



Relief and Control: Analysis of Countermeasures for Urban Vagrants and Beggars

Rongxiang Chen & Chenghui Li

School of Law and Public Administration, Jiangsu Polytechnic University

Changzhou 213164, Jiangsu, China

E-mail: shaomani@sohu.com

Abstract

In large and medium-sized cities, the number of vagrants and beggars is increasing. We should change the point of view that vagrants and beggars are due to their "lack of capacity" but "imputed to the injured person". Assistance for urban vagrants and beggars should be selective, differential treatment, sub-type management, and follow the people-oriented, user-friendly aid principles. Considering the angle of social and economic construction, the country should increase investment in rural basic education, develop skills training, and guarantee citizen's right to survival.

Keywords: Vagrants and beggars, Welfare concept, Classification management

On the street, at the railway station and bus station of bustling metropolis, especially in places where there is a mass of stream of people, vagrants and beggars can be seen frequently. This mass of people includes handicapped, the aged, women, and also the "trailer party" "lethargy party" and "seeking-for-help party" who exploit children for begging. What is your response when you are encountered with such groups of people? This involves the issue of values of human beings. There are some almsgivers who show sympathy based on the humanitarianism, there are some dodgers who regard begging as swindling by false pretences and are disgusted, and there are even some brave people who directly face themselves up to the bleak life (such as, volunteers from the Association of Bao Bei Hui Jia are dedicated to rescuing those children who are abducted and trafficked). However, the problem is whether individual power can rescue such a huge quantity of vagrants and beggars, and how to effectively resolve their actual difficulties? All the above are issues which deserve our thinking.

1. Whether aid should be given to these people?

Without doubt, the answer is yes. Then, let's have a look at those vagrants and beggars without any living sources in the urban life. According to "On 'Measures of the Urban Vagrants and Beggars for Salvation'" released by the Decree of the State Council NO. 381 in June 20, 2003, those so-called vagrants and beggars in the urban life refer to the group of people who leads a vagrant and beggar life in urban areas, unable to resolve their own board and lodging, without any relatives or friends to rely on and unentitled to share subsistence allowances for the urban poor or sustenance of Five Guarantees in rural areas.

As for the above group of people, the government should carry out measures for aid. First of all, what sort of aid on earth is better for them? Usually, most of us may classify those targets in need of aid into two groups, namely, those deserving sympathy (aid) and those not deserving sympathy (not to aid). Generally speaking, young and middle-aged men should earn their own living and stand on their own feet, but not stretching out their hands for begging. R.M. Titmuss from Britain proposes that, there can exist three sorts of choices in the field of social policies that offer social security: firstly, the remedy mode for social security which confirms actual needs based on income investigation; secondly, the mode of redistribution of a system which is universally protected by the society; thirdly, the industrialization mode in which contribution and benefit coordinate to mobilize the initiative.

Social welfare mode can generally be categorized into the major two sorts of "common relief mode" (mainly in Northern Europe and Western Europe) and "remedy mode" (or selective mode, mainly in English-speaking countries, especially in America). According to Professor Zheng Bingwen, China is vast in area and irregular in terms of development level, and it is impossible for China to adopt the welfare mode of "common relief" within an extremely long period of time, because setting of welfare standards in Northern European countries is based on the middle class

and absorbs the social underclass to unify and climb upwards, in which only some "corporatism" factors can be applied by our country to some extent. Within an extremely long historical period of time, it has been impossible for China to adopt the welfare mode of "common relief" that is popular in European countries, and has no choice but to adopt the welfare mode of "remedy" popular in English-speaking countries, such as North America, etc. The welfare mode of "remedy" has the following essential characteristics: the social under-class depends on the country, whereas the middle class depends on the market; the social under-class supports its political system, whereas the middle class supports its economic system; in combination, the country gains joint support from the two social classes, and the society becomes stabilized. If China is going to prevent the Latin American situation, it should select an appropriate welfare fare of "remedy", place the major resources of the country and the government on the social under-class and strengthen the strength of social aid.

