

## Service Suspension: Government Purchase Service Delivery Dilemma and Its Generative Logic: Taking the Rural Children Care Service Project in h City as an Example

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**Keywords:** Government purchase service, Service suspension, Social work for children, Grassroots governance

**Abstract:** Government purchase of services needs to integrate various social forces to participate in social construction and realize social governance, which is an important measure to accelerate the innovation of co-construction, co-governance and shared social governance. The focus of social governance is at the grassroots level, and the government's purchase of services plays a powerful role in promoting social governance at the grassroots level through service transfer. The case of H city indicates that the government purchase services by introducing third-party social organizations and connect the village children, director of the grassroots governance body, in their respective areas under the control of the institutional environment for their participation project service behavior making adaptive adjustment, change the original resource transfer way, service point to has deviated in grass-roots practice field, It is difficult for public services to sink down to the base, and there is a floating dilemma.

### 1. Introduction

The diversified demands of the public and the reform and innovation of the social management system constantly encourage the government to purchase services. In order to further regulate the government's purchase of services, the Ministry of Finance published the Management Measures for Government Purchase of Services in 2020 to promote the transformation of government functions and improve the supply of public services. By absorbing social organizations, government service purchase is complementary to the social governance innovation of co-construction, co-governance and sharing, which is an important public tool to promote the publicity of social governance innovation. Government purchase of services helps to shift the focus of social governance to the grassroots level, strengthen urban and rural community governance and service construction, provide convenient services for vulnerable groups in urban and rural areas, and smooth the channels for social organizations to participate in social governance. When local governments purchase rural social services, various governance subjects have been included in the design, so as to help rural vulnerable groups achieve the goal of emotional companionship and ability improvement in practice. However, when the local practice of service is equipped with various elements such as governance subject, system, resources and service objects, why there are deviation obstacles in the implementation process of service is still worth exploring.

On the local practice of government service purchase, the academic circle has given a variety of understanding perspectives. Chen Jingde believed that the fundamental reason for the difficulties in the supply of rural public services was that the traditional national single-center governance system could not meet the realistic needs of diverse rural service objects<sup>[1]</sup>. Leng Zhongyan and Jin Yongzhu proposed that in the process of rural public service mechanism shifting from single subject supply to multiple subject supply, insufficient endogenous supply capacity of rural public service would lead to low supply efficiency of rural public service<sup>[2]</sup>. Wen Jun and Wu Xiaokai believed that the single-line community construction guided by urban communities included rural

community public services into the logical sequence of urban development for consideration, ignored the effective participation and practical demands of farmers, and resulted in the dislocation supply of rural public services to a certain extent<sup>[3]</sup>. By introducing the social differences between China and the West, Luo Jing explained the complementarity and tension between the two logics of cooperation between social organizations and government departments and empowerment of service objects, which led to the difficulty of social organizations' participation in rural public services. The fundamental reason for the dilemma is that the theoretical basis of the two-fold logic of cooperation and empowerment are both rooted in and fit with the western social foundation -- the separation of state and society, which is not applicable to the social status of the integration of state and society in China<sup>[4]</sup>. From the perspective of constructing a child welfare system, some scholars conclude that the smooth development of child welfare services is due to the fact that the service mechanism used by social organizations providing child welfare services cannot adapt to the professional requirements of focusing on family guardianship and dealing with child injury from the perspective of national parental rights at the present stage<sup>[5]</sup>.

The existing studies have realized that the government's tendency to interpret and reconstruct the system and environment caused the government's inability to purchase services in rural areas. However, they mostly explain the problem from the perspective of a certain subject, rarely grasp the complex interaction process among multiple participants, and less see how the intricate interactive relations react on the service practice and bring the risk of service alienation. Through examples, this paper attempts to explain how each relevant governing body in the government service purchase adjusts its actions and interacts with each other in the grassroots practice, and discusses the logic behind the dilemma of the public service in the grassroots practice.

## **2. Expression of Dilemma: an Analysis of a Case**

In 2020, H City, Henan Province will build 100 “children's homes (activity rooms)” children's welfare projects in 100 villages under its jurisdiction. This project will be purchased by H Civil Affairs Bureau and undertaken by Y Social Worker Service Center. Women directors of each village will also serve as “children's directors” and be responsible for the village's “children's homes”. The total construction and operation cost of the project is 1.9886 million yuan. It was officially put into operation in July 2021 and closed in July 2022. It aims to provide a series of therapeutic and developmental services such as parent-child education, family relationship regulation, emotional counseling, academic counseling and so on for orphans, unsupported children, children in distress, left-behind children and other children in the jurisdiction, so as to protect the rights and interests of children. Taking the above events as examples, the author presents and analyzes the suspension dilemma of government service purchase in the practice of grassroots social governance.

