Research on the Construction of Active Social Assistance Legal System from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization

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Abstract

Since its establishment, China's social assistance system has played an important role in protecting people's livelihood. However, with the implementation of rural revitalization strategy, the content of social assistance has made new development, and the current Interim Measures for Social Assistance can no longer meet the actual needs. Therefore, in the new period, on the basis of building the legal system of social assistance, we should improve the legal system of social assistance, strengthen the supervision of funds, improve the supervision mechanism and improve the rights protection system, so as to solve the problems existing in the social assistance system under the background of rural revitalization, better protect the rights and interests of vulnerable groups and accelerate the realization of the strategic goal of rural revitalization.

Keywords

Rural Revitalization; Social Assistance; System Construction.

1. The Question Raised

On January 4, 2022, the Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Doing a Good Job in Promoting Rural Revitalization in 2022 was released. The Opinions pointed out that we must do a good job in "agriculture, rural areas and farmers" and continue to promote rural revitalization in an all-round way. "Agriculture, the foundation of the world, is of great importance." Since ancient times, China has implemented the smallscale peasant economy, creating a distant and civilized farming civilization. Under the background of rural revitalization in full swing in China, it is of great significance to give full play to the institutional advantages of the social assistance legal system for the realization of rural revitalization. Constructing a complete legal system of social assistance in China can help the needy and effectively link up the strategic transformation of poverty alleviation. The social assistance system is based on the people's right to exist and the social security system. However, under the background of rural revitalization, with the realization of the poverty alleviation strategy, the system of China's social assistance system is not perfect, the follow-up work has not been fully followed up, and the social assistance law has not vet been promulgated. At present, the current effective system is still the Interim Measures for Social Assistance revised in 2019. Although the relevant issues of social assistance are stipulated in this method, the legal hierarchy of this method is low, with only 70 articles including supplementary provisions. The content is relatively simple and the provisions are not comprehensive enough, so it can't meet the practical requirements of social assistance from the perspective of rural revitalization.

The problem of social assistance involves many disciplines. At present, the research on social assistance in China's theoretical circles mainly focuses on political science and sociology. In addition, based on the new problems in the background of rural revitalization, there is little research on the legal system of social assistance in the field of law. The core of the social assistance system is legal issues. Based on this, this paper is guided by "starting from the necessity and importance of the social assistance legal system, combining with the existing

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system to explore the implementation status and the improvement of future legislation", and launches the following discussion. By discussing the necessity and importance of implementing the legal system of social assistance in China, this paper points out the rationality of actively constructing the social assistance system in the view of rural revitalization, and lays the foundation for the following discussion. Then, starting from the existing legal system of our country, we will further explore the present situation of the implementation of social assistance. Then, according to the research on the present situation and the implementation of China's system, it points out the existing problems of social assistance at this stage. Finally, it builds the system of China's social assistance legal system from four aspects: perfecting the legal system, perfecting the system content, strengthening the supervision of funds and perfecting the supervision mechanism, so as to provide reference for the formulation of China's social assistance law.

2. The Necessity and Importance of Perfecting China's Active Social Assistance Legal System from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization

2.1. Perfecting China's Active Social Assistance Legal System is the Basic Guarantee for Citizens' Right to Subsistence and Development

Although China's Constitution does not explicitly stipulate that citizens enjoy the right to subsistence and development, Article 45 clearly states that our citizens have the right to get help when their lives are difficult, and it does not require them to fulfill their corresponding obligations, which actually involves the content of social assistance. The White Paper on Human Rights issued by our government also clearly stipulates that our citizens enjoy a wide range of human rights, including the right to subsistence, economy and politics, etc. At the same time, the "protection of human rights" in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the "satisfaction of people's living standards" mentioned in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights all belong to the requirements of social assistance, and China has recognized the above two international conventions, which shows that China is committed to fulfilling the social assistance issues required by the international community and implementing them as an obligation. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, China has paid special attention to the protection of citizens' basic rights, and China has just completed the important task of getting rid of poverty. There are still many unstable factors in the society, because social assistance is the requirement of citizens' minimum living guarantee, it should be taken seriously as an important issue of people's livelihood. Establishing a sound social assistance system is the embodiment of respecting the Constitution and safeguarding human rights, and it is also the basic guarantee of citizens' right to subsistence and development.

