrant, such as the construction labor in large and middle-sized cities like Beijing and Shanghai. The prominent feature of industry community type workers and the complementarity of service type workers is that the workers migrating with their families take up a large proportion of the entire migrant population. Therefore, how to deal with migrant children in Beijing became an outstanding issue.

Although the city administrators still had not realized the education problem of migrant children, some informal schools that recruited a large number of school-age migrant children sprung up, and they were generally known as 'schools for children of migrant workers'. Despite being a de facto part of the country's basic education, these schools received no government investment or teaching supervision from the educational authorities, so they were clearly marginalized. We conducted a large scale investigation among the schools for children of migrant morkers in Beijing from September 1998 to October 1999. There were 15,000 students in the 114 schools that our investigation team covered, but the difference in the school size among them was huge. While the smallest school only had seven students, the number of students in the largest school exceeded 1300 in October, 1999. The schools that have more than 200 students include Yu Ying Primary School in the neighborhood of Taiyanggong, Hongyan School and Bajia Private Primary School in Qinghe, Hope Primary School of Northern Zhangjiakou in Kunming Hunan Road, Jingyuchen Primary School, Mingyuan School, and Xingzhi School for Children of Migrant Workers, among others.

The findings of this investigation are thought-provoking—problems of the second generation of migrant workers have emerged along with rural labor migration, and the drawbacks of the old system of urban–rural division have become ever more perspicuous. To solve school enrollment problems for migrant children would call not only for the reform of the compulsory education system, but would also require institutional innovation in many respects. This report consists of five parts: first, the overview of schools; second, school administrators; third, educational decisions of migrant families; fourth, migrant children; and fifth, challenges and suggestions.

### 2.9.1 The Overview of Schools

1. Geographical distribution

From the perspective of geographical distribution, most of those schools were mainly concentrated in the rural–urban fringe zones, in which migrants resided in high density. For instance, Chaoyang District and Haidian District have the largest distribution. Among all of the schools, there were 44 of them in Chaoyang District, 41 in Haidian District, 11 in Shijingshan District, 7 in Fengtai District, 1 in Tongzhou District, 8 in Changping District, and 2 in Daxing District.[5] Schools were widespread in Haidian District, Chaoyang District and Shijingshan District. In these districts, several villages could share a school, some villages had their own schools, while some other villages had more than one school. In the heartland of the city, i.e. the areas within the 2nd Ring Road, like Xicheng District, Dongcheng District, Chongwen District and Xuanwu District, no school of such kind was found. However, one school for migrant children existed in the area between the 2nd Ring Road and the 3rd Ring Road, 15 schools existed between the 3rd and the 4th Ring Road, 60 existed between the 4th and 5th Ring Road, and 42 existed outside the 5th Ring Road. Hence, we can see that the schools for children of migrant workers were mainly spread over the areas outside the 4th Ring Road, since the migrant population there is large and the rental there is relatively cheap.

2. Features of the schools

These schools shared several features. First, all of them were private. Second, they had no legitimate operation license. Third, the students enrolled in these schools were the children of the migrant population, especially the children of families with middle and low incomes. Fourth, the application procedure was very simple. These kinds of schools had small demands for capital, and they did not need any legitimate license, so the operators could establish a school by renting houses or even building shacks in crop fields. The small upfront investment could easily be earned back via the charge of tuition fees. In addition, those schools had no standard requirement for recruiting their teachers. There were five schools that all had only one teacher, which meant that the school administrators had to undertake the job of teaching for several students. There were 22 schools with only two teachers, and many of them were run by couples. Finally, fifth, the conditions of these schools were abominable. Many of them were lacking in basic teaching equipment, such as set squares, compasses and so on.

3. Development process

Since 1993, the number of ‘schools for children of migrant workers’ had a rapid growth rate, and it increased year on year. Among the 114 schools that we

[5]Changping and Daxing were counties instead of districts of Beijing at the time of our investigation.

**Table 2.2** Number of schools for children of migrant workers

| Time of establishment (Year) | Quantity |
|---|---|
| 1993 | 1 |
| 1994 | 3 |
| 1995 | 10 |
| 1996 | 13 |
| 1997 | 24 |
| 1998 | 57 |

investigated, the oldest one was established in 1993. Those founded after 1998 make up half of the total number of schools in our investigation (see Table 2.2).

Generally speaking, the years before 1996 were the starting period for the 'schools for children of migrant workers'. During this period, the vacancy of one school per village was filled. Since 1997 until now, such schools have entered into expansion, and several schools have to compete in one village. The scale of those schools also developed quickly. For instance, there were only around 70 students in Taoyuan Primary School at its establishment in September 1998. But only 6 months later, the number of students doubled to 150, and at the first anniversary of the school, the number of students had been quadrupled to well over 300. When we tracked and visited dozens of those schools in the autumn of 1999, we found that most of the schools had an obvious expansion in terms of the number of students. The number of students had typically increased by 30%, from 200 to around 300.

4. Tuition Fees

The 'schools for children of migrant workers' mainly maintained their operation by collecting tuition fees. The cost of tuition fees among the 114 schools is listed in Table 2.3.

From Table 2.3 we can see that most of the schools for migrant children had low charges for tuition fees, 43.9% of schools charged less than 300 yuan per semester, and the average tuition fee of the 114 schools was 324.4 yuan. Compared with the public schools in Beijing, this charge is exceedingly low (Table 2.4).

Schools for children of migrant workers not only had a low charge for tuition fees, but also charged those fees in a flexible way. Most of the schools collected their fees on a semester basis and some even collected them on a monthly basis. What's more, many of them allowed a default in payment. This is one of the reasons that these schools are popular among the migrant population. By contrast, some of the public schools in Beijing usually require families to pay up the fees for several years in a lump sum as sponsorship fees to the school. This kind of requirement is merely unacceptable for migrant workers.

**Table 2.3** Fee standards of schools for children of migrant workers

| Tuition fees (yuan/semester) | Less than 300 | 300–399 | 400–499 | 500–599 | Over 600 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of schools | 50 | 33 | 14 | 11 | 6 | 114 |
| Percentage (%) | 43.9 | 28.9 | 12.3 | 9.6 | 5.3 | 100 |

**Table 2.4** Comparison of tuition fee standards for migrant children between schools for children of migrant workers and Beijing public primary schools (Unit: yuan)

| | Tuition fees | Additional fees | Donations | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Beijing public primary schools | 100 | 480 | 500–2000 | 1080–2580 |
| Schools for children of migrant workers | 300–600 | – | – | 300–600 |

5. The constitution of teachers

Most migrant schools were run by non-local people, and teachers were also mostly non-local, and were often fellow townsmen or villagers and even relatives. Take one school, for example, in September 1998, among the 31 teachers in Xingzhi School, more than one third of the teaching staff were relatives or villagers of the school administrators, with another one third being acquaintances. Xingzhi School was relatively large with more than 800 students and a large number of teachers, so the school teachers with such a background occupied a comparatively a lower percentage in terms of the overall staff number. In some relatively small schools, teachers were mostly relatives of the school administrators or fellow villagers. These migrant teachers had obvious shortcomings, as detailed below:

(1) Many teachers had not had any teaching experience or professional training. In some of the larger schools that we visited, approximately one third of their teachers had taught before in formal schools (including rural schools), or had graduated from normal schools. Because of the low salary or the fact that they sometimes even could not get paid on time at previous schools, they had to go out to work as a teacher again, and this time at a school for migrant children. As for the rest, two-thirds had no teaching experience prior to teaching, and were mostly vocational school, high school or secondary school graduates. They only taught at these jobs because they could not find any other work.
(2) Teachers show great mobility. Because working in the migrant school as a teacher was temporary work, teachers could come at any time, but also could go at any time. Many teachers just work to earn money, and do not want to be teachers in the long run. The salaries of migrant school teachers was also quite low, usually 400–500 yuan per month. Once they had a better job, they would leave their teaching position. Some teachers quit their job after teaching for a month or two. At some larger schools, there were teachers quitting almost every

semester, with new teachers coming. To some extent, it is safe to say that teaching at migrant school was a job with great mobility.

### 2.9.2 Schools Administrators

School administrators refer to the founders of these schools, not the teachers who merely worked for them, forming a relationship of employers and employees. School administrators of these 'schools for children of migrant workers' were of varied social groups, ranging from college-educated to illiterate. A large proportion of them had taught in private or public schools back in their hometowns and among the 114 schools, 79 were founded by them. Others joined this trade from scratch, with their original profession ranging from contractors, hawkers, cooks, vegetable growers, construction workers, cleaners, nannies and so on.

1. The origin of the administrators

The administrators of 111 migrant schools (excluding 3 kindergartens) were found to originate from nine provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, namely Hebei, Henan, Beijing, Inner Mongolia, Anhui, Shandong, Hubei, Sichuan and Jilin. Most of them had migrated to cities, and were largely from the Hebei and Henan province. There were 54 from Hebei, accounting for 48.6% of the total; 40 were from Henan, making up 36%. It was found that school administrators in Hebeiall came from Zhangjiakou Municipality, Hebei, especially from Zhangbei County where 25 school administrators came from. In Henan, except three, all the other surveyed school administrators came from Xinyang, especially Gushi County where 23 school administrators were from (see Table 2.5).

