

Study on Major Public Emergencies and the Improvement of the Temporary Assistance System

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Abstract: *The frequent occurrence of major public emergencies in today's risky society has caused severe harm to the public, community, and state. The social assistance system, which guarantees the basic survival of the people in need, has been dramatically impacted. As an emergency system arrangement in the social assistance system, the ability of the temporary assistance system to give full play to the function of emergency assistance is crucial to the effective response to significant public emergencies. In view of the impact of major public emergencies, such as COVID-19, on the temporary assistance system, this paper summarizes the domestic and international experience and practice of temporary assistance in response to COVID-19 and puts forward proposals for further improving China's temporary assistance system: Promoting the rule of law in the temporary assistance system immediately; Strengthening the emergency response of the temporary assistance system effectively; Emphasizing the inclusiveness of the temporary assistance system; Improving the accessibility of the temporary assistance system continuously; Improving the timeliness of the temporary assistance system continuously.*

Keywords: *Major Public Emergency; COVID-19; Temporary Assistance System*

1. Introduction and Literature Review

As a social security project with the most extended history, social assistance is the bottom-line institutional arrangement of essential livelihood protection and the "last line of defense" to ensure social security. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the CPC Central Committee has placed the construction of the social assistance system in a more prominent position. The Chinese government has put forward a series of new ideas, assertions, and requirements for social assistance, which has driven China's social assistance work to make historic achievements. China's social assistance cause has continued to move forward towards high-quality development. COVID-19 significantly impacted the traditional social assistance system, making conventional assistance measures challenging to play a role or even ineffective. To this end, the CPC Central Committee has made a series of significant decisions and deployments. Ministry of Civil Affairs and Finance have rapidly adopted a series of emergency relief measures, successively issuing a series of temporary relief policy documents to safeguard the basic livelihoods of the needy, such as the *Circular on Further Improving the Work of Guaranteeing the Benefits for the Needy During the Prevention and Control of the Epidemic*. It has played an active role in safeguarding people's livelihoods, stabilizing society, and helping the economy to recover. This fully demonstrates the importance of the temporary assistance system in responding to major public emergencies. It also reflects the necessity and urgency of improving the existing temporary assistance system.

In 2014, the State Council issued a document formally establishing China's temporary assistance system; in 2018, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and other departments issued the *Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving the Work of Temporary Assistance*; in 2019, the *Opinions on Giving Full Play to Temporary Assistance in Poverty Eradication and Bottom-Level Guarantees* were issued, with the system gradually being strengthened and improved, however, in the face of significant public emergencies with great harm, such as COVID-19. The current temporary relief system still exposes some defects, which affects the full play of its emergency relief function. In 2020, the CPC Central Committee issued *Opinions on Reforming and Perfecting the Social Assistance System*, which called for improving the policies and measures for temporary assistance, accelerating the establishment of a management mechanism for temporary assistance, and giving full play to the

bottom-line protection function of temporary assistance. During the two sessions of the National People's Congress this year, the Chinese government gave essential instructions on social assistance and other civil affairs work. He pointed out that it is necessary to strengthen temporary assistance and give full play to the role of guarantee. Therefore, improving the existing temporary assistance measures and enhancing the system's emergency response capacity to deal with public emergencies is of great practical significance.

At present, there are fewer studies devoted to the temporary assistance system, and the relevant literature mainly covers three aspects. First, analyze the problems and difficulties of China's temporary assistance system. Yu Depeng (2014) argued that the level of documents related to temporary assistance needs to be higher^[1]. Zhang Yujie (2016) pointed out that the mechanism for proactive discovery of temporary assistance has yet to be activated^[2]. Liu Fang (2019) argued that temporary assistance does not pay sufficient attention to the concept of "emergency."^[3] Zhao Chuanfang (2021) pointed out three outstanding issues: how to accurately identify the recipient, make the assistance standards more fair and reasonable, and improve the active discovery mechanism further^[4]. Second, explore the significance of the foreign temporary assistance system. Lv Xuejing (2016) pointed out that Japan provides emergency living assistance to disaster victims and simplifies the procedure for granting subsidies^[5]. Zhu Yidan (2015) pointed out that Germany not only offers essential living assistance to people experiencing poverty but also provides temporary assistance in medical care, education, and maternity for the poor under particular hardship^[6]. Liu Baochen (2018) argued that the low-income family assistance system in the United States more fully reflects the temporary characteristics of assistance^[7]. And third, put forward the idea of improving the temporary assistance system. Xie Zengyi (2014) proposed to perfect the legislation and formulate the Social Assistance Law as soon as possible to achieve a good connection between subsistence allowances, medical assistance, temporary assistance, and other projects^[8]. Guan Xiping (2015) pointed out that more attention should be paid to temporary assistance projects. Temporary assistance is not only a program of the social assistance system but also an essential part of improving the overall effectiveness of social assistance^[9]. Lin Mingang (2019) proposed that in terms of application procedures, the initiative of the rescued object to apply for assistance should be gradually expanded to the initiative of the government^[10]. Zhu Meng and Yan Xinming (2020) pointed out that preparing a good integration plan for the normalized social assistance and temporary assistance system is necessary under public health emergencies^[11].