For the time being, the economic society of China is being rapidly developed. Life of the people is continuously improved and the social security system is gradually becoming perfect. However, due to such reasons as movement of population, difficulties of family living, unscheduled events and personal choice, there still exist vagrants and beggars. Especially, juvenile vagrants are a social vulnerable group, so they are in need of care and help from the whole society.

Considering the above way of thinking, aid to vagrants and beggars should be investigated so as to determine the social security actually required, for which the social welfare of selective mode is suitable. What selective mode emphasizes is that the group of expenditure target should be aimed at.

Those professional and healthy beggars with the capacity of earning have fixed dwelling places and sources of living, and they regard begging as a way of living or a way of earning money. Under the circumstance when such a group of people does not violate public interests, the area of their begging can be limited. It depends on givers charity should be given or not.

Those physically disabled persons with mental disease undertake begging because they are driven by the life and have no individual subsistence capacity. Such a group of people should be give aid by the country according to relevant regulations on the handicapped in China, so as to guarantee their minimum living standard.

Juvenile vagrants have the possibility to be abducted and trafficked, kidnapped, coerced, inveigled, exploited for begging or vandalized and maltreated as a result of violating illegal criminal activities, so the country should strictly enforce the law to rescue and protect juveniles.

2. What kinds of aid should be given to vagrants and beggars?

The general principle is people-oriented and humanization aid, differential treatment and sub-type management. Ying Ruoping pointed out, vagrants and beggars can be classified into the four types, including prototypical type, professional type, operational type and gang type, based on the fundamental principle of combination of positive aid with sub-type management and according to different begging purposes of vagrants and beggars. Vagrants and beggars of different types are treated with different management measures. As for those prototypical beggars who are driven by difficult living with the purpose of seeking to live, they should be given aid in living, whereas for those professional types with the purpose of seeking a livelihood, those operational types with the purpose of making a profit, and those gang types with the purpose of profit-making, they should be treated with the method of management and control.

2.1 Distinction of reasons for the life of vagrants and beggars and aid to be offered in different classifications

Under the circumstance when the reasons for begging are made clear, we should choose to offer aid or not. As for the group that organizes and forces others to undertake begging, organizers and those who are passively asked to beg should be distinguished, the latter to be rescued, educated and assisted to return to their hometown; however, as for those phenomena of individually organizing and begging, but without any false imprisonment or intentional injury, etc, we should be determined not to give them any aid; as for those who violate security administration, we can implement administrative penalty on them. The existing law in China has not defined the act of individually organizing and forcing others to beg as a behavior of committing a crime, which enables some lawless persons to organize juveniles and the handicapped to beg by taking advantage of this legal slip. Therefore, we should attempt to make perfect the legal regulations on the above phenomena in legislation as soon as possible.

2.2 Pertinent aid should be provided to children, women, the handicapped and psychopaths.

In "On 'Measures of the Urban Vagrants and Beggars for Salvation'", particular regulations are made on women, juveniles, the handicapped and psychopaths. Women, children, the handicapped and psychopaths who lead a vagrant and beggar life have their own distinctiveness, and they belong to a more vulnerable group among the great mass of vagrants and beggars, so aid and protection on them should be more comprehensive, delicate and pertinent.

As for those who abduct and cripple children for begging, the legislation should be made to strictly prohibit begging of juvenile children. Some juveniles who wander in the streets should be the most vulnerable and be a special group which is mostly in need of our care and aid, because juveniles have no civil act capacity, and they are in special want of aid

and protection of governments at all levels and of all circles in the whole society. Thus, the civil administration department has specially set up an aid and protection center for juvenile vagrants. Civil administration departments, police security departments, urban management departments, departments of health, and departments of finance at all levels should take the initiative to play their respective advantages, use many ways to deal with any criminal behavior, crack down any illegal crime, educate and warn the public and propagate healthy atmosphere. The rescue and protection work should be done to juvenile vagrants.

As for those who run away from their home due to inappropriate family education, they should be sent home.