Why did most of the school administrators of migrant schools come from the Zhangjiakou Municipality in Hebei Province (54 out 54) and Xinyang Municipality in Henan province (37 out of 40) according the the survey information? This is due to the following factors:

**Table 2.5** Origin of administrators in schools for migrant children

| Province | Quantity | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Hebei | 54 | 48.6 |
| Henan | 40 | 36.0 |
| Beijing | 5 | 4.5 |
| Inner Mongolia | 4 | 3.6 |
| Anhui | 3 | 2.7 |
| Shandong | 2 | 1.8 |
| Hubei | 1 | 0.9 |
| Sichuan | 1 | 0.9 |
| Jilin | 1 | 0.9 |
| Total | 111 | 100 |

(1) Beijing was the main destination for migrants from Hebei and Henan provinces. Zhangjiakou and Xinyang areas were both poor areas, with one third to a half of the local population migrating to cities in order to seek jobs; many of whom came to Beijing.
(2) Xinyang and Zhangjiakou people had already formed their local communities in Beijing. For example, people from Gushi, Henan Province are almost dominating the waste collection business in Beijing and collectively reside in specific concentrated areas such as Guili, Bajia and Taiyanggong. Among the surveyed schools, the earliest school built was by Gushi migrants (Bajia Primary School founded in 1993), and the earliest known school founder was also from Gushi (came in 1992, with the school closed later). Migrants from Zhangbei County of Hebei Province were chiefly living on farming in Beijing and were mainly concentrated in the Sijiqing Township, Haidian Township, Yamenkou and some other places. Its earliest school founder arrived in Beijing in 1994. Migrants from Guyuan County, Hebei Province were mainly doing light-truck transport business in Beijing and were mostly living in the Qingheying, Lishuiqiao, Zhongtan and other places. Concentration of residence among the floating population gave rise to a large number of school-age children, meaning that more schools were needed.
(3) More fellow townsmen and villagers followed suit. After their initial success, more fellow villagers arrived in Beijing and become engaged in the same business. For instance, when someone had successfully founded one school, often his or her relatives or friends would then come and join in the business. This led to a scale effect. For example, Zhang Baogui, Li Lunjun, Qin Xuelin, Huang Shifu were four private teachers of Sanli Primary School in Jiangji Township, Gushi County and they all went to Beijing to establish their own schools. Another example is that the school teachers of a primary school in Dongmao Township, Chicheng County, Hebei Province founded five migrant schools in Beijing. Sometimes, school administrators of different schools can be kindred.

2. The educational level of the school administrators

The majority of school administrators have not received higher education. Among the surveyed, 16 were found to be junior college graduates, making up 14%; 83 of them had finished secondary school, accounting for 65%; 2 were sheer illiterate; and there were also 21 who declined to inform us of their educational background (see Table 2.6 for details).

It is worth noting that the qualifications here were reported by the surveyed school administrators themselves, and as far as we understand through our contact with the schools, some of them in fact have no formal college diploma. It can be said that the veritable educational background was most certainly lower than the table shows.

**Table 2.6** Education level of migrant school students

| | Junior college | Secondary normal school | Technical secondary school | High school | Middle school | Primary school | Illiterate | Information not given | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quantity | 16 | 27 | 2 | 36 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 21 | 114 |
| Percentage (%) | 14.0 | 23.7 | 1.8 | 31.6 | 7.9 | 0.9 | 1.8 | 18.4 | 100 |

*Note* 10 of the 27 surveyed teachers were in further education

**Table 2.7** Teaching experience of school administrators

| | With teaching experience | | | | Without teaching experience | Information not given | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Private school | Public school | Self-employed | Company-employed | | | |
| Quantity | 42 | 30 | 5 | 2 | 30 | 5 | 114 |
| | 79 | | | | | | |
| Percentage (%) | 36.8 | 26.3 | 4.4 | 1.8 | 26.3 | 4.4 | 100 |

3. Teaching experience of school administrators

This comprised three categories: private teacher, public teachers, and no teaching experience. Among the 114 school administrators, 79 had taught in schools before they founded their own schools, including 42 who taught in private schools and 30 in public schools, and 7 as self-employed or company-employed teachers. In addition, there were 30 school administrators who had no former teaching experience and five people refused to disclose any information (see Table 2.7 for details).

Among those without teaching experience, four had nonetheless taught in other migrant schools before establishing their own schools. A considerable proportion of school administrators join this business after quitting their various jobs. For instance, the following school principles all started as non-teaching staff: Mr Feng originally from Gushi County came to Beijing to do small business; Mr/Ms Ding originally came to wholesale soybean sauce; Mr/Ms He used to be a businessman; Mr/Ms Lu came as a chef before starting his own snack bar; Mr/Ms Zhu came as a secretary before becoming a manager in a home appliance firm; Mr/Ms Zhang from Anhui Province came to rent video cassettes before doing the hotel business; Mr/Ms Chen from Xinxian County, Henan Province came to work on a farm before becoming a labor contractor; Mr/Ms Guan from Guangshan County, Henan Province came to farm; Mr/Ms Qin and Mr/Ms Mei from Gushi County, Henan Province came as waste collectors; Mr/Ms Duan from Zhangbei, Mr/Ms Li, Mr/Ms Wu, Mr/Ms Yang, Mr/Ms Zhang, Mr/Ms Xue, Mr/Ms Wang from Jilin Province, Mr/Ms Liu from Inner Mongolia all planted vegetables on their contracted land; Mr/Ms Hu worked on a construction site for a decade; Mr/Ms Shi from Gushi County came to work in a printing factory; Mr/Ms Li came to work as cleaning foreman; Mr/Ms Li from Inner Mongolia came to work as a caretaker for the elderly; Mr/Ms Zhang from Shandong Province came as an accountant, and so on.

### *2.9.3 Educational Decisions of Migrant Families*

1. Occupation and income level of students' family

According to our survey of 500 students at a school, the parents of those students were mainly owners of a self-employed venture, contracted workers, peasants and so on (see Table 2.8).

To be specific; peasants' refer to peasants who migrated from other places to work in self-employed agriculture on a piece of contracted land in city suburbs or

**Table 2.8** Occupation of rural migrant families

| Role | Self-employed | Contracted worker | Peasant | Domestic laborer | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Husband | 72.0 | 16.1 | 10.1 | 1.8 | |
| Wife | 58.9 | 11.9 | 9.5 | 18.5 | 1.2 |

its surrounding areas; 'domestic laborers' refers to housewives who did not work outside and whose family are supported by a more financially able husband; 'others' refers to either (a) husbands without work; or (b) husband or wife still staying in the hometown.

Vendors and contracted workers make up the bulk of rural migrant workers. Based on our survey and interview, vendors made about 1000–1500 per month depending on the business operation. As is shown in the above table, husbands and wives often worked together in the same trade, so it is possible to see how much a family earnt per month. For instance, most couples worked as temporary workers and earnt 400–600 yuan each per month. A few people worked as a chauffeur and earnt a bit more. Overall, an average migrant family made around 800–1500 yuan per month. It is clear that they are among the low-income groups and this inescapably has an impact on the education they could afford for their children.

4. Why bring children to Beijing for schooling?

Through many in-depth interviews with schoolchildren and parents, and through the essays on their life in Beijing handed in by students attaining higher grades, a number of factors that drove children to come to study in Beijing with their parents can be found:

(1) Emotion: parents and children are naturally bound to miss each other if parted. So, understandably, it is human nature to bring children along when one travels far from home.
(2) Custody: if children were left behind in their hometown, more often than not, they would have no one to look after, educate and discipline them. Some migrant children did not behave or did not study hard at school after migrating to Beijing, which was in sharp contrast to their previous behavior back home. Some were mistreated and scolded by their relatives when their parents were working far away from home, resulting in some children with behavior disorders. For example, a child who depended on his or her relatives may not have dared to eat meat or anything he or she desired because of the disapproving eyes around the table. Seeing this when returning home at Spring Festival, many migrant parents would feel heartbroken and hence take their children with them. Grandparents could also take care of children, but as they grew old and many passed away, this became out of the question too. When children finally arrived with their parents in Beijing, it is often the case that they could only go to a migrant school since it was the only school their parents can afford.
(3) Economy: many migrant parents told us in our survey that they would need to spend a huge amount of money on transport to get back home to see their children. They also had to give money to the people they had asked to take care of their children. It was thus more economical for them to bring their children with them to live in Beijing.

3. Why not send children to normal schools?

(1) The most important reason is that public schools, cheap as they may be, charged substantial additional fees to part of migrants, usually at 2000–3000 yuan per annum. This has quite effectively inhibited most of migrant parents from sending their kids to these schools.
(2) Most public schools charged migrant parents additional tuition fees in a big lump sum for fear that they may migrate again in the near future to other places. And this does not suit migrant families due to their natural proclivity of mobility.
(3) Some normal schools in Beijing show prejudice against migrant students. As told by migrant parents, the academic performance of migrant students is not included in the overall teachers' appraisal and therefore teachers do not treat migrant students as seriously as their local peers. In addition, due to household registration restraints and thereby inequality of educational rights, even if awards were won by migrant students in competitions, the name and credit would belong to other local students because the migrant students could only use the names of local students instead of their own to participate in the subject competitions.

