

UNICEF - CAST Adolescent Education Project Case Study (2011-2015)







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Project Overview

Young people in transition from childhood to adulthood face many challenges. In addition to the physical changes they are experiencing, adolescence is often a time when youth move from dependency to independence. In the context of rapid urbanization in China, rural adolescents aged 12-18 years are a particularly important cohort. Due to various reasons, many rural youth, especially those from central and western China, live and work in cities after graduation, without getting sufficient knowledge and capabilities beforehand. When they are trying hard to fit into urban life, work and study, they are not well supported for future development, and their quality of life may easily lead to social stratification and ultimately to intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Therefore, it is essential to equip these adolescents with the life skills to enable them to set goals and assist them to make plans and taking action to realize these goals. Providing access to life skills training to adolescents, especially out-of-school adolescents, in China's rapidly growing and evolving rural economy, has become an increasingly important priority.

Towards this objective, UNICEF and the China Association for Science and Technology (CAST) have been collaborating since 1982 on a series of non-formal education programs, targeting vulnerable 12-18 year old adolescents in remote and underdeveloped central and western China, rural areas, ethnic minority regions, places concentrated with impoverished or migrating populations. In the 2006-2010 country programme cycle, UNICEF and CAST collaborated to build a model of community-based learning centres for out-of-school children in rural areas. By the end the cycle, the model was adopted by three provinces with investment secured from local governments. The key lesson learned was that to break the poverty

Project Province	Project County
Henan Province	1. Ruyang
	2. Yiyang
shaanxi Province	3. Danfeng
	4. Yongshou
Gansu Province	5. Anding
	6. Lintao
	7. Zhouqu
Inner Mongolia	8. Aohanqi
	9. Wulatezhongqi Mongolia Autonomous County*
Henan province	10. Xiangyin
	11. Linli
Qinghai province	12. Ledu
Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	13. Xiangzhou
	14. Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County*
Shanxi	15. Heshun
Guizhou	16. Shibing
Yunnan	17. Longyang
	18. Simao
	19. Jianchuan Bai Autonomous County*
Hebei	20. Jingxian
Total	20 counties in 11 provinces

*denotes minority counties

cycle for vulnerable adolescents and their families, it is not enough to provide assistance after they drop out of school, it is more important to reduce the factors which may cause them to drop out.

Therefore, in the 2011-2015 country programme cycle, to advocate for accessible and equitable education and employment opportunities for the most vulnerable out-of-school adolescents, UNICEF China and CAST extended the scope of the collaboration to include junior vocational and secondary schools, aiming to build a friendly educational environment and reduce negative factors which push adolescents into the poverty cycle. **The major objectives of the 2011-2015 programme approach were to:**

- Encourage responsible behaviour and reduce risky behaviours among adolescents to ensure a full and productive adult life.
- Harness positive energy of adolescents and support their active participation and action on issues that affect their lives, especially climate change, HIV prevention and drug abuse.

These objectives were met through four interlinked interventions:

- Social emotional learning (SEL) initiatives for increasing the resilience of young people faced with challenging socioeconomic circumstances.
- Career guidance for improving building adolescents' capacity to cope with rapidly changing labour market demands.
- Adolescent life skills education for children aged 12-18 years. This encourages positive behaviour by increasing adolescents' awareness on social, health and life issues and prepares them for work and family life.
- Adolescent networking for children aged 12-18 years to support civic participation through networking and alliance building around issues that are of importance to them and society at large.

