

# FAST FACTS

United Nations  
Development Programme



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China

## Inequality in China

### Context

China's development in recent decades has seen substantial improvement to the livelihoods of millions of people in economic and social terms, with a Human Development Index score of 0.719 in 2013 placing it in the "high human development" bracket.

At the beginning of 2015 the government announced reduced targets for GDP growth of 7% per year, an adopted status quo dubbed 'the new normal'. This growth will increasingly be powered by a service-based economy and domestic consumption, demanding new skills from China's workforce. At the same time, population ageing and rapid urbanization are introducing new social and economic pressures.

Consequently, inequality persists and on some measures is widening. Inequality exists regionally, inter-generationally, demographically and between ethnicities and genders. Many of those raised above the \$1.25/day poverty line still have precarious livelihoods that are vulnerable to shock. Inequality is found in economic, social, judicial, environmental dimensions and more.

Recognizing that inequality restricts human development, UNDP China currently addresses inequality in a cross-cutting manner, focusing on the structural barriers to equity and working specifically towards achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 10 to "reduce inequality within and among countries".

### Programme Themes

UNDP's programming to address inequality in China is oriented around three complementary themes: empowering marginalized groups, strengthening civil for equitable governance, and supporting China's reform process to develop equitable institutions.

### MATTERS OF FACT

- **0.473:** 2013 national Gini coefficient (National Bureau of Statistics 2013)
- **57%:** Percentage of all income earned by China's top 10% of households (World Bank 2014)
- **2 trillion RMB:** Estimated value of land expropriated by local governments (1990-2010) due to insecure land rights (World Bank 2014)
- **84.1 million:** People in China still living on less than \$1.25 per day. (World Bank 2011)
- **234 million:** Urban migrants in China unable to access local public services due to *hukou* registration (State Council 2014)
- **249.6 million:** Number of people who will receive social protection from the Social Assistance Law developed with UNDP support (National People's Congress 2013)
- **56 RMB:** The amount Chinese rural women earn for every 100 RMB earned by rural men (All China Women's Federation 2010)

### Supporting marginalized groups

Under this theme, UNDP seeks to address the structural drivers of socio-economic exclusion, focusing on the most marginalized groups. This includes improving access to justice by working to improve legal aid for the most marginalized groups who are inequitably struggle to access it, including migrants, people living with HIV (PLHIV), pollution victims and the disabled. For example, UNDP is supporting improved access to justice for those affected by environmental rights violations. In 2015 UNDP co-hosted a rule of law roundtable event to discuss environmental public interest litigation (EPIL)'s expansion in China.

UNDP also addresses inequality by promoting access to land rights for rural women, who currently struggle to assert property ownership and access credit services as a result.

Minimizing discrimination against PLHIV and LGBT people by advocating for policy changes and building the capacity of relevant civil society organizations (CSOs) builds social

equality.

UNDP works to reduce income inequality by developing inclusive financial institutions that make credit available in rural areas, especially to women and ethnic minorities.

UNDP has an emerging portfolio of work oriented around processes of international migration and urbanization, which are taking place on an unprecedented scale in China, is developing

### **Equality of participation**

UNDP promotes the equal participation of citizens and CSOs in China's governance, to ensure that development gains are better-shared within society. Capacity building work supports CSO's contribution to the delivery of public services, in partnership with the Ministry of Civil Affairs.

UNDP also supports China's reforms toward improved political equality through increased public participation in law-making. This involves assisting the adoption of effective, standardized consultation and feedback processes for draft legislation, offering expert comment on relevant legislation and encouraging the adoption of greater transparency.



Children from the Mosuo ethnic group, whom UNDP assists with business development for women. (Photo: UNDP China)

### **Equitable institutions**

UNDP supports the Government of China in pursuing governance and legal reforms to produce efficient, accountable institutions that can enable and sustain a more equitable society. UNDP provides policy advice, thematic research and capacity building to government, and to the judiciary, supporting reform and enhancing transparency and the rule of law.

Through its longstanding partnership with the Government of China, UNDP is ready to support recent moves to streamline and further decentralize public administration

with capacity building and policy support.

## **Policy Research and Advocacy**

### **Country-level**

UNDP makes use of its analytical capacity and institutional knowledge to provide support to China on specific technical issues. Recent examples include support to the expansion of public participation in government performance assessment, and technical support to the development of legislation such as the Social Assistance Temporary Regulations signed into force by Premier Li Keqiang in 2014.

UNDP's series of periodical China National Human Development Reports have examined the forces that create inequality through a variety of lenses for over a decade. The 2013 edition *Sustainable and Liveable Cities: Toward Ecological Civilization* offered a comprehensive overview of the policy challenges posed by urbanization – including social and economic inequality driven by migration – and offered potential solutions. The 2015 report is currently in production and will take an even more focused look at inequality in China, reviewing the potential for social innovation to tackle deprivation and discrimination in an ageing, urbanizing and increasingly statist context.

Beyond the NHDR series, UNDP regularly publishes issue briefs, research reports and more to contribute to national and international debate and inform policymakers. Recent offerings have focused on LGBTQI rights and challenges, income inequity and reform in global governance.

### **Global**

At the corporate level, UNDP has a significant body of operations geared towards reducing inequality. Some of this work is highlighted in the reports below:

Human Development Report 2014  
Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience

UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017  
The Future We Want: Rights and Empowerment

Being LGBT in Asia: Country Reports

**For more information, visit:**

[www.cn.undp.org](http://www.cn.undp.org)

[www.weibo.com/undpchina](http://www.weibo.com/undpchina)

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