On account of the above factors, 'schools for children of migrant workers' gained rapid development despite being relatively poor in terms if school facility and teaching quality. For migrant families, it was in their paramount interest to provide their children with an education opportunity that was affordable.

### *2.9.4 Migrant Children*

Migrant children are a special constitution of the migrant population. Compared with the migrant workforce, they are a derived part of the former, but this group has a unique growth pattern, which signals a more profound meaning of social change. Therefore, migrant children deserve our attention. From our survey of these migrant schools, the prominent features of these children are given as follows.

1. Overage of children compared with the grade they attend was a serious problem. These children followed their parents as they migrated, and many of them had the experience of dropping out. For example, in the Wabian Fourth Primary School founded by the Gushi people, there were 53 third-year students and 15 of them were over the age of 14, whereas the normal third-grade students should have been 10 years old. At Zhangbei Primary School, some 16-year-old students were astoundingly found to study in second grade. At Taiyanggong Primary School, there was an age gap of five to six years among students in each grade. There were 54 preschool students who attended this school, and nine of them were overage according to the prescribed admission age of six years old, equalling an overage rate of 16.7%; there were 46 first-grade students, with a total of 13 students over seven years old and an overage rate of 28.3%; among

the 30 second-grade students, seven of them were over eight years old, making an overage rate of 23.3%; among 18 third-grade students, 13 of them were over nine years old, with an overage rate of 72%. There were 148 students in the whole school, and 42 of them were overage, with an overage rate of 28.4%. In other words, more than one fourth of all students were overage.

The ubiquitous phenomenon of being overage indicated that a significant percentage of the school-age children had dropped out. One student wrote in his essay that: "My aunt lived in Beijing, and then my family moved to Beijing to work for a living. It is really hard for my parents to find a job, so they began to sell take-away box meals, fruits and baked pie. After they have closed their business, they have to worry about me because I could not go to school in Beijing due to the high cost of tuition fees, which cost almost 20,000 or 30,000 yuan. Later, we heard that there is a school designed for children of migrant workers, so my parents went there to talk to the headmaster to get me enrolled in the school, but the headmaster did not agree. In the end, I was sent back to my hometown to attend school … After a semester, it was time for me to attend the sixth-grade, so I came to Beijing again." Another student wrote in his article that: "In Beijing, my mom swept floors, and my dad worked in the same institution as a gatekeeper. My elder brother cleans smoke extractor. As my grandparents died, my relatives lived rather far away to attend to me, and I do not like to live in other people's house, my parents brought me to Beijing and I didn't go to school for half a year. After half a year, my mom heard that there is a school founded by fellow people from Henan Province in Wukesong, and that I can go study there. When I heard the news I was so excited that I almost screamed and that night I could not go to sleep. It felt so good that I can go back to school again."

2. From the words of these children about their family life, they paid much attention to their family's financial difficulty and their parents' hard work, so they seemed to understand more about their parents' hardship than children from normal families, and they had developed a sense of responsibility from an earlier age. During the survey and investigation, we collected a large number of students' essays. In their essays, they wrote down their life experiences, and expressed their understanding of life. They had more experience of 'city life' than rural children, but the 'city life' that they had was never the same as that of urban children. Owing to their particular social and family background and their life experiences, they were more sensible and learnt to understand the world around them at an earlier age compared with urban children. They observed the life of migrant workers' from a really close perspective.

The most universal and profound impression of family for these children is poverty and endless work. A kid asked the teacher in a composition: "Teacher, were you poor when you were a kid?" Another child wrote in the essay: "… Mom and dad are both peasants, and every day they go out early and come back late. They were so tired that even if they have not reached 40 years old, they have already had wrinkles, and have really dark skin; they look like they were over 50 years old."

Another child wrote, "I live in an apartment which is less than 10 square meters, and there are only two beds for four people…"

"My dad is on the go all day long. He would get up at 5 o'clock in the morning when I was still in bed listening to him washing. He would fetch those jars and pots and things like that, and then begin selling vegetables in the morning market. After a brief lunch, he'd go to deliver goods for other households, and after that, he'd also need to fetch more goods and come back after 6 o'clock in the evening. Sometimes he'd not come back for dinner after 6 o'clock. After dinner, he'd still need to work. He didn't have any time to relax from day to night…"

"Those schools for migrant workers' children are really cheap for us."

These are some excerpts written by many a child in our survey.

As an old Chinese saying goes, children grown up in impoverished families are more likely to become persons with strong sense of responsibility and filial piety. Perhaps this is because children living in this kind of circumstances are compelled to recognize more about the hardship of life and to develop a sense of responsibility at an earlier age. We can often encounter the following types of sentences in children's compositions: "I know that my parents are very caring for me, and I want to work hard to get good grades for them." "When I grow up, I want to make a lot of money to improve my parents' life." "Although my parents sell vegetables for a living and we are quite poor, I will work hard to achieve something some day." Another child wrote in his composition: "…When winter comes, it would get really cold. My dad would ride a tricycle to sell Chinese cabbage. I would sit in the back, feeling cold, and I assume my dad in the front would feel the cold even more. When I grow up, I would try to provide him with a good life." "…Today, I suddenly find that there are two wrinkles on my mom's forehead. Though the wrinkles are not that obvious, they touched my heart deeply. Mommy was too busy to dress up every day. Therefore, I have come up with an idea of buying an anti-wrinkle cream for mommy to restore her beauty."

A child wrote about the migrant working life of his family: "My hometown is Yunmeng County in Hubei Province, which is extremely underdeveloped with poor agricultural development, and there are few buildings in our hometown. There are four people in our family who are migrant workers. My mom and dad sell vegetables and could not make enough money, so they send my two elder sisters to work. My 18-year-old eldest sister worked in a factory in Guangzhou. It was not because of money that my parents send her to work, but my parents thought she is old enough to take care of herself. My second eldest sister is 16 years old, and she learned how to do haircut in a barber shop in Wuhan. Although she cannot get accustomed to the living conditions there, she still stayed there for my parents' sake." We lived a miserable life, and my parents quarrel all the time because other villagers at our hometown have built their houses and talked about it all the time, which made me really sad. Now I live with my parents in Beijing and study here because back home I do not have a place to eat and tuition fees are quite high. Having heard about the migrant schools in Beijing, my parents thus brought me here to go to school."

3. These children had an inner world that was different from other peers and a unique observation of the society they lived in. They tended to cherish more their opportunities of being educated than other peers. In their compositions, some children wrote that, "my father borrowed money from other people to afford the tuition fees for me and my brother". "Both of my parents are peasants. They go out to work early in the morning, and do not come back until dusk. In order to pay the tuition fees for us, they have to sell some of the grains that they have planted." "My family is faced with financial difficulties because of my attending school, and we have to lead a frugal life. Only at festivals can we enjoy a proper meal, and we would be very happy."

"My parents are fruiterers, but they make little money even though they work from dawn to dusk. They hope that I can get into university, and will not have to do hard work like them. Both of my parents are concerned about my studies, and they would help me with my coursework in their spare time." "I plan to find a job after graduating from middle school because my family is not rich due to my tuition fees, although I want to attend university very much."

"I enjoy learning. Because this is a competitive society now, both of my parents want me to enter university and find a good job afterwards. They do not hope to see that I will be doing a job like they do. They do not make much money despite the tiresome and dirty job, and their wages are only enough to cover our tuition fees, daily expenses, utility bills and rents. Nothing left."

"It is bliss for me to be able to study in Beijing." "It's not easy for my parents to send three children to study here. They have done a lot of work to make this happen. I am satisfied with my life right now, because I can study at this school."

"I wish that this primary school for migrant children will continue its operation, and develop better and better. I also hope that it will open a junior and senior high school, so that I can continue my study here."

Because they have few things in their life, those migrant children are sincerely grateful to other people's dedications and offerings to them. When talking about the teachers at migrant children schools, one of the children wrote in his composition: "The teachers here are wonderful. I used to have terrible marks back at my hometown. But thanks to the teachers' excellent teaching skills here, my scores got better right away after I came to this school."

"I hope that I will enter university and teach students like us one day. I also want to become a school principal, and recruit children like me into the school."

Another child wrote that, "I want to make a lot of money, and open many migrant children schools like this, so that children out of schools can come back to schools again."

Migrant workers from rural areas are categorized into the underclass of Chinese society. Their experiences and life give them a different understanding of the society from those in a superior status. Children from this social class also have unique perceptions of the society, as one child wrote in his composition, "I know it is difficult for my father to make money. And I know this society is unfair." There are even some children who said that. "I hate the local cadres in my hometown."

This ability to critique is derived from the children's actual life experience, which has far greater influence on their mind than any kind of publicity and education.

One child wrote in his essay, "every day when my father is having a rest, he would tell me to study hard and get away with living a life as hard as he does." Seeing the social reality with their own eyes, some migrant workers ask their children to "become an official with power and money". This aspiration for 'change' is hence deeply rooted in the minds of the children.

### *2.9.5 Questions and Recommendations*

Owing to the fact that the current system of compulsory education excludes low-income migrant families' children from urban normal schools, migrant schools this developed and became an important channel of solving education problems for migrant children. Migrant schools provided an educational place for children who had a poor economic background, and even a poor education is better than no education for many, which is the very merit of their existence.