2.2. Perfecting the Legal System of Active Social Assistance is the Embodiment of Promoting Social Fairness and Justice

Since the reform and opening up, vigorously developing the construction of "agriculture, rural areas and farmers" has become an important issue in China's social development and progress, and the implementation of the "agriculture, rural areas and farmers" policy is inseparable from the establishment of the legal system. On this basis, the role of the right to social assistance has gradually become prominent. As a bottom-up system, social assistance plays an important role in promoting fairness[1]. It solves the major problems of people's survival and development, and is one of the powerful ways to promote social fairness and justice. In addition, in the process of China's reform and opening-up, the policy of "scissors difference" between urban and rural areas, industry and industry has been carried out for a long time, and wealth is brought before wealth, so as to promote the rapid and stable economic growth, which has made great sacrifices for the development of rural areas and agriculture, and has been lagging behind other fields.

With the progress and development of society, cities and industries have made great achievements. Therefore, when distributing wealth, we should make appropriate deviations, strengthen the promotion of agriculture by industry, bring the countryside to the city, and lean towards people's livelihood. Social assistance is to redistribute wealth when the economy is rich, so as to reflect social fairness and justice. Therefore, we should actively improve the legal system of social assistance and promote social fairness and justice.

2.3. Rural Revitalization Puts Forward New Requirements for the Legal System of Social Assistance

To achieve the goal of rural revitalization, we should not only develop rural industries and upgrade agricultural industries, but also build a perfect social assistance system to protect people's livelihood and improve people's living standards. Especially in rural areas, there are many people who lack or lose the ability to work and have no one to support them. These people have no economic ability, and the rural old-age insurance can't fully guarantee their basic living needs, so they are easy to fall into the survival crisis[2]. At this time, the function of the social assistance system has been reflected. However, China's existing social assistance system is relatively simple in content, not comprehensive in regulations, and not operable[4]. In the context of rural revitalization, the work of "agriculture, rural areas and farmers" is more complicated, and there are many new problems and situations, which put forward higher requirements for the solution of the work of "agriculture, rural areas and farmers". The current Interim Measures for Social Assistance cannot fully adapt to the existing development plan. During the "14th Five-Year Plan" period, in order to promote the rural revitalization strategy, we should comprehensively plan the social assistance system and promote the legal development of social security.

3. The Implementation Status of the Legal System of Social Assistance from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization

3.1. Minimum Living Guarantee

Article 9 of the Interim Measures for Social Assistance stipulates that the main body of the minimum living security is the family whose income is lower than the local minimum living security standard and conforms to the local regulations. It can be seen that the minimum living guarantee is a kind of assistance for the vulnerable groups in the society, and the standards of each province and city are different due to the necessary expenses of its local residents and the level of economic and social development. Compared with other systems, the minimum living guarantee system is also temporary, that is, when the income or property of the guaranteed family is increased and reaches a certain standard, the minimum living guarantee will no longer be paid. Moreover, the guarantee object of the system is not aimed at individuals, but the family as the basic unit, so the calculation method also includes the family population[3].

As of December 31, 2021, there were 4.549 million households and 7.377 million urban residents in China, and the guarantee standard was 711.4 yuan/person-month, an increase of 5.0% over the previous year; There are 19,449,000 households and 34,742,000 rural residents, and the guarantee standard is 6,362.2 yuan/person-year, an increase of 6.7% over the previous year. This also reflects the gap between urban and rural areas in the minimum living guarantee under the dual economic structure. It can be seen that, on the whole, the number of minimum living guarantee in China is decreasing year by year, and great achievements have been made since its implementation.

