

Project Name China-Fourth Basic Education Project

Region East Asia and Pacific

Sector Education

Project ID CNPA36952

Borrower People's Republic of China

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Country/Sector Background

1. Compared with other developing countries, China's success in providing a comprehensive schooling system to its population has been remarkable. Enrolment rates in the first nine years of schooling are higher than most other lower income countries, with more than 98.4% of the 6 - 11 age cohort enrolled in primary school and over 78.4% of the 12 - 15 age cohort in lower secondary school.

2. These impressive summary statistics, however, conceal the disparity in education attainment among China's 1.2 billion inhabitants. While the goal of nine-year compulsory education is already achieved in most large cities and coastal area, many poor and remote areas have not even reached universal primary education. The education system in these areas suffer from: insufficient or dilapidated classrooms and schools; inadequately trained teachers; inadequate teaching materials; higher than average drop-out and repetition rates; unsatisfactory management; and difficult access.

3. Many of the poor and remote areas in China are inhabited by minority nationalities. Mainly due to economic, geographic, and cultural reasons, the economic and education levels in many minority areas are lower than the national average. For example, of the 589 minority nationalities counties, 143 are State-supported poor counties (1992 data). The average rural annual income per capita in these counties is below Y300 compared to the national average of Y 784. According to a sample survey of minority counties carried by the State Education Commission (SEdC), the gross enrolment rate of school age minority children is about twenty percentage points lower than the national mean, with the female enrolment rate being particularly lower. In addition to the characteristics of education in poor areas noted in para. 2, education of minority nationalities suffers from shortage in

teaching materials and adequately trained teachers. Bilingual education, regarded as instrumental in promoting minority nationalities to advance to upper and post-secondary education, also suffers from various shortcomings: a shortage of qualified teachers; unsatisfactory instructional materials and insufficient attention and research in the pedagogical, linguistic, psychological and curriculum aspects of bilingual education.

Project Objectives

4. The proposed project would respond to three fundamental objectives of: increased access/equity in primary and lower secondary education in poor and minority areas to achieve universal primary education and the expansion of junior secondary education, with particular attention to girls and minority nationalities; enhanced quality in primary and junior secondary schooling; and improved efficiency in the delivery of education through improving educational management at national, provincial, county and project institutional levels.

Project Description

5. The project will cover approximately 90 poor counties in the six provinces of Guizhou, Hainan, Heilongjiang, Hunan, Shanxi, Yunnan. Each participating province has been closely involved in the project preparation and has been aided in these efforts by government-administered PHRD Japan grant funds. The main criteria used in the selection of the provinces have been number of poor counties (national and provincial) in the province, level of teacher qualification, percentage of minority population, primary school completion rate, and girl's enrolment. The main criteria used in the selection of the counties was inclusion on the national or provincial list of poor counties; population and minority concentration; poverty indicators such as rural income per capita; public expenditure for education as a percentage of provincial expenditure and books per pupil at primary level; and teaching and management needs such as percentages of repetition, primary enrolment, and girls enrolment, transition rate from primary to secondary and percentage of qualified teachers.

6. The population in these 90 poor counties is approximately 31.0 million of which 7.3 million are members of minority nationalities. The counties have about 4.9 million students enrolled in primary and junior secondary schools, although not all of these schools will receive project assistance.

7. The project objectives would be achieved by improving educational inputs, improving management of schools and educational systems and facilitating innovative actions in the educational system. The project would comprise the following components.

8. Institutional Component. This component will include facilities upgrading, instructional equipment, and staff upgrading. Training under this component relates directly to training classroom teachers, school principals, trainers and local education managers and administrators to provide managerial and instructional leadership in

institutions at the provincial, county and village levels.

9. Facilities Upgrading. The project will finance civil works including renovation, rehabilitation, and some necessary new construction of primary and junior secondary schools. The project, as part of the objective of improving access to schooling, will increase the number of school places, and improve teaching facilities at teaching points, at complete and incomplete primary schools and junior secondary schools in poor and minority areas. Implementation of civil works will be phased over five years and will be integrated with that of such essentially related activities as the procurement of instructional equipment, books, furniture, and training of managers, principals and teachers.