### **2.1 Formalization of Activities**

Services purchased by the government are undertaken by third-party social organizations, and “children's directors” at the village level are selected as the direct implementer of the package of children's services, responsible for organizing children to carry out project activities. The children's service is independent of the village committee and is undertaken by the children's director. A site visit to 100 children's homes revealed a high prevalence of “inaction” by children's directors. The survey shows that 70 percent of village (residential) children's directors' education level is high school or below, 95 percent of the children's directors have not passed the vocational certificate related to child welfare services, lack professional skills, do not know how to carry out services; Most parents do not know the existence of children's director and related children's services, a few parents know the existence of children's service venue, but do not know that the venue is open to the public, lack of communication with the children's director; A total of 1,768 daily activities and volunteer group auxiliary activities were carried out in 100 children's homes, 232 of which were missing. At the same time, the same activities were repeatedly uploaded to expand the number of activities, which did not meet the project stipulation of “2,000 daily activities and volunteer group auxiliary activities should be carried out”. Part cannot be implemented as a children's home

jurisdiction for weekends, holidays for children in the function of the study, the entertainment places, most of the village children's information registration, activity form, service feedback copies are blank, items without using trace, and department of objects are private possession, signs of children's home not to carry out the service. SH Village children's director directly said that there was no point in setting up a children's home and that she did not agree with the children's home in her heart.

It has been proved that although the front-line child directors directly deal with the children, they take negative actions. In addition to their lack of skills, the children directors doubt the rationality of the actions and fall into the dilemma of value recognition. As a result, the children who should benefit from the project services do not use the child welfare facilities and participate in the service activities. The allocation of welfare service resources is aimed at the village level children group, but in the process of resource decentralization, the services are not implemented to the children, separated from the target group, resulting in the service becomes a mere formality.

## 2.2 Misalignment of Supply and Demand

Lack of parental care may have a negative impact on the mental health of left-behind children to some extent, but not all rural children suffer from this problem. Research shows that some left-behind children and non-left-behind children have no significant differences in learning ability and academic performance, mental health, emotional and behavioral stability, not every rural left-behind children need special care and protection. Once propagating and exaggerating the physical and mental “weak” of left-behind children, the vigorous support and care activities, but in the childish heart planted the seeds of self-pity, strengthen the left-behind children should be “weak” label. In order to improve the effectiveness of care and protection for rural left-behind children, it is necessary to choose the key points, take problems, difficulties and needs as guidance, focus on key objects, especially left-behind children and their families with multiple difficulties in one, which is the top priority that should be considered in the current child care services<sup>[6]</sup>. In most of the villages visited by the author, through talking with the director of children, it is found that there are 1-2 left-behind children with multiple problems in many villages. Among them, there is a single parent M in JL village who has a language barrier.

The children's director, L, said :*M was born in 2014. M has been unable to speak since he was a child. His mother left and his father went out to work, and only his grandparents took care of him. It's sad for the neighbors, but they have their own lives, and I can only do what I can to help him. Not long ago, our village got a quota of “children's micro wish”, which can satisfy a small wish of a child. M wanted a basketball, so I applied for it. Like M, I can only pay more attention to M at ordinary times, after leading the village children do all sorts of activities also won't call him to come to, such activities are not suitable for M, because other children also don't want to play with M, M not into activity, he took part in the activity is no use to him, finally will affect the overall activity.*

L was rated as “Excellent Director of Children” in the third-party evaluation of the project. Compared with some village director of children whose responsibilities were not fully implemented, L took care of M materially and was more responsible. But like M special left-behind children born in the countryside, although children services offered in the village children, but it turns out that the daily activities design can meet the most general difficulties in children, left-behind children's needs, to exclude a few children have more serious trouble, really difficult to special requirements of left-behind children are neglected. Due to participate in the service of children in school age period, at the same time accept the school education activities, and children's services, project activities designed to show everyday activities, holiday learning activity and safety education is given priority to, it's easy to have a same theme activities of government purchase service way and the compulsory education stage in the way of organization and repeated embarrassment. Finally, the few special children who should be taken care of are not taken care of, and the service resources provided for the majority of children are repeated with the activities organized by the school, and the supply and demand are mismatched. Service evolution of important groups of avoidance and

inefficient repetitive supply of double trends, leading to the consequences of service suspension.

