

**BASIC EDUCATION** 



# INTRODUCTION

Unequal educational opportunities lead to inequality early in life for children. Since Oxfam Hong Kong (OHK) began its poverty alleviation and development work in mainland China in 1987, its Basic Education Programme has been a major part of its work. The Basic Education Programme's geographic focus now includes Guizhou, Gansu, Yunnan provinces and Beijing.

Equality and quality are at the heart of OHK's Basic Education Programme. Through pilot projects, capacity building, policy research and advocacy, we strive to promote equal access to quality compulsory basic education for vulnerable groups in the western region.

# 1. BASIC EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

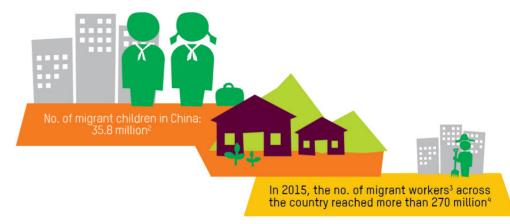
#### A NEW PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT FOR BASIC EDUCATION IN RURAL CHINA

With the implementation of national education reform policies and universal access to nine years of compulsory education, the teaching environment and facilities in most regions have greatly improved. The goal of equal access to education for our target groups has generally been achieved.

The current goal of education in rural areas has changed from 'access to education' to 'access to a quality education'.

The major aim of education in rural areas in the future is to enhance education quality and equality.

#### DIFFICULTIES MIGRANT CHILDREN¹ FACE



- Poor parenting skills: Many studies have revealed that most migrant workers lack good parenting and communication skills, and fail to understand their children's psychological status, which can lead to emotional problems and poorer academic performance.
- Few educational choices and poor teaching quality: The dual household registration system of urban and rural areas hinders migrant workers' children from enrolling in public schools in various ways. Some children are not able to attend public schools and can only enrol in poor quality private schools.
- Difficulty in integrating into the cities: The differences between urban and rural dwellers in terms
  of their living environment, habits and education level bring great psychological pressure to
  migrant children. The discrimination and prejudice they face make it difficult for them to integrate
  into the urban community.

Migrant children are those under the age of 18 who have moved to areas outside of their household registration together with their working parents for more than six months.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Source: All-China Women's Federation, 2013

Migrant workers are labourers whose households are still registered in rural areas, and have been engaged in non-agricultural jobs for six months or more either in or outside of the towns where their households are registered.

<sup>4</sup> Source: National Bureau of Statistics

## DIFFICULTIES LEFT-BEHIND CHILDREN<sup>5</sup> FACE



- Estranged relationships: Left-behind children are often separated from their parents for extended periods of time, leading to a lack in communication. This often results in emotional and behavioural problems in these children.
- Lack of parenting at home: Left-behind children are usually taken care of by their grandparents and/or a guardian. These carers might find it difficult to fulfil the parenting role due to strenuous farm work or limited capacity.
- Lack of an institutional system that safeguards left-behind children: The
  household registration system makes it very difficult for children to obtain
  schooling in the cities, but an institutional system that supports
  left-behind children does not exist. These children are especially vulnerable
  but do not receive adequate and effective policy attention. Despite the
  policy advocacy efforts from and theoretical solutions put forth by
  academics, problems related to these children's survival and development
  have yet to be solved.
- Lack of parents' involvement in school education: Without the cooperation
  of and support from their parents, school authorities find it difficult to
  effectively help left-behind children with special needs or to take
  preventive measures before problems arise.
- The problems faced by these children are persistent, complex and require urgent attention. Schools, families and communities need to come together in order to tackle these issues.
- 5 Left-behind children refer to children whose parent(s) has/have moved from the villages where their households are registered and thus do not live with their parents.
- Source: All-China Women's Federation 2013

#### IMPACT OF THE SCHOOL MAPPING RESTRUCTURE POLICY

The school mapping restructure policy was introduced to pool schools' resources together to run central boarding schools. As a result, over half of all village schools in the country closed down. However, this triggered negative impacts. It is especially so for ethnic minority children in remote mountainous areas; for instance, they are more prone to delayed enrolment in school and are more physically burdened because of the long commute to school.