As for those who are abandoned and handicapped and their addresses can not be made a thorough investigation, they should be transferred to a welfare institution. As for those who are maltreated as a result of family reasons and who return each time they are sent, they should be provided with aid and management so as to reduce minor crimes by juveniles.

As for those who are normal in intelligence and run away from their home due to personal reasons, they should be convinced to return home.

As for those children vagrants who are cheated and controlled to beg, they should be rescued and sent back home.

2.3 Other persons

As for those who are put up temporarily due to such reasons as suffering from loss by theft and fail in search for relatives, the rescue stations should provide them with short term board and lodging, return tickets and help them contact their relatives.

3. To what extent should aid be provided?

Why do vagrants and beggars select begging as their means of living? Poverty ought to be the primary cause. One of angles to define poverty is the "theory of insufficiency". The "theory of insufficiency" focuses on the superficial phenomenon of poverty, with a scope ranging from pure material "insufficiency" to the embracive social, spiritual and cultural "insufficiency". The second angle to define poverty is the "competence theory", which is inclined to the internality, subjectivity and initiative of causes of poverty, that is, poverty is caused by its own "insufficiency of competence". The third angle to define poverty is the "deprivation theory" or "exclusion theory", that is, poverty is caused as a result of being "deprived", "excluded" and "low social hierarchical class", which, without doubt, is to discuss the deep reasons for poverty.

In the past, a large majority of us would think that existence of vagrants and beggars was due to their own "insufficiency of competence", "eating their head off", and their stewing in their own juice. The author once spoke with justice to a young woman who carried an infant in the arms for begging, "You have your hands and feet, so why don't you try to find a job by yourself? Your begging may not only hurt yourself, but may also do harm to the innocent child in your arms." recalling that at present, we should change our concept: "in most cases, poverty is not due to individual reasons, but as a result of social reasons." Thus, the life of vagrants and beggars is not influenced by personal factors or cultural factors, but an outcome of the whole social and economic structure.

3.1 The country should guarantee subsistence rights of its citizens.

The current objective fact is that, the social security system is still seriously unsound, which in turn seriously constrains effect of aid to vagrants and beggars. For example, there are still lots of limitations to the system of subsistence allowances in urban citizens, medical assistance system, educational aid system, housing aid system, employment assistance system, the system of aid and protection to children and welfare care, etc, and especially these systems usually can only be accessed by local urban citizens, and there is no means for them to benefit outsiders. For instance, establishment of the social security system in the extensive rural areas in China is still seriously lagging behind, and there still hasn't any other nationwide and systematic social relief and aid except for the support system of Five Guarantees. Thus, it is unlikely to provide even the least basic living guarantee for rural residents.

"When the granaries are full, people know courtesy, and when the purse is light, one cannot be polite". The nation is obliged to guarantee subsistence rights of its citizens, formulate subsistence standards and, at the same time, carry out specific measures that attain these standards. That is, the country should concentrate on comprehensively making perfect its social security system, especially focus on establishment and improvement of a rural social security system, be dedicated to realizing the plan of urban and rural social security as a whole, and satisfy the lowest subsistence demand of human being, that is, offer of food and housing.

Recently, on the internet, such a story has been widely known: two brothers from Kai County in Chongqing held hostages for raising money (such posters as "We only want relevant department to loan us with an amount of 18,000 Yuan", etc, to blackmail relevant department) and saving their mother (when their mother sprayed insecticides on the crops on the mountain, she carelessly fell down from the mountain and was seriously damaged). The incident of "holding hostages for raising money and saving the mother" indicates that, medical insurance in rural areas is still not

perfect, and if farmers suffer from a serious illness, they are actually waiting for death. The two ordinary men could not help but make such an unwise decision.

