

8 From 'Integration into Cities' to 'An Integrated Society': Women Migrants' Needs and Rights in Fujian Province, China

Yu Zhu and Liyue Lin¹

Abstract²

This chapter addresses the rights issues of women migrants in China in the context of their complex, lengthy, unstable, and diverse migration processes, and from a gender perspective. It first documents recent efforts by governments and relevant institutions in China to address the rights issues of women migrants. It then presents results from two recent surveys of rural-urban migrants and from subsequent in-depth interviews in Fujian Province, a major destination of rural-urban migrants in China. Although great efforts have been made and significant progress has been achieved, major rights issues still exist for women migrants. The chapter suggests that the common conceptualization of rural-urban migration as a one-way transition is oversimplified. It proposes a non-urban-centred and non-residence-based approach to migrants' rights. Migrants require inclusion in a system of rights that extends wider than the municipality or locality level, probably to a nationally integrated system, to be adequate to their real, complex patterns of movement, instead of integration into a locality-specific system of social rights only. In addition, the chapter illustrates other policy implications that flow from a more gender-sensitive analysis of key issues affecting the achievement of women migrants' rights and social entitlements, including education and access to work after the age of forty.

Keywords: China, Fujian Province, women migrants, needs, rights, social integration, urban integration, urban- and residence-based approach.

8.1 Introduction: Studying Migrants' Differentiated Needs

China has perhaps the largest internal migrant population in the world, and nearly half of this flow is com-

posed of women. Women migrants both benefit from and make important contributions to society through migration, as do their male counterparts. A large body of literature has emerged both in China and internationally on the social rights of migrants, some of which has shown that women are still placed in a disadvantaged position, especially in society and in the communities of destination (e.g., Chan 1996; Solinger 1999; Cai 2000; Yang and Chen 2000; Yang 2001; Fan 2003; Xu 2006). Addressing women migrants' rights is of great significance not only to migration research, but also to relevant social-policy-making.

While some of the academic work is more refined, policy debates on and practices to promote the rights of internal migrants in China are by and large premised on an urban-centred and/or residence-based approach, and on the principle of the *hukou*.³ The urban-centred approach is linked to the debate on 'urban citizenship', and seeks to establish migrants' full rights in the destination cities by granting them an urban status (e.g., Chan 1996; Solinger 1999; Wang/Zhang 2006). The popular tendency is to treat migrants as a homogeneous group, without paying atten-

1 Professor Yu Zhu is Professor in the School of Geography and Director of the Centre for Population and Development Research, Fujian Normal University, Fuzhou, China. Dr. Liyue Lin is a Lecturer at the School of Geography, Fujian Normal University, Fuzhou, China.

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tion to the complexity of ‘difference’, in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity. In cases where particular attention has been paid to women migrants and their specific rights issues, a gender perspective is often lacking.

This chapter contributes to the policy debates on women migrants’ rights issues in China by moving beyond the debate surrounding only the *hukou* to bring into focus issues of rights arising from, and embedded in, the migration process itself. The chapter shows how the migrants’ unsettled position may be related to other factors besides the *hukou* system, such as their household strategies and the intrinsic demand of the destination cities for temporary migrant labour. Diversification in the migration process in terms of the final destinations has been noted, such that cities where migrants work and live cannot be necessarily assumed to be the location where they will finally settle down (Zhu 2003, 2007; Zhu/Chen 2010). While paying special attention to women migrants, the chapter also includes men migrants in the analysis, and makes explicit gender comparisons, which show both differences and similarities between women and men in terms of the migration process and rights issues.

Using data from a survey in Fujian Province, a related survey of the five districts of its capital city Fuzhou, and subsequent in-depth interviews, the chapter highlights the complexity and diversity in migration processes and outcomes and argues for treating women migrants as a socially differentiated category which spans different patterns of migration flows and corresponding needs for rights protection. Located in the coastal area of south-east China, Fujian Province is one of the major destination areas for internal migration, along with other coastal provinces⁴ (Zhu 2007; Zhu/Chen 2010), and so we expect that the research findings in Fujian may have a wider reference value.

3 China’s *hukou* system dates back to the Northern and Southern Dynasties some 1,500 years ago. Its recent form was shaped through the promulgation of the ‘regulation on household registration’ in 1958. This stipulates that all citizens must register with the relevant authorities at the places of their permanent residence, with the household as the basic registration unit; all births, deaths, and migrations are required to be registered by the same authorities; the transfer of one’s household registration from a rural to an urban place needs to be approved; and all people are assigned a registration status as either ‘agricultural’ or ‘non-agricultural’ in the registration system (Zhu 2004). However, since the reform era, there have been various reforms in the *hukou* system, causing various changes to this regulation in different places.

Bringing the understanding of mobility patterns of migrants closer to rapidly changing realities and emerging needs will have implications for policy-making for China as a whole.

In the following section (8.2) we highlight recent efforts by governments and relevant institutions to protect the rights and interests of both women and men migrants. This provides the context against which our findings are discussed. As many rights issues of women migrants in China have been examined in the literature without distinguishing between men and women, as is also the case when governments and relevant institutions address these issues, we will assess such efforts without singling out women migrants. The later sections, specifically on Fujian, will advance these discussions by focusing on women migrants and making explicit gender distinctions and comparisons. In section 8.3 we will document women migrants’ rights issues as reflected in their socio-economic characteristics and working and living conditions. Section 8.4 examines the current dominant approach in addressing these issues in relation to women migrants’ complex and diversified migration flows. Section 8.5 puts forward some policy recommendations for improving rights protection for women migrants.

8.2 Progress in Migrants’ Rights Protection in China within the Current Urban-Centred and Residence-Based Approach

The needs of migrants and their families for rights protection manifest themselves in many aspects of their work and life, especially unequal access to and insecurity of employment (Wang/Zhang 2006; Cook 2008; Du et al. 2008), low income level (Zhu 2007), low social insurance coverage (NBS 2006; Zhu 2007),

4 According to the latest 2010 census, the total population of the Province was 36,894,216, and the size of the Province’s ‘floating population’, namely those who had left their town (township, sub-district) administrative boundaries for more than half a year at the time of 2010 census (excluding those moving between the sub-districts of the same municipality) amounted to 10,244,081 persons, with 4,313,602 of them from outside Fujian Province. The population of Fuzhou city, the five districts directly under the administration of Fuzhou Municipality, was 2,921,700 at the 2010 census, and the city is one of the major migrant destinations in Fujian Province.

exclusion from housing security (Wu 2002; Lin/Zhu 2008), and unequal access to educational opportunities for children (Liang/Chen 2007), as well as the great difficulties that migrants' children face in migrants' places of origin (Xiang 2007; Duan/Yang 2008). In recent years, the need for rights protection for migrants and their families has been increasingly recognized in China, and various efforts in the form of policies, insurance programmes, and other practices have been made to meet such needs, especially since 2000. So far, extending the coverage of the conventional urban-*hukou*-based and residence-based social welfare system or its post-reform variations to include migrants has been the dominant approach (Zhu et al. 2009). In a way, migrants are regarded as newly added members of urban society, and various efforts have been made to integrate them so that they can enjoy the same rights and benefits as local urban residents. We refer to this as the urban- and residence-based approach.

The most significant progress has been achieved in addressing the rights issues of migrants in terms of their employment and income (Zhu et al. 2009; Zhu/Lin 2011). Once seriously compromised by policies restricting and controlling rural-urban migration and migrant employment in the cities, migrants' access to employment opportunities in many destination cities has been significantly improved through a number of new policies (Ministry of Labour 1994). Government at various levels has released and implemented various documents to reduce the institutional basis for the discriminatory treatment of migrants in urban employment (General Office of the State Council 2003; The State Council 2006; Song/Hou 2007).⁵ In short, all the regulations treating migrants differently in terms of employment, even those regarding employment in government departments and public institutions, have now been abolished.⁶ As a result, both

women and men migrants are now increasingly enjoying improved conditions of employment and income.