In summary, most of the literature on the shortcomings and recommendations of temporary assistance need to be more generalized and focused. Currently, the research focuses more on the specific programs of temporary help in foreign countries. At the same time, there is a lack of research on the emergency response mechanism of temporary assistance in various countries under major public emergencies and how to improve the temporary assistance system. Therefore, this paper takes COVID-19 as an example, analyzes the impact and challenges of major public emergencies on the temporary assistance system, summarizes the successful experience of China's temporary assistance in major public emergencies, combines with international practices, and puts forward the policy suggestions for the soundness and perfection of China's temporary assistance system.

2. Major public emergencies highlight the urgency of improving the temporary assistance system

Emergency refers to the sudden occurrence of natural disasters, accidents, public health events, and social security events, which often causes serious harm to the public, society, government, and the country. It is necessary to take emergency measures and give social assistance to the victim groups. For general public emergencies, the government can solve the problems of people in need by comprehensively applying traditional relief policy. However, for major public emergencies, such as COVID-19, social relief work has become extraordinarily complex. It is difficult to effectively respond to them by simply relying on conventional means of relief. At this time, the temporary assistance system can more effectively perform its function of providing assistance^[12].

2.1 Major public emergencies have significantly impacted the current temporary assistance system

Major public emergencies such as COVID-19 have brought major shocks and severe challenges to the temporary assistance system. First, the scope and target of temporary assistance have broken through the system's boundaries. Although China's current temporary assistance has been expanded from vagrant beggars to all types of individuals and families who are suddenly in distress due to emergencies, the scale of the victimized group is highly uncertain. All groups may become victims of

disasters, especially large-scale floating populations, which in turn form large-scale new groups in need of temporary assistance. At this point, temporary assistance has shifted from targeting individual emergencies to targeting large-scale group emergencies. Second, the goals and tasks of temporary assistance have broken through traditional perceptions. From its inception to development, social assistance has always been oriented toward addressing and alleviating poverty, and the temporary assistance system is no exception. However, in major public emergencies, the first thing that people face is the danger of survival, and temporary assistance is needed to solve the problem of life-saving and survival, which is prioritized over the issue of poverty alleviation. Third, the content and means of temporary assistance have broken through the general category. Generally speaking, temporary assistance focuses on cash and in-kind assistance; the means usually include cash handouts, food, and materials. In a significant public emergency, the need for service, psychological, and spiritual assistance comes to the fore, so the content of temporary assistance has shifted from single material assistance to "material + service (psychological and spiritual)" assistance.

2.2 Major public emergencies strengthen the emergency requirements of the temporary assistance system

Compared with ordinary emergencies, major public emergencies have the characteristics of suddenness, contingency, unpredictability, high severity, and widespread, resulting in more significant harm, which requires the temporary rescue policy to have a more robust "emergency." China's current social assistance system framework is based primarily on a "regular state" rather than an "emergency state." It lacks specific emergency management and response provisions regarding assistance organizations, recipients, and methods. Although a natural disaster assistance system and a temporary assistance system have been established in response to emergencies, there is no emergency response mechanism for social assistance in a major public emergency. At the same time, China's current laws on public health emergencies do not provide for an emergency response mechanism for social assistance. In addition, as an institutional arrangement for emergency relief, temporary assistance lacks "contingency," so during COVID-19, China issued successive circulars to make up for the shortcomings of the social assistance system. In the future, extreme disasters, cross-border crises, and emerging risks may be superimposed on one another, which will continue to bring new challenges and requirements to the social assistance system, and the traditional temporary assistance system will face an even more significant impact^[13]. It is necessary to continuously improve the emergency and inclusiveness of the temporary assistance system, further strengthen the emergency and distress relief function of the temporary assistance system, and make up for the shortcomings of the social assistance system in responding to major public emergencies.