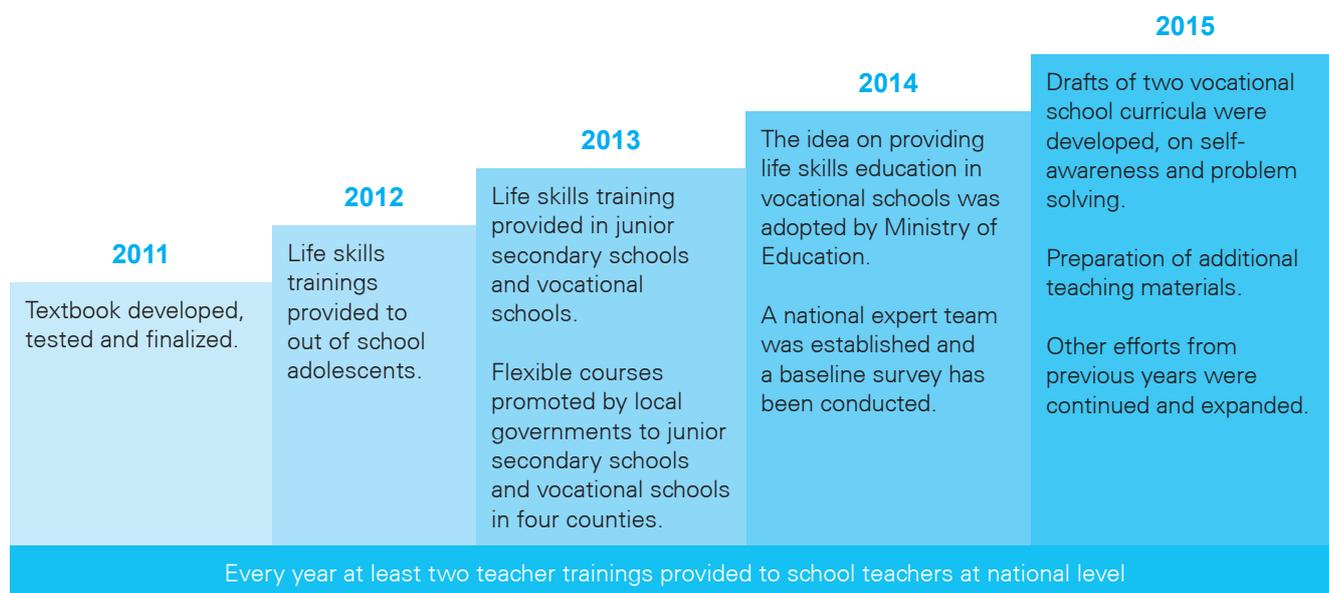
Major Results Achieved 2011-2015:

The non-formal education program, with its new concepts and participatory teaching approach, has focused on education equity and gender sensitivity, offering training and development support to adolescents in and out of schools. The major results achieved in 2011-2015 include:

- At least 30,000 adolescents directly benefited from life skills development through participatory training sessions and courses in Social Emotional Learning, Career Guide and Development, Interpersonal Skills and Communication, Independence and Self-Management, Information Technology, Life Skills for Girls and Financial Education.
- Over 1,000 teachers received training in participatory approaches to teaching-learning, and gender-based pedagogy.
- 20 schools adopted life skills courses as their school-based curricula.
- 16 youth learning centers were established and equipped by CAST, and deliver the life skills courses and training to marginalised and vulnerable adolescents using a flexible and non-formal approach.
- CAST adopted life skills education and it is institutionalized through inclusion in the government's national budget.
- MoE has adopted life skills training and started developing curricula for use in vocational schools nationwide.

The project achievements in 2011-2015 clearly showed that the project responded very well to new global trends in pursuing new and innovative approaches to education of vulnerable children and adolescents, and also responded directly and strongly to new educational challenges created by China's changing social and economic environment. Through these innovative approaches the project had a positive impact on the lives of thousands of adolescents in some of China's poorest counties, and also had an influence on educational policies and practices that will last well beyond the life of the project. *UNICEF-CAST Adolescent Education Project Case Study (2011-2015)* is a selection of good practices and experiences gained. It is intended to serve as a reference and guide to support the rollout of life skills education across the country, particularly in underdeveloped regions and in poor urban settings.

