Discussion on the Problem of Emergency Personnel Welfare and Security of Chinese Non-governmental Organizations

TANG Huamao, LI Xiaohui and FENG Jiawei,
Beijing Wuzi University, Beijing, China

Abstract: The emergency management work in the new era is a systematic and challenging task that requires the cooperation of the government and society. In recent years, China's non-governmental organizations have participated in emergency rescue activities, and their role has been recognized by the public. Concerning the internal development of civil organizations, the lack of emergency management personnel has also become a bottleneck for organizational development. Through typical case analysis, this paper points out that there are problems in the management of emergency personnel for non-governmental organizations, such as insufficient protection of rights and interests, ineffective incentives, and other aspects of welfare protection resulting in a high rate of brain drain which has severely affected the construction of the organization's talent team. Combined with the management experience from the United States and the United Kingdom, this paper proposed countermeasures to solve the problem of emergency talent management in civil organizations from those three aspects of the government, social and non-governmental organizations.

Keywords: Civil organizations; Emergency personnel; Talent management

The handling of emergencies in modern society no longer depends solely on the strength of the government. From the perspective of resource integration to maximize efficiency, the main actors involved in emergencies should be more diversified so that civil society organizations participate in the governance process of public crisis has gradually gained public recognition. However, given that it is difficult to recruit or retain emergency personnel, the development of Chinese non-governmental organizations has not been able to embark on a normative development path. The reason is that the lack of personnel incentives and protection of rights and interests in the management of non-governmental organizations and their negative impacts have severely limited the ability of civil society organizations to participateresulting in the massive loss of talent.

The Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee proposed actively guiding social organizations to participate in the governance of public crises. The State Council's government work report (2015) pointed out that the government needs to support people and organizations to participate in social governance in accordance with the law and enhance the ability to handle early warning and public crisis events. Charity Law of the People's Republic of China (March 2016) stipulated that "Arrange volunteers' service content reasonably to provide volunteers with necessary security and personal insurance". This protection of emergency personnel welfare in non-governmental organizations arose attention from the government and the community.

Talent benefits generally refer to non-cash compensation that companies use to retain and motivate employees. Because the role of civil society organizations is different from that of enterprises and government organizations without capital resources like enterprises and lack of government support, it's almost empty in talent welfare. In view of the special nature of these emergency personnel and the problems they encountered in actual combat, the content of the emergency personnel welfare discussed in this paper mainly includes aspects such as incentives, protection of rights and interests, and training systems.

I. STATUS QUO OF WELFARE AND SECURITY IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO CIVILIAN ORGANIZATIONS

After the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008, China's civil emergency response organizations have grown and expanded. The number of organizations has grown rapidly from a dozen to nearly a thousand in the past decade. The emergence of a large number of non-governmental organizations represented by the Blue Sky Rescue Team has brought positive forces to emergency rescue. However, the development is not easy. Thus, it’s vital to solve problems such as how to protect the rights and interests of rescue workers, upgrade their professional standards, and maintain personnel stability in order to boost the development of talents in non-governmental organizations.

Blue Sky Rescue Team Problems

BLUE SKY RESCUE established in 2007 is an independent private welfare aid organization with certain professional capabilities aiming at promoting the development of the
domestic private rescue system and making every citizen enjoy free emergency rescue services and opportunity. Blue Sky Rescue has set up authorized rescue teams in 31 provinces and municipalities across the country so far. Since its establishment in 2007, it has participated in almost all large-scale disaster rescue operations in China (more than 1,000 rescue cases per year) and actively assisted governments in various disaster accidents. Through those rescue operations, it has assisted to reduce the people’s property losses and protect the lives of the people. As a representative of the Chinese private emergency organizations, Blue Sky Rescue team is facing many problems in the development of emergency talent management.

1. The emergency personnel's own protection is insufficient.

Blue Sky Rescue is responsible for personal insurance for the personnel participating in large-scale rescue operations. However, the reality is that most insurance companies do not cover the rescue insurance. They think that the rescue operation is an active risk-taking activity resulting in such a fact that it's difficult to find insurance in actual situations. In Yushu earthquake, it was impossible for Blue Sky Rescue to find an insurance company to provide protection for its participants. At last, Blue Sky Rescue acquired the insurance for its participants from an American insurance company after a few twists and turns.

