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# Research on Issues concerning Social Security for Migrant Workers in Harmonious Society

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**Abstract** This article analyzes the status quo of social security for migrant workers in China, and points out that there are deep system and concept reasons for the lack of labor rights and interests security, social security, equality and the right to development, political participation channels for the current migrant workers. This article then expounds the adverse effects of lack of social security for migrant workers on building a harmonious society; the lack of social security for migrant workers poses an enormous hidden trouble to the social stability, restricting the urbanization process in China, and hampering China's agricultural development. To improve social security for migrant workers and promote the harmonious development of society, it is necessary to adhere to "people-oriented" outlook of development, give full play to migrant workers' social creativity; implement the development strategy of comparative advantage, enhance material basis of social security for migrant workers; break the trade barriers between urban and rural areas, build unified urban-rural labor market; based on the actual situation of various regions, use hierarchical classification method to progressively improve the social security mechanism for migrant workers.

**Key words** Migrant workers, Social security, Harmonious society

*Decision on Strengthening the Building of the Party's Ability to Govern* issued by the Fourth Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee mentioned the goal of "building a socialist harmonious society", and regarded it as the Chinese communist party's ruling goal<sup>[1]</sup>. "Society is produced by the people and society is also human society"<sup>[2]</sup>. Here, in a certain sense, a harmonious society is people-oriented society. The farmers and the derived migrant workers are not only the indispensable main factor in the building of a socialist harmonious society, but also the groups that deserve the results and benefit from the building of a harmonious society, so migrant workers and the social security issues naturally become one of the questions that need to be thought about and answered in the course of building a socialist harmonious society.

This paper analyzes the status quo of social security for migrant workers in China and the reasons for the lag, discusses the adverse effects of lack of social security for migrant workers on the building of a harmonious society, and puts forth the recommendations for improving social security for migrant workers and promotes the harmonious development of society.

## 1 The status quo of social security for migrant workers in China and reason analysis

### 1.1 The status quo of social security for migrant workers

**1.1.1** Lack of labor rights and interests security. The dual rural-urban structure makes migrant workers' employment in the city only reliant on informal labor market. In this employment environment, the employment interests of migrant workers can not be guaranteed.

First, census register, education level, employment, type of work and other limitations prevent the migrant workers to enjoy equal employment opportunities. Second, "unequal pay for equal work", "different hours for the same work", and "different rights for the same hour", make the migrant workers fail to enjoy equal employment rights. Third, wage deduction and arrears of wage are serious. Fourth, there is lack of unemployment insurance. Without any unemployment benefit, they are in face of huge economic, social and psychological pressure.

**1.1.2** Lack of social security. The survey shows that the majority of migrant workers are left outside of the social safety net. Due to lack of relevant certificate of formal workers, they are not able to enjoy the treatment of pension, medical insurance and housing subsidies enjoyed by urban residents.

When suffering accidental injury and occupational disease, they have no choice but to accept the employer's initial pension in the pressure of outside, and pain and frustration thereafter can only be seen as natural and man-made disasters.

**1.1.3** Lack of equality and development rights. Equality and development rights are not only reflected in migrant workers, but also their child's schooling. Many cities always list the types of work that restrict migrant workers' employment.

Within the units, the migrant workers can not enjoy the same treatment of vocational training and promotion as the urban residents. A large number of migrant workers' children can not receive normal education as the children of the urban residents.

**1.1.4** Lack of political participation channels. In the flow process, the migrant workers become a kind of "marginalized group" in the "push-pull theory" of Western scholar Donald Borg-er.

Because of the barrier of time and space as well as the impact of the actual operation of the rural regime, they are unable to fully

participate in political elections, supervision and other activities, unable to express their interests demand. In the city, due to the limitations of the household registration system, they are also excluded from various gates of political participation.

## **1.2 Analysis of the reasons for lagged social security for migrant workers**

**1.2.1** The fundamental reason: The original social security model is broken, but new protection mechanism has not yet been established. The original security model mainly refers to land protection and family protection. With the rapid growth of the rural population and tense relationship between the people and land, a large area of land is abandoned arising from the migration of farmers. The rural cultivated land is not only difficult to play the traditional security function, but also difficult to play the economic development function of means of production. Traditional family protection mode is also increasingly declining.