3. Successful experience of temporary assistance in dealing with major public emergencies

Table 1 Policy paper on temporary relief in response to COVID-19 epidemic

serial number	Policy documents	Temporary relief measures
1	Circular on Further Improving the Work of Countering Epidemic Spreads from the People in Difficulties during the Prevention and Control of the Epidemic (FJG[2020] No. 59)	Protect the basic livelihood of people in need during epidemic prevention and control. Temporary price subsidies are paid in full and on time to low-income recipients, special hardship cases, and others in need. The scope of temporary assistance is timely incorporated into the regular poor population with documented records. During the epidemic, for affected persons who have become poor, the return to the poverty of the poor population on file, the confirmed cases of low income, special hardship cases, low-income family members, and the poor population on file, under the provision of the timely granting of temporary assistance, can be increased on a case-by-case basis. Temporary assistance is provided for families that experience temporary difficulties in basic livelihood in the quarantine of a family member. Patients and their families who have problems making ends meet are promptly included in the scope of temporary assistance, which is long-term for the families of those who have died of the disease. Temporary assistance was provided to people in difficulty whose basic livelihoods were affected by the epidemic but could not be covered by other social assistance systems for the time being. Areas with severe epidemics can implement first aid, providing material help or service assistance according to the emergency. Protect the basic livelihood of low-level persons in hardship. Temporary lodging, food, warm clothing and other assistance are provided to temporarily stranded people. During the epidemic, temporary assistance was provided to migrant workers who could not find work, failed to find support, and were experiencing temporary difficulties in their essential lives.
2	Circular on Further Improving Basic Livelihood Protection for People in Difficulties (FJG[2020] No. 69)	Moderately expand the scope of temporary assistance. Assistance to unemployed persons in difficulty and not covered by social insurance has been strengthened. Unemployed persons affected by the epidemic who cannot return to work and have had no source of income for three consecutive months, long in hardship and not covered by unemployment insurance policies, are given one-time temporary assistance payments. Families or individuals affected by the epidemic who have fallen into trouble and are not temporarily covered by the relevant social assistance and security systems are promptly included in the scope of temporary assistance. For those experiencing significant life difficulties, the amount of assistance is raised on a case-by-case basis. A system of temporary assistance reserve funds for townships (streets) has been fully established to provide first aid, and temporary assistance can be implemented directly in areas where conditions exist.
3	Opinions on Reforming and Improving the Social Assistance System (FJG[2020] No. 18)	Improve temporary assistance policies and measures. Temporary assistance is divided into emergency-type temporary assistance and expenditure-type temporary assistance. When implementing emergency-type temporary assistance, small amount first aid is used, with regulatory relaxations provided afterwards. In the case of expenditure-based temporary assistance, it is handled by the report and approval procedure. Follow-up assistance and one-time approval "blended assistance" are adopted to reduce the time-lag of assistance. When necessary, the start of difficult people's basic life subsistence work coordination mechanism at the county level. Promote the establishment of temporary assistance reserve fund systems in townships (streets). Strengthen the interface between temporary assistance and other assistance systems and charitable help, ultimately forming a system of assistance.
4	Circular on Further Improving Basic Livelihood Protection for People in Difficulties Affected by Diseases and Epidemics (FJG[2021] No. 15)	Strengthen social assistance in emergencies. Support for temporary assistance reserves in townships (streets) has been increased; temporary assistance has been provided to those experiencing difficulties in basic living due to a disaster, and first aid can be implemented in cases of emergency. Restrictions on application from places of domicile and residence have been abolished so that temporary assistance can be implemented directly from the site where the emergency occurs in the following cases: migrant workers who are temporarily unable to find a job and have lost their family support, persons temporarily stranded in local areas for reasons such as traffic control, and disaster victims whose domicile is not in the local area.
5	Circular on Effectively Safeguarding the Basic Life of the People in Difficulties (FJG[2021] No. 32)	Pay close attention to price changes, ensuring that social assistance protection standards are linked to price rises, and using temporary price subsidies in full and on time. Increase the level of temporary assistance for those in need. Families in difficulty that meet the conditions for low-income protection have been included in the scope of one-income protection. Additional one-time assistance allowances have been granted to low-income insurance recipients and persons in exceptional hardship. In areas with severe epidemics, people in difficulty are entitled to temporary assistance payments. Using one-time temporary assistance payments to unemployed persons who cannot return to work and in some work due to the epidemic, who have lost their source of income for three consecutive months and who are long in hardship and not covered by unemployment insurance policies. Increase the assistance and support provided to young people, such as unemployed university students living in difficult situations, and take temporary assistance loans promptly to ease the actual situation. Temporary assistance is provided directly to low-income insurance recipients, persons in extraordinary hardship, and low-income protection patients and families experiencing temporary difficulties from their households, as needed. Other families or individuals whose basic livelihoods have been affected by the epidemic, who have fallen into difficulty, and who cannot be covered by the relevant social assistance and security systems are given temporary assistance on time.