3.2. Support for Destitute People

The Interim Measures for Social Assistance stipulates that destitute people refer to the elderly, the disabled and minors who have no ability to work, no source of income and no support. It mainly focuses on three special subjects, all of whom belong to the vulnerable groups in society and should be given special protection. At present, the support system for the destitute people in China basically achieves the comprehensiveness of the support content, which not only provides basic living needs, but also takes into account the treatment of diseases and funeral expenses. As of December 31, 2021, there were 4.378 million rural poor people in China, a decrease of 1.9% compared with the previous year, and the annual expenditure was 42.40 billion yuan; There are 327,000 urban destitute people in China, a decrease of 4.81% compared with the previous year, and the annual expenditure are increasing year by year. The state's support system for the extremely poor people has achieved great results. However, it can also be seen that, due to the difference of the dual economic level between urban and rural areas, there is also a certain height gap in the support expenditure for the destitute people.

3.3. Urban and Rural Medical Assistance

In 2019, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress promulgated the Basic Medical Care and Health Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China. This law is a comprehensive medical and health regulation made under the background of epidemic prevention and control. It makes specific provisions on medical and health services, institutions, personnel and security, and it also makes a certain supplement to China's medical assistance system. China's medical assistance targets include family members with minimum living guarantee, destitute dependents and other people with special difficulties. The contents and objects of assistance are clearly defined and targeted. In order to achieve the comprehensiveness of the assistance, China has also stipulated the system of emergency assistance for diseases, which is aimed at the critically ill patients, reflecting the relief of medical assistance, and alleviating the pressure of medical expenses for people in need to some extent. In 2020, there were 84.042 million outpatient and inpatient medical assistance in China, and the outpatient and inpatient medical assistance can be seen.

3.4. Natural Disaster Relief

China's natural disaster relief is a relief system implemented only under specific circumstances, with territorial management and graded responsibility. All along, China has invested a lot of manpower and material resources in disaster prevention and mitigation, and made many regulations on post-disaster reconstruction to ensure emergency rescue and material supply. Every year, China suffers huge losses due to natural disasters. In 2020, the total area of crops in China is 199.576 thousand hectares, and the affected population is as high as 138.297 million, resulting in a direct economic loss of 37.015 million yuan. 7,840 geological disasters occurred, resulting in a direct economic loss of 5,020.27 million yuan; There were 1153 forest fires, resulting in a direct economic loss of 100.777 million yuan. The establishment of natural disaster relief system, to some extent, has reduced the pressure of disaster relief in various regions, and improved the social relief system in China.

3.5. Temporary Assistance

China's temporary assistance system is a social security system that provides help to families in difficulty. Compared with other systems, it has the following characteristics: First, the assistance situation is special, including accidents, and other situations do not belong to this category; Secondly, the recipients of assistance are targeted, not only for families, but also for families with minimum living security and other special difficulties. However, because "other special difficulties" are difficult to define, it is often only for families with minimum living security in practice. Third, the assistance system is temporary, it is a temporary general assistance to families with difficulties in life, but it is not long-term, that is, when the difficult situation disappears, no assistance will be given. In 2020, a total of 13.806 million people were given temporary assistance, and 16.57 billion yuan of temporary assistance funds were spent in the whole year, an increase of 17.51% compared with last year, with an average assistance level of 1,200.3 yuan per person. It can be seen that with the continuous improvement of China's economic development level, the expenditure of temporary assistance has also been greatly improved.

