



**BASIC EDUCATION**



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樂施會  
**OXFAM**  
Hong Kong

無窮世界  
World  
Without  
Poverty

## 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 CHILDREN<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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>2</sup> Source: All-China Women's Federation, 2013

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

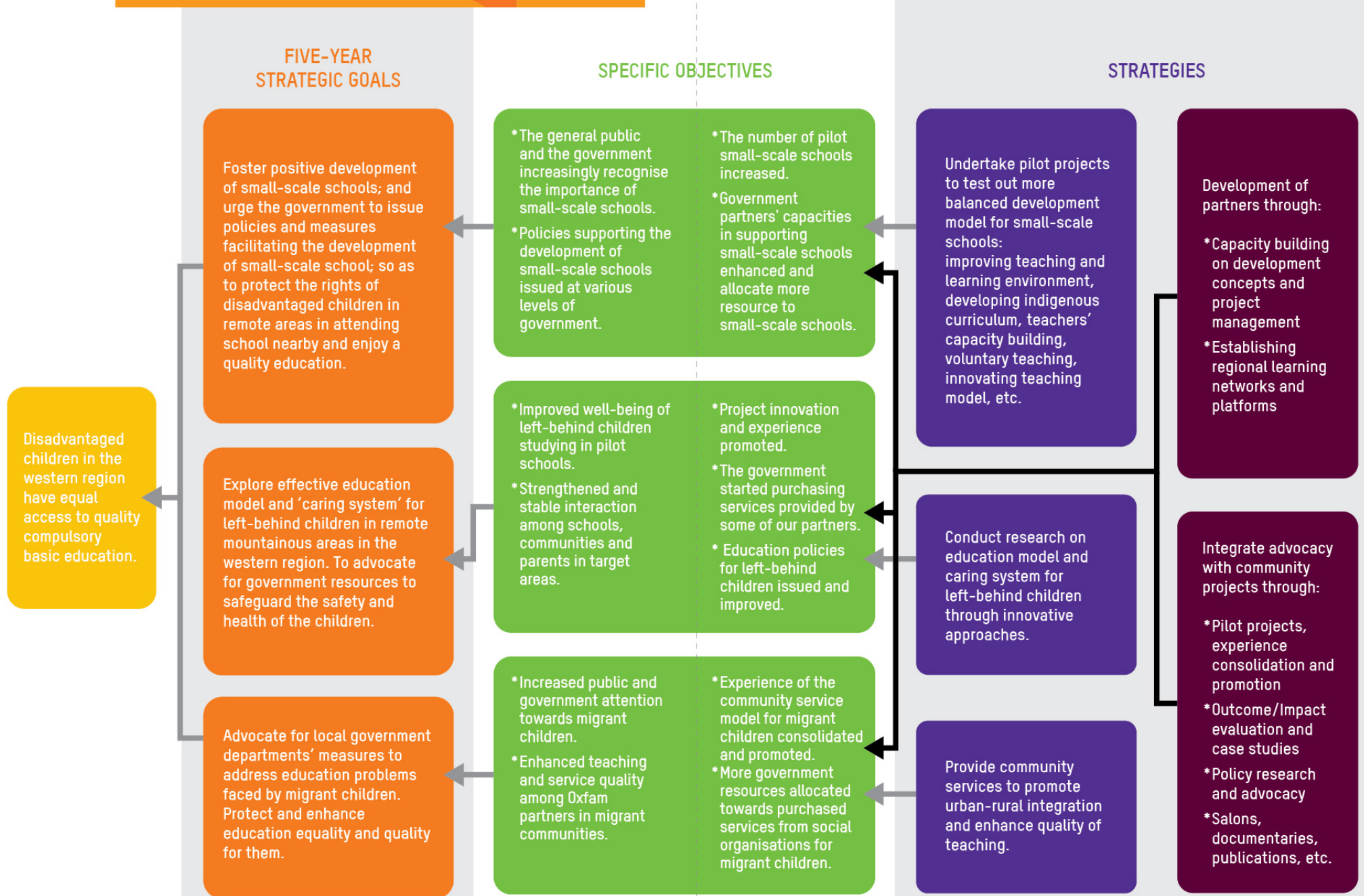
### Problems faced by small-scale rural schools

- 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.