Source: Based on publicly available information.

In responding to COVID-19, China has innovated a series of temporary assistance policies, which

have effectively safeguarded the basic livelihoods of the people in need and built up the last line of security in the fight against COVID-19. The results are worth recognizing, and the experience is worth summarizing, including four primary areas of practical experience. The specific policy documents and assistance measures are shown in Table 1.

3.1 Categorization of temporary assistance measures.

In COVID-19, temporary assistance targets included the normally and dynamically vulnerable. Normally, vulnerable groups mainly include widows, widowers, orphans, and single persons, especially older adults in welfare institutions, orphans, and de facto orphans. During the epidemic period, the application for subsistence allowances for normally vulnerable groups only needs to be asked by phone, and the staff can verify their economic status through the big data connected to the civil affairs system, thus simplifying the application process and issuance process; increase the number of temporary assistance subsidies. For example, during the epidemic, Wuhan provided a standard of four times temporary assistance to the temporary unable to find employment families, attached importance to service assistance, and provided psychological counseling to normally vulnerable groups. Dynamically vulnerable groups refer to migrant workers, poor households with the ability to work, employees on flexible pay systems, and the unemployed, especially the floating population with non-local household registration. During the epidemic, temporary employment services were given greater prominence for the dynamically disadvantaged, with point-to-point, one-stop employment services being provided to help groups of migrant workers return to work and resume their careers; families returning to poverty as a result of the epidemic were provided with temporary assistance promptly; and the scope of temporary assistance was expanded to include those who had been stranded in the local area during the epidemic, with local civil affairs departments or the streets directly implementing temporary assistance.

3.2 Diversification of the contents of temporary assistance.

During COVID-19, China provided temporary assistance in various ways, including cash assistance, assistance in kind, and service assistance. On the one hand, service-oriented assistance was strengthened in implementation. Social organizations, psychologists, volunteers, and others were fully involved, using hotlines and micro-letters to provide psychological assistance and emotional relief to quarantined persons and their families, family members of those who had died of the disease, and those stranded abroad. On the other hand, increase the cash relief program. For example, during the epidemic, Wuhan has provided nursing subsidies to people infected with COVID-19. For those eligible for subsistence allowances and low-income families with confirmed cases, temporary assistance will be provided according to six times the subsistence allowance standard. Temporary assistance will be provided to registered poor people who have fallen into poverty due to epidemics or returned to poverty due to illness. To provide one-off condolence payments to the families of the epidemic victims, We will provide charitable assistance to families suffering from COVID-19^[14].

3.3 Diversification of the central bodies of temporary assistance.

In COVID-19, the central bodies of temporary assistance included the Government, social organizations, the market, and individuals. The diversification of relief subjects not only supplemented the service strength of temporary relief, effectively alleviating the problems of insufficient personnel and lack of resources, but also enhanced the operational efficiency of temporary relief through mutual assistance and complementarity. The relief model of "government + enterprises + individuals + charitable organizations" has provided an essential organizational guarantee for China's fight against the epidemic and has made up for the shortcomings of relying solely on the government's power to implement relief in times of crisis.