4. There are Problems in the Legal System of Social Assistance from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization

4.1. The Legal System of Social Assistance is not Perfect

China has attached great importance to people's livelihood since the reform and opening up. After decades of development and improvement, there is still a lack of a unified legal system of social assistance. At present, the "Administrative Measures for Social Assistance" in 2014 is still effective, with low legislative rank and insufficient authority. The specific nature, object and legal responsibility of assistance are scattered in other laws and regulations. Moreover, the regulations in different places are different, which makes the social assistance system in China lack of uniform norms. Secondly, the legislation of social assistance is lagging behind. The Interim Measures was promulgated under the premise of China's poverty alleviation and development strategy, so the relevant regulations mainly protect the interests of the poor and vulnerable groups. With the realization of China's poverty alleviation strategy and the implementation of rural revitalization, new requirements have been put forward for the social assistance system. The current regulations have been unable to keep up with the changes of the times, and become the shackles that hinder social progress[4]. Finally, China's current social assistance system is mostly policy-oriented, with only a few legal provisions, and there is an imbalance in emphasis, resulting in the situation that policy-oriented system is the main one, supplemented by legal provisions, which leads to the selectivity of social assistance methods and the uncertainty of assistance principles, and easily leads to the chaos of social order.

4.2. Weakening the Legal Function of Social Assistance

In the identification of the recipients, there is no detailed distinction and refinement of the recipients, and there is no clear definition of how to achieve "difficulties in life". Moreover, the recipients' conditions are different due to regions, ages, technologies, etc., which makes it easy for provinces and cities to form a "one size fits all" situation when formulating local laws and regulations. In addition, the authenticity of the materials submitted by the applicant is often uncertain due to unclear responsibility subjects and overlapping functions of various departments. The applicant may obtain assistance by false proof or concealing real income, so that the object who really needs assistance does not get real assistance, which violates the fundamental purpose of social assistance. In terms of the content of assistance, the scope is still not comprehensive enough. Although the Administrative Measures already cover special assistance including housing and education, with the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy and the state's emphasis on "agriculture, rural areas and farmers", social assistance projects can't cover the existing development[5]. For example, rural revitalization proposes to speed up the development of rural industries, but it is still in the primary stage, and there are many difficulties. The existing social assistance system does not reflect industrial assistance. As for the punishment of illegal recipients, the Administrative Measures only stipulates "stopping assistance" and "recovering fines" for those who cheat social assistance. The punishment is small, and the illegal cost is low, which may lead to the indulgence of defrauding social assistance. Laws and regulations require recipients to take the initiative to report their real family situation, which puts forward higher requirements for their moral consciousness. However, recipients are often poorly educated and have low quality. The guarantee of social assistance can not only rely on people's consciousness, but also need the restraint of the system. It is feasible to strengthen the supervision of recipients and further strengthen the detailed accountability system.

4.3. Lack of Institutional Guarantee of Fund Sources and Confusion of Fund Raising

At present, China's regulations on the allocation of funds for social assistance are defined by normative documents, and the standards are not uniform between the central and local governments. However, the financial expenditure involved in social assistance is huge, which will easily lead to corruption and waste if it is not properly managed. On the one hand, the management system of rescue funds is not perfect. Our country has not clearly defined the rights and responsibilities of the main body of fund management, which may lead to the weak sense of responsibility of the responsible body in management, mutual shirking when problems occur, and arbitrary accountability. Moreover, in actual work, the distribution of relief funds is arbitrary, which is easy to cause uneven distribution, corruption and waste of funds. For example, the fund manager requires the recipients to collect "kickbacks" before issuing relief funds[9]. On the other hand, the financing mechanism is lacking. In terms of financial allocation, there are no clear provisions on whether the funds belong to the central or local financial allocation and the specific allocation standards, and the allocation of funds is arbitrary to some extent, resulting in confusion in the rescue work. Moreover, although the amount of government funding is increasing year by year, due to the large number of recipients and high funding standards, it often cannot meet the needs of recipients, and it is still in a state of short supply. In terms of social donation, due to certain uncertainty and non-standardization, as well as weak supervision links, there are often cases of embezzlement and private occupation of relief funds, which hinder the development of social assistance.