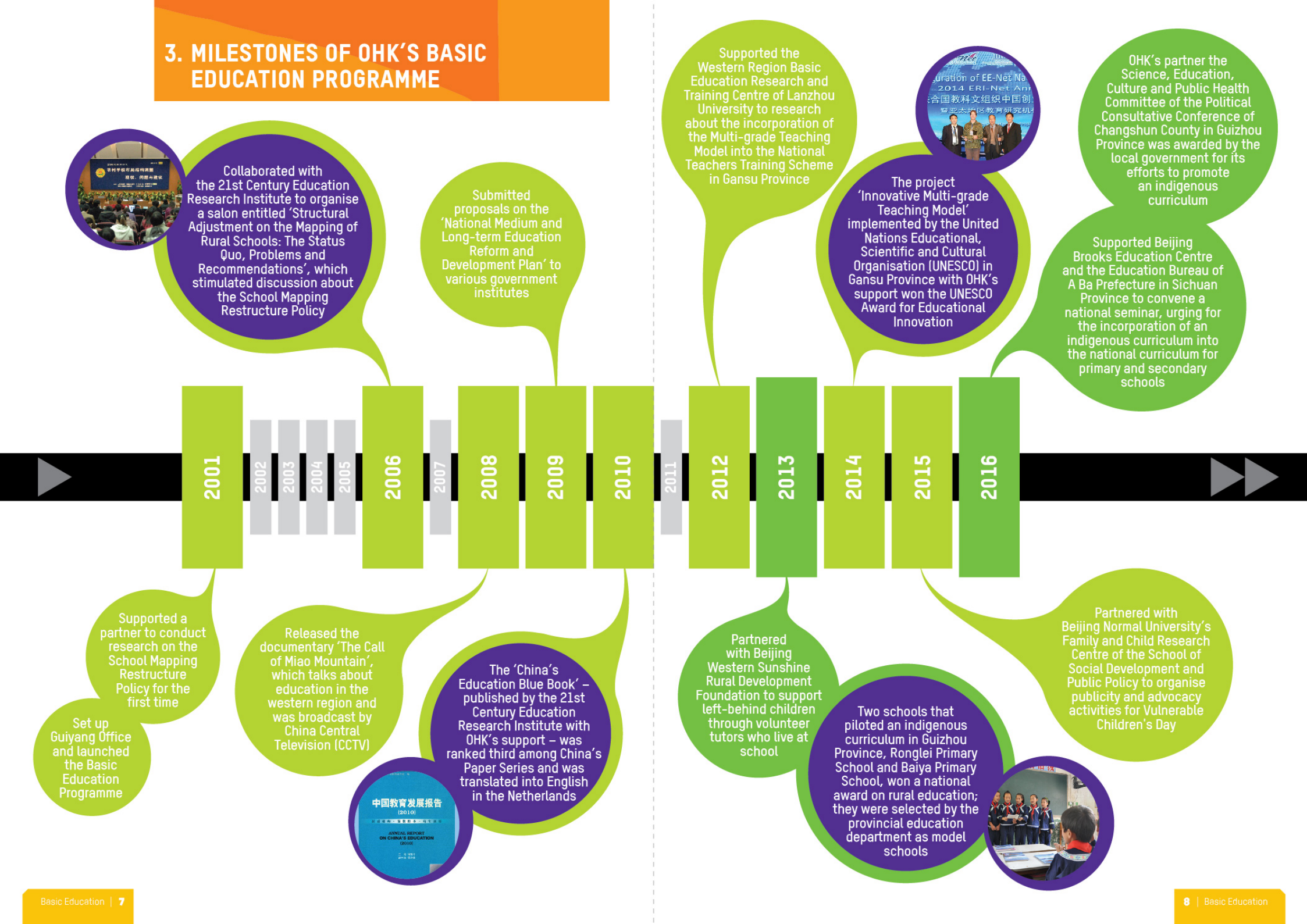
Mr. Gong Baojia is the only teacher in a rural school

