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International Labour Organization

Call for Expression of Interest
Brief on "Good practices in Social Security in China: Establishing and strengthening long-term care insurance"

The ILO Office for China and Mongolia (ILO-Beijing) invites qualified Chinese research institutions to submit expressions of interest for the development of a brief entitled **"Good practices in social security in China: Establishing and strengthening long-term care insurance".** The assignment will be undertaken under the EU-funded Project "Improving China's Institutional Capacity towards Universal Social Protection (Phase III)".

Further details of the assignment are provided in the **Terms of Reference (ToR)** below.

Interested institutions are invited to submit a **technical proposal** (in English or Chinese) and a detailed **financial proposal** as outlined below:

1. **Technical proposal** in English or Chinese, of no more than four pages, including:
   1) A description of the institution's research capacity and relevant experience, together with the curriculum vitae (CVs) of the proposed lead researcher(s) and key team members;
   2) A brief summary of previous research and publications related to long-term care insurance (LTCI) and/or social protection, including social health protection;
   3) The proposed research approach, including the analytical framework, structure, methodology, and work plan for developing the brief.

2. A detailed **financial proposal**, including:
   1) The estimated number of working days for each team member;
   2) The proposed daily fee rate for each team member; and
   3) Any other relevant and justified costs associated with the assignment.

Submissions should be sent to vicente@ilo.org no later than **18 September 2026**.

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Terms of reference

Brief on "Good practices in Social Security in China: Establishing and strengthening long-term care insurance"

1. Background and motivation

China is undergoing a rapid demographic transition characterized by population ageing and a growing demand for long-term care services. By the end of 2025, more than 323 million people in China were aged 60 and above, accounting for 23 per cent of the total population, while 223.65 million people were aged 65 and above, representing 15.9 per cent of the population.[1] As life expectancy increases and family structures evolve, a growing number of older persons require long-term care due to physical, cognitive, or functional impairments. The number of older persons with functional impairments is projected to reach 77 million by 2030.[2] Ensuring access to affordable and quality long-term care has therefore become an increasingly important policy priority.

Long-term care insurance (LTCI) is an integral component of the social protection system and an important instrument for advancing universal social protection in ageing societies. By protecting individuals and households against care-related risks and expenditures, LTCI helps ensure access to essential care services while reducing the financial and care burden on families. As population ageing accelerates, strengthening LTCI has become increasingly important for building a more comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable social protection system.

To address these challenges, China has been progressively establishing an LTCI system as a new pillar of its social security framework. Since the launch of LTCI pilot programmes in selected cities in 2016, the scheme has expanded steadily with the objective of providing protection against care-related risks associated with disability and loss of autonomy. In March 2026, the State Council issued guidelines setting out a roadmap for nationwide implementation of LTCI by 2028.[3] The guidelines envisage a financing mechanism combining contributions from employers and individuals, government support, and other social resources, while progressively expanding coverage and strengthening benefit provision.

Alongside efforts to expand coverage, significant progress has been made in strengthening the quality and professionalism of long-term care services. LTCI funds are primarily used to finance basic care services provided by qualified institutions and caregivers. During the pilot phase, authorities have developed standardized disability assessment mechanisms, promoted the integration of medical and care services, established service standards, and expanded the long-term care workforce. These reforms have contributed to the growth of care providers and the emergence of a more professional system of assessment and service delivery.

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[1] https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202607/1367295.shtml
[2] https://en.people.cn/n3/2026/0405/c90000-20443543.html
[3] https://www.mee.gov.cn/zcwj/zyygwj/202603/t20260327_1147747.shtml

China's experience in developing LTCI offers valuable lessons for countries seeking to strengthen social protection systems in the context of rapid population ageing. The establishment and expansion of LTCI not only address growing long-term care needs but also contribute to extending universal social protection by ensuring that older persons and persons with care needs can access essential long-term care services. At the same time, important challenges remain with regard to expanding coverage, ensuring financial sustainability, improving service quality, strengthening the care workforce, and enhancing coordination with other social protection and health-care programmes. Documenting the achievements, innovations, challenges, and lessons emerging from the pilot phase and the transition towards nationwide implementation is therefore both timely and important.

In May 2026, the International Labour Organization (ILO), International Social Security Association (ISSA) and the National Healthcare Security Administration of China (NHSA) jointly organized a training programme on long-term care administration in Beijing[4] under the EU-funded project *Improving China's Institutional Capacity towards Universal Social Protection (Phase III)*. The training brought together officials from NHSA, relevant government authorities, and pilot regions to exchange experiences and discuss recent policy developments and implementation practices. Building on this collaboration, the ILO and NHSA have agreed to develop a brief documenting good practices in the establishment and strengthening of China's LTCI system, with a view to analysing key policy approaches, implementation experiences, achievements, remaining challenges, and future prospects.