A second area of progress concerns measures to ensure equal access to education and equal treatment in the destination cities for migrants' children, a major concern for women migrants who are mothers or future mothers (The State Council 2006; Duan et al. 2008). China's educational resources are allocated according to the size of the schooling population with local *hukou* status. As most migrant children do not have such *hukou* status, this used to be one of the biggest obstacles to migrant children's attending school. Public schools that accommodate migrant children often charged an extra fee called '*jiedufei*' (guest student fees), thus limiting their access. In recent years, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Security have released various documents with new policies and measures aimed at ensuring migrant children's equal access to educational opportunities. These policies and measures are collectively reflected in "Opinions of the State Council about solving the problems of rural-urban migrant workers", which stipulates that, in principle, children of rural-urban migrant workers should have equal access to compulsory education, and governments of the destination areas should take the main responsibility for this (The State Council 2006).⁷

Following the above guidelines, governments at local level have made many efforts to meet the needs of migrant children for education, and to give them equal treatment in schools. At the turn of the new century the enrolment rate of school-age migrant children, including those able to attend public schools, has increased significantly compared with the 1990s (Duan et al. 2008), though much remains to be improved, both in public schools in the destination cities and for the children of migrants who are left behind (Duan/Yang 2008).

A third policy area is the extension of the coverage of existing urban social insurance to migrants, so that they can be directly included in the system (Peng/Qiao 2005). Social insurance programmes of this kind

5 The promulgation of the minimum wage standards, and the promulgation at the beginning of 2008 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Employment Contracts, provide further protection for migrants in terms of minimum wages, overtime work, working contracts, etc. (Liu 2007; Standing Committee of the People Congress of PRC 2007). Governments at various levels have taken measures to abolish unreasonable fees imposed on migrants and to solve the problems of delayed wage payment and payment in arrears; in some cases they have even directly intervened (General Office of the State Council, 2003; National Development and Reform Commission et al. 2004; Liu/Zhou 2007).

6 Our interviews with officials from the Fujian Province Department of Labour and Department of Social Insurance suggest that while there may still be some discrimination against migrants at the local level, there is now no institutional and legal basis for such discrimination (Interview record of the Fujian project, May 2009).

7 The State Council of the People's Republic of China, that is, the Central People's Government, is the highest executive organ of state power, as well as the highest organ of state administration.

mainly cover old-age insurance, insurance against work-related injuries, medical insurance, and unemployment insurance, with the priority placed on the first two areas and on insurance against major diseases. The system of migrants' old-age insurance is made up of two components, the overall pooling of social funds (*Shehui Tongchou*) and individual accounts (*Geren Zhanghu*), and both migrants and their employers contribute to the system. Because the issue of the portability of rights has not been taken up, these programmes have not been effective in reaching the migrant population. For example, as has been pointed out (Gao 2006; Li/Yang 2007), when migrants withdrew from such programmes, they could only take away their own contribution to the insurance funds. Their employers' contributions would remain in the funds of the cities where they used to work. At the time of the Fujian survey at the end of 2009, migrants still could not take insurance benefits with them when they moved from one place to another, making the insurance invalid in their later life. This problem had significant negative effects on migrants' participation in various social insurance programmes. In fact, many migrants who joined the programmes subsequently withdrew from them, and it is widely reported that the non-portable nature of social insurance programmes was the main reason (Song 2007). In recent years, the first steps in dealing with the portability issue have been taken but many practical issues remain to be resolved (Zhu/Lin 2010).⁸ In general, the proportion of migrants joining various urban-based social insurance programmes is still very low.

A fourth policy area which has started to attract attention is migrants' housing needs. In 2005, migrant housing was listed as a key priority by the Ministry of Construction. This was the first time that the issue of migrant housing had become part of the agenda of the Ministry (Liang 2005). In the same year, in a document issued by the Ministry of Construction, the Ministry of Finance, and the People's Bank of China,

it was stipulated that rural-urban migrant workers could join the public reserve fund for housing if certain conditions were met (Ministry of Construction et al. 2005). In the important "Opinions of the State Council about solving the problems of the rural-urban migrant worker" released in 2006, the State Council gave the instruction "to improve the housing conditions of the floating population" (The State Council 2006). The State Council asked relevant government departments to enhance monitoring and administration to ensure that the living places of migrants met basic sanitation and safety standards. At the end of 2007, the Ministry of Construction and four other ministries jointly issued a document entitled "Guiding opinions on improving migrant workers' housing conditions", in which, for the first time, it is stipulated that work units or enterprises are the main institutions responsible for improving the housing conditions of rural-urban migrant workers, and that governments at various levels should incorporate the issue of rural-urban migrant workers who will live and work in the cities on a long-term basis into housing planning (Ministry of Construction et al. 2007).

These recent documents at national level have laid down the principles for the measures to be taken by governments at local level to meet the housing needs of rural-urban migrants. Attempts have been made in some migrant destination cities, including Fuzhou and Xiamen in Fujian Province, to include some migrants who meet certain strict conditions into the existing urban housing security system, so that they can enjoy various housing benefits provided to local residents, such as low-rent housing, affordable owner-occupier housing, and the public reserve fund for housing (e.g. Lai 2007). In the major migrant destination cities of Fujian Province, local governments have also adopted the practice of developing low-rent or free housing in the industrial parks for rural-urban migrants, in cooperation with migrants' employers, with funds allocated for such projects (Du 2008). However, these efforts are sporadic and only cover a very limited group of migrants; in general, housing is still a little-addressed rights issue for migrants in China, including in Fujian Province.

Summing up, despite major efforts to address the rights of internal migrant workers in China in recent years, limitations must be recorded in areas such as the low coverage of migrants by various social insurance and housing benefits, and barriers to migrants' children in public schools.

8 At the beginning of 2010, the "Provisional measures for the transfer and continuation of the basic old-age insurance for the employees of urban enterprises", enacted jointly by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and the Ministry of Finance, began to be implemented. The "Provisional measures for the transfer and continuation of the basic medical insurance for mobile employees", enacted jointly by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Finance, were promulgated and took effect from 1 July 2010.

8.3 Women Migrants' Rights and Aspects of Gender Differences

The following section discusses the findings of the Fujian and Fuzhou surveys on the socio-economic characteristics of women respondents and the working and living conditions they face, in order to shed light on the existing rights issues of women migrants and their gender differences.

8.3.1 Fujian and Fuzhou Surveys and Subsequent In-depth Interviews: Research Design

The survey in Fujian Province⁹ was supported by IDRC and jointly conducted by the *Centre for Population and Development Research* at Fujian Normal University and the *Fujian Provincial Population and Family Planning Commission* in December 2009, when China was recovering from the financial crisis of the late 2000s. As the emphasis of the research was on women migrants, the sample sizes of women and men migrants were determined as 2,000 and 1,000 respectively, with the latter serving as the comparison group for gender analysis. We then used a four-stage *probability proportional to size (PPS)*¹⁰ sampling procedure to randomly select the county-level, township-level, and village-level administrative units, and then to randomly select ten women migrants and five men migrants in each selected village.¹¹ Using the above procedure and after data cleaning, we obtained a data set with 2,977 valid responses, 1,963 from women migrants and 1,014 from men migrants.¹²

The survey in Fuzhou city was conducted in February 2009 during the height of the late 2000s financial

crisis, and covered 600 migrants who met the same criteria as those of the Fujian survey,¹³ half of whom worked in industrial, trade, and service enterprises in Fuzhou's major industrial zones and commercial areas, and half of whom were engaged in informal employment as street vendors, motorbike-taxi drivers, porters, day labourers, and informal employees in small enterprises. The quota-sampling method was used in the Fuzhou survey to select respondents for both formal and informal employment, and a sampling framework with stratification across major occupational categories was developed. We obtained 194 responses from women migrants and 406 responses from men migrants.¹⁴

The in-depth interviews were conducted during the above two surveys, and covered six government officials in relevant government departments, including the Departments for Labour and Social Insurance of Fujian Province, the Department of Education of Fuzhou Municipality, the Department of Construction and Housing of Fujian Province, three employers of migrants, and thirty-eight migrants in both formal and informal employment. The analyses in the following sections are mainly based on the above two surveys and subsequent in-depth interviews.

