

### Addressing life skills education in vocational education

A close working relationship with the Department of Vocational and Adult Education under the Ministry of Education (MOE) has been built up, establishing conditions for greater policy impact of the project. A clear roadmap on providing life skills in vocational schools for 2016-2020 has been developed with Ministry of Education and national expert team in 2015 to incorporate the life skills into the national vocational education curriculum to benefit, by 2020, at least two million vocational school students.

### How to do it?

1. Build trust and partnership with central and local government.
2. Build capacity of counterparts by providing technical inputs with leading national experts.
3. Build positive environment through influencing key stakeholders and the public.
4. Build models together with government to allow scaling up to ensure sustainability.

## EDUCATION FOR ADOLESCENTS: Why, what and how?

### Adolescents in Transition: Challenges or Opportunities?

The period of adolescence (10-19 years) is a time of transition from childhood to adulthood, from school to society. Adolescents will experience monumental changes in every single aspect of their lives during this transition period which include:

- **Emotionally**, adolescents encounter many new experiences that challenge their ability to cope with a broad array of intense emotions. Emotional maturity is closely tied to the knowledge of oneself, and one's values. This self-identity develops and solidifies during adolescence.
- **Physically**, adolescents grow to resemble adult bodies. Their gender awareness start to grow. This is also the period when the brain becomes more efficient and develops more advanced skills.
- **Cognitively**, adolescents begin to gain the ability to think abstractly and analytically simultaneously which promotes their social, emotional, and moral development. However, the incomplete development of the brain means that adolescents will continue to struggle to make wise and thoughtful decisions in the presence of peer and social pressures.
- **Socially**, adolescents' primary social support shifts away from their families, and toward their peers and elsewhere. Because of the increased importance of peer relationships, adolescents are especially sensitive to peer pressure. Their understanding of right and wrong becomes more sophisticated and nuanced.



### United Nations Children's Fund

UNICEF Office for China  
12, Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District, Beijing, P.R. China 100600  
Telephone: (86-10) 85312600 Fax: (86-10) 65323107  
Email: gwang@unicef.org, yichen@unicef.org  
Website: www.unicef.org



## Why Invest in Adolescence

### Key Perspectives

**The human rights perspective:** Adolescents' rights are enshrined in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and in the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women*.

**The economic perspective:** Investing in adolescents is crucial to build upon the historic gains achieved in early childhood and to ensure a prosperous and more equitable future. The second decade of life offers a critical opportunity to break the inter-generational

### Scientific evidence shows:

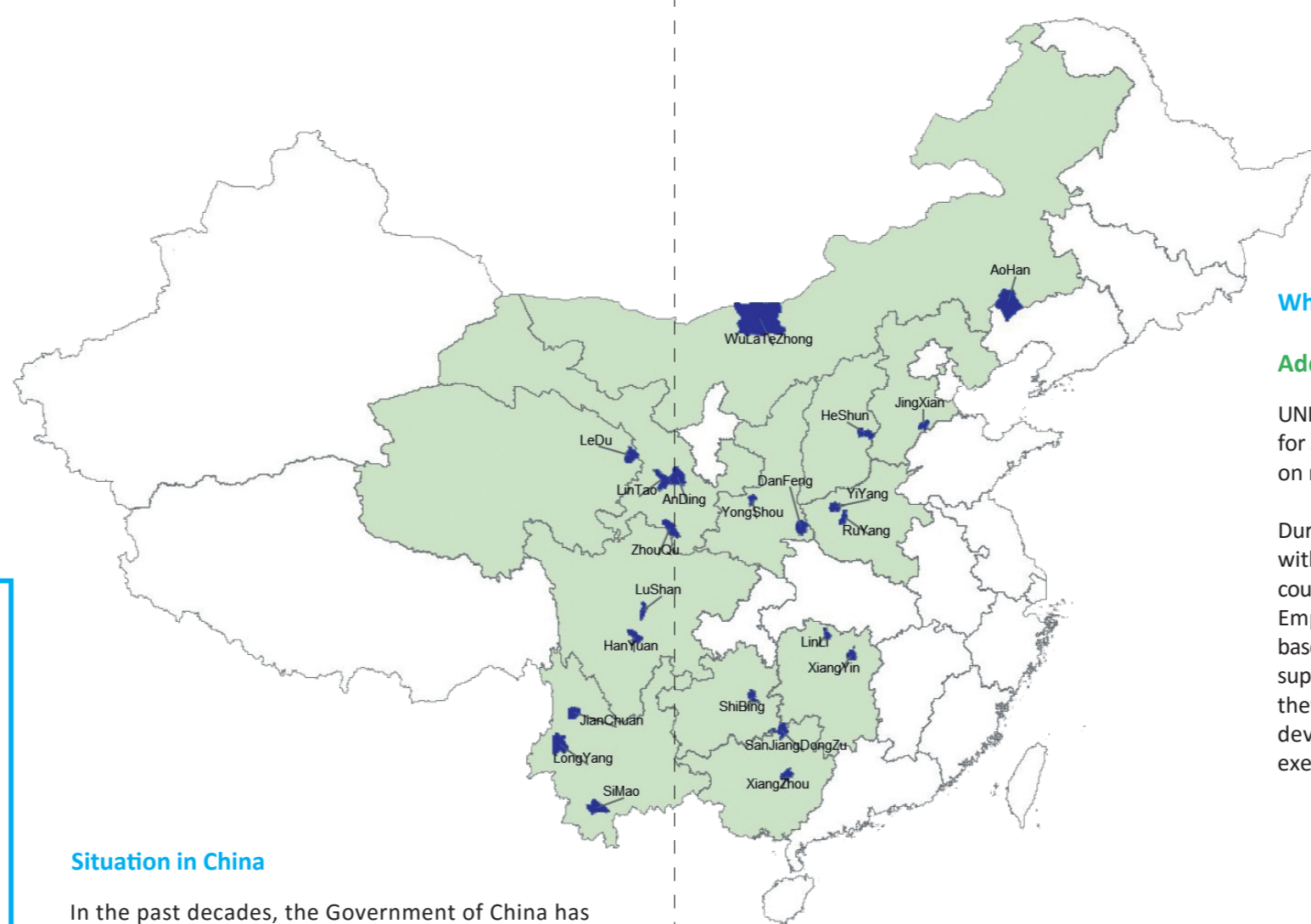
“The brain systems involved in decision-making, planning, social understanding and risk-taking are developing in adolescence”.