2. There is no corresponding regulations or policies for the protection of volunteers participating in a rescue operation.

Most of the volunteers in the rescue team are full-time employees in other units. For involving in an emergency operation, they need to take leave from their work units. Sometimes the time period is long, this kind of long-term overdraft holiday behavior naturally has an impact on their own lives. They can neither get the understanding of the work units, but also receive the punishment from their work units. This dilemma has seriously affected the enthusiasm of personnel participating in the rescue team and forced many professionals to leave. The personnel turnover rate of Blue Sky Rescue was between 60% and 80% which indicates that it is in a dilemma of the shortage of talent.

3. Lack of financial support

There is no doubt that emergency operations are usually heavily invested, but the output of such inputs is by no means quantifiable. Give this imponderable proportional ratio, making money is always a problem that plagued development. Blue Sky Rescue has always adhered to the concept of non-commercialization which means that it does not accept any donations with additional conditions resulting in limiting the collection of funds. Furthermore, when it comes to the rescue equipment, it is divided into the public equipment and the personal equipment which shares different funding sources. The basic equipment in public equipment has been realized by itself. As for the high-end equipment, Blue Sky Rescue needs to depend on the government to borrow from the government's emergency department. Besides, Blue Sky Rescue has to afford the budget of personal equipment, which increases their financial burden. The funds has become a major problem for Blue Sky Rescue.

First, there is a lack of scientific and effective training. The lack of professional skills and equipment makes it difficult for civil organizations to play a greater role.

Second, rescue teams are difficult to protect their rights and interests when they encounter risks or accidents. For those individuals involved in the rescue team, they must sign a “birth and death” as a certain contract, which means that participants should be responsible for individual safety. A number of rescue teams are trapped by the same situation due to the fact that there are not sufficient insurance companies are willing to provide insurance for those rescue teams given the risks. Therefore, self-responsibility is a frustrating movement.

The Tigers Rescue Team is a member of the Shandong Provincial Public Welfare Rescue Alliance. And it’s also facing many problems in its development as other non-governmental rescue organizations: Lack of public identities for organizations and members exists. And legal protection for the participants is not perfect; Given the lack of professional training, the result of rescue has always kept a poor level. Because of the lack of support and incentives, enthusiasm of participants involved in rescue teams have been damaged so that these personnel have increasingly left the rescue work.

II. PROBLEMS EXISTING IN THE WELFARE AND WELFARE PROTECTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

1. Insufficient protection of rights and interests of emergency personnel

The situation of emergencies tend to be critical, and the personal safety of rescue workers involved is usually threatened. In the event of an earthquake or flood and an emergency public health incident, these people are likely to be involved in accidents. In reality, they suffered from accidents, some were not treated promptly, and there was no reasonable compensation. Even for emergency workers who were killed in distress, there were also cases where they could not get pensions and compensation. The lack of an insurance system made these people suffered losses affecting the enthusiasm of the public in participating in the emergency rescue launched by non-governmental organizations. Moreover, this situation is not conducive to building a good social environment for the development of non-governmental organizations. Basic life safety problems are not effectively guaranteed which results in making emergency personnel in private organizations worry about participating in rescue operations.

2. Weak motivation for emergency personnel

On the one hand, although these emergency personnel do not involve the issues of salary and job promotion, their performance also needs to be recognized by the public.
The results of years of research at Harvard University show that if there is no incentive, a person’s ability to play will be only 20% to 30%. If appropriate incentives are given, they will use their own efforts to make the capacity reach 80% to 90% which proves the importance of motivation. These emergency personnel have actively participated in rescue operations in their own good faith in critical situations. This does not mean that their efforts can be ignored, but in reality, a large number of emergency workers donot receive relevant incentives, which makes them involved in passive participation. On the other hand, the current incentives are mainly focused on the spiritual level ignoring material incentives. Based on the assumption of a rational economic man, such incentives are not reasonable. Both spiritual and material incentives can not only maintain the enthusiasm of existing personnel, but also play a role in attracting talents to a certain extent. The main problem lies in the lack of incentives. For the long term, this could hit the emergency personnel’s work enthusiasm resulting in the loss of talent. There is no doubt that talents needed by non-governmental organizations have been in a deprived state. Besides, the loss of the status quo is even more detrimental to the establishment of long-term talent mechanisms by non-governmental organizations which in turn affects the sound development of civil society organizations.

