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**Evaluation and Learning: Migrant
Parent School in Marginalised
Communities of Lanzhou Project
2015-2017**

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Through the project, migrant women can better integrate into city life. The project also addressed the educational needs of migrant children at different stages of development. Parent school project has become a platform to integrate the local community. In the future, OHK will work with partner to concentrate on improving their service quality, teachers' professional capacity and project management skills.

Background

About 50,000 migrants live in the Xiaoxihu Street area, Lanzhou, the capital city of Gansu Province. They are Muslim ethnic minorities who came from rural Gansu. In the city, most migrant men can only get low-income and low-skilled jobs with high labour intensity. There, 95 per cent of the migrant women are illiterate, and because of differences in culture, language and lifestyle, few of their children also benefit from the free education offered by the state. Five certificates are required for a migrant child to get into urban public schools. It is hard for migrant families who usually have several children (some have no Hukou due to various reasons), and survive on temporary jobs hard to obtain a work-proof certificate and with limited income. For those who do manage to get a spot though, it is still hard for them to adapt to city life and the education system. Besides cultural differences, migrant parents generally have a low level of education, little awareness about family education and are preoccupied with making a living. So, it is hard for them to allocate time to work with teachers for their children regularly.

Oxfam has been supporting the Parent School Project since 2006, and supported a total of four phases of the project. The scope of the project expanded from simple women's capacity building, improving girls' literacy to providing more comprehensive support for the migrant community, especially in promoting the literacy of migrant women and improving preschool education for their young children. The Parent School Project has become a channel through which community needs can be identified and responded to.

Long Term Goals

1. Enhance awareness of family education among migrant parents, and ensure the migrant children's right to quality education.
2. Improve the employability of migrant women.
3. Facilitate the development of migrant communities by collaborating with schools, communities, families and the society in areas like education, employment and culture.
4. Build a replicable Parent School Project model to benefit more people, and to increase the social impact of our partner organisation.

Project Evaluation Cycle: Sept 2015 to Sept 2017 (the Fourth phase)

People We Work with: Six communities in Lanzhou, Gansu, participated in the project, namely Wuxingping, Gonglin Lu, Hualin Shan, Xiaxyuan, Shangxiyuan, and Luotuoxiang. A

total of 170 women, 40 teenager girls (13-17 years old) and 400 schoolchildren (6-12 years old) from these communities joined the project.

Project Partner: Lanzhou Murui Service Center for Migrant People. Founded in 2003, the centre serves migrant ethnic minorities. It aims to enhance the quality of life and capacity of women and children, and help them better adapt to city life. The project provides everything from a library and preschool education for migrant children, to literacy classes and vocational training for women.

Project theory of change:

Oxfam aims to make the Parent School Project a platform to, firstly, enhance the livelihood and employability of migrant women through work and life skills training (e.g. literacy class, vocational training, family education, health knowledge, gender education, understanding of policy implication etc.), and secondly, provide preschool education and other informal educational services (e.g. preschool child care, after school interest classes/activities, parent-child activities, library, reading activities, etc.). Thirdly, Oxfam hopes to enhance the capacity of teachers to improve the services provided through the Parent School Project as well as the quality of management at schools. Training on teaching, gender and education is provided not only for staff but also for parents so that they can become future teachers. Fourthly, it is hoped that the project will be a platform that helps unite the community and enrich community life through various activities.

Oxfam also aims to increase the impact of Lanzhou Murui Service Center for Migrant People and facilitate exchanges between the centre and the government, schools and peer organisations. It is also working with its partner to leverage resources, advocate for more favourable education policies and resources for migrant children to protect their right to an education. Further, Oxfam hopes to enhance the collaboration between schools, communities, families, the society and the government in the areas of education, employment and culture in migrant communities. Ultimately, Oxfam hopes to develop a replicable Parent School Project model for migrant communities.

Project evaluation

An external evaluation was carried out to find out what has been achieved during the two-year project phase, what worked and did not work, and why. It was conducted by an expert from Lanzhou University, a partner together with OHK between June and September 2017. The evaluation team used following methods to collect data.

Method	Qty	Objective	Content
Secondary data analysis	--	To understand the overall implementation	Reviewed project documents, records on organisational management and activities that were held, as well as the organisation's annual plans and review reports.
Key informant interviews	2	To understand the overall implementation and context of the project during the evaluation period, including the cooperation between those implementing the Parent School Project and	Interviewed partner's project manager to understand the implementation details, including the process, outcomes, growth and challenges. Interviewed government community officer to understand the cooperation between the Parent School and the community, related policies and how they

		the community; to collect stakeholders' views towards the project	think about Parent school.
Focus group interviews	2	To collect feedback and suggestions from staff, volunteers and beneficiaries to understand project achievements and lessons learnt	<p>Group 1: Staff and volunteers (five in total) from OHK's partner organisation, who were frontline teachers and volunteers. They helped teach/lead literacy classes, afterschool tutorials and extra-curricular activities for migrant women and children.</p> <p>Group 2: Women who received training through the Parent School Project (six in total).</p>

Findings

1. Capacity building initiatives helped migrant women better integrate into city life.

Migrant women who attended literacy classes saw improvement in their basic life skills (such as how to use mobile phones, see doctor, go to parent's meeting and simple family finance) and their ability to adapt to city life. Participants even reported improvement in their social and working skills after attending literacy classes and receiving other training. One participant even became a staff member at Lanzhou Murui Service Center for Migrant People.