#### Problems faced by small-scale rural schools

- Although the State Council issued a policy in 2012 to restore small-scale schools to an appropriate extent, no operational measures were proposed.
   Research is thus needed to understand how restoration can be done, restoration standards, and the direction of how to develop these schools, etc.
- The hardware infrastructure of these schools have been improving but their software are still not up to par. For instance, there is a high turnover rate among teachers. Also, many teachers are still having outdated teaching philosophies and skills.



# 2. THEORY OF CHANGE (APRIL 2014 - MARCH 2019)

## FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC GOALS

Foster positive development of small-scale schools: and urae the aovernment to issue policies and measures facilitating the development of small-scale school: so as to protect the rights of disadvantaged children in remote areas in attending school nearby and enjoy a quality education.

Explore effective education model and 'caring system' for left-behind children in remote mountainous areas in the western region. To advocate for government resources to safequard the safety and health of the children.

Advocate for local government departments' measures to address education problems faced by migrant children. Protect and enhance education equality and quality for them.

#### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- \*The general public and the government increasingly recognise the importance of small-scale schools.
- \*Policies supporting the development of small-scale schools issued at various levels of
- \*Improved well-being of left-behind children studying in pilot
- \*Strengthened and stable interaction among schools, communities and parents in target
- \*Increased public and government attention towards migrant
- \*Enhanced teaching and service quality among Oxfam partners in migrant

- \*The number of pilot small-scale schools
- \*Government partners' capacities in supportina small-scale schools enhanced and allocate more resource to small-scale schools
- \*Project innovation and experience
- \*The government started purchasing services provided by some of our partners.
- \* Education policies for left-behind children issued and
- \*Experience of the community service model for migrant children consolidated and promoted.
- \* More government resources allocated towards purchased services from social organisations for migrant children.

## **STRATEGIES**

Undertake pilot projects to test out more balanced development model for small-scale schoolsimproving teaching and learning environment, developing indigenous curriculum, teachers' capacity building, voluntary teaching, innovating teaching model, etc.

Conduct research on education model and caring system for left-behind children through innovative approaches.

Provide community services to promote urban-rural integration and enhance quality of teaching.

Development of partners through:

- \*Capacity building on development concepts and project management
- \*Establishing regional learning networks and platforms

Integrate advocacy with community projects through:

- \*Pilot projects, experience consolidation and promotion
- \*Outcome/Impact evaluation and case studies
- \*Policy research and advocacy
- \*Salons, documentaries, publications, etc.

# 3. MILESTONES OF OHK'S BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME



Collaborated with
the 21st Century Education
Research Institute to organise
a salon entitled 'Structural
Adjustment on the Mapping of
Rural Schools: The Status
Quo, Problems and
Recommendations', which
stimulated discussion about
the School Mapping
Restructure Policy

Submitted
proposals on the
'National Medium and
Long-term Education
Reform and
Development Plan' to
various government
institutes

Supported the
Western Region Basic
Education Research and
Training Centre of Lanzhou
University to research
about the incorporation of
the Multi-grade Teaching
Model into the National
Teachers Training Scheme
in Gansu Province



The project
'Innovative Multi-grade
Teaching Model'
implemented by the United
Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural
Organisation (UNESCO) in
Gansu Province with OHK's
support won the UNESCO
Award for Educational
Innovation

OHK's partner the
Science, Education,
Culture and Public Health
Committee of the Political
Consultative Conference of
Changshun County in Guizhou
Province was awarded by the
local government for its
efforts to promote
an indigenous
curriculum

Supported Beijing
Brooks Education Centre
and the Education Bureau of
A Ba Prefecture in Sichuan
Province to convene a
national seminar, urging for
the incorporation of an
indigenous curriculum into
the national curriculum for
primary and secondary
schools