Key Milestones of the Life Skills Education Project (2011-2015)



UNICEF – CAST Adolescent Education Project Partners

Provincial-level Management	County-level Management
Henan Youth Science and Technology Center	Ruyang Association for Science and Technology Yiyang Association for Science and Technology
Shaanxi Youth Science and Technology Center	Danfeng Association for Science and Technology Yongshou Association for Science and Technology
Gansu Youth Science and Technology Center	Anding Association for Science and Technology Lintao Association for Science and Technology Zhouqu Association for Science and Technology
Inner Mongolia Youth Science and Technology Center	Wulatezhongqi Association for Science and Technology Aohanqi Youth Science and Technology Center
Hunan Youth Science and Technology Center	Xiangyin Association for Science and Technology Linli Association for Science and Technology
Qinghai Youth Science and Technology Center	Ledu Association for Science and Technology
Guangxi Youth Science and Technology Center	Sanjiang Association for Science and Technology Xiangzhou Association for Science and Technology
Shanxi Youth Science and Technology Center	Heshun Association for Science and Technology
Guizhou Youth Science and Technology Center	Shibing Association for Science and Technology
Yunnan Youth Science and Technology Center	Longyang Association for Science and Technology Simao Association for Science and Technology Jianchuan Association for Science and Technology
Hebei Youth Science and Technology Center	Jing County Association for Science and Technology
Sichuan Province	Lushan County, Ya'an / Hanyuan County, Ya'an
12 Provinces	22 Counties

Adolescent Education Project Case Study (2011-2015)

From the training, I came to understand how to communicate with people, how to better protect myself, and to stay calm instead of rushing or panicking to do things. During the training, although I might still stutter sometimes, I no longer had the barrier in my heart. I am more willing to communicate now. I gained confidence as well as the encouragement and acceptance of the teachers and classmates.



"Stuttering had been a real problem of mine for 18 years. Finally, with the help of the teachers and classmates of the non-formal education project, I have shaken it off. This seemingly tiny change has lit up my world. I no longer feel inferior and I can now smile at the world."

— Zhang Rui, Anding, Gansu Province

My name is Zhang Rui. I am an ordinary rural girl from Kangjiazhuang village, Chankou, Dingxi. I am 18 years old and studying preschool education at Class 3, Grade 12 at Dingxi Vocational Secondary School of Science and Technology. I am an orphan. My mother abandoned me because I'm a girl. Deep down I felt inferior, as I had been a mistake since the day I was born.

For me, being able to study at school is a pleasant thing. But my stuttering problem made my learning and life extremely difficult. It was an invisible barrier. Even when I had so many ideas, every time they rushed to my lips, I swallowed them up. Since I would not speak in class, the teachers gave me less and less opportunities to talk. After class, my classmates would not talk to me. This wore down my confidence. Gradually, a vicious cycle was formed and it became my lingering nightmare.

It was not until late October 2014 that my life took a major turn, when I took part in the Girls' Life Skills course offered by UNICEF and CAST.

When I learned that the teachers for this training were all experts in education, I turned to one of them Ms. Xie Meiqing, to ask her how to overcome the stuttering problem. Ms. Xie heard that I did not stutter when I read the textbook aloud, so she suggested that I read aloud lyrical prose and poems when nobody was around, and she asked me to speak more, practice more, and talk to my classmates boldly. I heard her words, but it was incredibly difficult to really act as she said. My lips were like a sickle that had not been used for long. They were rusty.

Just when I had no idea how to step up, an opportunity arose. Probably on purpose, the teacher asked me first among all students to read aloud in the training course. The whole class

stared at me as I stood up, blushing and nervous, having no idea what to do. I tried to make a sound, but my vocal cords froze, and nothing came out. Something was buzzing in my head. As seconds went by, I felt more and more embarrassed for wasting everybody's time. Finally, I picked up my courage, and, as if drawing out all my strength, I read aloud the first sentence on the textbook in a trembling voice. The teacher and classmates all looked at me with surprise and encouragement, which gave me more confidence to finish the rest of the text without stopping. Hearing the applause of the teacher and classmates, I felt like being in a dream, filled with pleasure beyond description. In the following sessions, the teacher paid special attention to me, and I actively answered all the questions and even acted as a spokesperson of my team to deliver a speech on their behalf.