3.4 The way of temporary relief is scientific and technological.

During COVID-19, temporary assistance has fully utilized modern information technology in its implementation to provide assistance services in a more timely, effective, and rapid manner. First, the APP and other ways as a medium, the performance of the whole process of relief work online to ensure that social assistance work is not affected by the epidemic. The second is to optimize the temporary assistance work procedure. Use big data and Internet technology to simplify the approval process of temporary assistance and improve the processing speed. The third is implementing online appointment and treatment services to provide patients with more convenient and faster relief services during the

epidemic^[15].

4. International references to temporary relief in response to significant public emergencies

The temporary assistance system is a system that has been gradually developed and established in the course of China's practice, and there is no equivalent title or assistance system abroad. Overseas countries attach great importance to safeguarding citizens' right to social assistance, believing that social assistance is not the obligation of the State alone but that individuals, families, and the market are all subjects of responsibility. The Government, therefore, encourages and supports the active participation of non-profit organizations, social enterprises, and other social actors in social assistance. In the face of significant public emergencies such as COVID-19, all countries lacked foresight but introduced a series of temporary assistance policies that relied on their relatively comprehensive public health systems and legal systems for social assistance. Table 2 shows the specific ways, targets, and content of temporary assistance in the UK, Japan, and the US. The temporary assistance system in each country can be summarized broadly in the following two areas.

Table 2 Temporary relief measures taken by some countries in response to COVID-19 outbreak

Country	Relief Methods	Rescue object	Rescue content
Britain	Launching WWII to maximize action on the market (incomplete collation)	Groups with employment difficulties	Nearly £7 billion was spent on groups in employment difficulties due to the outbreak, paying 80 percent of the income of self-employed business employees (up to a maximum of £2,500 per month) for three months.
		Confirmed patient quarantine group	Free medical treatment for those diagnosed, and isolation grants of £500 per person for new crown-positive patients or those on low incomes whom the NHS requires to isolate themselves.
Japan	Third Emergency Bailout Plan (7 April 2020)	Epidemic-hit MSMEs \ Self-employed persons \ Households with total income below the income standard line \ Low-income families, and laborers whose income has dropped by more than 50% due to the epidemic	Eligible families are granted a living assistance allowance of 300,000 yen per family and a child allowance of 10,000 yen for those who meet the criteria.
	Severance Support Payment (21 October 2021)	Individuals forced to stop working due to problems in their company's business situation affected by the epidemic.	The subsidy amount is 9,900 yen directly, with a maximum of 11,000 yen in specific areas such as those where an emergency has been declared.
	Extension of emergency microfinance and integrated support funds	Households with temporary difficulties in maintaining their livelihoods due to the epidemic	The maximum range of emergency small amounts is 200,000 yen, and the full amount of comprehensive support funds is 600,000 yen, both of which can be applied simultaneously.
United States	Universal Cash Assistance Bill	Groups earning less than \$99,000 a year	Adults receive \$1,200, children receive \$500, and assistance decreases in descending order for groups making \$7,500 to \$9,900 a year. The IRS initiates payments based on income, and applying independently is unnecessary.
	Unemployment Benefits	Ordinary unemployed workers and those who employ their people for odd jobs	The government provides payment cards to which a certain amount is paid weekly, and the payment practice continues for several months.
	CARES Act	Couples earning less than \$150,000, individuals and children earning less than \$7,500	Separate payments of \$2,400, \$1,200, and \$500 are available.
		Unemployed	Allow states to increase unemployment benefits and receive additional compensation from the federal government.
		Other groups of individuals	Allow \$100,000 to be withdrawn from retirement accounts.
New Crown Relief Assistance Act	Adults and dependents in families	Issues \$166 billion in direct checks (each adult and dependent in each household receives a separate \$500 bill); \$120 billion in additional unemployment assistance (workers would be eligible to receive \$300 per week in federal unemployment benefits by 14 March, including casual economy workers).	

Source: Based on publicly available information.