3.2 To narrow gap between urban and rural areas and to promote coordinated development of urban and rural areas

Poverty is the primary cause for vagrants and beggars. If poverty can not be eliminated and gap between urban and rural areas can not be narrowed, then aid to vagrants and beggars may be faced up with persistent pressure and challenges. The ultimate target of the system of aid to vagrants and beggars should eliminate existence of vagrants and beggars. Therefore, we should attach importance to the strategy of effecting a permanent cure, which is to adopt several effective means in a comprehensive way, promote rapid development of rural social economy, narrow gap between urban and rural areas, and to try to stimulate coordinated development of urban and rural areas. The major issue encountered at present in China is the crisis caused by some social problems which happened in the process of modernization and urbanization, such as extreme disparity between the rich and the poor, gap between urban and rural areas, social inequality, growing income disparity, class antagonism and conflict of interest, etc. We can imagine that, if farmers also share stable medical care and retirement pension, then vagrants and beggars in urban areas may witness a reduction.

3.3 To enlarge investment in rural basic education and to develop skill training

Education to the poor is the fundamental approach to changing the reality, which is to invest in "human capital".

According to survey, education degree of vagrants and beggars is seriously low. Degree of education and professional skill affect their employment competence. For example, the Rescue Station of Bao'an District in Shenzhen has taken the initiative to help vagrants and beggars seek for jobs. They established close relationship with local personnel market, helped them seek for jobs, and provided them with pre-post training. As a result, three of them were employed, and two of them left the position the next day. Their answer was that the working strength was too heavy and the salary was too low.

3.4 To satisfy demands of women and to carry out the family planning

For instance, popularization of the measure of birth control and release of tools of birth control are helpful for implementation of the family planning of women. However, what's most important, farmers have changed their concept. If the social security of farmers does not be carried out, then the concept of "bringing up sons to provide for their old age" can not be eradicated fundamentally. The family planning in rural areas has always run into a stone wall in its implementation, but having more children outside the state plan for farmers further increases their burden. One of the reasons is that farmers have the deep-rooted concept of "bringing up sons to provide for their old age". Therefore, we can not simply criticize that their concept is laggard. We can imagine that, if farmers can be provided for when they are old just like urban citizens, then the concept will naturally fade out, and implementation of the national policy of the family planning may become easier.

All in all, in order to differentiate and analyze selection of the concept of social welfare, aid to urban vagrants and beggars is discussed as a living example. Assistance for urban vagrants and beggars should be selective, differential treatment, sub-type management, and follow the people-oriented, user-friendly aid principles. At the same time, We should change the point of view that vagrants and beggars are due to their "lack of capacity" but "imputed to the injured person", and make clear that "poverty is more as a result of social reasons than personal reasons". Therefore, the life of vagrants and beggars is not influenced by personal factors or cultural factors. Considering the angle of social and economic construction, the country should increase investment in rural basic education, develop skills training, and guarantee citizen's right to survival. Then, urban vagrants and beggars may witness a reduction.

References

Hong, Dayong. (2004). *Social Aid in China in the Social Transition Period*. Shenyang: Liaoning Education Press.

When volunteers offer aids to urban vagrants and beggars children, they are susceptible to be tracked in dangerous misunderstanding [EB/OL]. [Online] Available: <http://news.sohu.com/20091012/n267280349.shtml>2009-11-27.

The first sort is "Trailer Party", in which one child drags a plate trailer, on which a big loudspeaker box is tied up, and there is also a "handicapped" adult sits on the trailer singing who is the watch master. The latter threatens and orders the child to beg for money. The second sort is "Lethargy Party": in bustling places in downtown, one adult carries a lethargic baby to try to gain sympathy and begging from passers-by. The third one is "Seeking-for-help Party": one adult, together with several children, kneels on the street, instigating these children to continually kowtow and weep for begging.

William H. Whitaker. (2003). *Social Welfare in Today's World*. Beijing: Law Press.

Ying, Ruoping, et al. (2006). Sub-type Management Mode of Urban Vagrants and Beggars. *Hunan Social Sciences*, No. 4, 86.

Zheng, Bingwen. (2005). Latin Americanization: China VS Russia. *Chinese Cadres Tribune*, No. 2, 40.