4.4. The Supervision Mechanism is Weak and the Relief Channels are not Smooth

The target of social assistance is the vulnerable groups in China. As one of the means of social security, it is the expression of the government's purpose of serving the people. Therefore, it is necessary to supervise and relieve them. In terms of supervision, Articles 57 and 64 of the Interim Measures for the Administration of Social Assistance stipulate that governments at or above the county level and their social assistance management departments, financial departments and audit institutions are the main bodies of supervision and management in China. The content of supervision is to inquire and check income and property, copy relevant information, and inquire about relevant information. However, the regulations are too broad, not specific to a certain institution, and the division of responsibilities is unclear, so it is easy to appear supervision space in the implementation process. Moreover, the supervision mechanism is weak, and it can't be effectively supervised and restricted. Especially in rural areas, grassroots cadres often have the idea that "the sky is high and the emperor is far away". If they want to get social assistance, they must take improper measures. In terms of relief, although the Interim Measures for the Administration of Social Assistance stipulates relief channels, it is limited to reporting, complaining or applying for administrative reconsideration or administrative litigation. However, the scope of social assistance stipulated in "Administrative Reconsideration Law" and "Administrative Procedure Law" only includes pension, minimum living allowance and social insurance, and all social assistance behaviors are not included in its scope. In addition, the main body responsible for social assistance is the state administrative organ, which is in a strong position in the legal relationship, so it is often difficult for applicants to protect their rights and interests and obtain assistance qualifications[6]. Moreover, even administrative reconsideration and litigation are the means of relief after the damage occurs. Our country has not stipulated the prior relief procedure of social assistance. If the applicant can appeal, accuse and defend in the review stage of relief materials, it will save time and manpower and material resources to a great extent, and ensure the early realization of relief rights.

5. The System Structure of Social Assistance Legal System from the Perspective of Rural Revitalization

5.1. To Speed up the Improvement of China's Social Assistance Legal System

First, improve the legislative level of social assistance. In September, 2020, the draft of Social Assistance Law was published, but it is still at a standstill. In order to realize the legal protection of social assistance from the perspective of rural revitalization, we must improve the relevant legal system, raise the legislative rank, speed up the formulation of the Social Assistance Law and establish a complete assistance mechanism. Secondly, improve the connection between social assistance and rural revitalization. Rural revitalization is inseparable from the examination of the "three rural issues", and the social assistance system is the minimum guarantee of the "three rural issues" policy. The strategic policy of rural revitalization is of great reference significance to the improvement of the legal system of social assistance. There is a convergence point between them in the work of "agriculture, rural areas and farmers"[7]. The effective connection between them can make the legal system of social assistance meet the new requirements put forward by the rural revitalization strategy, and make the limited resources reasonably allocated. Finally, improve the legal norms of social assistance and strengthen coordinated legislation. In addition to the central legislation, under the guidance of the legal system of social assistance, each province and city should formulate local laws and regulations according to local economic conditions, so as to realize the subordinate law of social assistance. In addition, it is necessary to realize the coordination and operability among norms, and strengthen the legislative coordination between basic assistance and other special assistance, such as relaxing the qualifications of the recipients in special assistance, realizing equal protection of the rights subjects and complementary assistance functions.

5.2. Improve the Main Content of the Legal System of Social Assistance

With regard to the perfection of the legal system of social assistance, the author believes that the following three aspects need to be done:

First, accurately identify the social assistance target. The recipients of social assistance are in a dynamic state due to their economic situation. If there are management loopholes in the screening of applications, the recipients who should be rescued will be omitted, and the recipients who should not be rescued will appear on the list of assistance, resulting in unreasonable allocation of resources. Under the vision of rural revitalization, we should make clear the social assistance objects, adhere to the principle of dynamic supervision, flexibly adjust the assistance personnel, update the assistance standards in time, and treat them differently according to the recipients at different levels, and focus on assistance for the objects in each standard according to people's needs, so as to achieve social equity.