10. Instructional Equipment, Furniture, and Books. The project will upgrade the instructional equipment in those schools with incomplete sets of equipment. The provision of increased numbers of library books, textbooks and supplementary materials, and more and better equipment will improve quality through better learning achievements at both primary and junior secondary levels and completion of a higher proportion of required practical experiments in the junior secondary science syllabus. Central primary schools may become the bases for proposed Teacher Support Networks (TSNs). These Networks will aim, through continuous post-training support of teachers, to achieve better quality classroom teaching and more cost-effective use of books and equipment in order to empower professionally isolated teachers in poor rural and minority areas. A textbook lending scheme may be instituted in selected counties on a trial basis. If instituted, its effectiveness will be reviewed at mid-term, and recommended action will be taken to extend, modify or terminate the scheme.

11. Staff Upgrading. An extensive program of staff upgrading, largely through in-country training, will be provided under the project. It will be carried out through short-term inservice courses which will develop appropriate models, networks and structures to reach out to the poorest and most remote schools. The emphasis will be on program content, focusing on practical skills, knowledge and expertise needed by teachers, principals and administrators. A limited number of study tours will be provided in such areas as girls' education, multigrade teaching and school management. Priority locations for study tours will be in-country settings where good practice has been demonstrated. Some international visits may be considered if better examples exist abroad. In all cases, specific Terms of Reference are to be reviewed and agreed between SEdC and IDA.

12. Five groups of staff will be upgraded: (a) trainers; (b) elementary and junior secondary teachers; (c) school principals; (d) technicians and librarians at schools and colleges; and (e) administrators at local, provincial and national levels. A pilot teacher training activity at the primary level will be carried out in two counties participating in a UNDP project in Yunnan province. This will be led by UNDP, Beijing, in collaboration with SEdC and IDA. If found to be effective, decisions could be taken at mid-term to expand the activity to other counties and provinces. At the junior secondary level, the project will support an innovative teacher training program

in science teaching, based on a training of trainers mechanism which is modeled on a similar element in the Bank-supported Effective Teaching Services Project (Cr. 2471-CHA).

13. Management Improvement Component. This component will develop management capabilities at the institutional, county, provincial and national levels through management training, the provision of equipment and specialist services to improve the overall efficiency in the management of education. Sub-components will include: (a) training in educational planning and management; (b) training in project management in order to develop implementation capacity, including skills in project monitoring and evaluation, at all levels; and (c) support for educational management information systems at the provincial and county levels through training and the provision of equipment.

14. The Central Component. The center (SEdC) will coordinate the project implementation tasks executed by the six provincial education commissions (PEdCs). Additionally the center will: (a) organize national level management training for provincial personnel; (b) organize national level training programs for teacher trainers; (c) organize study visits; (d) in collaboration with PEdCs, UNICEF (Beijing), and IDA, oversee and supervise dissemination activities related to best local and international practice in the education of girls and minorities; (e) collaborate with UNDP and IDA in the teacher training pilot activity in Yunnan; (f) in partnership with provinces, carry out a school-based study on innovative approaches to junior secondary science teaching; (g) institute and monitor Student Assistance Programs in project counties, based on the guidelines developed under the Third Basic Education Project; (g) and provide support to a Chinese Experts Panel which will oversee implementation and provide professional advice to provinces.

Project Cost and Financing

15. The total cost is estimated at about US\$140 million. The provincial and county governments are expected to provide US\$70 million and IDA is being requested to provide the balance, i.e. US\$70 million.

Project Preparation and Implementation

16. The Bank is assisting the Government in the preparation of the project. The Bank's involvement is in quality control, providing advice as needed, and final appraisal. This level of involvement is considered appropriate to ensure manageability of the project design and development process and, more importantly, to build the SEdC's capacity to carry out such processes, and to facilitate replication in non-project areas.

