

## Programme Area Summary

**Country:** China

### **Programme Area: Basic Education Programme Plan 2007-2012**

**What is the aim of the programme area?** To improve the quality of the education and opportunities for learning through basic education for disadvantaged girls and boys in selected areas of the poor and Western province.

**Why is VSO working in this particular programme area and region?** Since 1981 VSO has been working in China mainly through English Language Teaching at both in-service and pre-service levels. This work will continue until 2012. VSO has established a reputation for working with partners in education and it is this reputation along with the relationships which VSO has built up with the education authorities and other partners that is allowing VSO to develop its work in Basic Education.

This programme mainly focuses on the six years of primary education and three of junior education, which encompasses the nine-year compulsory education in China. However it is still possible to work at senior middle school level and pre-school level in some cases where specific needs are identified with strong rationale for VSO. The programme fits well with Dakar Conference 2000 'Education for All' goals, the Chinese Government's 11<sup>th</sup> five year plan and the implementation of the new national curriculum and with Millennium Development Goal 2.

The programme currently works with partners in Gansu, Shaanxi Province and Yunnan.

**Key beneficiaries and partners.** The beneficiaries include school age girls and boys, teachers, school managers, community members, community organizations, local teachers colleges, local teacher training schools and the local education bureaus.

The partners include the Provincial Education Bureau, Provincial Education Research Institute, Prefecture level education Bureau, Teaching and Research Office, Country-level Education Bureaus, local schools and local teacher training colleges.

### **Key objectives of the programme and the cross-cutting themes**

- To improve teaching and learning outcomes through strengthening teacher's professional development in selected schools to reach the most disadvantaged boys and girls.
- To improve school management systems that promote the interests of the most disadvantaged girls and boys, focusing on improving leadership at the school level and improving standards of school management
- To increase the level of community participation in providing education services as a way to overcome barriers preventing students from accessing, completing and enjoying schooling.

### **Current programme activities**

#### Focus of International Volunteer Placements

The education programme places expert international volunteers in training and advisory roles. These roles include school management advisors, education advisors or teacher trainers, child psychologists or children development advisors etc. Clusters of volunteers are placed at county and school level. Some are based in schools and some are line managed by the County Education Bureau. Other volunteers are placed at teachers' colleges, helping to improve pre-service teacher education practices, so their work is not limited to English Departments but

benefits the whole college. A smaller number of volunteers are placed strategically at prefecture and provincial level.

The programme uses a number of interesting approaches to capacity building, including;

- the exchange of in-service and pre-service teachers (the first to benefit from a return to college for skills development and the second to get classroom exposure); and
- the training of children centred teaching trainers to train and support other teachers in their country, prefecture or province.

**Workshops, training & conferences.** Education workshops and reviews are organised in addition to an annual volunteer conference to share learning and understanding.

**Partner exchange visits/study tours.** In-country exchanges and study visits are organized for education authorities, in order to expose them to different educational models. International LINKS tours expose partners to new and different ways of working.

**Small grants and/or equipment for partners.** Small grant schemes are set up to support partners with the purchasing of educational materials that otherwise could not be afforded.

**What makes VSO's work in this programme area special?** VSO China's programme in Basic Education builds extremely well on the work that VSO has been doing over the past 30 years in China. It is from these experiences that the Programme Office has been able to develop the partnerships which means volunteers can now work to achieve positive change in very disadvantaged areas, in what can sometimes be a demanding context. Curriculum reform in China provides opportunity for VSO international volunteers to share their student-centered educational concepts and skills with their Chinese counterparts. The use of local volunteers as interpreters and research assistants is highly innovative.