3. Lack of corresponding psychological counseling services for emergency personnel

Although these emergency personnel have a certain degree of professionalism, they are basically faced with complications. After experiencing unexpected events in person, there may be mental harm. For those who have just participated in the rescue operation, the impact they may suffer may be even more severe. Therefore, it is necessary to provide psychological intervention to these emergency personnel after the completion of the operation. Although some people have abnormal conditions, they do not realize seriousness due to various reasons. They may cause severe sequelae and affect mental health. At present, most non-governmental organizations do not provide emergency personnel with such counseling services. The relevant fields are almost blank.

4. The professional training system for emergency personnel is not perfect

Emergency rescue requires high professionalism, but the number of real professionals is relatively small. Most of those staff need to rely on continuous training to improve their skills in order to deal with special circumstances arising from emergencies. However, civil organizations can only provide basic professional training and cannot maintain deeper levels of continuing training. Moreover, training is still concentrated in the form of lectures and other solidification forms. It lacks scenario simulations, practical drills, and other training methods that can actually improve professional skills. Without effective improvement in the professional skills of emergency personnel, they will not be able to deal with difficult situations in an emergency, which will not only fail to achieve the purpose of rescue, but may also have an impact on their own safety.

5. Insufficient financial protection for emergency personnel

Due to the restriction of economic ability, civil organizations are unable to provide welfare support for personnel. For example, from the prospective of providing insurance, given the lack of funding, many formulated plans are difficult to implement. In Beijing, it did not provide personal injury accident insurance for civil organizations until 2014. In fact, the clause was determined in 2013, which was delayed again and again due to lack of financial support. For those involved in major disaster relief, it is necessary to insure special insurance with high-risk work compensation. However, such kind of insurance usually has high insurance premiums, and in China, there isn’t any insurance company to provide this product forcing those civil organizations to insure foreign insurance companies which will increase the pressure on budget. The scarcity of funds makes it difficult for these organizations to maintain their own development, not to mention the higher-level welfare protection.

6. Insufficient legal and policy support for emergency personnel

The development of non-governmental organizations in our country is not mature, and its management method is not the same as the general agency management. And the positive role of civil society personnel in emergencies was basically recognized after SARS, so there are also few provisions in laws, regulations and policies in this area. The Constitution of our country only stipulates in Article 42 that “the state promotes citizens to engage in voluntary activities.” Afterwards, although the Guangdong Youth Volunteer Service Regulations, Shandong Province Youth Volunteer Service Regulations, Heilongjiang Province Volunteer Service Regulations and Hangzhou Volunteer Service Regulations were successively reviewed and implemented, these are all local in nature. The rules and regulations are not applicable. Moreover, the content is mainly to establish the legal status of civil organizations. There is no involvement in personnel management, not mention in-depth welfare protection. Until 2006, it proposed the requirement of “mobilizing volunteers to participate in emergency rescue and strengthening the formation and training of volunteer teams” from Opinions of the State Council on Comprehensively Strengthening Emergency Management Work which represented that Chinese government began to pay attention to the training of emergency personnel in non-governmental organizations. But there is no follow-up legal and policy support for the protection of other rights and interests. By 2016, the 12th National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China passed the People’s Republic of China Charity Law which is clearly indicated that “Register real names with volunteers, provide service records, and provide certifications upon request. At the same time, arrange volunteer services to provide volunteers with necessary security and personal insurance”. The China Charity Law marked that the government began to involve in the measurement of the contribution of emergency personnel in civil organizations and the protection of their rights and interests. However, due to the fact that the number of national laws and regulations is still relatively limited, the promotion and implementation are weak and the specific issues concerning the protection of emergency personnel rights and interests have not yet been clearly defined. Therefore, the practicality of the
existing law is not strong which could not provide support for the welfare personnel of emergency personnel.