2. Objective

The objective of this assignment is to **develop a brief on good practices in the establishment and strengthening of China's LTCI system**. The brief will document and analyse key policy reforms, institutional arrangements, and implementation experiences at national and local levels, with particular attention to coverage, benefit design and adequacy, financing, governance, and service delivery.

The brief will highlight achievements, lessons learned, and remaining challenges, and assess how LTCI contributes to addressing long-term care needs and advancing universal social protection. It is intended to support regional and global knowledge-sharing and mutual learning on effective approaches to the design and implementation of LTCI systems.

3. Contents

The brief should cover the following aspects:

- **The rationale for and development of LTCI in China**, including its role within the social protection system, its contribution to advancing universal social protection, and the policy objectives underpinning its establishment in the context of rapid population ageing and rising long-term care needs.

[4] https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/china-strengthens-capacity-long-term-care-administration-through-joint

- **The evolution of China's LTCI system**, including the policy and institutional framework, major reform milestones, and the transition from pilot programmes to nationwide implementation.
- **Good practices and key reform measures** in the design and implementation of LTCI, drawing on national policies and selected local experiences. Particular attention should be paid to:
  - expanding effective coverage and improving equitable access;
  - benefit design and adequacy;
  - financing mechanisms and financial sustainability;
  - disability assessment and eligibility determination;
  - governance and administrative arrangements;
  - service delivery models, including the integration of health and care services;
  - development of the long-term care workforce and quality assurance mechanisms.
- **Achievements and lessons learned** from the pilot phase and the ongoing expansion of LTCI, including innovations that may be relevant to other countries seeking to strengthen long-term care protection.
- **Remaining challenges and policy issues**, including those related to coverage gaps, financing sustainability, benefit adequacy, service quality, workforce capacity, regional disparities, and coordination with other social protection and health-care programmes.
- **Policy considerations and future directions** for strengthening the LTCI system and supporting its contribution to a more comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable social protection system in an ageing society.

4. Research methods

The research should be conducted through a combination of policy review, selected case studies, and stakeholder consultations.

- **Policy review**

  Review relevant national and local policy documents, official statistics, research literature, and other reference materials to analyse the development of China's LTCI system, including its policy framework, coverage, benefits, financing arrangements, governance, and service delivery mechanisms.

- **Case studies**

  Undertake targeted research on a limited number of representative LTCI pilot and implementing regions to identify good practices, implementation experiences, achievements, challenges, and lessons learned in establishing and strengthening LTCI.

- **Stakeholder consultations**

  Conduct consultations with relevant government officials, researchers, and other experts to validate findings and gather perspectives on key achievements, remaining challenges, and future directions for LTCI development.

5. Deliverables and timeframe

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The selected institution shall prepare a brief **in Chinese** on *Good Practices in Social Security in China: Establishing and Strengthening Long-term Care Insurance*. The brief is expected to be approximately 10 pages in length, including tables, figures, and illustrations, but excluding references.

The final brief shall be submitted to the ILO no later than **31 December 2026**. The ILO will be responsible for translating the brief into English and will support its publication and dissemination.

Proposed timeline:

- Outline and proposed structure: within two weeks of contract signature;
- First draft: by 30 November 2026;
- Final draft (incorporating comments from the ILO and NHSA): by 31 December 2026.

6. Qualifications of the research institution

The selected institution should demonstrate:

- Proven expertise in social protection, social security, health financing, long-term care, ageing, or related fields;
- Strong knowledge of China's social security and health-care systems, LTCI policies and reforms;
- Demonstrated experience in policy research and analytical writing, including the preparation of policy briefs, research reports, or similar publications;
- Capacity to conduct policy analysis, stakeholder consultations, and field research where necessary;
- Excellent written communication skills in Chinese; and
- Experience working with international organizations, government agencies, or research institutions would be an asset.
- Institutional filiation with Chinese governmental structures in charge of health protection and/or social security would be considered.

7. Reporting and coordination arrangements

The selected institution, to be defined jointly by ILO and NHSA since the final intended outcome is a joint publication, will work closely with the ILO-Beijing social protection team and relevant counterparts of NHSA.

The institution will:

- Regularly update the ILO on progress made under the assignment;
- Submit draft outputs for review and comments;
- Participate in meetings and consultations organized by the ILO and/or NHSA as required; and
- Revise the draft brief based on feedback received from the ILO and NHSA.

The ILO will provide overall technical guidance and quality assurance for the assignment.