On the one hand, under the guidance of the family planning policy and market economy values, the family structure of the migrant workers increasingly goes toward "4 - 2 - 1" structure mode. The majority of young migrant workers have become "urban residents", while the old members are alienated due to the spatial and temporal differences.

On the other hand, the migrant workers' legal awareness is weak. Coupled with strong mobility of migrant workers, the family protection function can not be exerted well only under the moral constraints. However, the original mode of protection is broken constantly, while new protection mode does not grow and develop accordingly. So, in the transition period of society, the economic system and social structure are in a significant change, and migrant workers' social security is in a period of "temporary shortage or scarcity".

**1.2.2** The institutional reason: Institutional barriers leave the migrant workers in the status of marginal group. Traditional household registration system divides the citizens in China into population with agricultural registered permanent residence and population without agricultural registered permanent residence. The migrant workers are defined in the rank of population with agricultural registered permanent residence.

Although the vast majority of them are engaged in non-agricultural industries in the cities and towns, their census register is still in rural areas, and they are still farmers. Having no permanent urban residence certificate means that they can not equally enjoy the subsistence allowances with urban residents. This marginal social status makes it difficult for them to enjoy national treatment, especially social security interests.

**1.2.3** The concept reason: Government departments and migrant workers have ideological misunderstanding. On the one hand, many government departments believe that the government's burden of offering social security for urban residents, and especially laid-off workers has been heavy enough. If coupled with the social security for migrant workers, it is hard to deal with. Moreover, migrant workers are engaged in non-agricultural industries, but af-

ter all they have contracted land, and once faced with unemployment, illness, injury and other accidents, they can retreat to the farm.

Therefore, the social security for migrant workers should be borne by themselves. Obviously, this idea has ignored that the Chinese government is a "government of the people" instead of "public government", the Chinese finance is "national finance", rather than "public finance".

On the other hand, the migrant workers' sense of participation in social security is relatively weak. They know little about social security, and take a wait-and-see attitude, with low enthusiasm for participation.

## **2 The adverse effects of the lack of social security for migrant workers on the building of a socialist harmonious society**

**2.1** The basic meaning of "harmonious society" The phrase can relate back to the time of Confucius when music could bring about harmony by maintaining balance in the society. In addition, music was considered to have the power to transform people into becoming more civilized. Thus, the idea of harmony also suggests the government's responsibility in guiding people "to the correct direction in life." Society is a form consisting of different people, and a living community whereby a considerable number of people interrelate with each other according to certain specifications<sup>[3]</sup>. When various elements constituting the society are mutually inclusive in the unified body under the conditions of coordinated action and benign transformation, the society will be harmonious, full of vigor and vitality. If the interdependent relationship between these elements is broken, there will be constant internal conflicts and disputes, and then the whole society will be caught in crisis and disaster.

In other words, "harmonious society" is relative to the social system as a whole, which requires the formation of a society where people can work according to their ability and live harmoniously. From the perspective of elements, the relationship between sectors and links is stable, coordinated and orderly. From the point of view of the subject, the relationship between the members of society, groups, and classes is harmonious, with no conflict of fundamental interests.

## **2.2 The adverse effects of the lack of social security for migrant workers on the building of a socialist harmonious society**

**2.2.1** Enormous hazard of social stability is hidden. In a certain sense, a society in a stable and normal state has a social security mechanism<sup>[4]</sup>. The migrant workers are subject to "non-national treatment": They are engaged in bitter, tired, dirty, dangerous, cheap (low-paying) occupations or trades, but they bear the city discrimination, the system exclusion, and policy restriction; they build the city and town, but they can not equally enjoy the fruits of urban civilization and economic and social development, coupled with the lag and lack of social security.

All these will be easy to make them risk danger in desperation and challenge the social stability.

