

# Disease-led poverty 'hardest nut to crack'

Addressing poverty caused by illness is the most difficult task in China's poverty alleviation campaign with about 40 percent of the country's rural poor in that situation, said a senior official on Monday.

The central government subsidy for medical aid reached 15.5 billion yuan (2.26 billion U.S. dollars) in 2016, up 10 percent year on year, to address this problem, said Liu Xitang, director of the social assistance bureau under the Ministry of Civil Affairs, at a press conference.

Financial aid allocated by provincial governments also shot up by 31 percent in 2016, Liu said.

In addition, the central government launched a poverty alleviation project through health promotion in 2016, pledging universal access to basic medical and health services by 2020.

Liu said the Ministry of Civil Affairs would improve its medical aid system to offer more help and ensure "the last line of defense" in medical security for the poor.