4.1 The Government legislated and took the initiative to strengthen social assistance.

In 1848, the United Kingdom passed the world's first *Public Health Act* and promulgated the *Beveridge Report* in 1942, after which a series of laws and regulations were successively introduced, including the *National Assistance Act 1948*, the *Social Security Act 1986*, the *Social Security Contributions and Allowances Act 1992*, the *Jobseekers Act 1995*, the *Charities Act 2006*, the *Income and Corporate Taxation Act 1988*, *Agreement on the Relationship between the Government and Voluntary and Community Organizations 1988*, and the *Public Services (Social Values) Act 2012*, which have gradually established a comprehensive legal system for social assistance. In response to the impact of COVID-19, the United Kingdom has enacted the *New Coronavirus Health Protection Act 2020* and the *New Coronavirus Act*, taking the initiative to expand the scope of social assistance. The United States passed the *Federal Emergency Relief Act of 1933*, the *Social Security Act of 1935*, the *Personal Responsibility and Employment Opportunity Adjustment Act*, the *National Emergencies Act*,

and the *National Emergency Preparedness Program*, forming a legal social assistance system centered on this. After the outbreak, the United States enacted the *Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)*, the *Universal Cash Assistance Act*, the *Coronavirus Assistance, Relief, the Economic Security Act (CARES)*, and the *New Coronavirus Relief and Assistance Act*. The social assistance measures in the United States are more intensive, broader in coverage, and longer in duration.

4.2 Timely adjustment of the scope and content of assistance recipients.

First, the scope of social assistance recipients has been appropriately expanded. In the United Kingdom, the low-income group was refined based on "family factors such as whether the applicant is single, whether he or she has a spouse, whether he or she has children, and how many children he or she has." Then, the criteria for determining the recipients of assistance are refined in the light of such conditions as "working hours, family savings, age, place of residence, and type of person (disabled, elderly, students, etc.)." Japan established a social assistance model based on the 1946 Livelihood Security Law. Although it adhered to the principle of minimum security, it also took the initiative to expand the scope of assistance recipients during the epidemic. Second, improve the method and content of assistance. During the epidemic, Europe and the United States generally took "light prevention and control" and "heavy social assistance" strategies. Social assistance focuses on direct aid to individuals, more inclined to pay directly to special groups of money, directly targeting the individual "needs side." Third, unemployment assistance is provided through innovative labor protection policies. The United Kingdom introduced the "Long Epidemic Holidays" scheme, under which the government paid workers to take long vacations but not to reduce staff to safeguard employment. The United States provided \$350 billion in financial support to small and microenterprises in the early days of the epidemic, encouraging companies to try to retain employees rather than dismiss them and encouraging employees to take long unpaid vacations and keep their health insurance. It also allowed employees to apply for unemployment benefits from the government. The government temporarily added \$2 trillion to support the Unemployment Security Fund.

5. Reflections and Suggestions on Further Improving China's Temporary Assistance System

5.1 Promoting the rule of law in the temporary assistance system immediately.

China still needs to introduce a legal system for the temporary assistance system. At the same time, social insurance, which is an essential part of social security and has a relief function, has been formally legislated. There are two main requirements for upgrading the legal nature of the temporary assistance system: first, the promulgation and implementation of the *Social Assistance Act* as soon as possible, and the clear stipulation of the objectives, tasks, main contents, operational mechanisms, safeguards and other elements of the system for temporary assistance. Second, the coordinated development of temporary assistance and social insurance should be realized at the legal level to maximize temporary assistance's emergency relief and livelihood protection functions^[16].

5.2 Strengthening the emergency response of the temporary assistance system effectively.

When other social assistance systems are temporarily unable to function, temporary assistance is a kind of emergency and transitional institutional arrangement. Still, the emergency attributes of China's temporary assistance system must be strengthened urgently. First, when adjusting temporary assistance policies and measures, the concepts of "emergency response" and "emergency relief" should be fully implemented. Full consideration should be given to major public emergencies that may occur in the future, and emergency plans for temporary assistance should be drawn up, with the organizational structure of the temporary assistance system, the construction of personnel teams, service projects, and the management system all being conducive to the performance of emergency functions. Second, based on the emergency response mechanisms for various types of emergencies, social assistance measures and emergency relief procedures are being formulated for the emergency period. Specific emergency response measures have been proposed in significant public emergencies to adjust the relief model and expand the scope and time frame for emergency relief. Third, by the degree of social, economic, and cultural development, it constantly explores the recipients of temporary assistance, the implementation process, the standards of assistance, and the forms of assistance.

