

# **Literacy, Poverty-reduction and Life Skills in China: Present Situation and Development**

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## **1. Rural Women Literacy Project**

### **1.1 Basic information**

Considering that female illiterates amount for 70% of the total number of illiterates in Gansu Province of China , Gansu Province Government started "Rural Women Literacy Project" in ten poor counties, which has rather adverse natural conditions, underdeveloped infrastructure and a larger population of the female illiterates. The project focused on integrating literacy education into mastering of agricultural techniques and protecting women's rights and interests. By the end of 2011, more than 100 000 illiterate women had become literate and mastered one or two applied techniques for production.

### **1.2 Innovative points of the project**

The project has the following innovative features:

- Women literacy is the responsibility of government at all levels, which provides financial support and mobilizes the participation of all sections concerned. The governments have integrated women literacy education into local economic and social development plans.
- Multi-media teaching materials based on written learning materials are adapted in teaching and learning process, which can be used in association with written texts to improve illiterates' comprehension and reading ability. They help them by enabling them to hear the words as they read them, and by providing immediate guidance on the pronunciation of

specific words.

- Women Illiterates participate in the whole process, including the design the activities, writing of learning materials and evaluation of results.
- To meet female's needs, besides reading, writing and calculating, the project pays special attention to sense of citizenship, health and hygiene, women's rights and interest, family education and home economics.
- The project sets up 100 community leaning centers in village level.

### **1.3 Challenges**

- Some of women illiterates have moved to urban areas, so it is difficult for the project to reach them.
- Lack of all-time female literacy teachers has some influences on teaching effects, especially teaching of contents designed for women in ethnic areas.
- The long-tern women literacy mechanism has not been established.

## **2. New trends and Innovations of Poverty Reduction**

### **2.1 Dew Program**

The development of human resources is an effective means of enhancing development capability. Since 2004, the Chinese central government has invested a total of three billion RMB Yuan in poverty reduction named the "Dew Program," which focuses on training labor force from poor rural families in technical skills and practical agricultural techniques so that they can find better-paying jobs. By the year 2010, more than four million people from poor rural families had received such training, and 80 percent of them found jobs outside agriculture. A sample survey revealed that workers who had received training earned 300-400 RMB Yuan per month more than those who hadn't. The training programs not only helped employment and salary growth in poor areas, they also provided chances for the workers to get access to new skills

and new concepts, thus broadening their horizons and enhance their confidence.

## **2.2 Application of ICT for Poverty Reduction through CLCs**

With the rapid development of Information and communication technology (ICT), Community Learning Centers in China have carried out activities by means of broadcast, television, mobile telephone, video, computer and Internet. Tianzhu Community Learning Center has developed a new training mode in electronic environment. With the cooperation of Tianzhu Township Cable Television Station, which made 11 programs on agricultural technology, the CLC used cable television network to train farmers. The CLC also established "learning network for farmers" and used internet to collect and distribute information. It opened short-message platform and has provided farmers with phonetic consulting, weather forecast, and information on science and technology. In addition, the CLC adopted the mode of "research +base (rural families) + training" and made use of computers, television and telephones for giving various kinds of training to local citizens. They helped local farmers adjust the structure of planting, improve the variety of plants and enhance the planting skills for the purpose of increasing the output of agricultural production.

## **3. Contents of Life Skills Development**

### **3.1 Current Contents of Life Skills Development**

In 2011, Chinese Minister of Education issued *Morality and Life Curriculum Standard*, which includes the idea, aims, contents and suggestions of life skills development in primary schools. The contents concerned life skills can be categorized into the following four components:

- Healthy and safe life----include good life and health habits, self protection awareness and ability, be pleased to schools. The students need to know

the knowledge of natural disasters and be able to protect themselves.

- Happy and positive life---include verbal and non-verbal communication with others, self-esteem, confidence and courage. The individual must learn to find ways to solve difficulties by themselves. They need to learn to appreciate others and themselves.
- Be responsible and kind-- include learning to do, learning to care for others, abiding by social regulations, valuing their homeland. The students must be able to be pleased to share with their companions. They are able to make distinguish between the right and the wrong.
- Creative life--include be curious, learning to think, learning to solve problems. The students need to be interested in the surroundings and find the answers. They are able to improve their activities by themselves.

In non-formal education, life skills education is integrated into all kinds of trainings designed for special groups. The main contents are personal development, interpersonal communication, legal issues, transportation, banking & credit, health, alcohol, cultural awareness, employment, decision-making and changing jobs or careers.

### **3.2 New contents of life skills development**

The life skills education should be reformed in line with the rapid social development. It should focus on disadvantaged groups such as unemployed, peasant-workers, university students from poor families, poor single-parent families, stay-home children, single-parent students. And at the same time, in formal education, adolescent students are the key. They are surrounded by mixed messages about sex, drug use, alcohol and adolescent pregnancy. It is through life skills that teenagers can fight these challenges and protect themselves from health-related problems. They also should have skills to lessen violent behavior, improve self-image, cope with anxiety and improve constructive conflict resolution with peers.