However, we can see that problems obviously existed in these schools, including two aspects in general. The first is the issue of the internal management mechanism. Schools were run with the aim to gain profits and to pursue maximum profit—that is the reason why the education provision was kept only at the lowest level. Because there was no external supervision, especially from government departments, they did not even spend money on basic teaching facilities even though they were not in financial difficulty. As long as schools could run regularly, the more they skimped on teaching, the more school managers could earn. Second, the teachers themselves were not of a high quality, equipped with neither professional training nor teaching experience. In addition, they did not have a standardized approach to teaching management and organization.

At present, the proportion of migrant families in the total number of migrants was growing, which was associated with a growing number of children coming to city with their parents. At the same time, many migrant families' children who were born in Beijing were reaching school age. Against this backdrop, migrant primary schools developed rapidly. More and more migrant children needed to receive education in the city. However, the majority of migrant families had a low income, and if their children received education in urban public schools, then they would need to pay extra fees, which they could not afford. Thus they had to seek alternatives.

As migrant workers settled down in cities with a stable income, this would lead to a subsequent increase in demand for local education for their children. The previous urban–rural division in the compulsory education system did not satisfy this social need. Due to the high fees of urban public schools, some parents would have to resort to unsystematic behavior, which shows the severity of the issue.

The ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Security had twice formulated temporary administrative measures on floating children's education. However, those policies were not implemented effectively. Local governments had

two attitudes towards management of migrant schools, namely they either ignored the schools and did nothing, or they closed them down entirely. In fact, both measures were not ideal. The first approach made migrant schools devoid of normative management and teaching quality, which was detrimental to a huge number of children; while the other approach was even more precarious, because closing migrant schools means children would have no school to go to. We suggested that governments should take specific measures as soon as possible, such as the following two steps:

First, sponsorship fees for public schools should be greatly reduced or abolished altogether. Public schools should be the main channel for taking in migrant children, and migrant families with stable employment and living standard in the city should have the right to send their children to public schools. For instance, the current education facilities and teachers of Beijing public primary schools were excessive since the number of local students had declined. Reducing or abolishing the threshold of high sponsorship fees would not only solve the education problems of floating children, but also make full use of education resources, thus benefiting all.

Second, migrant schools should be standardized. Migrant schools should adopt the correct approaches to education, which would include establishing standards, adopting differential treatment, and providing supervision and guidance. In particular, it could take following three steps: first of all, introducing standards for running migrant schools. The standard could be lower than that of public schools. The schools could either be officially recognized after reaching said standards, or otherwise closed. Second, the quality of school managers and teachers should be controlled. For example, school managers should have a junior college degree or above, whereas teachers should have intermediate teaching qualification or an equivalent degree. Third, for those schools whose teaching activities do not reach the standards established to ensure the teaching quality of migrant schools by the government, education departments should provide regular guidance and supervision. If they find problems, they should offer guidelines to schools to quickly help to improve quality.

#### 2.9.5.1 Conclusion: Attention Should be Given to Second Generation Migrants

Rural-urban migration will last along with the process of China's reform and urbanization. If the flow of labor speaks about people's inherent acquiescence to the old rural–urban segmentation system, the second-generation migrants will have more direct institutional appeals. Or, due to the increasingly large-scale of second-generation migrants, the disadvantage of the old society system would be ever more evidently exposed, and people will find it difficult to tolerate. Compulsory education is merely one of the problems. If these problems were not addressed by a good innovation system, the second-generation migrants will bring more widespread social issues in the long run.

According to the study on immigrants in the US society by American political scientists, compared with first-generation immigrants, second-generation immigrants

differ significantly in psychology and behavior. Due to the fact that the first-generation immigrants have a comparison to the conditions at their place of origin, they have a high degree of recognition for social injustice at the local area. In other words, although they feel discriminated against in the local place, it is still better than their place off origin, and they usually do not expect to have the same rights and status as local residents. While second-generation immigrants do not have the same experience; they usually donot have life experience in original place, and compare their levels of life satisfaction mainly with the lives of local residents. In contrast to their parents, they lack life satisfactionbecause they feel the gap between their status and those of the local residents; they have a stronger sense of discrimination and of deprivation. Unlike the expectations of their parents, they strongly demand their rights and position. Driven by this kind of psychological expectation, second-generation immigrants have a lack of tolerance in the face of injustice. That is why they usually use more fierce or violent behavior to express their dissatisfaction, or demand equality directly or indirectly. As a result, irregular behavior of second-generation immigrants is more prevalent, and the crime rate is higher in more serious cases.

Based on China's current situation, it is hard to predict that a similar situation might emerge that would reflect foreign nations' experience with their second generation immigrants. We might avoid social conflict caused by institutional defects and reduce social turbulence by movement of people through an adjusting system, in an attempt to realize social transformation in a peaceful social atmosphere. However, according to the survey on compulsory education of floating children, especially when reading children's inner monologues about family and society in their essays, we think it is reasonable to harbor some misgivings. Therefore, more progress should be made in rural–urban system reform, which aims to eliminate the dual structure.

*Note* (In March of 1996, Zhao Shukai accidentally found a primary school for migrant workers' kids when he did the field survey on migrant vegetable peasants in Sijiqing Village, Beijing. The school was established by a peasant couple (Benyao Yi, Shumei Li) from Henan Province. At that time, there were more than 30 students in that school. Before that, only kindergartens were found and studied by the researchers of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Peking University. But they did not find any primary schools aimed at migrant workers' kids. After that, Zhao Shukai introduced this primary school to some media, such as BTV, and led some support activities. Having experienced many changes, at the time of writing there were more 1300 students in this school and it had become the largest primary school for the migrant workers' kids, so far as we know. With the increasing number of this kind of primary schools, systematic research was launched in 1998. The main researchers were Zhao Shukai, Lv Shaoqing (Associate Professor in the Research Center of Rural Economy in the Ministry of Agriculture), Bai Wenyu (graduate student in the Department of Education at Beijing Normal University), Xu Wei (graduate student from the Department of Philosophy at

Beijing Normal University), etc. The report was finished in Dec. 1999, published in the "Research Reports" of the Development Research Center, and then published in the journal "Management World" in May of 2000.)

## Column II: The Stories of the Unplanned Birth

In the mid-1990s, unplanned birth problems of migrant families received great attention from society, becoming a hot topic of family planning management and migrant management. Against this background, the research group from the Research Department of Rural Economy at Development Research Center of the State Council, led by the author, conducted a series of research, including an in-depth interview with Daohai Chen who taught at a migrants' school, which served as important materials for the present study. The following are some excerpts from the interview.

## The Price of Unplanned Birth

### *Excerpt One*

Personal information: male, 38 years old, middle school education, born in Dongdao Village, Duanji Township, Gushi County, Henan Province, now selling meat near Wukesong.

The oral account: "I have four children. Fortunately, the fourth child is a boy, otherwise it would be difficult to forecast how many children I will have. Anyway, my wife and I decide we must have a son.

The reality is, in our hometown, the rest of life for a person is extremely difficult if one doesn't have a son. Without a son, there's no one to cultivate land; without a son, one will be mistreated by bad people easily; without a son, nobody can support the family; without a son, on one takes care of old people. Daughters will be part of in-laws' family after marriage, and they will be good for nothing for their parents. Take my family as an example, my wife has not returned to her home for four years, so you see how she can take care of her parents? And as for me, I go home at least once per year. My father died before I got married, thus I always try to give my mother more money in order to make her happy in her later years.

In our hometown, elders are almost taken care of by sons and grandchildren. If a parent is sick, daughters can only stay for a few days, then she will have to leave because she needs to take care of her own family. However, for sons, they can stay home day and night, they can take care of the elderly and work simultaneously. I experienced a lot of suffering and get tired all these years just because I want a son.

Policy doesn't change overnight, but people can always adapt. Family planning fine is heavy, but the fines I got are far less than other people. This is mostly owed to my relationship with local cadres. I get along well with village cadres, thus they are not that strict with me and my family. The women of childbearing age in our hometown need to take a pregnancy test every three months, or else one will be fined 300 yuan each time. My wife didn't take the pregnancy test once when she was pregnant with our second child, and we were altogether fined for unplanned birth for over 1000 yuan.

We met more troubles when our third child was born. Some women were kidnapped to village hospital at night secretly to take birth control operation. Seeing this, I took my wife to work in a brick factory in Mashan town, Nanyang village, and went back home only until the baby was almost due. Unfortunately, our third child is again a girl, and we were fined 3000 yuan. Having a third child reaches the top limit in our village, if we continue having more babies, the consequence would be very grave. Either our property suffers, or our parents and relatives suffer. So we came up with one idea, that is to send our third child to others reluctantly, and told villagers that the child was stillbirth. The first family we sent to had good conditions —the man worked in local industrial and commercial bureau, and the woman worked in grain management agency. But for some reason they didn't want the child, so they sent her to a family called Zhou. Mr. Zhou didn't want her either, but his wife did, however it was not allowed by the township government, for both of them were workers and had already had a son. The child is unfortunate, for Zhou's sister-in-law wants her but it was too late—Zhou has already sent the child to a Mr. Xu who was single. Mr. Xu has a younger brother who was also single. Both of them lived together with their mother. They were very nice fellows, but too poor. Imagine how hard it would be for them to get married given their poverty?