Supported a partner to conduct research on the School Mapping Restructure Policy for the first time

Set up
Guiyang Office
and launched
the Basic
Education
Programme

Released the documentary 'The Cal of Miao Mountain', which talks about education in the western region and was broadcast by China Central

The 'China's
Education Blue Book' –
published by the 21st
Century Education
Research Institute with
OHK's support – was
ranked third among China's
Paper Series and was
translated into English
in the Netherlands

Partnered
with Beijing
Western Sunshine
Rural Development
Foundation to support
left-behind children
through volunteer
tutors who live at
school

Two schools that piloted an indigenous curriculum in Guizhou Province, Ronglei Primary School and Baiya Primary School, won a national award on rural education; they were selected by the provincial education department as model schools

Partnered with
Beijing Normal University's
Family and Child Research
Centre of the School of
Social Development and
Public Policy to organise
publicity and advocacy
activities for Vulnerable
Children's Day



# 4. MAJOR OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

2016 2012 Through the endeavours of OHK Through the endeavours of OHK and and other actors, the State Council issued a policy document entitled 'Opinions other actors, the State Council issued a policy document entitled 'Opinions on Regulating Public School on Strengthening Caring and Protection Work for Mapping Restructure in Rural Areas', which suspended **MAJOR** Left-behind Children in Rural Areas'. It is the first national the indiscriminating closing **OUTCOMES** down and merging of rural public schools. policy that promotes the **OF POLICY** well-being and education of left-behind **ADVOCACY** children. **EFFORTS** The Multi-grade Teaching Model was incorporated into the National Teachers Training Scheme by the Education Office of Gansu Province.

2012

Oxfam allocated US\$3.76 million to its Basic Education Programme between April 2014 and March 2016. The following are some key outputs and outcomes.

Programme expenditure	US\$3.76 million
Direct beneficiaries	187,809 (gross count)
School benefited	4,868
Volunteers	1,053 (gross count)
Seminars and salons	34
Publications and research	117
Media coverage	278
Awards	5
Policy proposals put forward	14
Networks and platforms	13

sic Education | 9

#### **GOOD PRACTICES**

#### Advocating the Suspension of the School Mapping Restructure Policy

In 2001, comprehensive research results showed that this education policy led to a surge in school dropout rates among children in the western mountainous areas.

In 2006, OHK partnered with the 21st Century Education Research Institute to organise salons to discuss with academics, the government and the public how to best cope with the problems arising from the policy, which garnered media attention. In the same year, the Ministry of Education issued a notice which spoke about the need to rethink the policy.

In 2009, we submitted proposals to the national government, pointing out that only by retaining and restoring the schools necessary in remote rural communities, allocating resources to enhance the quality of teaching in these schools, enabling school proximity, and prioritising the development of basic education in rural areas can we achieve balanced development and close the gap between the quality of education in urban and rural areas.

Through the endeavours of OHK and other actors, the State Council issued the 'Opinions on Regulating Public School Mapping Restructure in Rural Areas' in 2012 to suspend the indiscriminating closing down and merging of rural public schools.

#### Improving the Quality of Small-scale Schools Through the Indigenous Curriculum

Since 2008, OHK has cooperated with the local government of Changshun County in Guizhou Province to develop and promote indigenous curriculum, incorporate indigenous culture into the national basic education curriculum, and to promote adaptive liberal education. Through this partnership, a set of teaching materials, namely 'The Land We Love', was published. The indigenous curriculum has also been incorporated into the school curriculum of the County's 40 schools piloting such an initiative. Tunbao opera, lantern art, the Miao people's Lusheng dances, Buyi songs and dances, and the like were integrated into various communities' cultural activities. In 2015, 'The Land We Love' was awarded with the Second Prize for Scientific Research on Basic Education in Qiannan, Guizhou.