5.3 Emphasizing the inclusiveness of the temporary assistance system.

The inclusiveness of social assistance is mainly reflected in two aspects: First, the assistance targets should comprehensively cover all poor and vulnerable groups. Not only should all existing poor and vulnerable groups be covered, but it should also be made to cover new groups of people in difficulty in the future. Second, the content of assistance should emphasize capacity assistance and development-oriented assistance. It is necessary to help the poor and disadvantaged groups enhance their ability to participate in social and economic activities; it is essential to strengthen the linkage between social assistance and employment promotion, and through the provision of employment guidance, employability training, support for business start-ups by recipients, encouragement of employment by recipients, and other developmental assistance, it is necessary to enhance the opportunities for the participation of groups in difficulty in employment and to continually promote the entry of recipients into the labor market for employment. As an essential part of the social assistance system, the temporary assistance system must enhance its inclusiveness from the above two aspects and continue to shift from traditional survival-oriented assistance to active development-oriented assistance.

5.4 Improving the accessibility of the temporary assistance system continuously.

The current initiatives to gradually abolish restrictions on the place of domicile and residence and to promote the implementation of temporary assistance from the place where the emergency occurs have effectively enhanced the accessibility of the temporary assistance system, especially in resolving the difficulties faced by the floating population in enjoying temporary assistance. In the future, the accessibility of the temporary assistance system can be further improved in two ways: First, the issue of the limitation on applications for temporary assistance based on household registration should be determined by the legal status, and a temporary assistance system based on "citizenship" should be established under the people's actual needs. The entire population can apply for temporary assistance without discrimination in a significant public health emergency. Second, improve the mechanism for proactive identification of temporary assistance recipients. The community has given full play to its advantage in accurately identifying families affected by emergencies. It has made the active discovery of temporary assistance recipients a regular feature of its work, setting up a system for follow-up visits to provide assistance, implementing an organized filing system for marginalized populations, meticulously addressing the circumstances of residents' families in each village, and promptly including those genuinely in need of help within the scope of temporary assistance.

5.5 Improving the timeliness of the temporary assistance system continuously.

Current initiatives, including simplifying the approval procedures for temporary assistance and the active implementation of "first aid," have greatly enhanced the timeliness of the temporary assistance system and given full play to its functions of providing relief in emergencies. The timeliness of the temporary assistance system can be further improved in three ways: The first is to improve the response mechanism for temporary assistance in emergencies. Great efforts should be made to strengthen the integration and connection of the temporary relief system with natural disaster education assistance and emergency relief in terms of rescue objects, standards, and procedures, and establish a temporary effective assistance response mechanism for emergency response in combination with the characteristics of different stages, including prevention, rescue, transfer and resettlement, and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction. Second, temporary assistance front-line staff should be given greater freedom. Temporary assistance faces uncertain risks, and it is difficult to establish strict institutional norms for all situations in advance. When emergencies occur, it is too late to carry out the complex review and approval procedures, and it is often necessary to make rapid judgments and decisions based on the specific situation and to take relief action at the first opportunity. Third, the level of informatization of temporary assistance should be further enhanced. The introduction of big data, Internet, blockchain, and other technological means, applied in the timely discovery of assistance recipients, the convenient integration of assistance information, and the rapid distribution of assistance resources, can effectively enhance the assistance efficiency of temporary assistance.

6. Conclusion

Major public health emergencies not only have an impact on economic and social development but

also expose vulnerable groups to crisis. Temporary assistance is of a transitional and short-term nature, and at this important juncture, it is necessary for the government to strengthen temporary assistance for vulnerable groups and to safeguard the basic needs of the people. However, in the face of COVID-19, which is a major public emergency of great danger, extreme disasters, cross-border crises, and emerging risks may be superimposed on each other in a risk society. More social risks require more redistribution of resources to achieve social stability. Whether and how the function of temporary assistance can be brought into play will have a direct bearing on the degree to which "the weak can be helped" is realized and on the overall stability of our society. When implementing temporary assistance in the future, the concept of "people first" should be followed, to lay a solid institutional foundation for winning any major public health crisis and steadily achieving the goal of a "healthy China".

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