When our daughter arrived at family Xu, she was re-named Jingjing Xu. She was mistreated, for her adoptive father quite adored her. Due to poverty, she suffers a lot in life, both reflected in her food and clothes. As there is no woman at home, she was dirty and there were louse in her hair. She is 11 years old and studies in the third grade at primary school. During the spring festival in 1999, I went home. I fetched her on the third day of New Year, and took her to places, bought her clothes, and sent her home on the twelfth of New Year. In general, adoptive parents would try to avoid the child keeping in touch birth parents, however, family Xu was generous, and I really thank them. One day, when she is married, she could come back his home and my home, so that I haven't lost a daughter, and she also benefit from more family affection.

Lately, her adoptive father married a widow, and brought her to live at widow's home, and all the children of the widow were married. My child was more burdened than before, for she had to do housework every day. But it wasn't too bad, the widow didn't beat her. I gave her 200 yuan to pay for tuition fees before I came to Beijing. Actually her adoptive father could afford the tuition fees by selling grain, but she was my daughter, and I love her dearly. I felt guilty when sending her to others, so I gave her something so that I could feel better.

The condition was better when our fourth child was born. At that time village cadres also understood us. My wife was usually resting at home, once family planning inspection tightens, village cadres would tell us to go out and find a place to hide for a while—such as at relatives' or friends' home. Unfortunately, family planning was tightening when the child was almost due. Township officials would talk with village cadre, and village cadre asked me to pay 7000 yuan for fine to get through this. It was very urgent situation. They asked me a night before, and required me to pay the next day. My wife borrowed 5000 yuan from her father and 500 yuan from her younger sister, and borrowed 1500 yuan from other people. It was a great relief to have paid the fines. Family planning fine was based on family economic condition in our village. The wealthier families have to pay more fines for unplanned birth than the relatively poor families.

Coming to Beijing was totally coincidental. My brother and I bought a small-size four-wheel tractor together to be used for cultivating land. When we started the machine, we forgot to take out the crank in time, and the crank was thrown out of the machine and hit my mouth, resulting in few of my teeth being knocked out. I was really afraid when I reflected later. I was lucky for it only hit my mouth, I would probably die if it hit my forehead. After that, I felt fearful every time I saw the machine. Then I thought about it. I was really busy for the whole year but only got meager returns, so why not go out and have a look at this world. Therefore I followed some young people who work in decorating and came to Beijing.

On the way to Beijing and the first few days after arrival in Beijing were rather trying for me. On the train, I was stolen over 500 yuan when I transferred in Zhengzhou, capital city of Henan Province. I only had 1 yuan left in my pocket when I arrived in Beijing. At the beginning, I was living near Gongzhufen. I didn't have work at that time, and when fellow villagers cooked for themselves, I felt embarrassed eating with them because I didn't have money, if there was leftovers, I could eat a little bit, if nothing left, I would be starving. There was once when I talked with an old man who sold cigarettes along the road, I told him about my circumstances, and he kindly gave me 10 yuan. I really thank him. I can never forget his kindness, and before long I returned 10 yuan to him as soon as I had earned money. Later, I found a job to decorate house in Shijingshan. I didn't have much to work on because the project was not on a tight schedule. Hence the money that I made only could afford basic meals. Other villagers hadn't married and had only their own mouth to feed. But I couldn't. My family were waiting for the money I send back home to live on. A month later, I offered my resignation to my boss. I told him my situation, and he agreed and gave me 60 yuan as transport allowances as well.

The moment I began packing and getting ready to go home, someone came to our construction site and asked whether there were any carpenters. I replied instantly that I happen to be a carpenter. Actually I had not learned carpentry skills before. I had just worked as my cousin's assistant when he did carpentry, and could do a little bit by myself. It might be the instinct of finding a job that I replied swiftly and easily. Then I knew that this person was manager Wang who is in charge of a

decoration company located in the yard of Central College for Youth Leagues. Then I came to his company with him just like that. He let me try to do a cabinet, after I finished, the size of the cabinet was exactly suitable to be put in the house. Manager Wang praised me and allowed me continue to work for him. Since I was smart, flexible, diligent and economical, manager Wang asked me to be a foreman before long. Being a foreman means one doesn't do things themselves, but just commanded others to do. When working, even if a nail that costs only few cents fell down, I would ask workers to pick it up. Therefore, manager Wang trusted me very much. Moreover, I also did things conscientiously and saved lots of money for him.

There was once when we needed an electric welder to weld iron frame, lathe, Iron Gate and so forth on our construction site. Manager Wang hired an electric welder. I learned how he welded and practiced as well. A few days later, I could also weld. Then I thought, if I were able to weld, the cost could be saved. So I told this idea to manager Wang, and the welder was fired.

I was too honest, but perhaps that's the reason why my boss places his trust in me. I would have become rich had I been more flexible. Manager Wang took a decoration project which costs 0.6 million for materials in Qinghe. These materials were procured by me. If my mind was not that straightforward, then I could have earned lots of brokerage. Since I was the person to have filled in the check, manager Wang wouldn't find out even if I took some kickbacks. And I worked like this for three years under manager Wang. During this period, the younger brother of Zhao who worked in Haidian District public security bureau worked together with me for a short time, and Zhao suggested me to run my own business. He said I could only earn a few hundred yuan per month like this now, excluding eating and daily expenses, I almost have little to save. If I want to earn big money, I had better run my own business.

After that, I worked in interior decoration with several workers. It earned me lots of money. However, most of the profit was reaped by the contractor. Second-hand contracting agent like me couldn't earn a lot of money. It is fine if I had projects after projects. But if I had less work to be done, and at the same time I have to pay for the rent and food, the remaining money would be, in effect, negligible.

Doing decoration couldn't make much money, so I started to run a fruit store, mainly selling peach, apricot, pear and so on. Selling peach could earn some money, but others were not good. It lasted for one year like this.

Then I began to sell pork since October 1997, until the first half year of 1998 when I earned some money during this period.

At the beginning, there was no morning market at the east bank of river. Seeing that there are many residential buildings so I sold pork nearby every day, and my business was fairly good. However, after some time more and more people started to sell pork, vegetables and other commodities nearby too, and morning market came into being. So my business was not as handsome as before. Now there are over a dozen selling pork in the morning market, all of them were my fellow villagers or their relatives.

From August 1998 to recently, non-local pigs flowed into Beijing, and the price of pork was low. Sometimes 10 yuan could buy 1.5 kg of pork, so I didn't earn

much money at that time. However, daily expense didn't go down in the meantime, such as fixed stall fees, which costed 300 yuan per month in the morning market, and I had another stall in the west side of the city for afternoon sales, costing 300 yuan per month. Moreover, my rental was over 300 yuan per month as well. Besides, I needed to pay few hundreds for my mobile phone every month, but after the spring festival in 1999, I gave my mobile phone to my friend because the business was not good and I no longer needed it. Since diseased pork was found in the market, Beijing began to ban all imported non-local pigs. Pork market is better now, and the price of pork is almost twice as high as in Spring.

All the pork that I sold was from the pigs that I bought and slaughtered. Sometimes I bought from Hebei province, sometimes from the suburbs of Beijing. The pigs from Hebei were cheaper. I bought nine pigs from Hebei several days ago, and it costs me 120 yuan for transport to Beijing, and it was stopped and checked few times on the road. These pigs would be slaughtered in the slaughter house, named Wulituo, located in Shijingshan, a branch of Xihuangcun slaughter house. When buying pigs one is required to get a quarantine permit, otherwise they will neither be able to pass on the road, nor accepted in slaughter house. And it would be checked again after delivery to the slaughter house, and a quarantine permit would be released only when pigs were qualified, and lastly they will put a stamp on the pigs. For otherwise they wouldn't be allowed to be sold in the market.

The slaughter house would give the pork to me after the pigs are slaughtered and defeathered, and it costed 20 yuan per pig for the processing. In order not to make a mistake of confusing one's pigs from another, each person needs to pick up one number when we gave pigs to the slaughter house, and then the butcher would 'write' the number that you picked in pigs by using nails. Pigs would bleed in this process, but the number on the pigs stays even after they were slaughtered. Since everyone's number was recorded at the slaughter house, their pigs could match with pork correctly.

I made tens of thousands those years, but had to bear a lot of things as well. Travail is fine, but the most annoying thing was that local people always find trouble out of nothing for us. In general, if we endure for a while it would be over, however, tolerance also has limit, and sometimes we would be very angry if it is too much because we all have self-esteem.

One day, I pulled a handcart loaded with pork and passed by a couple, when suddenly the man asserted that pork smeared his trousers, and scolded but I don't think that was true because my handcart didn't touch him. I said I could clean it for him, he said no; then I said I will buy a bag of washing powder for him, he said no; and I said I will buy a new pair of trousers for him, he still said no; nothing could solve this issue except gave him over dozens of yuan. He also said: 'I am a local person, does a non-local dare to fight with me?' I was extremely angry and took the machete for chopping spareribs: 'Local? I can chop you, do you know where I live? I can kill you right now and get away immediately! I can even catch up with you and kill you and all your family if you try to run away now!' I said while approaching him, he was afraid having heard what I said, and retreated backward

and said nothing, while the woman apologized to me, and then run away with the man instantly.