Ethnic minority women benefit from the project

Some female teenager trainees were also sent to vocational training and Arabic language school. Through the seminars and classes at the school where they discuss the typical challenges migrant women face, they have become more confident. For example, in the past they feared going out alone, but now they can go to see a doctor on their own, know how to send and receive text messages, and do simple arithmetic. They can also help their young children with their homework. Through these initiatives, these women are able to expand their social network and boost their self-confidence.

All of us came from rural areas, were illiterate, afraid to talk to people and shy in front of strangers. Now everything is different – we are much braver. One of the best decisions we've made is to learn. Thinking about how embarrassed we were when we were illiterate before,

we needed help but sometimes were too afraid to ask. Now we can be more outgoing because at least we can read some words.

– Woman who benefited from the project

However, the quality and effectiveness of seminars and talks varied. Whether it was successful or not depended on the topic, if the speaker catered to the needs of the students; and students' education level.

2. The project addressed the educational needs of migrant children at different stages of development. The three community spaces offered through the Parent School Project – namely, the Wuxingping Migrant Children Care Centre, Ethnic Minority Preschool Welfare Centre, Wuxingping Migrant Children Library – provided preschool services, afterschool homework tutorials, extra-curricular classes and so on. They also addressed the educational needs of children at different stages of development, and improved the quality of education for migrant children. Improvement was seen especially in families that were extremely poor, those with single parents or children whose parents were imprisoned and did not have the required five certificates to go to school.

By joining a variety of classes and activities, the children improved their ability to express themselves, work with others to solve problems and learn, as well as their self-confidence.



The Parent School Project has been providing a preschool service for migrant children since August 2015. It has also opened two migrant children centres. This picture shows children doing warm-up exercises before leaving school for the day.

Parents who joined these activities found that their relationship with their children had also improved. They learnt communication skills, how to be more present to their children as well as parenting skills. Furthermore, the community sports events, parent-child activities, talent competitions and so on, not only helped the children and their parents, but also enriched the lives of other community residents.

3. It is crucial for the project to enhance teachers' capacity. It was hoped that capacity building activities would help improve in both teaching quality and project management, which could ensure the sustainability of the project. However, this was not achieved due to school teachers' high turnover rate and limited funding. The scope and depth of teachers' training were also inadequate. Only six teachers attended training sessions during this phase which were

short-term training sessions on management and education that barely touched upon professional teaching.

The overall quality of teachers in the Parent School Project determined the quality of the project activities, and had an important impact on organisational management, and the implementation and development of the entire project. In sum, teacher sustainability and quality is still a bottleneck for which Oxfam needs to explore potential solutions.

4. The Parent School Project has significant contributions to the community. Cultural performances held through the project has directly enriched the lives of the community and its library has provided a public reading space for residents. With support from the community, the organisation extended the children services to children with special needs and lonely elderly. The various kinds of training and classes offered to migrant women and teenage girls has improved the literacy of the population and helped the community become more harmonious. All in all, the project has provided the community with more resources and has helped it develop. As such, the project has received active support from the community government officer.

The Parent School Project worked well for us and has evidently done a lot for the community. The resources it offered was, to some extent, more than what we can offer. As such, we can work together to serve the community better in many ways, and there was no reason not to support them. I hope more activities will be organised and more resources will be offered to the community in the future.

- Government community officer

5. The project was praised by the government at different levels, the general public and corporations. It helps partner organisation to promote the project model and its reputation. The implementation of the project was acknowledged and supported by different sectors in society and various levels of government (including the District Civil Affairs Bureau, provincial Health Department, District Health Department, Provincial Women's Federation, municipal Jiusan Society, Qilihe District Civil Affairs and health Bureau, etc). For example, the partner organisation is one of NGO contributing to the Gansu Civil Affairs Bureau and Gansu Provincial Women's Federation's 300 Children Home projects.

OHK's partner organisation also liaised with various government departments, persuaded the Qilihe Education Bureau to adjust its policy regarding school entry restrictions for migrant children, encouraged public schools to accept migrant children from the Parent School. Over 500 children have been sent to public schools since the third phase of the project (238 in the current phase). The Lanzhou Murui Service Center for Migrant People also actively sought external resources and has successfully gained financial and in-kind support from other foundations (One Foundation, Misereor etc), corporations, and the government.

The centre also made an effort to build a volunteer platform, and provide training and internship opportunities for university students who major in social work. It also collaborated with peer organisations. Provincial and municipal TV stations and newspapers even reported about the centre several times, and the centre/project received positive feedback from the general public.