### **3. Practical Logic for Dilemma Generation**

#### **3.1 The Government's Action Logic under the Target Responsibility System**

When faced with numerous governance tasks, grass-roots governments take actions based on whether to respond to superior policies. Administrative pressure under the bureaucratic system becomes the main consideration factor for local governments to carry out their work, and the fundamental driving force for the implementation of superior policies comes from top-down administrative promotion<sup>[7]</sup>. At present, basic public service and social management function of government, the project system of public service acceptance standard is different from the traditional focus on digital indicator of economic growth, the lack of objective and measurable tasks, in the face of superior examination, grass-roots government twist the task decomposition into digital indicators to represent the governance, In addition, when superiors cannot clearly measure the performance of subordinates, they can only adopt the “impression performance” evaluation<sup>[8]</sup>, which further promotes the use of digital indicators in daily work and leads to the emphasis on the results of digital indicators rather than the in-depth investment in the work content.

In the above children's service projects, the grass-roots government pays attention to the preparation of the hardware facilities for the construction of the children's home activity room at the village level, as well as the number of services for children, the number of children's attendance and sign-up, and the number of children's director receiving training. The service results are clearly presented with quantitative information. It can reflect the progress of the village children's home and the third party social work agency participating in the service implementation. But pay attention to the indexing service the result is relatively neglected action process, and the government pay close attention to project progress each quarter, sent staff working in WeChat group urged service behind schedule of backward, director of the children to make up the work, have backward work up depends on whether, director of the children in the specified APP upload picture of the service activities, And how many photos were uploaded to determine how many events. Social work agencies are also teaching children's directors how to take qualified photos. Under pressure, some children's homes upload duplicate photos instead of multiple activities or simply leave them alone. Children become nominal service objects, resulting in a lack of substantive content in the actual process of service.

#### **3.2 The Action Logic of the Organization under Task Orientation**

In the construction project of children's homes, the social work agency won the bid through open bidding, obtained the construction qualification of 100 children's homes, and was responsible for the site construction of 100 village children's homes. In the same system, the project is implemented in each village children's home, and is limited to the ability background of the person in charge of each children's home -- the director of children's home. Each children's home presents different service effects. Perceived service quality differentiation, task-oriented organization turn their attention to social services have done relatively good some of the children's home, through the resources tilt and quota ration to the children's home in limited project resources, encourage them to make the children's home, the achievement of this on behalf of the children's home projects, projects for low quality loss, Get government recognition. At the same time, in other children's homes outside the focus area of social work agencies, the service effect is not excellent, even on the verge of bankruptcy, which is not only related to the children director's personal service willingness and service ability, but also related to the degree of investment of social work agencies. For the sake of the efficiency of project progress, institutions support and cultivate children's homes with more development opportunities with limited resources, and are reluctant to spend energy on those children's homes that require more resources and are likely to be stagnant. The Matthew effect is so easy to form that the marginal children's homes are neglected and become worse and worse, while the children's homes in the center of attention become the “excellent representatives” of the

children's home construction project under the two-way encouragement of the social work agency and the children's director, representing the success or failure of the project. The end result is that very few children in children's homes receive child benefit, other children's homes become a dummy, children's directors become a dummy, services targeted at children are not implemented, and the practice of children's services is suspended in the interaction field between the agency and the village.

### **3.3 The Action Logic of the Children's Director under the Guidance of Administrative Work**

The system design of government service purchase is applicable to each service point at the grass-roots level -- village children's homes. As the output object of the project system, each village children's homes pursue the consistency of personnel structure and action logic, and the service output should also be homogenous. In fact, consists of 100 villages in the children's home existed in the process of operation in accordance with the rules of the system framework, but children's services, the effect is uneven, the third party assessment scores ranking 20% relative to the front of the village, the highest in the children's home and the ranking result by 20% after the village in the children's home on the initiative of services for children and normative exists obvious difference. This difference is analyzed from the aspect of village residence. Taking HZ Village and KY Village as examples, the director of children plays a decisive role.

HZ Village ranks the bottom 20%, the children's home activity room is often locked, the children's director has long resigned, there is no exact person in charge, only a temporary agent is responsible for keeping the key, not officially in office.