Secondly, expand the scope and content of assistance. Social assistance involves people's food, clothing, housing and transportation. It is to ensure the basic life and survival and development needs of the recipients, and there can be no mistakes. The scope of social assistance should not

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only include low-income households and needy groups, nor should income or population be used as the criterion for judging hardship. Marginal groups should also be taken into account. Once such people suffer from family changes and market risks, they are likely to fall into a difficult life. As for the content of assistance, it should also be extended to housing assistance, industrial assistance, financial assistance and infrastructure assistance. For example, giving certain funds or loans to rural revitalization industries can improve the employment opportunities of the disadvantaged groups, realize the long-term development of industries, and make up for the vacancy of the existing assistance system[8].

Finally, implement the legal responsibility of the recipients. Rights and obligations complement each other. After enjoying certain social assistance resources, the recipients should bear certain obligations, ensure that their own situation is true and correct, use the assistance funds properly, actively participate in employment training, etc. If they violate their obligations, they will have to bear corresponding consequences, such as returning assistance money, losing their eligibility for assistance, etc. If the circumstances are serious, they may even bear criminal responsibility. It should be noted that the undertaking of obligations is not the equivalent price of social assistance, but the purpose is to make resources reasonably allocated, give full play to the advantages and improve the social effect of assistance.

Strengthening the Supervision of Social Assistance Funds **5.3**.

In view of the supervision of funds, the author thinks that we should start from the following two aspects:

First, improve the Budget Law. Social assistance belongs to the content of state financial transfer payment, and the relevant state financial expenditures are accounted by the Budget Law. Therefore, a scientific and reasonable budget system has an important impact on the supervision of social assistance funds and the protection of civil rights. When the Budget Law is amended, social assistance can be regarded as a special financial expenditure, various types of special assistance funds can be established, and independent supervision can be carried out to ensure that all funds are put in place and promote the coordinated and stable development of social assistance.

Second, improve the financing mechanism of social assistance. At present, the supply of social assistance funds in China is in short supply, and there is a certain gap in the level of economic development between rural areas and cities. It is not enough to support the expenditure of social assistance only by local finance. Under the background of rural revitalization, we should continue to actively invest in social assistance expenditures, introduce commercial support, and give full play to the power of social organizations. The government can purchase public services of social assistance, make full use of the undertaking power of outsourcing, and meet all-round requirements of assistance. In addition, it is necessary to enhance the fairness of central financial support, avoid the same treatment of "absolute egalitarianism" in different regions, and allocate relief funds scientifically and reasonably.

5.4. Improve the Supervision Mechanism of Social Assistance, Improve the **Rights Protection System**

On the one hand, a good system can't be separated from the supervision mechanism. By strengthening supervision, we can standardize the behavior of social assistance subjects and speed up the improvement of the legal system of social assistance. Establish a clean and honest supervision mechanism under the rule of law. All supervision subjects will form a joint force, and all departments will perform their duties, so that all aspects of social assistance will be handled by specialized agencies, and the overlapping of functions will be resolutely avoided. The administrative body should regularly check the families and property of the recipients, conduct dynamic supervision, and carry out strict examination and approval procedures, and ISSN: 2688-8653

improve the system of combining reporting with verification. In addition, establish a personal credit information system for recipients, implement a strict points system for which recipients choose, deduct the corresponding points if there are irregularities in the process of recipients, and upload the information to the data platform to improve the information verification and supervision of social assistance from the technical level[9].

On the other hand, improve the administrative relief procedure of social assistance. First of all, improve the prior relief procedures, for example, when approving the application materials, give the applicant the right to make representations and defenses, to some extent, alleviate the arbitrariness of the examination and approval authority as a strong position in qualification determination; The introduction of the hearing system can also enable applicants to express their opinions and protect the right to assistance from damage. In addition, to improve the legal aid mechanism and protect the aided groups, the applicants are generally vulnerable groups with difficulties in life. When their interests are infringed, they often don't know or have no way to safeguard their legitimate rights and interests, so they need to provide professional legal aid to ensure the effective realization of social assistance.

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