The indigenous curriculum has brought new opportunities to small-scale schools. Two schools that piloted the indigenous curriculum, Ronglei Primary School and Baiya Primary School, were included in a project to promote indigenous culture by the provincial government and were granted US\$ 37,800 to carry out their work. Baiya Primary School, which has only a little over 50 students, managed to survive the Rural School Mapping Restructure because of the recognition it received for its indigenous curriculum.



#### School-based Volunteer Tutors Who Provide Left-behind Children with Support

Since 2013, OHK has partnered with Beijing Western Sunshine Rural Development Foundation to send volunteer tutors to rural boarding schools in five districts in Kang County in Gansu Province. These volunteer tutors are given training in the area of social work, and provide left-behind children, especially girls, with support. The Foundation also launched various initiatives. For instance, left-behind children can now write letters to the volunteer tutors in their schools, donations-in-kind for left-behind children. The tutors also offers counselling services and various cultural and sports activities to meet the students' needs and realise their potential. Moreover, they arrange home visits in the communities to encourage the schools and communities to work more closely together.

Through advocacy activities and efforts to share their experience, the Foundation was able to increase recognition for the volunteer tutors scheme among education authorities and various

sectors of the society. In Kang County, an educational model that incorporates care from schools, families and the community for left-behind children has been preliminarily established. Through this, left-behind children's self-esteem and ability to participate in social affairs have been increased. Moreover, children now enjoy their four basic rights: the right to survival, the right to development, the right to protection and the right to participation.



## Providing Equal Education Opportunities for Migrant Children



Since 2006, OHK has supported the Lanzhou Chongde Cultural Services Centre's non-profit kindergarten. It mainly helps low-income families that are unable to send their children to public kindergartens due to stringent admission requirements or to private kindergartens because of expensive tuition fees. Through this initiative, the Centre pioneered a model for community organisations to provide non-profit pre-school education in Lanzhou.

Up to now, the Centre has helped over 1,000 migrant children gain access to formal pre-school education. It has also nurtured a group of teachers and parents, thereby increasing support for the Centre's services. With its growing influence and social recognition, the Centre has also set up a voluntary service platform. Furthermore, the model of "NGO setting up non-profit kindergarten" has been promoted and replicated this initiative in neighbouring areas.

# 5. ABOUT OHK'S PARTNERS (APRIL 2014 – MARCH 2016)

Strategic Goals	Number of partners (including NGOs, local government departments, academic institutions, training and research institutes, companies, NGO networks and campaign coalitions, and the media)
Foster positive development of small-scale schools; and urge the government to issue policies and measures facilitating the development of small-scale school; so as to protect the rights of disadvantaged children in remote areas in attending school nearby and enjoy a quality education.	40
Explore effective education model and 'caring system' for left-behind children in remote mountainous areas in the western region.  Advocate for government resources to safeguard the safety and health of the children.	14
Advocate for local government departments' measures to address education problems faced by migrant children.  Protect and enhance education equality and quality for them.	13

Total number of partners: 67

# **CONTACT US**

## HONG KONG HEADQUARTERS

17/F, China United Centre, 28 Marble Road, North Point, Hong Kong Tel: (852) 2520 2525 Fax: (852) 2527 6307

Email: info@oxfam.org.hk Website: www.oxfam.org.hk

## MAINLAND CHINA

#### OXFAM HONG KONG BEIJING OFFICE - RURAL AND EDUCATION TEAM

Room 1104, Unit 1, Block D, Yinxing Xiaogu,

No. 104 Beijing Road, Yunyan District, Guiyang, Guizhou Province, China 550001

Tel: (86-851) 8583 2408 Fax: (86-851) 8583 2407 Email: gzo@oxfam.org.hk

#### OXFAM HONG KONG GANSU OFFICE

Room F, 26/F Huafu Swiss Palace, No 213 Jinchang South Road, Chengguan District, Lanzhou, Gansu Province, China 730030

Tel: (86-931) 886 8655 Fax: (86-931) 886 8257 Email: gso@oxfam.org.hk