9 The database for all members of the floating population, which was established and managed by *Fujian Provincial Population and Family Planning Commission* and considered to be the most complete migrant data base in the Province, was used as the sampling frame, and the potential respondents were both women and men migrants in the database who were 15 to 64 years old, employed as labourers or in business, who had migrated out of the boundaries of their original county-level administrative units, and had lived in their current places of destination for more than one month.

10 *Probability proportional to size (PPS)* is a sampling technique in which the probability of selecting a sampling unit (e.g. village, township, county) is proportional to the size of its population.

11 In some villages more than ten women migrants and more than five men migrants were selected.

12 As the proportions of women and men migrants in the total migrant population were both close to 50 per cent in the sample frame, we randomly selected half of the responses (1,016) of women respondents and combined them with those of the 1,017 men respondents to form another data set, excluded 22 invalid responses from it, and obtained a data set with 2,011 valid responses, including 997 responses from women migrants and 1,014 responses from men migrants. Analyses of this data set demonstrate some basic features of migrants in Fujian: the average age of the respondents was 31.3 years, and 66.06 per cent of them had educational attainment at or higher than junior high school. Some 68.52 per cent of them were married, and 85.93 per cent of the married respondents lived together with their spouse.

13 See footnote 8. This survey was conducted as part of the *Social Protection in Asia (SPA)* policy research and network-building programme funded by the Ford Foundation and the *International Development Research Centre (IDRC)*.

14 The average age of these respondents was 30.59 years, and 76.67 per cent of them had educational attainment at or higher than junior high school. Some 49.67 per cent of them were married, and 80.87 per cent of the married respondents lived together with their spouse.

8.3.2 Low Educational Attainment and Unequal Access to Educational Opportunities

The results of the Fujian survey demonstrate two major issues related to the educational attainment of women migrants. First, compared to the local residents in their destination cities, women migrants' educational attainment is lower. This is an important factor affecting their competitiveness in the labour market, and delays their upward socio-economic mobility in both their destination cities and their places of origin if they return home. The typical educational attainment of most women migrants in the Fujian survey was junior high school or below, and the proportion of women migrants who had completed senior high school stood at only 17.7 per cent. This is much lower than the proportion of employees in the secondary and tertiary industries of Fujian Province who had completed senior high school, which stood at 51.5 per cent according to the second national economic census of 31 December 2008.¹⁵

Second, compared to their male counterparts, women migrants are further disadvantaged. This is reflected in several aspects of our survey results: the average length of women respondents' education was 7.53 years, 1.03 years shorter than that of men respondents; the proportion of women respondents who had received no education beyond the level of junior high school was 82.3 per cent, 7.2 percentage points higher than that of their male counterparts; the proportion of female respondents who had received education at or above the level of junior high school was 59.4 per cent, 15 percentage points lower; and 26.1 per cent of women respondents had dropped out of school, 8.5 per cent points higher.

8.3.3 Vulnerability in Employment and Income

The results of the Fujian survey show that in terms of income and employment, corresponding to the increasingly equal treatment of female and male migrants in their employment in the destination areas mentioned above in section 8.2, more than seventy per cent of both women and men respondents in the Fujian survey did not feel discrimination against their migrant and gender status in their employment. In the

¹⁵ Migrant workers were included in the above-mentioned employees. If they were excluded, the educational attainment of local employees would be even higher.

Fuzhou survey, the proportion of respondents who thought that their non-local *hukou* status did not affect their employment opportunities was 81.2 per cent. This shows that discrimination against migrants in terms of employment is no longer a major issue.¹⁶ Furthermore, 87.3 per cent of male respondents and 90.2 per cent of female respondents in the Fujian survey reported that their wages were paid in full and on time, suggesting that significant progress has been made in solving the issues of delayed payment and payment in arrears to migrant workers, once a serious problem in China. However, despite these significant achievements, female migrants are still vulnerable to employment instability and other problems related to their social inclusion or exclusion at the destination.

8.3.3.1 Insecurity and Instability in Employment

The results of the Fujian survey show that some 59.1 per cent of women respondents had the experience of changing their jobs, and 29.0 per cent of them had changed their jobs twice or more since they entered the migration process. On average, female respondents in our sample had been engaged in 2.11 jobs before the survey.¹⁷ The job instability of female respondents is also reflected in the status of their working contract: only 40.8 per cent had signed employment contracts; this proportion was slightly lower than that of their male counterparts (44.0 per cent). Furthermore, among those women migrant workers who had signed a contract, only a very small proportion of them (around one per cent) had a long-term contract, indicating the temporary nature of their jobs (see also table 8.1). The unstable and temporary nature of women migrants' employment often puts them at a disadvantage in the labour market; with no employment contract, their ability to protect their rights in labour disputes would be compromised.

8.3.3.2 Segmented Nature of Employment, Little Upward Occupational Mobility, and Age Discrimination

The Fujian survey results show that women migrants were concentrated in the manufacturing and service

¹⁶ The Fujian survey results show that the average monthly income of women respondents was 1,534.3 Yuan (US\$243.9) at the end of 2009, much higher than the overall average level of below 1,000 Yuan (US\$159.0) only five years ago (Zhu/Chen 2010), although a significant gender gap still exists.

¹⁷ The average migration duration of female respondents was seven years.

Table 8.1: Distribution of lengths of respondents' working contracts (%). **Source:** The authors, based on the 2009 Fujian survey prepared for the IDRC project.

Length of working contracts	Female respondents (N=808)	Male respondents (N=446)	All respondents (N=1254)
Less than 3 months	0.7	0.4	0.6
3-6 months	1.4	0.4	1.0
6-12 months	43.8	38.1	41.8
1-3 years	46.3	49.1	47.3
3-5 years	3.8	4.3	4.0
More than 5 years	1.1	1.6	1.3
Casual contracts	2.8	6.1	4.0
Total	100	100	100

industries. As table 8.2 shows, production workers, sales and service workers, and workers in individual businesses were the most common occupations of the female respondents, with 80.2 per cent of them engaged in these three types of occupation. This is a much higher proportion than that in the general female population employed in the urban areas of Fujian Province, which stood at 62.7 per cent in 2009.¹⁸ In contrast, professional and technical workers, administrative and managerial workers, and clerical workers only accounted for 11.6 per cent of women respondents, and this proportion was much lower than that of men respondents, which stood at 20.4 per cent.

Furthermore, figure 8.1 shows that the occupational structure of the female respondents' most current jobs was remarkably similar to that of their first jobs since migration, suggesting little upward occupational mobility. The only noticeable occupational mobility identifiable from figure 8.1 was the shift from being production and transport workers to running individual businesses, and this does not represent a fundamental change of employment structure, since the majority of individual businesses require low skills and are labour-intensive and small-scale. Nor could any significant upward mobility be identified in our in-

18 Calculated based on the data provided by the Statistical Bureau of Fujian Province in: *Fujian Statistical Year Book* (2010); available at: <<http://www.stats-fj.gov.cn/tongjijianjian/dz10/index-cn.htm>> (tables 3-15 and 3-17).

Table 8.2: Occupational structure of female respondents (%). **Source:** The authors, based on the 2009 Fujian survey prepared for the IDRC project.