The impact of the project helped extend the centre's influence. The project's achievement and effectiveness brought positive feedback from all sectors in society, brought in other resources, especially professional and other social resources, "which can help further brand the organisation without the centre having to promote it.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

1. The training migrant women were provided with was successful, but how it can further enhance their employability needs to be studied.

1) Vocational training should incorporate skills training in areas migrant women are more interested, suitable and with market need”, and cater to jobs that are more culture-oriented and with higher demand. The quality and effectiveness of the training provided also need further enhancement. Current vocational training only provides skills training on knitting and cooking, however, these skills cannot secure a job for migrant women. The external evaluator suggested that Oxfam and its partner factors in employment opportunities instead of just providing training during the next phase.

2) Oxfam and its partner should train future core members. This has actually been considered in the current phase. For example, teenage girls were trained as tutors in care centres so they could work and at the same time, offer greater manpower at the school. Oxfam and its partner also worked with the local employment department and local community to secure a small fund for migrant women to start their own business, and linked them up with other employment opportunities. That said, these actions were not carried out systematically or on scale. In the coming phase, Oxfam will assess the resources and ability its partner has to facilitate a more feasible and sustainable plan.

2. Migrant children’s services were effective but need to be more professional.

(1) It is important for the Parent School to help cultivate good habits in children. As such, there should be more professional support in this area and the Parent School needs to integrate “good habit” training with existing activities.

They (the children) participate actively if they want to, but avoid the activities they have no interest in. They cannot concentrate for long, their emotions change quickly, can be quite disruptive and hard to control. This causes difficulties in our work.

- Staff at Lanzhou Murui Service Centre for Migrant People

(2) Parents play an important role in education; the centre should thus look into new ways to educate parents about how to support their children better. The Parent School intended to reach out to parents through parent-child activities, however, this method was not very effective as parents did not come every time and when they did it was usually only the children’s mothers. This limited the scope and depth of the service. As such, new ways of reaching out to parents should be explored in the future.

(3) Volunteer training and management should be strengthened. The Lanzhou Murui Service Center for Migrant People can recruit more social work students as interns, to ensure they have a steady and professional group of volunteers.

3. Systematic training and development should be provided for teachers. A new solution to the problem of the lack of teacher training at the Parent School should be sought. Teachers are essential to the project and the partner organisation. Enhancing their professional standards and ability to participate in the project would thus have a significant impact on the growth of the partner organisation and the project.

OHK’s partner organisation fully recognised this, but because of its own limitations, found it very difficult to recruit and keep good teachers. The external evaluation expert has offered the following suggestions: 1) Increase teachers’ sense of belonging, motivation and enthusiasm from within the organisation. 2) Equip existing staff with more management skills. Consider having the current person in charge of the project to be in charge of the centre and select young teachers to take turns sharing the responsibility for managing the project. Oxfam should also help them enhance their management skills by giving them more responsibility and motivate

their creativity and sense of belonging. 3) Finally, Oxfam should place greater emphasis on the professional training and development of teachers.

4. Future publicity focus should be based on organisation goals. Publicity about the organisation in the past was very general and unintentional. Being more specific and intentional about its branding can attract greater support and enhance the organisation's sustainability as it remains a struggle for many smaller-scale NGOs in China to survive. Leveraging on the centre's current reputation, clearer brand positioning and a more coherent strategy would more effectively help realise the centre's goals. Further, it would be of greater benefit to the centre to assign someone to take up this task.

5. Partner's Project management skills need to be further strengthened. All activities should be reviewed in a timely manner to improve the service quality. After each event or activity, participants' feedback should be collected. Feedback should be taken seriously, and a person should be assigned to follow up on these comments. By doing this, the organisation would be able to capture the immediate project outputs and learn from the experience.

In general, we should look at the bigger picture when working on the project, consider the general situation in migrant communities. Some changes cannot be achieved by one project/organisation. In sum, we should think bigger, be more innovative, and not just limit its work to working on project details.



Children participate in after school activities in partner organisation

Comment from Programme Team: The five suggestions the external evaluator offered hit the nail on the head. Our partner, Lanzhou Murui Service Center for Migrant People will thus work hard to improve in these areas: integration of skills training and employment for migrant women, service quality, systematic training for teachers, branding and project management. With limited resources, Oxfam would suggest its partner to improve in these areas one step at a time. They should start by solving internal problems by concentrating on improving their service quality, teachers' professional capacity and project management skills.



The project is operated by Oxfam Hong Kong basic education team, you can click [here](#) to read the basic education programme brief. We hope this brief evaluation report and the programme brief can increase the accountability of our work and give you a better idea of what we do in China so that bring more exchanges and learning.

If you are interested in knowing more, please feel free to contact [Xiaoxi Lian](#), Programme Evaluation and Learning Officer or [Paris Law](#), Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Manager of Oxfam Hong Kong.