**2.2.2** The urbanization process in China is restricted. The systems in history, policies and other factors to a large extent affect the process of urbanization. The existence of the problem of social security for migrant workers is also a major obstacle to speeding up the process of China's urbanization. Due to the lack of social security, the potential role of migrant workers in the urbanization process of China is far from played. The state and government do not consider the comprehensive social security for migrant workers in the city.

At the same time, due to limitations in the educational level, employment skills, relationship capital, adaptability, differences in urban and rural family planning policy, and strong sense of homes of migrant workers, the healthy development of China's urbanization process is seriously restricted.

**2.2.3** The scale development of agriculture in China is hampered. Many studies show that the scale operation is the direction of China's agricultural development, and the transfer of rural surplus labor is the key to achieving large-scale land operation. However, since the complete transfer of rural labor force is blocked, the vast majority of migrant workers take informal flow (its significant feature is not to abandon rural land). This informal flow of migrant workers directly leads to the farmers' diversified operation, namely the migrant workers never give up the traditional agricultural operations in rural areas while engaging in the production of non-agricultural industries in the city<sup>[5]</sup>.

From the microscopic point of view, farmers' diversified operation is migrant workers' rational choice. But from macro point of view, the migrant workers' diversified operation based on small-scale decentralized management of agriculture in China is not conducive to the long-term development of China's agriculture.

First of all, it is not conducive to the flow of rural land to farming experts. Secondly, it is easy to result in "the minimum protection form of agriculture", neglect agricultural input and field management, conduct extensive operation of land and even abandon land.

Obviously, the social stability, balanced regional development, and industry cooperation are implied in the basic meaning of a harmonious society. Therefore, solving the issues concerning agricultural development arising from the lack of social security for migrant workers is not only the inevitable requirement of building a socialist harmonious society, but also the basic condition of building a socialist harmonious society.

### **3 Recommendations for improving social security for migrant workers and promoting the harmonious development of society**

**3.1 Adhering to "people-oriented" outlook of development and giving full play to migrant workers' social creativity** *Decisions on Strengthening the Building of the Party's Ability to Govern* proposed by the Fourth Session of the Sixteenth Central Com-

mittee of the Party pointed out that we should endeavor to make the workers, peasants and intellectuals share the results of the economic and social development with the masses; to realize the coordinated development of urban and rural economy and society smoothly and achieve industrialization and modernization, it is necessary to effectively safeguard farmers' legitimate rights and interests, protect migrant workers' social creativity and ability of the political participation<sup>[6-7]</sup>.

**3.2 Implementing the development strategy of comparative advantage and enhancing material basis of social security for migrant workers** Obviously, the most effective way to change the status quo of the social security for the peasant workers is to lay solid material foundation. In other words, we should constantly promote the relative economic status of the economic groups in society as a whole<sup>[8]</sup>.

However, all means and assets that can obtain wealth are almost the labor. Therefore, the most effective way to improve their employment elasticity is to vigorously develop labor-intensive industries, to give them the fullest employment opportunities and reasonable labor prices in line with the law of supply and demand.

### **3.3 Breaking the trade barriers between urban and rural areas and building unified urban-rural labor market**

John · Rawls convincingly elaborated the connotation and basic requirements of "social justice", who held that "Everyone has inviolability based on justice; justice denies the legitimacy of depriving the freedom of others to share greater benefits"<sup>[9]</sup>.

However, China has not truly reflected the constitutional principle of "citizens are equal". To a certain extent, this is caused by the industry barriers in urban and rural areas. It seriously hampers migrant workers' equal participation in the competition for jobs.

Therefore, we must strive to improve the operational mechanism of the labor market, and eliminate various unreasonable regulations hindering and discriminating against migrant workers' employment in labor market, to create a relaxed environment for migrant workers to engage in fair competition under equal conditions.

### **3.4 Using hierarchical classification method to progressively improve the social security mechanism for migrant workers based on the actual situation of various regions**

Migrant worker is a new social phenomenon in China's transition process, and the combined effects of a variety of factors make it in a flow state. Therefore, when building the mechanism of social security for migrant workers, we can not take the approach of one size fitting all but take hierarchical classification method, to give priority to solving the outstanding basic security issues, and establish sustainable mechanism of social security for migrant workers.

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