Occupation	Proportion of women respondents	Occupation	Proportion of women respondents
Administrative workers	4.2	Transport workers	0.5
Clerical workers	4.5	Individual business owners	16.6
Technical workers	2.9	Petty traders	2.1
Sales and service workers	16.6	Casual workers	1.8
Production workers	47.2	Others	1.2
Construction workers	2.4	Total	100

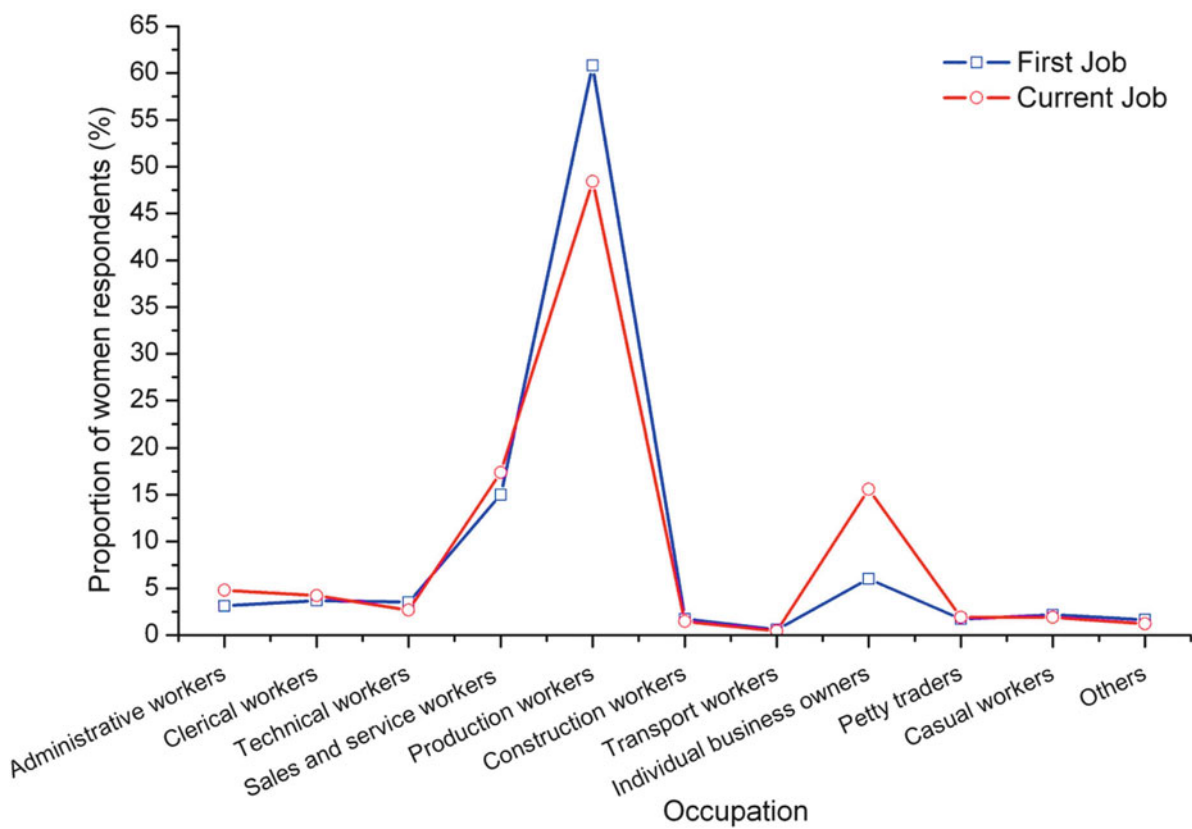
depth interviews, although more evidence is required for more conclusive findings.

Furthermore, age discrimination is a major issue for women migrants, as only young women migrants are regarded as skilful and deft and welcomed in the labour market. 48.0 per cent of the female respondents reported that there was an age limit in their employment; the average upper age limit reported for female migrant employment was 41.1 years, compared to 54.9 years for male migrants. This is a dramatic difference. So while women are preferred over men as young factory workers, they are not wanted when they are over forty.

8.3.3.3 Insignificant Roles of Governments and Intermediaries in Providing Employment Information and Training

The Fujian survey results show that, as with their male counterparts, most women respondents found their jobs on their own (30.2 per cent), through their family members, relatives, townsmen, colleagues, friends, and classmates (56.2 per cent), or through advertisements in newspapers and on TV and the Internet (8.8 per cent), and only 4.8 per cent of them through employers' recruitment, introduction by intermediaries, job assignments or recommendation upon graduation, or government-organized labour export programmes. This suggests that the role of governments and intermediaries in providing employment information for migrants is rather weak. Furthermore, most women migrants have not received training for their employ-

Figure 8.1: The first and current occupations of women respondents. **Source:** The 2009 Fujian survey in the IDRC project.



ment, and the relevant government departments have played an insignificant role in this regard. Only 8.7 per cent of female respondents had received training before their migration, and the government accounted for only 4.7 per cent of such training. In the process of their migration, the proportion of female respondents who had received training increased to 32.7 per cent, thanks to on-the-job training; however, the role of relevant government departments decreased, accounting for only 2.9 per cent of on-the-job training reported by the female respondents. Our in-depth interviews with officials of relevant government departments in Fujian Province in early 2009 revealed that employment training programmes were usually only provided to local residents and migrants from within the province, and therefore migrants from outside Fujian Province were excluded (interview conducted in May 2009 during the IDRC project).

8.3.3.4 Employers' Domination in Determining the Migrant Pay and Gender Gap in Income

According to the Fujian survey, 60.2 per cent of women respondents and 52.4 per cent of men reported that their pay was determined unilaterally by their employers, and only 18.4 per cent of women and 23.3 per cent of men reported that it was determined through negotiation with employers, trade unions, and relevant government departments. Besides this, collective bargaining played an insignificant role, and women migrants were clearly more disadvantaged than their male counterparts, one possible factor behind the gender gap in income. We mentioned earlier that the average monthly income of women respondents was 1,534.3 Yuan (US\$243.9); while this represents a significant increase in the income level of female migrants, it was much lower than that of their male counterparts, which was 2,012.7 Yuan (US\$320.0). Even in the same job category of production workers, in which the largest proportion of both female and male respondents were engaged, the average monthly income of female respondents was

1,456.3 Yuan (US\$231.5), still much lower than that of their male counterparts, which stood at 1,871.1 Yuan (US\$297.5). Such gender gaps in income reflect the fact that there is still gender discrimination against female migrants in the labour market; but they also partly result from the gap in human capital between migrating women and men.

8.3.3.5 Excessive Overtime

The Fujian survey results suggest that the average length of working time for female respondents was 10.03 hours per day, similar to that of male respondents (9.97 hours), and female respondents took only 2.22 days off in a month, even less than their male counterparts (2.32 days). Furthermore, 29.5 per cent of women respondents reported that they were not compensated for overtime work, and for those who were, the compensation (on average 6.03 Yuan or US\$0.96 for women respondents and 7.25 Yuan or US\$1.15 for men) was below even the wage standard stipulated for normal working hours.

8.3.4 Low Social Insurance Coverage and Unequal Access to Urban Public Services

Another major concern identified in the Fujian survey is the very low social insurance coverage of both female and male migrants, and their unequal access to urban public services. This is consistent with our earlier assessment that national efforts to address these issues have not been satisfactory so far.

8.3.4.1 Very Low Proportion of Female Migrants Covered by Various Social Insurance Programmes

Data from the Fujian survey show that the proportions of women respondents covered by old-age insurance for urban employees, medical insurance for urban employees, unemployment insurance, and insurance against work-related injuries were only 13.3 per cent, 16.5 per cent, 10.2 per cent, and 17.7 per cent respectively, and that the situation for migrant men was similar. This suggests that despite the great efforts devoted in recent years to extending urban-based social insurance system to migrants, only limited progress has been achieved, and the majority of both female and male migrants have not benefited. Interestingly, rural-based social insurance programmes have played an unexpectedly important role in recent years, as evidenced by the Fujian survey result that 43.50 per cent

of female respondents joined the New Rural Cooperative Medical Scheme before or during migration. It can be expected that with the implementation of the New Rural Social Pension Scheme in the future, more female and male migrants will also join this kind of rural-based old-age social insurance programme.