III. COUNTERMEASURES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEMS OF EMERGENCY PERSONNEL WELFARE IN CIVIL ORGANIZATIONS

A. Government level

1. Improve legal, policy and other related system construction

It's vital to define the legal status and status of emergency personnel in non-government organizations clearly according to the relevant laws and regulations to guarantee the legal rights of private organizations and emergency personnel. Furthermore, the construction of the legal policy system will create a favorable social environment for the welfare development of non-governmental organizations to regulate and guarantee the stable social relations in the development of civil society organizations. To achieve this, the government will ensure that those civil organizations enable implement the welfare work in accordance with laws and regulations. Meanwhile, and government could monitor the civil organization’s daily movements. This is the only way to realize that the welfare work could be implemented on standard with the force of the law and intangible forces of the policies.

2. Establish a reasonable organizational management system

To take charge of this special task, it’s effective to establish a comprehensive emergency management agency. As Xue Tao stated in the book Crisis Management—Challenges Faced by China in Transition: The government has to integrate emergency management into day-to-day management and establish a permanent, authoritative, integrated department to coordinate with independent status. Not only needs to set up a special organization, but also needs to set up a reasonable position which demands to investigate and analyze the needs of the position aiming at ensuring that employees do their best. In the organizational reform of 2018, the State Council established the Emergency Management Department specializing in the work of the emergency. This establishment represented that the specific contents of the emergency personnel welfare should be made by the national-level management agencies to provide action guidance for the civil society organizations. To some extent, these contents can indicate the direction of work for civil society organizations. Each civil society organization can then follow the content guidance when needed, and combine its own specific conditions to implement a set of special welfare programs that meet the needs at the same time.

3. Provide governmental funding support

The sources of funding for non-government organizations in our country are mainly the service income, social donations, and government funding. However, these funds can only maintain the basic activities of the organization which can not meet the needs of deep welfare. In order to promote the smooth progress of welfare work, the government’s sufficient capital investment is a powerful guarantee. The government could set up special fund projects in non-governmental organizations to support various expenditures for the emergency personnel welfare work, including recording every expenditure. Due to the implementation of special management with all work recorded, this specific and clear management approach can not only effectively meet the needs of non-governmental organization funds, but also make the work process more clear and transparent.

Furthermore, the government may also consider expanding the governmental purchasing services. In 2014, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and the State Administration for Industry and Commerce jointly issued the Measures for the Administration of Government Purchase Services (Interim). In the future, the principles and priorities for government procurement-related services should be more clearly defined. The detailed catalogues will be provided to present a clear and normative basis for government procurement services for private emergency rescue organizations. Besides, the government could actively encourage and guide civil society organizations to participate in emergency rescue work which could form an important emergency rescue force apart from the government.

In addition to its own strengths, the government can also call on private sectors to invest funds for non-governmental organizations and provide preferential policies such as tax relief or related preferential services for industry services through compensation to enterprises to boost enterprises incentives to provide assistance to civil organizations. Besides, from the perspective of non-governmental organizations, tax-free treatment is also a terrific option to be provided for the income of non-governmental organizations.

B. Social aspects

1. Form a common concept of welfare protection for emergency personnel

It’s vital to use the mass media to make publicity to the contributions of civil society emergency personnel so that their efforts could be recognized by the public. Meanwhile, the public could acknowledge the danger of the work of civil organizations and the current situation of insufficient guarantees.

In contrast, the media could help form the correct public opinion guidance for providing welfare protection for civil society emergency personnel. In fact, the recognition and support from the public is the key factor in the implementation of welfare work. The general public have gradually realized, understood and accepted welfare work so that their work can be widely recognized in the social sense which could provide a harmonious social atmosphere for the normalization of welfare protection.