In the morning market where I sold pork, there was an old lady with white hair who was standing opposite my stall. Because of her abominable personality and [the fact that she] often bullied non-locals, we all called her 'white hair old witch'. She lived in a building situated in the east side of the morning market and she also attended to her stall every day. One day, she came to buy pork at my stall but didn't have money with her. Then I said: 'you can take it and pay me later.' After a long time, she still didn't give me money. Then I asked her, but she was reluctant to pay. Later, another old lady who was familiar with white hair old witch wanted to buy my pork. The price of that piece of pork was 10 yuan, but I said: 'we often met, so you could have it for just 9 yuan.' However, she only wanted to pay me 8 yuan. I was angry and said: 'No, I can't sell at 8.' The white hair old witch interrupted: 'you are a pork-selling man, if you don't sell, what are you doing then? You must sell it to her no matter what!' How rude is she! I couldn't sell at a price lower than what it costs. Then we quarreled and exchanged swearing words and they even fought with my wife until it was stopped by the surrounding crowd. However, they asked us to pay medical bills. What medical bills? They weren't even hurt at all, what they did was simply bullying non-locals! On reflection and through negotiation, we gave them 300 yuan in the end. If didn't give them, they would keep coming and making trouble every day. After all, we are here trying to make a living, not to make troubles, and couldn't afford the consequences troubles may bring about as well.

I was in frequent contact with people who work in local police station because I was trying to obtain temporary residence permits and start my business in the market. I kept a good relationship with people who were in Wukesong local police station of Tian village and Haidian District sub-bureau. My temporary residence permit was issued at local policy station of Tian village, it saved me some money.

I have four brothers, the oldest and the youngest were at home, I and the third were in Beijing, and he sold meat too. My big brother did farm work at home. Each of us had more than one acre of land, but we had to pay agricultural tax and other fees about 100 yuan per year. If expenses on seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and farming machine fee are calculated, farming won't bring anyone any profit.

My wife came with me in 1996, when she was so toiled because she needed to not only take care of children, but also do farm work. Moreover, I worried about domestic harmony in the family, since she didn't have a good relationship with my mother and I was afraid that they would quarrel with each other. In other places, it was fine if you did the birth control operation once and for all. However, I didn't know what they do in our town. Since my wife came to Beijing, she had to take the pregnancy test every year in Zhumadian Liaison office in Beijing, and then sent the pregnancy test certificate back to corresponding office in hometown, otherwise one would be fined. I was too busy the year before last year when my wife did the pregnancy test but forgot to send the certificate back home, and soon we found out that the bike, television, and electric fan at home had been confiscated by local authority. Besides, they also took my daughter's watch which was put on a table

when she was taking a shower. Finally, I paid 1000 yuan as fine and got back our things except that watch. All of them said they didn't take it, but I was sure that someone sneaked it and put it into his own pocket.

My second and the youngest child came to Beijing in 1997. My mother was too old to take care of them. Furthermore, my mother and big brother were not strict on the children, and usually let them do whatever they want. It was good for their formative years if they come to live with their parents. Our commonsense tells us if children are not disciplined in their early years, this is especially the case for boys, it would be much worse for both parents and children when they grow up. If they did harmful things when they grow up, it would mean that I don't have sons and the efforts we have pitched in all those years are in vain. Now the two children are studying in a migrant school, and their academic performance is fine. However, it is still lagging behind local school students. We couldn't afford local school. The child of my third younger brother studied at local school, he was in the same grade as my second daughter, but he knows the answers to the questions that my daughter doesn't know, and his knowledge scope is wider than my daughter's. My eldest daughter studied in the third grade at middle school in hometown. As long as she could get in high school, I would afford her tuition fees whatsoever. But the younger children are hard to say, if we could stay in Beijing for a long time, and I also have the ability to afford them to go to school, then I would absolutely do so. For the third child in Xu family, if her adoptive father couldn't afford her to go to school, but I could, I would do the same to make sure she gets her education."

## Excerpt Two

Personal information: male, 32 years old, middle school education, born in Shenqiao, Tuocheng Village, Shangqiu County, Henan Province, now he is doing vegetable business at Wukesong in Beijing.

Oral account: "I moved to Beijing in 1991, and the reason for it makes really a long story, because at that time I wasn't even serious about my decision on migrating.

Because of poverty, even though I passed the entrance exam of a major middle school at hometown, I had to be dropped out of school since my parents didn't have enough money to support me after only one semester, and this was the biggest regret in my life. I still like reading books till now, as long as I have time, I will read books even when I am selling vegetables. I like many kinds of books, such as novels, stories, agricultural technology and information and so on. On the one hand, reading books fills in the boring time, on the other hand, I could learn some useful knowledge. No matter what, learning new things would not be harmful. Just because I like reading day and night, my friends joked I was attending community college at night.

It is money that stopped my studies and me from progressing in my life.

After being dropped out of school, I began to make money. At first, I sold peanuts in Luoyang, and I could earn around 20 or 30 yuan every day. I was optimistic at that time to have been able to make 20 or 30 yuan per day. Even though I had to drudge a bit, I was motivated. And I did it like this for three years and made some money, but gradually my appetite became bigger, and I felt the money I make was not enough. Therefore, I started to gather information. I heard that there is a big price difference of egg in Xi'an and Luoyang. So I decided to start from Xi'an. I bought a carload of eggs at price of 1.15 yuan per kilogram. Unfortunately, the price of local eggs fell down to only 0.8 yuan per kilogram shortly after, and it was sold for 0.85 yuan per kilogram in Luoyang. This time I lost more than ten thousand yuan. I was not disheartened though. If others could make a lot of money, why couldn't I? Then I bought a carload of apples from another place, but it was raining when I got home, and it lasted for half a month. Most apples were rotten and I lost a lot again.

It seems that I wasn't gifted to make big money in business, so I came back to my rural hometown and devoted myself to agriculture like before. I contracted 20 acres lands, 14 acres for watermelon, and 6 acres for chili. I was savvy about agro-technology, so I asked for several technicians to lend a helping hand with a monthly salary of 300 yuan each. Nonetheless, I had a bad luck that year, for it experienced extraordinary drought at first, then it rained non-stop. My watermelons were small and not ripe, so I picked them up and gave to people to feed their pigs for free. Meanwhile, my chili seedlings were strong and firm but there was no chili. It costed me 10 thousand yuan to plant watermelon and chili, together with the rental and labor, and in total I lost over 30 thousand yuan. I went completely bankrupt this time. I didn't even have a single penny. Villagers didn't understand, and they often talked about my failure behind my back and gossiped a lot. What's worse, my father didn't speak to me, either. Therefore, I felt life can be so hard!

There were many people from our village who worked in a brick factory to cut bricks in Shangling farm, Xian Village, Cangzhou County, Hebei Province. Back then, I only had 17 yuan for transportation, and I had no children. My wife and I followed fellow villagers to the brick factory and began cutting bricks. People from Henan Province had a habit of getting paid at the end of each working day. However, we didn't get any money for half a month at that brick factory. Due to the bleak business of the brick factory, we couldn't get our meals at work. Just imagine what a large amount money it would be—half of the monthly salary of over 170 people was considerable, and the most important thing was that we couldn't live without eating. We wanted to leave, but without money we couldn't go anywhere. Then we came up with one idea that we took the case to court. Then we came to the intermediate people's court in Cangzhou County to prosecute the brick factory. While the president of the court is from Henan, too, and his home is not far from mine. So I told him about our situation, and later he called the person in charge of Shangling farm directly, and the manager of Shangling farm was shocked and said, "the president of the intermediate court in Cangzhou, did you know each other?" Then he gave us 40 bags of flour and 200 yuan in cash. You know, there were over 170 people of us, how long could we make do with only 200 yuan? We would have

to ask again when we need more to sustain. So I discussed it with my wife and we decided to leave. We know a fellow villager at Balizhuang, and we went to Beijing.

We got on the bus without money and we got off at halfway. The driver couldn't do anything since we didn't have money. We got off at Daxing County, and then asked passers-by which direction Balizhuang is. People who knew where it is told us how to get to the city center of Beijing, and which public transportation to take. We got off at last stop. Then we told and pled to the conductor that we really had no money and she could do nothing about it. Then we arrived at Gongzhufen at first, and transferred to Balizhuang, where we asked people if there was anyone from Henan. Some people were nice, and told us what they knew and how to get there. Some people said they don't know. Some people didn't tell us and said some bad words that show contempt for people from the countryside. I was really angry. After a long time of quest, we found a Henan villager finally, and although he was not originally from my village, but is not too far from where I live. He was indifferent to me, and didn't have the usual enthusiasm when people see their fellow villagers. I asked him how his business was going on, and he just said he didn't earn much money by selling vegetable.

The next day, I went to Fengtai vegetable wholesale market, where I found that oilseed rape was 3.5 cents per kilo, however, it costed 0.5 yuan per kilo in the small market which was on south of 121 bus station at Donghuisi. And the price difference of other vegetables was big as well. Then an idea came into my mind - with such a big difference, if I did well I could certainly earn a lot of money. I thought about the nonchalant villager in my mind, knowing that he was lying to me, which was unnecessary.