8.3.4.2 Migrants' Unequal Access to Urban Public Services: Housing and Children's Education

Migrants' unequal access to urban public services is particularly evident in the status of their housing security in their destination cities. According to the results of the Fujian survey, 54.8 per cent of women respondents lived in rental housing, followed by 35.9 per cent in dormitories provided by their employers. This is in strong contrast to the housing situation of the local residents in Fujian Province, 64 per cent of whom owned their housing (Lin/Zhu 2008). Furthermore, only 6.1 per cent of female respondents received housing benefits from their employers, and an even smaller proportion (1.8 per cent) from the government. The disadvantaged housing situation of migrants is also reflected in the size of their dwellings. In the Fujian survey, the *per capita* usable area of women respondents' housing was 9.8 square metres, less than one-third of the *per capita* usable area of Fuzhou local residents' housing, which stood at 34.2 square metres in 2005 (Fujian Statistical Bureau 2006).

Besides this, children's education remains a major concern for female migrants. Data from the Fujian survey show that while 53.3 per cent of female respondents brought some of their children to their places of destination to receive education, only 64.9 per cent of these children were admitted to the public schools, and respectively 30.6 per cent and 4.5 per cent of them had to go to private schools or schools for children of migrants operated by NGOs and/or the migrant population themselves. At the same time, 52.1 per cent of female respondents had left children behind to be cared for by grandparents or other relatives and to receive education in the places of origin. Children of migrants face problems of educational neglect in different ways. Those who accompany their parents, or are born in the destination cities, often go to schools privately set up for them by NGOs or the parents themselves, despite the formal commitment of the government to their education. High tuition fees, the poor conditions of the schools, and lack of supervision mean that the teaching quality of these schools cannot be guaranteed. Those children who do not move with their parents are deprived of parental

supervision in their daily lives, and this negatively affects both their school performance and psychological development, and even causes much deviant behaviour (Research team on issues of left-behind children 2004).

8.3.4.3 Lack of Awareness and Channels for Rights Protection

In the Fujian survey, more than half (54.0 per cent) of female respondents and 48.7 per cent of male respondents said that they were not aware of relevant information concerning their own rights and interests, such as wage standards, social insurance policies, policies concerning their children's education, and employment contract policies, at their working and living places. Only 9.3 per cent and 1.5 per cent respectively of female respondents joined local trade unions and local women's federations, the two most relevant organizations for the protection of their rights and interests; the proportion of male respondents who joined local trade unions was 11.2 per cent. In addition, their high mobility marginalizes them in the political life of both their places of origin and destination, reflected in the facts that only 24.9 per cent of female respondents and 29.2 per cent of male respondents had ever participated in the village committee election of their home areas, and that only 1.1 per cent of female respondents and 1.2 per cent of male respondents had done so in the election of urban neighbourhood committees in their places of destination. These survey results indicate the lack of well-organized channels for both female and male migrants, particularly for women to obtain information concerning the protection of their rights, to express their interests, and to seek support to protect their rights.

Data from the Fujian survey show further that when their rights and interests were violated, the most common reaction of female respondents was to turn to family members, relatives, and friends to seek help (30.9 per cent), followed by arguing directly with their employers (21.3 per cent). The corresponding figures for male respondents were 24.39 per cent and 19.12 per cent. Only 13.1 per cent of female respondents and 19.08 per cent of male respondents would turn to relevant government departments for help; those who would take legal action only accounted for 7.4 per cent of female and 8.98 per cent of male respondents; and those who would seek the help of trade unions and women's federations only accounted for 2.1 per cent of female and 1.6 per cent of male respondents. These figures suggest that there is much room for official channels such as relevant government depart-

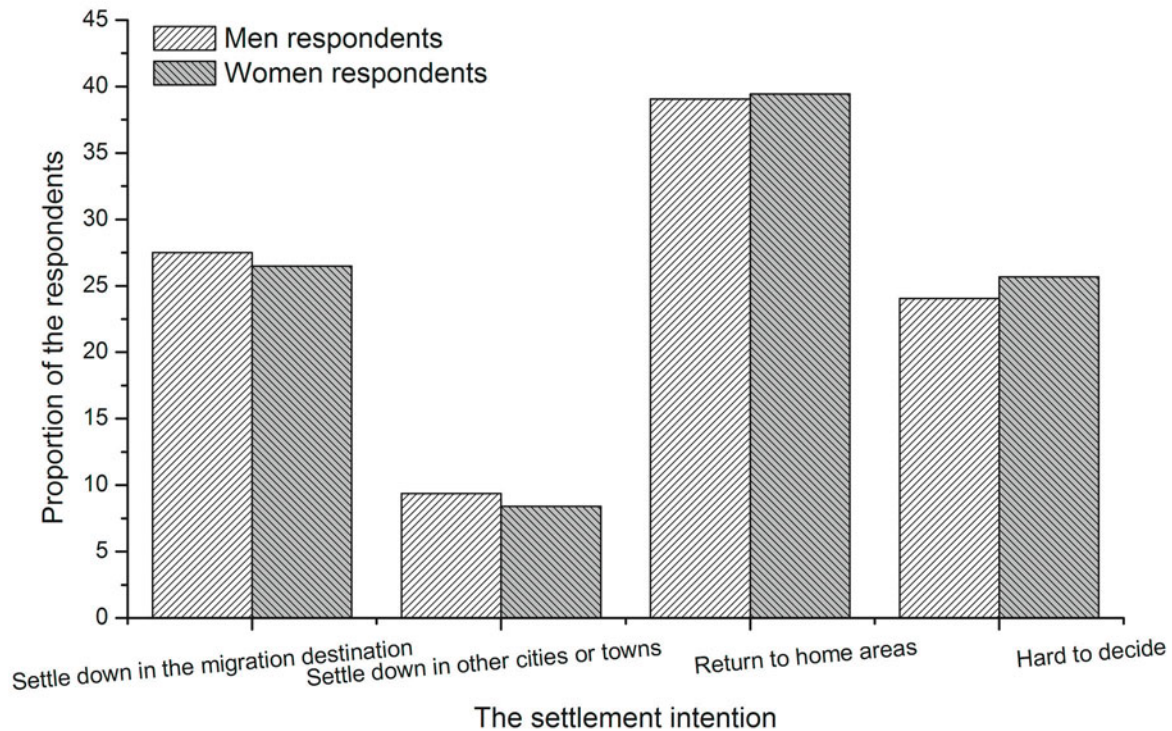
ments, legal institutions, trade unions, and women's federations to play a bigger role in the protection of rights and interests for both female and male migrants, especially the former.

8.4 Female Migrants' Complex and Diverse Migration Flows: Limits of the Urban-Centred and Residence-Based Approach

Above we showed that although great efforts have been made to protect the rights and interests of female and male migrants, they have not been universally effective. While such a situation can be attributed to many reasons, including the neglect of the changing nature of female migrants' rights issues, the inadequate roles of the governments and relevant institutions, and the barriers caused by the *hukou* system, all of which will be addressed below, one particularly important factor is the current urban- and residence-based approach, which is inadequate as a way of understanding the rights issues of women migrants and of underpinning relevant policy-making. We examine next this inadequacy in the context of the mobility patterns of female migrants, hoping that more sophisticated and diverse approaches can be developed.

8.4.1 The Mobility Patterns of Women Migrants: Beyond the Conceptualization of a Rural-Urban One-Way Transition

The underlying rationale of the current urban-centred and residence-based approach on the protection of rights for migrants seems to match a common understanding that conceptualizes rural-urban migration as ultimately a one-way transition (Zhu/Chen 2010). Although there has long been recognition in China of the circular nature of much contemporary rural-urban migration, this circular nature is often attributed to the barriers caused by the *hukou* system, which has made it difficult for migrants to settle permanently in cities and to enjoy the same rights as local residents (see e.g. Chan/Zhang 1999; Solinger 1999; Liang 2001). It is assumed that without the hurdles caused by the *hukou* system, most migrants would settle permanently in cities, and that granting migrants the *hukou* status of their destination cities and thus integrating them into the destination urban society would be the best way to protect their rights and interests (Zhu/Lin 2011).