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

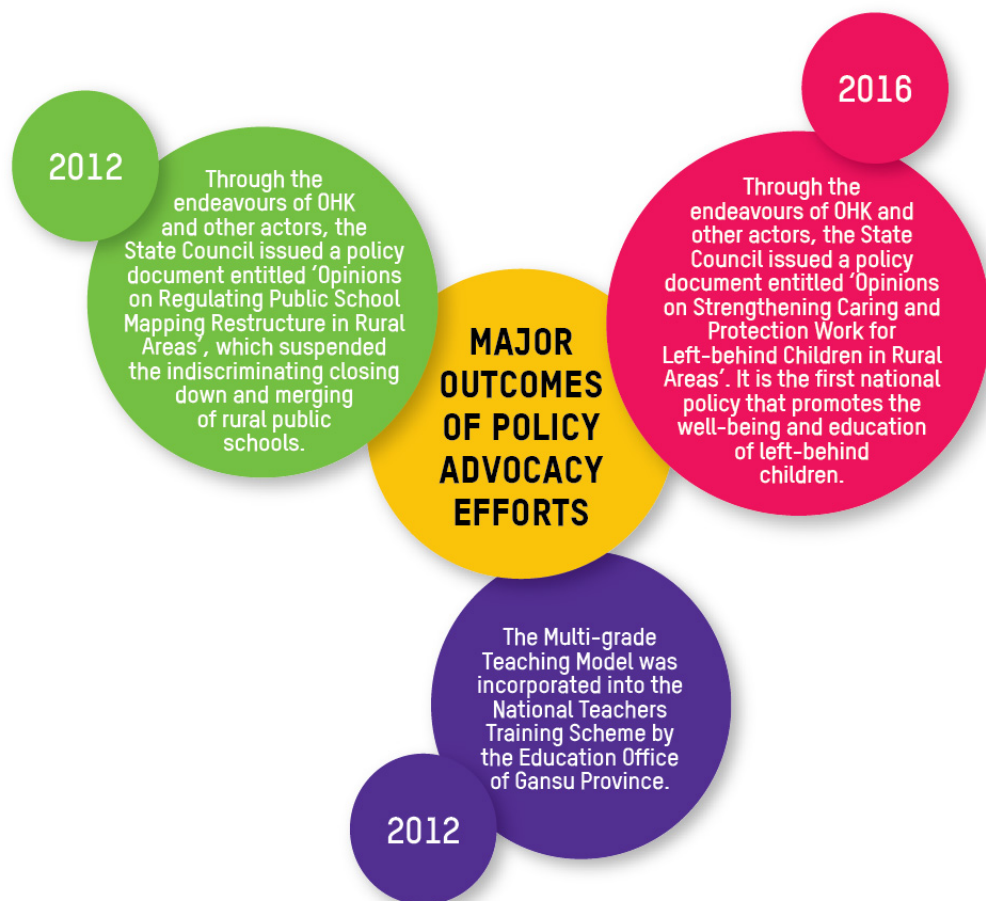




### 3. MILESTONES OF OHK'S BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME



## 4. MAJOR OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES



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



## 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)
<p>Foster positive development of small-scale schools;</p> <p>and urge the government to issue policies and measures facilitating the development of small-scale school;</p> <p>so as to protect the rights of disadvantaged children in remote areas in attending school nearby and enjoy a quality education.</p>	40
<p>Explore effective education model and 'caring system' for left-behind children in remote mountainous areas in the western region.</p> <p>Advocate for government resources to safeguard the safety and health of the children.</p>	14
<p>Advocate for local government departments' measures to address education problems faced by migrant children.</p> <p>Protect and enhance education equality and quality for them.</p>	13

Total number of partners: 67

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