

"Those with lower birth rates to get rich fast"

The Chinese authorities intend to put an end to the currently inconsistent implementation of their birth control policies throughout the PRC's rural areas, including Tibetan regions, until 2010. The policy move intends to break up the perceived *"vicious circle"* between poverty and the *"excessive growth of population in rural areas"*, and *"speed up the improvement of economic conditions"*. A core aspect of the move, which has potentially far-reaching consequences, is the replacement of blanket subsidies for the poor by a system of awards and positive discrimination for those who practise family planning and comply to state-assigned birth quotas. Further measures include more accurate monitoring of policy implementation and financial incentives for provincial authorities to effectively implement birth quotas.

An interview in the Beijing Jingji Ribao (18 Oct 2006) with Zhang Weiqing, director of the State Population and Family Planning Commission, clarifies that the system of encouraging and awarding family planning in rural areas, labelled *"Those With Lower Birth Rates to Get Rich Fast"* (Chin: shao sheng kuai fu) supplements the established system to 'Penalise More Births', but does not replace it. Both systems are simultaneously to *"more effectively control"* population growth in rural areas.

Zhang states that the trial implementation of the new policy started in 2002, in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. It was declared successful by the PRC leadership following a survey by the Ministry of Finance and the State Population and Family Planning Commission the following year. In 2004, the trial implementation of the system was extended to Qinghai, which incorporates most of the region traditionally known to Tibetans as Amdo, as well as to Yunnan and Sichuan, which incorporates most of the region traditionally known to Tibetans as Khams, as well as to other provinces and cities of the PRC. In 2005, the trial implementation of the system was further expanded to a larger part of the country, including 12 counties in the Tibet Autonomous Region. A new phase towards full implementation started in 2006 with further extension to Inner Mongolia, Hainan, Gansu, and Xinjiang and *"all places where people are allowed to have three children as approved by (...) relevant stipulations in minority nationality areas"*.

Zhang admits *"some difficulties and problems"* in the implementation of birth control policies, which he attributes to a *"lack of adequate propaganda and education"*, but also to the fact that policies are not adequately implemented. These difficulties will be now addressed by an increased effort to publicise the policies and to streamline the regulation over operational procedures. In particular, responsibilities for assessing who qualifies for the award, for the management and correct and timely distribution of funds, will now be spread across different parties. This indicates that, in the past, funds allocated for family planning were often misused. The further task of documenting records is also to become more accurate, notably by establishing *"dynamic and personal files on farmers"*.

Zhang underlines that the policy drive will also be *"favourable to improving public finance"* by replacing subsidies, which are often unpopular in the more affluent regions of the PRC. Provinces are to provide a percentage of the funds needed for the award and assistance system, which coerces them into taking an interest in their effectiveness. The extent to which provinces have to financially participate depends on their grade of poverty. Thus, the central finance participation in Shandong and Fujian is only 20%, while it is 50% in the central region, and 80% in the Western region.

© 2008 TibetInfoNet (Reg.Nr. BN8490, Germany). All rights reserved.

TibetInfoNet is an independent information service that provides news and analysis of the current political, economic, social, environmental and human rights situation in Tibet.

Website: www.tibetinfonet.net
Phone: +44 (0) 20 300 206 33
Fax: +49 (0) 2238 9494466
Email: tin@tibetinfonet.net