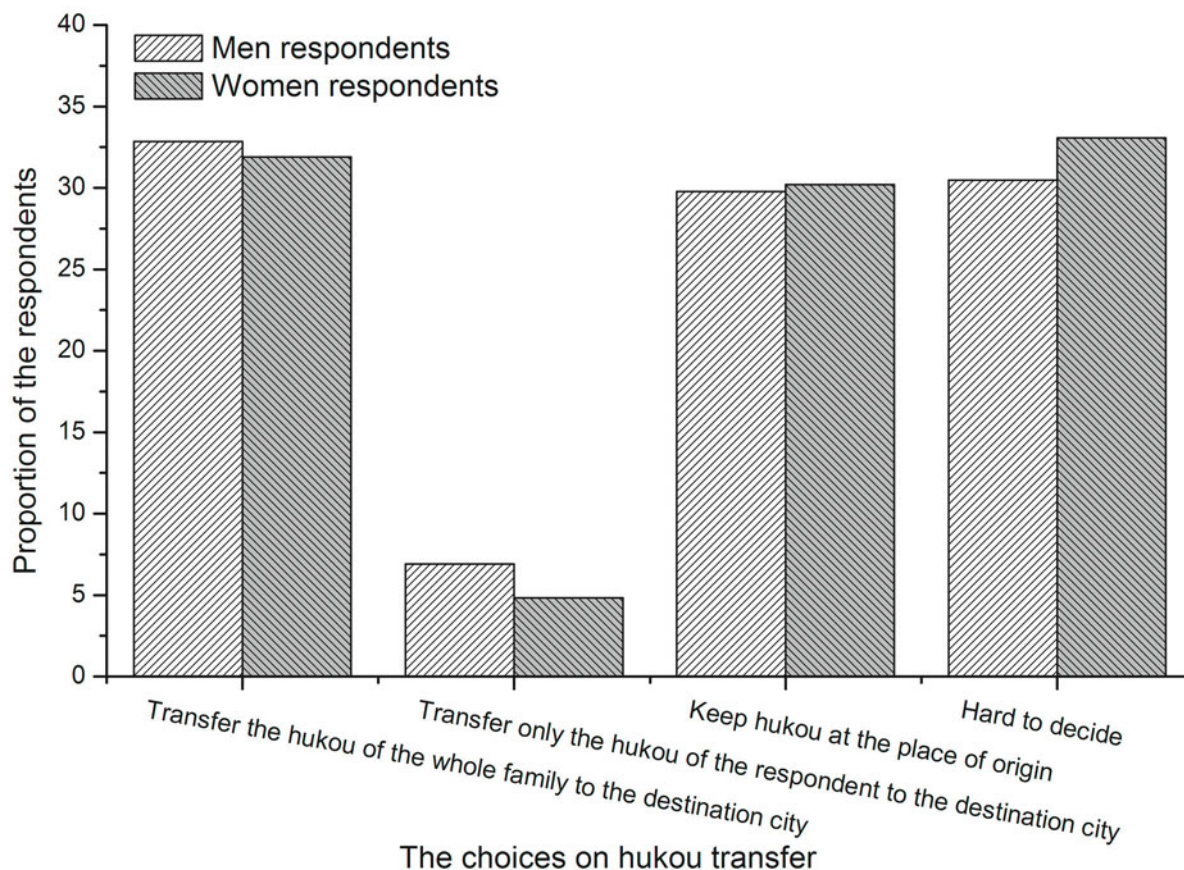
Figure 8.2: The settlement intentions of the respondents from the Fujian survey (%): **Source:** Prepared by the authors.

However, the Fujian survey indicates that such a simplistic conceptualization of rural-urban migration is not valid, and that the mobility patterns of migrants are much more complicated. First, as can be seen from figure 8.2, the diversity of migration flows was an important feature among both female and male migrants. Answers to the question 'If you had a free choice, what would be your long-term plan?' indicate the diversity of the respondents' choices of the final direction of their migration movements, and it is noticeable that instead of settling down in the current or future destination cities, going back to their home areas remained their most common choice. It is also noticeable that a large proportion of respondents, both women and men, had not made up their mind, as this is no easy decision to make. Thus, there was a three-way division (settling down in cities, returning to home areas, and keeping in circulation) in their migration patterns, with little gender difference.

It is uncertain whether the above low intention of the respondents to settle permanently in their current or future destination cities is caused by the *hukou* system or by related institutional constraints. Based on the Fujian survey, figure 8.3 documents the responses to the question 'If you were qualified (allowed) to transfer the *hukou* of your family to the destination, what would be your choice?': those who chose to

transfer the *hukou* of the whole family to the destination city, those who chose to keep the *hukou* at the place of origin, and those who could not make a decision each accounted for around 30 per cent, so only a few chose to transfer the *hukou* solely to the destination city. Again no significant gender differences exist. Since *hukou* is widely regarded as the biggest hurdle for rural-urban migrants to settle down in their destination cities, the reluctance of our respondents to transfer their registration from rural places of origin to urban places of destination suggests that their decision to remain mobile or return to home areas reflects their own priorities and conditions. In fact, it is understandable that the majority of the respondents were reluctant to transfer their *hukou* and move permanently to the cities, since transferring *hukou* from places of origin to places of destination, especially when this is conditional on giving up land at the places of origin, implies a complete abandonment (often irreversibly) of the bi-local status that has enabled them to benefit from both the rural and the urban worlds (Zhu/Chen 2010). In the Fuzhou survey the respondents' answers were similar and again without important gender difference (Zhu/Lin 2011), except that higher proportions of both women and men migrants wanted to go back to their home areas and keep their *hukou* at the places of origin, because the

Figure 8.3: The choices on *hukou* transfer of the respondents from the Fujian survey (%). **Source:** The authors.



Fuzhou survey was conducted during the financial crisis (Zhu/Lin 2011).

Job instability is another important factor affecting mobility patterns. Among the respondents, 59.1 per cent had experienced changing jobs, and 28.9 per cent had changed jobs more than twice. This job instability is also reflected in the status of their working contracts, as discussed above. Furthermore, among those who had signed a contract, particularly among women, only a very small proportion had a long-term contract, indicating the temporary nature of their jobs (table 8.1). As argued elsewhere (Zhu 2007), although the fact that most migrants do not have local *hukou* status in their destination cities may contribute to the unstable and temporary nature of their employment, the instability of the labour market per se is the major factor, and this cannot be changed easily. Such job and income instability makes it necessary for migrants to move frequently, and this makes it even more difficult for them to get settled in their destination cities.

The evidence from the Fujian and Fuzhou surveys and in-depth interviews demonstrates that the mobility patterns of both female and male migrants in

China are more complicated than commonly perceived, and that their multi-local status combining both rural and urban areas, the different patterns of their migration flows, and job instability feature strongly in their migration process. The current urban-centred and residence-based approach in the protection of rights for both female and male migrants is based on the conceptualization of rural-urban migration as a preferred fairly rapid and complete transfer of residence to urban areas, but this is incompatible with the actual mobility patterns, and needs to be reassessed.

8.4.2 Reassessing the Needs of Female Migrants for Rights Protection: Current Inadequacies

The first limitation of the current urban-centred and residence-based approach to the rights issues of female and male migrants is that it is incompatible with the highly mobile and prolonged migration process. This is particularly evident in the status of the social insurance of female migrants. As we have seen above,

according to the Fujian survey only a few women were covered by social insurance programmes at their urban destination. This may be attributed to many factors (Zhu/Lin 2011), but a key factor is that these programmes cannot be transferred. These social insurance programmes should have the same level of mobility as the women migrants themselves, and the urban-centred and residence-based approach cannot meet this requirement. Fortunately China has moved in the right direction by beginning to address the issues of transfer and continuation of old-age and medical insurance programmes, though much more remains to be done.