Shortly after, I started looking for an apartment to get ready for my vegetable business. I was lucky because I met a nice landlord. I told him my situation, and he didn't ask me to pay rental immediately, and he even gave me some money to start my business with. Besides, he also spent over 100 yuan on a second-hand tricycle for me. Some time later when I had made some money and intended to pay him back, he declined and said, I could return him later when my business gets better.

At the beginning, although the price difference of vegetable was big, such as cowpea bought for 0.065 yuan, and sold for 0.4 yuan per kilo. However, due to a lack of experience, they were sold slowly, and thus I couldn't earn lots of money. In addition, a small incident took place during that period. Once my tricycle was flopped, and the person next to me said I hit him, but actually I didn't touch him at all. Since he was native, thus I couldn't afford to offend him. Finally I gave him three hundred yuan to make concessions and avoid trouble. Later when my landlord heard about this, he gave me five hundred yuan again to support my business.

I have five children, all of them were born in Beijing, and the youngest was sent away. The oldest was born in Wuluju in 1992 and costed eight hundred yuan in hospital in Beijing. The second, third and fourth children costed a little bit more. All of them stayed for seven days in hospital, and each of them costed over two thousand for delivery and care. The first three children were all daughters, while the fourth was a son, and we were relieved. People in my hometown village still had feudal thinking that they favor boys over girls, and that they would never give up

until they have a son. Since we had kids in Beijing, we were out of control from cadres in my hometown, while at the same time local cadres in Beijing didn't have the managing right, and that's the reason why there was no trouble when we had one child after another. My wife didn't receive sterilization operation after our fourth child was born, and soon she got pregnant again, and we spent eight thousand when fifth kid was born, and my wife gave a hard birth as well. Our youngest child was a daughter, and we thought the burden was too heavy so we gave her away to others. To be honest, she wouldn't be sent away if she was of an opposite sex.

The child's adoptive parents were introduced by someone we know in Beijing. The agent said that the child's adoptive parents would like to pay me some money, but I didn't accept because I was not selling my child. How could I take the money? I don't know the child's adoptive parents till now. I only heard that it is a military family and they are leading a good life. I felt relieved that my child could live in such family.

It is a local tradition in my hometown that daughters don't ask things that happened at her parents' home once they got married. If their parents were ill, they wouldn't be informed in time. Even if they came back home and took care of their parents, they would need to go back home after a few days because they have their own family to take care of. Whereas if we had a son, they are responsible for all things such as taking care of parents and paying medical bills when parents are ill. Parents who don't have sons can be misery when they get old. It is fine if they are rich. But if they are poor, they will have to borrow money once they are sick and need to go to the hospital, and sometimes people won't lend money to them because they doubt if they can repay. Their daughters couldn't easily borrow money, but the chance is higher if it is done by her husband who is customarily the head of a family. Sons-in-law have to pay for the expenses when parents go to see a doctor. But are there many such good sons-in-law in the world? If my oldest child is a son, I wouldn't have wanted a second child. To be frank, should people in city don't have their labor insurance, they would also prefer having a son.

Doing the vegetable business was very tiring, purchasing vegetables at night and selling them in the daytime. I can only sleep for a little while at noon, and come back home at 9 pm sometimes. In spite of the toil, I could merely earn 30–40 yuan a day. In addition, I have to be really careful and stay alert when purchasing and selling vegetables every day, since the market are mostly indoors now, plus high stall fees and meagre sales, it was hard to earn money in a normal market. So selling vegetables along the street is where people go because one doesn't need to pay stall fees and could sell more, therefore despite [the fact] that one might be fined for 100 or even 500–600 yuan, once they have been caught and the tires of their vehicles would be compromised after fine, one could still earn more money than his counterparts in a normal market. I think if those who sell vegetables along the street were organized by their own members who take turns to be on duty every day and kept a good order in the streets, I would be willing to pay for as much as eight hundreds yuan per month.

Selling vegetable during the day, I was often caught because the tricycle plate was not a Beijing license plate; purchasing vegetables at night, I was often chased by local law enforcement officers, too. It is heard that there was a vendor who purchased vegetables at night and was chased by local officer from the Transport Bureau. He drove the tricycle so fast that his wife who was standing in the tricycle was thrown out of the tricycle. It was 12 p.m. midnight. Then the officers took his wife to the hospital at 4 a.m., and she was pronounced dead already and found with a big wound on her head. It might be the result of her not being treated timely after the accident that makes her bleed too much. In general, the officers of the Transport Bureau shouldn't have chased them because it could easily lead to an accident. Didn't they as law enforcement officers understand this simple fact? This vendor sued them at court, and according to forensic autopsy, his wife was dead after falling. Would the local justice stand aside with migrant workers? This person didn't get any compensation, and he spent ten thousand for funeral expenses. How miserable we migrants truly are!

It is more and more difficult to make money now. I couldn't afford my eldest and second daughter to attend school here, thus I have to send them back to study at my hometown, and no matter how tired I will be I must make sure they go to school. I couldn't let my children experience a life without culture like I do. If I had a college degree, how could I do this now? After a while, I would send my wife and children back home, since they couldn't help me with my work, and will only add up to my expenses. I am now going to work harder to earn big money for the future of my children."

## *Excerpt Three*

Personal information: male, 37 years old, middle school diploma, born in Gaoji Village, Luyi County, Henan Province, currently grows vegetables at Wukesong, Haidian District in Beijing.

Oral account: Migrating was not to evade the family planning for him, but was still partially the reason.

I had four children, the eldest and youngest are boys. When my eldest child was two years old, I came to Beijing to find a job. Several of my younger brothers and sisters haven't married yet, so my mother was extremely busy and had no time to take care of my children. My wife worked on the farm and looked after our second child, so she was already quite busy herself. There was no choice, so I had to ask my mother-in-law to look after my eldest child. We took him home until he was seven years old, and then brought him to Beijing later. But I couldn't afford him to go to school in Beijing when he reached the school age, so he was sent back to our hometown for school. In the second half of 1995, I heard that a private school accepted migrant children with low fees, thus I brought him to Beijing and he stays with me until now.

The family planning policy was not strictly enforced in our hometown at first, and nobody cares how many children you have as long as you have money and pay the penalty, however, now it has been tightened as opposed to before. I was fined over 500 yuan when my second child was born. I didn't have a clear concept about how many children one should have at that time, and didn't consider how many children I wanted—few or many was both fine for me. If sterilization was mandatory after a second child, my wife might have done it and we would no longer have had to hide. The problem then was, I could have as many children as I want so long as I pay the fines. There weren't any contraception methods at that time, and there's no doubt that a woman would be pregnant without being sterilized. So when my wife was pregnant again, we were just expecting to welcome an addition to the family. Having an abortion not only gives the mother pain, but also it was too cruel for the unborn child. However, it was a stillbirth. So I asked village cadres if they can return the fines that I handed in. But they said, we would not return the money to you, but you could have another child to compensate your loss. We agreed and that's how we had our third child, and brought her to Beijing shortly. Later, we had our fourth child in Beijing since there was no contraception. When the vegetable fields, which we rent at Wukesong, were requisitioned, I took the youngest child home for a short time. Unfortunately, I was fined two thousand yuan this time at home. The huge economic pressure made me feel I had too many children, so I asked my wife to receive sterilization. Now I am still in deep regret. If we didn't have so many children, how can we be so poor and life so difficult!

Since I got married, the size of our land hadn't changed, and the authority only gave me the land for one person. So my family has six people, but we have only one acre land. The crops produced on our land was not enough to feed us, and we couldn't possibly afford children to go to school.

In order to afford my children to go to school, I had to make money by becoming a migrant worker. There were many fellow villagers engaged in vegetable business in Beijing, and their income was good, so I followed their example.

After I came to Beijing, my land was reclaimed by the local production team. The local rule stipulates that the land would be reclaimed as long as all your family members have moved out. And whilst you are away from home, you don't need to pay the agricultural tax and other fees during this period. Land would be returned to you when you come back.

At the beginning of 1990 when I first arrived in Beijing, I didn't rent a vegetable field, but I helped fellow villagers to grow vegetables. After settling down, I thought it was fine if I bought the whole family to Beijing, so I decided to bring them to Beijing. My third child was only one month old at that time. Later, with the help from a fellow villager, I rented one acre of vegetable field at Wukesong. The rental was cheap, at about 170 yuan per acre. And if you have connection to the local production brigade, you don't even have to pay for the rental. Sometimes, they would even give you some money [to] grow vegetables. That's because they would suffer a loss if planting by themselves, thus both their work would be in vain, too. Meanwhile, the land mustn't be left empty, otherwise their superiors would inquire and they'd be in trouble. Thus they were more than willing to give the land to others

to plant. And farming on their land was easy thanks to the convenience provided by the production brigade—water, fertilizer, pesticide and seeds were all for free at times. Back then I took care of an acre of land, excluding the costs, I could earn more than one thousand yuan a year. It was because the policy was loose at that time and people were nice. Now, it might be hard to earn 1000 yuan a year. I did watering, weeding, fertilizing and crop collecting in the morning every day. My wife sold vegetable along the streets, sometimes in alleyways. I also joined in selling in the afternoon. There was nobody to look after our two younger children at home, so my wife put them in two baskets and put them on the tricycle. The baskets for vegetables were put around the baskets that hold the children, and my wife was kept busy as she had to sell vegetables while looking after our babies. She often sold at the same place, so many people knew her and felt pitiful to her, and some people often brought snakes to our children. My wife did not take any money from the people who gave snakes to my children, but they would not buy our vegetables if my wife didn't take their money. Street management was loose and law enforcement officers were nice at that time. When officers came by, others would run away quickly, but my wife was slow because there were two children on the tricycle. However, some officers not only let her go, but also helped my wife pick up vegetables on the ground. In contrast, now if you are running away not fast enough, vegetables would be taken away as forfeit by passers-by and officers. Some vendors who were caught would be beaten and abused. The vegetables were often expropriated or carried away when I was selling. I heard of and once saw with my own eyes that someone was beaten and abused. An old man was caught when he was selling vegetables on the street and was slapped by officers. My wife's hand was once put on the ground and stomped on by officers. A woman was caught and pulled aside. Because she was beautiful, one of the officers searched her body with the real attempt to molest her, and later declared in front of other colleagues shamelessly that he had touched her body everywhere except her crotch. This behavior was like animals, not human. Some public security officers were there as well; upon hearing this, they laughed.