17. Since the bulk of project activities will take place in the provinces, the main preparation and implementation responsibilities will be assumed by the provinces, with SEdC -- which has extensive experience with IDA projects -- providing guidance on project preparation and implementation, coordinating certain TA activities,

and arranging for joint procurement where appropriate. At the provincial level, Foreign Investment and Loan Offices (FILOs) headed by the Vice Commissioners of the respective Provincial Education Commissions, and staffed with officials familiar with education planning and management, financial management and accounting, civil works and equipment will be formed. A similar structure will be repeated at the county level. The provincial FILOs will be responsible for overseeing the activities of the county FILOs and arranging for the necessary training.

18. At the central level the SEdC will organize three working groups:

(a) The Project Working Group comprises working level staff from the Finance, FILO, Minority Education, and Basic Education, Equipment and will be responsible for organizing all project preparatory activities;

(b) a Project Leading Group will be formed, headed by the SEdC Vice Minister in charge of World Bank projects and comprising the directors of departments represented in the first group, who will be responsible for providing guidance and coordination and resolving major implementation issues that may arise; (c) the Project Expert Consultative Group comprising 7 - 9 non-SEdC experts specializing in basic education, minority/bilingual education, teacher training, curriculum development, civil works, equipment and education management. It will advise and make suggestions on project implementation, and (d) once the credit is approved, responsibility for coordinating implementation at the center will be assumed by the Foreign Investment and Loan Office (FILO) and the SEdC's Finance Department. Directors of project implementation units from both Shanxi and Gansu provinces, both in the earlier Education Development in Poor Provinces (EDPP) project and Third Basic Education (BEIII) project, are members of the Project Expert Consultative Group so as to ensure continuous input into the development programs in the project-supported provinces as well as training of new project implementation staff.

Sustainability

19. The project will partially finance school-based activities at the village, township, county and provincial levels, which support the key national education policy of achieving universal nine-year education by the year 2000. The moderate level of IDA financing for the project (approximately 50% percent) and the annual provincial level of counterpart funding as a ratio of the 1994 provincial educational budgets (i.e., a modest 2 percent on average) increase both the chances for sustainability and affordability of the project activities. Provincial education budgets are set for 1997 and 1998 and are generally expected to go up after that period, which will decrease the percentage of counterpart funding (which has been budgeted at fixed annual levels during the project) as a part of the provincial budgets. Additionally, the source of provincial counterpart funding is balanced and sustainable - on average approximately 80% percent from the county, 10% percent from the province (half of which comes from an education surtax) and 10% percent from the national level. The poverty reduction focus of the

project is central to the Government's recently announced seven-year plan to eliminate absolute poverty by the year 2000, a plan that specifically aims at upgrading education and literacy in backward and poor areas. Built into the project are maintenance costs for schools, classrooms and equipment procured under the project, equipment procurement, technical assistance and training to develop an EMIS system. Project training of approximately 150,000 teachers and education managers builds and strengthens existing and new human resource capacity which will remain in place long after the end of the project.

Environmental Aspects

20. The project involves no environmental issues and therefore will be a Category C.

Benefits

21. The project is expected to benefit about five million children in six of China's poorer provinces. Better physical facilities will provide significantly expanded access to basic education among the poor, girls and children of minority nationalities. The participation of increased numbers of teachers, principals and education managers will strengthen the provision of educational services in poverty areas and increase their planning and management capacity. Equally, specific interventions have been designed to improve planning and management capacity at the central, provincial and county governments to prepare and implement similar comprehensive projects and to replicate them in other parts of the country. Better trained teaching staff, new science teaching approaches, continuous post-training support to teachers, and a focus on local curriculum content and materials will improve quality, thereby helping to provide the skills necessary for target groups to participate in subsequent levels of education, in the economic growth of local areas, in increased mobility of labor, and , in the long-term, in greater social cohesion.

Contact Point

22.

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Note: This is information on an evolving project. Certain components may not necessarily be included in the final project.

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