The second limitation of the urban-centred and residence-based approach to the rights issues of female migrants is the neglect of the distinctive needs of migrants due to their mobile nature; these needs are different from those of local or urban residents. This is particularly evident in the case of the needs of migrants for housing security. China's current urban-based housing security system basically consists of the provision of affordable owner-occupier housing, low-rent housing, and the public reserve fund for housing,¹⁹ which are made available to local urban residents who meet certain socio-economic criteria (Wu 2002). In the Fujian Province survey, the housing security system was entirely inaccessible to 98.2 per cent of female respondents, in Fuzhou city to 91.2 per cent. This suggests a clearly disadvantaged situation for female migrants in destination cities. Therefore, to extend the existing urban housing security system to female migrants is no answer. The answers of female respondents (table 8.3) to the question 'What are the most important measures that the governments and/or your employers can take to protect the housing security of rural-urban migrants?' in the Fuzhou survey²⁰ referred to a) the provision of rental subsidy, b) the provision of low rent housing, and c) the provision of free accommodation by employers. This suggests that among the three main components of the conven-

tional urban-based housing security system, only low-rent housing is what most women migrants are interested in, and they have their own priorities regarding housing security, different from those of local residents. Some differences between women and men appeared, but the general patterns of their selections were similar.

As we have demonstrated elsewhere (Lin/Zhu 2008), the housing needs of migrants differ from those of the local urban residents. Most migrants, because of their unsettled nature and multi-local status, view reducing the costs of housing as the top priority. Unlike local urban residents, most have little incentive to invest in stable, high quality housing in the destination cities.

The third limitation of the current urban-centred and residence-based approach to the rights issues of female migrants is its neglect of the various needs of migrants caused by their different final destinations. Table 8.4 shows the social insurance programmes preferred by women in the Fuzhou survey. Contrary to expectation, when asked 'What is the best type of social insurance programmes you would like to choose so that your future life will be secure?', only 34.5 per cent chose the existing urban social insurance programmes. Instead, 24.2 per cent chose social insurance programmes designed according to the characteristics of migrants, and 30.4 per cent chose social insurance programmes designed for rural residents at their home areas. Female migrants seemed slightly more likely to choose an urban-based social insurance programme than men migrants, but the important fact is that there was a near-equal three-way split for the selection of social insurance programmes by women and men, where urban-based insurance programmes were only one alternative.

The diverse choices of female migrants on social insurance programmes are closely related to their different preferences with regard to their final settlement. In the Fuzhou survey (table 8.5), those women who wanted to settle in the cities were clearly more inclined to choose the existing urban social insurance programmes. However, those who wanted to return to their home areas were more likely to prefer the social insurance programmes designed for rural residents; and those who wanted to circulate between their places of origin and destination were divided between these two groups. Thus, rather than assuming rural-urban migration to be a one-way transition and concentrating all efforts in migrant destination cities, efforts should also be made to develop non-urban-based and non-residence-based social insurance pro-

19 The public reserve fund for housing is a way of providing housing benefits and security in China, whereby employees are required to contribute a certain proportion of their salaries to the fund, matched by a certain contribution from their work units. All contributions become the property of employees and can only be used for housing-related purposes.

20 Unfortunately, no questions were asked regarding the needs of migrants for housing security in the Fujian Province survey, and therefore we have to rely on the results of the Fuzhou city survey in this regard. This is also the case in our following analysis on the needs of migrants for social insurance and so on.

Table 8.3: Stated needs of women and men respondents for housing security (%). **Source:** The authors, based on the 2009 Fuzhou survey.

Measure for migrant housing security	Women respondents (N=194)	Men respondents (N=406)	All respondents (N=600)
Provision of free accommodation by employers	15.0	14.0	14.3
Provision of housing for migrant couples by employers	5.0	6.3	5.9
Provision of low rent housing	16.0	17.3	16.9
Provision of rental subsidy	31.7	27.6	28.9
Entitlement to 'affordable owner-occupier housing'	8.2	9.7	9.1
Entitlement to the public reserve fund for housing	10.0	7.3	8.2
Provision of loans and preferential treatment in taxation	8.1	10.7	9.9
Setting up of housing standards for migrant dormitories	6.0	7.2	6.8
Total	100	100	100

Note: Each respondent could choose three answers and rank them first, second, and third. Each figure in the table is the weighted average of these responses, with respective weights of 0.5, 0.3, and 0.2.

Table 8.4: Selection of the types of social insurance programmes (%). **Source:** The authors, based on the 2009 Fuzhou migrant survey.

Type of social insurance programmes	Women respondents (N=194)	Men respondents (N=406)	All respondents (N=600)
Joining the existing urban social insurance programmes	34.5	32.5	33.2
Joining the social insurance programmes designed according to the characteristics of migrants	24.2	25.1	24.8
Joining the social insurance programmes designed for rural residents in their home areas	30.4	36.2	34.3
Going back to home areas if having great difficulties at the places of destination	10.8	6.2	7.7
Total	100	100	100

grammes, and places of origin are therefore crucial. In fact, this is already reflected in the significant role of *Rural Cooperative Medical Schemes* in their medical insurance, as shown by the Fujian survey, and it can be expected that the newly announced plan to gradually develop a nationwide New Rural Pension Scheme will also play an important role in old-age support for migrant women.

The importance of migrants' places of origin in their rights protection is also reflected in the educational needs of their children. As our Fujian survey results show, while 53.4 per cent of the women had children migrating with them to the destination city, an

almost equal proportion (52.1 per cent) had children left behind. It is important to note that the Fuzhou survey asked why the respondents left children in their home areas, and the three most important reasons were 'unable to afford the high tuition fees at the destination city' (40.68 per cent), 'no economic capability to afford the high living costs in the city' (36.44 per cent), and 'job instability' (29.66 per cent).²¹ While the first reason can be attributed to the lack of educational resources and the migrants' unequal access to education in the destination cities, the other

21 This question was not asked in the Fujian survey.

Table 8.5: Selection of the types of social insurance programmes by female migrants and their preferred settlement (%). **Source:** The authors, based on the 2009 Fuzhou migrant survey.

Types of social insurance programmes	Settle down in the cities N=55	Circulate between places of origin and destination N=66	Return to home areas N=73	All women respondents N=194
Joining the existing urban social insurance programmes	60.0	22.7	26.0	34.5
Joining the social insurance programmes designed according to the characteristics of migrants	25.5	28.8	19.2	24.2
Joining the social insurance programmes designed for rural residents at their home areas	12.7	33.3	41.1	30.4
Going back to home areas if having great difficulties at their places of destination	1.8	15.2	13.7	10.8
Total	100	100	100	100

two reasons are mainly related to their socio-economic characteristics, which make it necessary for them to rely on their resources in their home areas, and they consider it desirable to leave some family members at the places of origin. This need is in turn reflected in the fact that nearly all female respondents in the Fujian survey (95.3 per cent) felt that it was necessary for them to keep their land in their home areas, although they have been away for a long time. Therefore, keeping some family members and resources at their places of origin is a rational choice for many migrants (including women) in China, and new home-area-based approaches to rights protection should be developed to meet these needs.

