

# Using Distance Education and ICT to Improve Teacher Quality in Poor Areas of Western China

## The Challenge

The importance of teachers in determining the quality of education is emphasized and reflected in government policies and regulations in China. Raising the standards of teacher qualifications, and continuing professional development of teachers are the priorities in China's educational development strategies. It is especially true in the western China where poor rural teachers, particularly woman teachers and minority teacher find little means to improve themselves.

Ongoing professional development for teachers in western China faces two major challenges: funding constraints, and the need for more appropriate training to meet the needs of the most remote and under qualified teachers.

## The Response

This project aims at increasing educational equity and improving teachers' quality at the primary level in three western provinces of China through delivering high-quality, distance teacher training for 20,000 in-service teachers in poor rural communities within the nine selected counties of Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces. The project design and implementation will meet the particular learning needs of the target group of teachers including subgroups such as female teachers, *dai ke* teachers and ethnic/language minority teachers.

There are increasing demands for professional development from central government directives. Concurrently, there are new developments in the provision of ICT equipment and their applications for educational purposes. This project capitalizes on new opportunities to focus on teachers in the poorer rural areas and to strengthen capacity in distance education and ICT as a vehicle for professional development for such teachers. The project is therefore extending current government initiatives and strategies to reach teachers and communities not yet benefiting from these initiatives. By doing so, the project pilots innovative approaches in professional development for teachers in poor and remote communities.

## Achievements

- The quality of primary teachers is improved in terms of their professional knowledge and skills and the number of primary teachers with requisite qualifications is increased through piloting and implementing new models for teachers' professional development. So far, 45000 teachers have been trained under this project.
- A cadre of backbone teachers and school heads able to lead and support curriculum reform and professional development is developed. And the capacity of teacher trainers is strengthened, particularly in designing and using ICT and Distance Learning for teachers' education. Access to learning opportunities and materials is increased for all primary teachers in the project counties; and networks of professional development and resource centers at township level are established.
- Sustainability mechanisms of distance learning services for primary teacher education piloted involving innovative public-private partnership (PPP) and partnership with civil society organizations (COSs).
- Experiences and materials from the project are shared beyond the project and evidence based policy recommendations are produced and disseminated nationally.

## At A Glance

Start Date: 2002

End Date: 2007

Implementing Partners : CICETE

Project ID: 00012142

Website: [www.undp.org.cn](http://www.undp.org.cn)

UNDAF

Outcome 1 : Social and economic policies are developed and improved to be more scientifically based and human centered for sustainable and equitable growth

MDG

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

CPAP Output

Output 2.1 900 senior leaders trained/exposed to international best practices on sustainable and human centered development

Total Budget: US\$ 9,400,000

UNDP: US\$ 1,200,000

Government: US\$ 3,000,000

Private Sector: US\$ 5,200,000

Project locations: Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu

To contribute to this initiative, or to find out more about the programme, please visit our website or contact **Grace Xiaojun Wang, Program Manager** at (86-10) 85320751 or [xiaojun.wang@undp.org](mailto:xiaojun.wang@undp.org)

**UNDP** fosters human development to empower women and men to build better lives in China. As the UN's development network, UNDP draws on a world of experience to assist China in developing its own solutions to the country's development challenges. Through partnerships and innovation, UNDP works to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and an equitable Xiao Kang society by reducing poverty, strengthening the rule of law, promoting environmental sustainability, and fighting HIV/AIDS. [www.undp.org.cn](http://www.undp.org.cn)