HZ village agent said: *murakami thing too much, murakami's work is done, busy didn't have time to go to the children's home, and worry about children items were damaged, rarely to children to use, plus some parents especially unreasonable, private possession, the article to the lost things I also can't explanation, less than not open. I wouldn't mind closing the children's home in our village. It takes up space and the children can't use it. It's pointless.*

Before that, three children's directors resigned in succession. The first children's director resigned due to family divorce and continued to serve in the village committee. The second and third children's directors were about 30 years old and unwilling to live in the village, so they moved to other places to make a living and could not continue to serve in the village.

On the contrary, the children in KY Village ranked among the top 20%, with good service activities for children and high enthusiasm for children's participation. The village children's director used to be a kindergarten teacher. He has 20 years' experience in children's education. Even though the village is busy, he will devote more energy and enthusiasm to serving children. But such as KY village have related work background just alone, director of the children, most of the village children is all have no, director of the children education experience, their daily work is around the superior reach the administrative affairs of village, and village affairs is multifarious, administrative work as the center, children's work just extra burden for them. Due to work independent of administrative work, director of the children, considerations are subject to supervision by the undertaking institutions to their project work, children tend to make children work daily administrative work, director of the outside of the idle task and do not add value, eventually make variables influence children's performance simply become a children's director's personal preferences, children's services limited, director of the subjective judgment of the child, The project system changed at the village level, and the practice deviated from the action logic preset by the rules. Finally, the children's home became a synonym for occupying the site, wasting resources, and lacking of practicality.

## **4. Conclusions and Suggestions**

On the surface, the service subject of the project cooperated with the action that should be within the project responsibilities, but the final service direction deviated from the children, resulting in unexpected consequences -- service deviation. Most left-behind children are cared for by welfare such as resource sinking and humanistic care, but the special left-behind children with physical and

mental defects are not cared for. Children's homes are formalized and become empty. As the child welfare service itself is not one of the important work of the government, the grass-roots government collects the quantity index to deal with the task in a task-oriented way, which makes the service from the source lack of attention. Plus limited assessment and incentive mechanism can not form effective constraints, the actions of social work agency institutions to maintain a limited project results, according to their own interests to adjust and change to complete the task indicators, the resources devoted to do relatively well village, a laissez-faire attitude for the rest of the village, indirectly lead to two levels of differentiation service. Children's directors in charge of local children's homes lack supervision, flexibly add or subtract service procedures and service contents, and pursue the formalization of services in a disguised way, leading to the mismatch between service supply and children's needs. The main body of the project governance seeks for the active space of their own actions, forming a formalized strategic action at the edge of the project system, catalyzing the free project role of each practice body, and finally forming the deviation of children's services.

Service suspension is the result of multiple factors, and to avoid service suspension requires relevant subjects to take actions. For the government, we need to establish and improve the working mechanism for distributing public services and integrate the operation mechanism of projects. Synergistic action, with power to promote social work institutions of the third-party evaluation and reflection, director of the children, strengthen the examination evaluation system and refinement of social work institutions supervision and inspection, change the excessive focus on digital index evaluation way to attention to the service object as the main body of the evaluation mechanism, linkage project action subject jointly put the satisfaction of the service object demand for task; For social work institutions in project service for many children, the accurate identification of difficult to enjoy the public service has the special children's physical and mental defects, set for rural children special care, excavation case service object, for the left-behind children suffered multiple difficult case management, safeguard the rights and interests of special children's survival and development of out, improve service quality, Strengthen the service effectiveness for left-behind children in difficulties; For the village, the subjectivity of the village children's home should be appropriately enhanced, and the autonomy of the children's director should be brought into play. Instead of passively accepting the service management of the social work agency, the service management function of the children's director should be actively output. At the same time, the material reward for the director of children will be enhanced to stimulate the motivation for action. It is also necessary to strengthen capacity training, establish a training and assessment mechanism for child directors, implement a last-place elimination system, promote the service ability and professional quality of child directors, and further improve the quality of children's welfare services.

Under the background of the downward shift of the center of social governance, the government's purchase of services to promote grassroots social governance is still plagued with problems. How to effectively promote the government's purchase of rural public services to the grassroots level, it is particularly necessary for the government, social organizations and village-level governance subjects to take actions to improve the efficiency of welfare delivery to the countryside, open up the last meter of services for rural children, and make welfare practice truly serve the grassroots level.

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