“Adolescence represents a period of brain development during which environmental experiences, including teaching, can profoundly shape the developing brain”.

“There is some evidence of gender differences in the trajectories of brain development in adolescence, with cortical grey matter in boys developing more slowly in early adolescence than in girls. This mirrors the delay in puberty in boys relative to girls (on average)”.

Adolescent Brain Development, M. Costandi & S. Blakemore. Available from <https://thinkneuroscience.wordpress.com/2014/01/22/adolescent-brain-development>

transmission of multiple deprivations in a much shorter timeframe, compared to interventions in the first decade that pay off over a longer period of time. Adolescents have the potential to become change makers, not just passive beneficiaries.



### Situation in China

In the past decades, the Government of China has made tremendous efforts in achieving the spectacular success in the nine years compulsory education for every child. Special attention has been paid to poor and ethnic minority areas especially those in the western region. However, issues still exist that could make it more difficult to meet the needs of rapid development of China.

- **From the demand side**, as the population ages, China needs to ensure greater efficiency and productivity of its labour force which is dependent on the quality of education and opportunities for continued education.

Vocational education is an important component of the Chinese education system and has received greater attention from the Chinese government in the last two decades. According to China's 1996 Vocational Education Law, vocational education is a major channel to boost economic growth, employment and social advancement. The importance of its development was emphasized in the Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) released in July 2010, in which it states that expanding vocational education must be given more precedence and vocational education development to meet the needs of rural areas must be accelerated.

- **From the supply side**, due to the increasing competition in the job market, adolescents who drop out of school or graduate without the required skills face a future with poorer prospects of employment and opportunities in life. Adolescents in poor, remote rural areas are especially disadvantaged in learning opportunities.

With increasing affluence and independence, risky behaviours such as smoking, drug abuse, unplanned pregnancy and HIV/STI infection are becoming more common among today's adolescents. Therefore social and emotional development of adolescents needs as much attention as education.

**“Vocational education is one of the key paths for China's youth to open the door to success and prosperity, and thus it is essential to place significant attention on vocational education and accelerate its development”.**

**-- President Xi Jinping, the National Work Conference on Vocational Education, Jun.23, 2014**

### What is UNICEF China Doing?

#### Addressing the out-of-school issue

UNICEF China has been working with China Association for Science and Technology (CAST) for over 30 years on reaching out of school children.

During the project cycle 2011-2015, in partnership with CAST, UNICEF has developed a set of flexible courses for adolescents called Step into Society—Life, Employment and Development. A set of life skills based, participatory and youth friendly manuals that support the positive development of adolescents as they prepare to enter the labour force have been developed, which include practical information, exercises, games and group activities.

The curricula are divided into six parts and cover important topics in:

- **Career Guidance and Development** – self assessment, looking for jobs and getting through interviews, professionalism, safety and labour rights, and entrepreneurship.
- **Interpersonal Skills and Communication** – circle of friends, effective communication and resolving conflicts, friendship, love and marriage, and bridging the generation gap.
- **Independence and Self-Management** – hitting the road, finding shelter in hotels, dorms or rentals, managing your money, safety and security, and healthy behaviours.
- **Information Technology** – computers, the internet, surfing the web, cell phones and what they can do, communication on the web, using the web to find jobs, internet safety, and preparing your resume.
- **Life Skills for Girls** – gender and role models, positive communication, self-protection against harassment and violence, adapting to urban life, career and development, and sexual and reproductive health.
- **Social Emotional Learning for Adolescents** – how to recognize and manage self-emotions and how to build up healthy relationships with other people.