8.5 Policy Suggestions: Seeking New Approaches for the Protection of the Rights of Female Migrants

8.5.1 From 'Urban Integration' to 'Societal Integration': Extending Temporal and Spatial Coverage of the Protection of the Rights of Female Migrants and Respecting their Diverse Needs

In recent years, great efforts have been made to ensure that the rights of migrants in their destination cities will not be compromised by their non-local status. Great progress has indeed been made in this regard. However, some important rights of migrants have still not been effectively addressed. Major reasons for this unsatisfactory situation are the over-simplified conceptualization of rural-urban migration as—in essence—a one-way transition, and the corresponding

urban-centred and residence-based approach that focuses only on the rights issues of migrants in their destination cities and on the role of the *hukou* system in hindering the integration of migrants and their rights (e.g. Solinger 1999; Zheng/Huang Li 2007). This approach neglects the complex, lengthy, unstable, and diversified nature of the mobility processes of migrants; it fails to take into full consideration their needs to have their rights protected in the long transition process and at different locations (including their places of origin) before their final (re)settlement, and it is therefore incomplete in both spatial and temporal coverage. We therefore recommend that a non-urban-centred and non-residence-based approach should be adopted to extend the coverage of the rights of migrants to all stages and locations in their migration process. Under such an approach, the protection of the rights of migrants should not rely on 'urban citizenship', and the whole society (rather than the destination cities) should bear the responsibility for protecting the rights of all citizens, including female and male migrants, no matter where they live. Thus, instead of advocating the 'urban integration' of migrants, policies should be formulated to promote their 'social or societal integration', and to ensure that migrants' rights and interests are not compromised anywhere or at any time. Such an approach will inevitably require the gradual equalization of the rights and interests of urban and rural residents; it will benefit not only permanent migrants, on whom the conventional urban-centred and residence-based approach is focused, but also circular and temporary migrants, and is therefore socially more inclusive.

A related recommendation is to respect the different needs of female migrants to protect their rights.

The conventional urban-centred and residence-based approach may capture the situation of the limited group of migrants who intend to settle and are capable of settling in the cities; it is not suitable for those migrants who need and/or prefer to circulate between rural places of origin and urban places of destination, and for those who will eventually return to their home areas. Migrants in the latter two groups have to change their migration flows and choose urban places as their destination if they want to take full advantage of efforts to protect their rights under the conventional approach; however, this is not necessarily in their best interests. Great efforts must also be made to link the policies and measures targeting different groups with different migration flows, so that their protection will not lapse if they transfer from one migration flow to another.

8.5.2 Upgrading the Efforts in Addressing the Rights of Migrants: Shifting From a 'Survival-Oriented' to a 'Development-Oriented' Approach

During the first few years of this century when migrants' rights issues started to attract public attention in China, most academic and policy discussion was focused on their rights of a 'survival nature', i.e. those related to their restricted access to urban employment opportunities, very low and often delayed wage payment and payment in arrears, and the low admission rate of their school-age children. Although issues of this kind still exist and need to be further addressed, their priority has gradually lessened, and other legal issues, not necessarily new but relatively neglected, now stand in need of attention. Among them are those relating to their educational attainment and employment training, the segmented nature of their employment and occupational mobility, their employment, social and housing security, their access to social insurance and public services, and their awareness of and channels for legal protection that are more of a 'developmental nature'. They reflect the fact that with China's rapid socio-economic development, rights issues pertaining to migrants should now be addressed with a view to raising standards.

We suggest that while continued attention must be paid to improving migrants' basic working and living conditions, more comprehensive and sophisticated efforts should be made to facilitate migrants' access to public facilities and services and to promote their upward mobility. Particular attention needs to be paid to promoting and ensuring migrants' rights to receive de-

cent education before and employment training during the migration process, to enjoy working conditions that meet the standards stipulated in relevant laws and regulations (including those concerning their working days and hours) and more upward occupational mobility, to enjoy more social security without it being compromised by their migration process, to have equal access to public services, particularly those relating to housing and children's education, and to access more channels for their rights protection. Again, measures to address the above issues should not be urban-centred; in fact, some of the issues cannot be fully addressed without going into their root causes in migrants' places of origin in rural areas (such as migrants' education), or being linked to their rural components (such as migrants' social insurance and the education of their children). Policies of this kind will not only improve migrants' situation in terms of equality and social inclusion, but will also enhance their human and social capital and their position in society, and eventually promote economic growth and the social cohesion of all of society.

8.5.3 Developing a Clear Legal and Institutional Framework that Defines the Rights of Migrants and Obligations of Governments: Towards a Rights Approach for Citizens

Achieving the two policy objectives discussed above requires a legal and institutional framework that defines the rights of migrants and the obligations of governments and relevant institutions. China's conventional legal and institutional framework does not suit this purpose well because it is *hukou*- and residence-based, and is ambiguous when it comes to what migrants' rights are and whose responsibility it is to protect such rights, as migrants are away from their places of origin where they have their *hukou* registration. Significant progress has been made towards solving this problem; though progress so far has not been solid and complete. Policies and measures for the protection of the rights of migrants are often described by the authorities at the national level as 'opinions' or 'guidelines'. They are often presented in general terms, are not legally enforceable, and can easily be compromised at the local level. We suggest that policies concerning the rights of migrants in the form of 'opinions' or 'guidelines' should be carefully examined and transformed into laws or regulations if possible. At the same time, a legal and institutional framework should gradually be developed to implement the

notion that protecting the rights of migrants is a duty of the whole of society rather than that of certain places where migrants are affiliated, and changes in relevant legislation should also be made to base this protection not only on the labour rights of migrants, but also (perhaps more importantly) on their citizen's rights. Currently, local governments at the destination cities of migrants and their employers are primarily responsible for providing migrants with social benefits and security and ensuring their rights. Such an institutional arrangement can no longer suit the situation of migrants and should be changed, with the central government and governments at higher levels gradually playing a bigger role.

8.5.4 Strengthening the Roles of Relevant Government Departments and Other Societal Institutions in Protecting the Rights of Migrants

A crucial issue is the establishment of a new financing mechanism so that the rights of migrants can be effectively protected. Both the extension of temporal and spatial coverage and upgrading the protection of the rights of migrants can no longer rely on the conventional state financial sources and financing mechanisms. New ways of financing mechanisms that take into consideration the highly mobile and multi-local nature of migrants need to be explored. As migration is a cross-region phenomenon, the central government, and the governments at higher levels, should gradually bear more responsibility in this regard, and financing mechanisms based on fiscal revenue should gradually play bigger roles; otherwise, the non-local nature of migrants can easily put them at a disadvantage if the local budget is insufficient. To solve this problem, a new financing system and more financial allocation from the central or higher governments are needed. Such a new financing mechanism should be designed along with a redefinition of the rights and obligations of the various parties involved, and should be well informed by knowledge of migrants and their needs. In addition to the government role in the new financial mechanism, there are many other aspects where the roles of the government and relevant institutions can be strengthened. Particular efforts should be made to enhance the roles of the government and of relevant institutions in providing migrants with employment information and training and housing security; in supplying information about rights protection and creating formal channels to implement this; and in determining migrants' wages. Women's federations

and trade unions, the two institutions most concerned with the rights and interests of migrants, can increase efforts in these areas.

8.5.5 Increasing Attention to the Protection of the Rights of Female Migrants

Our recommendations so far largely apply to both female and male migrants. This suggests that the migrating patterns very much determine the characteristics of the rights issues of female migrants and their specific needs for protection of their rights. Female and male migrants have very much in common here. However, our survey results also show that rights issues related to migrants do have gender dimensions, and we therefore recommend that particular attention should be paid to the following aspects where female migrants are more disadvantaged. First, the relevant government departments both at places of origin and of destination (especially the former) should make more efforts to ensure that relevant laws on schooling are enforced, so that female migrants will receive the nine years of legally compulsory education before joining the migration process. This will significantly contribute to their labour market performance, their longer-term employability, and their position in the power relations of both their family and society.

Second, efforts should also be made to advocate the equal position of men and women in the family, so that female migrants would not make sacrifices by dropping out of school and withdrawing involuntarily from the migration process when the family is in difficulties.

Third, more efforts need to be devoted to promote employment security, social security, and housing security for female migrants, who are in a more disadvantaged position. In particular, we noted that female migrants are often not considered employable beyond the age of forty. In addition, measures should be taken to address family concerns regarding the migration process, such as the care of elderly family members and children. Female migrants are more affected by these issues, which contribute to the interruption of their migration process and the insecurity of their employment.

Fourth, more efforts should be made to promote their equal access to employment without age- and gender-related discrimination, and to promote equal pay. Our results show that women migrants continue to be more disadvantaged in the above aspects of their work and life in their migration process, and require more and special efforts to address their rights issues.

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