2. Social members should have a sense of providing welfare for emergency personnel

Emergency personnel is a type of highly specialized person who usually receives learning and training. This kind of input to oneself needs to be rewarded, as explained in the theory of human capital in labor economics: the educational decision model points out that the degree of education is positively related to the income in the labor market. Professional education differentiates the educated personnel from other personnel. This capability advantage enables them to obtain benefits in the labor market. From this theoretical point of view, emergency personnel should receive corresponding returns. This is not limited by the identity of the civil organizations they are involved
in. To some extent, they are also human capital in the labor market whose value of the service is worthy of recognition by the society. The general public who are willing to accept the services of these emergency personnel and provide them with returns must recognize that they have expertise who are in a standardized organization.

3. Social supervision regulates welfare work

It’s necessary to make the media and the public involve in supervising of civil society welfare. On the one hand, as an important component of democratic supervision, the media has played a role of a megaphone and it can provide the public with timely information on the specific situation of civil society organizations to meet their needs for information rights. On the other hand, the public is a broad-based monitoring group. With the full development of information technology, the public can perform their supervisory functions more easily to find problems. Under double supervision, the civil organization can constrain itself to prevent the abuse of welfare and provide the necessary emergency benefits for the real emergency personnel.

C. Civil organization level

1. Standardize internal management

It’s necessary to establish a sound daily management guideline (establishment of incentive mechanisms, establishment of functional departments) and implement internal governance to create an internal environment which is conducive to the smooth progress of welfare work. From the perspective of communication, the public generally think that these civil organizations are closer to their own lives and are more conducive to engagement. Therefore, if civil society organizations are in a state of confusion and lack of security, not only will not play the role of attracting talent, but also will leave the public unfavorable development expression, contrary to the original intention of the development of non-governmental organizations, resulting in another sense of human resources waste.

Boost the transparency of welfare content

The reason why the public is skeptical is that they do not understand and they’re full of curiosity to find out. Therefore, it is an inevitable choice to open all welfare content and standardly that people could clearly witness the process of implementation. This choice was also due to the fact that, in previous years, some non-governmental organizations implemented the opaque operation which played a negative role in the society, such as the misappropriation of funds by private individuals. Due to the natures of civil society organizations, the public does not tolerate such incidents. “Openness and transparency” is the key to gain public trust.

2. Cultivate professional talents

The American sociologist Larson pointed out: The reason why the society gives the profession its power and prestige is that the profession has a specific knowledge system linked to the main needs and values of the social system. Meanwhile, Profession commits to serving the public, therefore, the talent development path can enable them to obtain “power and prestige”, that is, the repay of professional work and the recognition of the public. The method of improving professionalism lies in training. Training is an important way to improve the overall quality of emergency personnel and achieve in-depth development. Training should focus on those several aspects: training content should be specific and targeted. As for training method, it should focus on practical significance to make the ability of emergency personnel to be effectively improved. Besides, the training should ensure a certain period and emphasize on the assessment of training results (establishing a qualification examination evaluation system). Taking specialization as an important form of innovative breakthroughs in welfare will boost the talents development of specialized emergency development.

Improve the internal incentive mechanism

Non-governmental organizations should also carry out material spiritual incentives for emergency personnel so as to maintain their enthusiasm for work. This goal can be achieved through the establishment of organizational alliances. Modern society emphasizes cooperative development and recognizes cooperation of “$1+1>2$”. From the perspective of the development of non-governmental organizations in China, Chineson-governmental organizations are relatively weak at present so that it’s difficult to provide comprehensive incentives. At this stage, the organization of alliances has become a realistic choice to adapt to the situation. An incentive platform has been established within the alliance to give publicity and provide certain material rewards to those employees with outstanding performances. Similarly, those with poor performances should be punished so as to achieve two-way incentives.

Another important factor constraining incentives is the shortage of funds. For this point, civil organizations should also seek solutions to their own problems. As the saying goes, “Granting people fish, it's better to teach people fishing.” Non-governmental organizations should seek financial support from enterprises. Nowadays, in the process of development, modern enterprises also pay attention to social responsibility. In order to establish a positive image in the society, a number of companies are willing to devote their donations to the society. Meanwhile, non-governmental organizations can seek help from them to acquire financial support. Through this cooperation, those companies can get social identity to promote the corporate value. As a result, civil organizations and achieve mutual win-win situation.

References