Sometimes those who had been hit and abused including me, had thought about prosecuting them, but finally we gave up. Bureaucrats take cover for one another, and there are now very few good officers. Rich and powerful men are good and decent people even they do bad things, on the contrary, poor and powerless people are bad even they do nothing bad. There is a saying in my hometown that goes, not to prosecute bad guys no matter what, and not to steal even when you starve; prosecution is useless, especially so for people like us migrants.

We never lived in a proper condition since we came to Beijing and lead a life on farming. When I planted vegetables at Sijiqing, it was not in a plastic greenhouse, but on an ordinary open-air vegetable patch. My income was not so good that I could afford to rent an apartment, which might cost few hundred yuan every month. Besides, we were not allowed to build a makeshift house next to the vegetable patch. Because according to relevant regulations of the production brigade, military-owned vegetable patches couldn't be let to non-locals, and should be under centralized management. If we built a house, officials of higher rank would know it

is let to migrants when conducting regular inspection, so it was not good for cadres at the brigade. Therefore, I could only build a shed in the vegetable patch, while I needed to dismantle it when inspectors came. If I didn't tear it down by myself, others would do all the same, and I had to pay for them. In a situation like this, I would do by myself anyway. Hence, the shed was set up and demolished again and again. Finally, I dug a cellar underneath the vegetable patch, and all my family members lived underground. We enjoyed much more stability than before. However, it was very humid inside, like my cloth shoes can get thoroughly wet in the next morning. Let alone how significant an impact it has on our knee joints.

I did farming at Sijiqing for five years, then it was requisitioned by the state. I rented this vegetable patch after strenuous searches. The size of the plastic greenhouse was more than one acre with living place and a bit of empty space. The rental was 550 yuan per acre at the beginning, however, the price increased in the last two years, and it costs 2000 yuan now, plus 500 yuan for electricity and water, that's a total of 2500 yuan per year.

Money is more of a scarcity than before, and therefore life has become much more difficult. Three of four children attend the same migrant school, with two of them in grade four and one in grade one. The books and tuition fees are about 2000 yuan per year. If they had lunch at the school's canteen, then that's a 60 yuan per month each, and the total cost of meals for my three children is a lot of money for me. In order to save money, I gave each of my children 1.5 yuan every day to buy a simple lunch outside the school. My eldest and second children could ride bicycle now, but I couldn't buy one for them. So they have to walk about four kilometers to school in the morning and back in the evening. The third child complains it's too much pain for her legs. Luckily, children are being very helpful. They would pick up firewood and straw when they come back from school. The eldest kid would cook while the second kid does his coursework, sometimes they would help teach my third child. My cooking pan is similar to a picnic pan. Just take a look, there are brickbats around the base, and the pan is put above, and firewood is used for fuel. If it is a rainy day, dense smoke would come out of the fire since there is no cover lid on the pan and the firewood and straw are humid. As a result, my children would have a cough and sore eyes sitting close to the cooking utensil. My wife and I came back at eight or nine o'clock in the evening after the vegetables are sold.

Our 'house' is modified originally from a plastic greenhouse. We put some dry grass on the top of the plastic greenhouse, and put brickbats at the bottom of it. Since the inside is lower than the outside, rainwater would flow into the house when it rains. The depth of rainwater could reach about one foot if the rain is heavy. On a heavy raining day, all my family would have to get water out of the house in all means.

Because my 'house' is a low rise ramshackle, it is very hot in summer, especially there are some areas that are not covered with grass, it is literally like staying in a steamer. My neighbors and I built this shed several days ago, and sitting inside it can be cool at noon. You would have to bend yourself down when getting in, and it is pretty dark inside. I thought you have already felt what I mean. The light was not enough for reading even in the daytime. Three of my children always read outside.

There isn't electricity, so we used candles. In order to save candles, I always ask them to do more reading in daytime, and tried to avoid reading in the evening. Vegetables that we eat everyday are planted by ourselves. If the vegetable we want to eat are not grown by ourselves, we could get them from our neighbors. The relationship between us is extremely good, and we could have each other's vegetables freely. But of course, we eat our own food most the time. In addition, as rice is more expensive than flour, we seldom eat rice, and sometimes make porridge, and we didn't buy steamed bun because we can make them by ourselves and it could save money. Furthermore, we have to fetch water for free from private households near the factory. And I would give them some vegetables every time I go to fetch water. They never came to my garden for food.

Something happened two years ago, and I spent all my money.

In the summer of 1997, my wife and I had nothing to do since we sold out the vegetables, and my wife asked me to purchase vegetables with a fellow village at the wholesale market. Unfortunately, when I was returning home on my bike, I hit an Audi car in the rear, which suddenly came out from my right side of the road under the overpass, and the rear light of Audi was broken. And I gave him 3000 yuan as indemnity in the end.

Misfortune never comes alone. Last summer, in an afternoon at about 5 pm, my children and neighbors' children were crossing the road, when my youngest child was hit by a taxi. His lips were smashed and only attached to the mouth with a little skin, and his gum was cracked, part of it had come out of mouth. At that point the other children were terribly scared, and I only knew about it when my neighbor's children came back and told me. It took me a long time to find the scene of the accident, and I couldn't feel my legs after a long time of walking and searching. When I got there, my son was covered in blood, and I felt so heartbroken and sorry for him. The police had detained the driver. This accident is mainly caused by the driver. My son was walking on the pavement when the taxi hit my son when he was overtaking another car.

When we arrived at the 301 hospital, a doctor said it was fine, and told us to go home. I said: 'the child is hurt as bad as this, how could he be fine?' My wife and I met at the corridor and we discussed. Then I decided that I couldn't leave anyway. If I left, my child would probably die. My wife was holding the child, sitting in the corridor, and I thought we had met a worst doctor for he has no ethics. He must be bribed by the driver because the driver wouldn't have to pay any money if I left. But still, there are after all some nice people in the world. Later, another doctor passed through the corridor and asked us what happened to my son, and I told him in full detail. Then he asked me about what requirements we have, and I said we wanted to stay in the hospital. He looked at the medical casebook and was surprised to find there was nothing wrong, which was written by the previous doctor. Then he rewrote his medical statement again. The 301 hospital didn't have a place for us to stay, so the doctor helped us contact Fengtai hospital and got in touch with the traffic police, and transferred our medical deposits to Fengtai hospital.

At first, the initial response from the traffic police brigade was that the driver should compensate for all our medical expenses. However, when they knew we

were migrants, they said we should cover part of the medical costs. Isn't it ridiculous? After fierce argument, finally they decided that the driver compensated all the expenses, which amount to 2000 yuan in total.

During the stay in hospital, he took some medicine in the first few days, and then reduce the dose of intake. Except the medical cost, other expenses such as meals were paid by us. My son stayed for 40 days in hospital. During this period, we were too busy to take care of the tomatoes in the plastic greenhouse, and all of them were rotten. As a result, I lost a lot in 1998. But what's good about it is that, my son's mouth had completely recovered, and you could almost see no scars.

This plastic greenhouse that I planted now was due on the 1st July, after which it would be expropriated and we will need to move out. However, I haven't found a place to stay. It was difficult for me to find a job since I don't have any skills. Even though I found a job, my family still won't have a place to stay and we couldn't afford the rental. I still want to do farming, although it is rather tiring, at least my family could live together and feed ourselves like before. My children have to go to school, and ideally it is not too far. I think after some time we will find one that suits our needs, just as heaven never seal off all the exits.

Since we arrived in Beijing, my wife and I only applied for one temporary residence permit. We are familiar with local competent cadres and they knew we were poor, so when they came to check our temporary residence permit every time, they would let my wife hide for a while. After some time, all the local officers at the police station knew we were poor, too, so they were not too harsh on us, either. I heard that after 1st July, anyone over 16 years old will have to get a temporary residence permit, and need to pay 80 yuan per month. However, it was 180 yuan per year before. It seems that Beijing has taken stricter measures on migrants, using economic pressure to drive away some migrant workers like us. As long as I could live in Beijing, I would not leave. I do this mainly for my children's education. I would do so even if I will have to go begging in the street."

(Interviewer: Daohai Chen)



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