From the training, I came to understand how to communicate with people, how to better protect myself, and to stay calm instead of rushing or panicking to do things. During the training, although I might still stutter sometimes, I no longer had the barrier in my heart. I am more willing to communicate now. I gained confidence as well as the encouragement and acceptance of the teachers and classmates, which helped me out of the lingering nightmare. The teachers were willing to help me overcome my obstacles, and give me more opportunities to answer questions in class. The classmates were also more willing to communicate with me and give me encouragement. They even selected me as the star of progress.

The training period was short, but I gained a lot. I would like to say to the teacher:

"Ms. Xie, I am glad to take part in this training course of Girls' Life Skills, from which I gained a new understanding of myself. With your help, I am able to speak on the stage. Maybe I did not do it well enough, but I am still proud of myself. You are a wonderful teacher and feel like a parent to me. You always encouraged me to speak more and speak slowly. Thank you. Although we did not spend much time together, you left an impression deep in my heart. If there is any chance, I wish you would come to our school again to carry out more such activities."



Adolescent Education Project Case Study (2011-2015)

It improved my understanding of learning and social life and the ability to adapt, and raised my awareness to participate in social issues closely related to myself. I learned how to choose a career that suits me, and properly plan my career life. I was able to adapt to changes in my social life in advance, formulate a financial plan according to my own situation, and develop a healthy way of living. I mastered the methods to protect my rights at work and protect myself in life. I learned how to deal with different interpersonal relationships, and how to use the Internet to solve real problems in life and in learning.

I used to think that solid professional knowledge and unremitting efforts were enough to ensure success. But after taking the training course of UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project, I learned that as a student who is about to step into society, I still have a lot to learn."

— Deng Xianchong, Pu'er, Yunnan

My name is Deng Xianchong. I am 19 years old and a Han ethnic. I live in Chashulin Railway Maintenance Team of Nandaohu village, Nanping town, Simao district, Pu'er city. I have a family of five: my father, mother, little brother, little sister, and me. We mainly live on our parents' small income from farming and almost have no extra money.

I have always known the hardships of my parents, and wanted to give my family a better life through my own efforts. In September 2012, I became a student of accounting major at Class 1205 at the Vocational Education Center of Pu'er. In class I am a hard-working student. I am respectful to the teachers and friendly with the classmates, while striving to advance my expertise. As a reward for my efforts, I became the top student in my year.

In 2014, due to my outstanding accounting skills, I was selected by the school to participate in the Accounting Skill Competition of Yunnan. After three months of hard training, I made it into the top nine in the competition and won the third prize for individuals in the accounting computerization event. After the competition, I was full of confidence about my future. I believed that solid professional knowledge and unremitting efforts were enough to carry me to success. But after taking the training course of non-formal education project, I learned that as a student who is about to step into society, I still have a lot to learn.

In 2015, I began the last period of my vocational secondary school life - an internship before graduation. During my four-month internship at Pu'er Xingyang Inc., I found that the non-formal education training had laid a very good foundation for my internship. It gave me a brand new experience. The ideas, techniques, teachers' styles, their commitment and team spirit all had great influence on me and the other students. During my internship, I played the role of a professional instead of a student. The most obvious difference was that I had to mainly rely on myself to solve any problems during work: while at school, I could turn to my teachers and classmates for help. The first day I went to the company, I was worried that I was not competent enough for the work. After all, real-world practice is much more than a paragraph in a text book. However, the CAST training helped me become more outgoing, and made me learn to actively greet my colleagues, introduce myself and get along with them. During this period, I gained so much knowledge that I could never learn at school, and I made rational plans and arrangements for my first income. I formulated a financial plan, which will lay the foundation for me to start a business in the future.



This training taught me how to adapt to and live in a new environment as well as to get acquainted. After the training, my communication skills have improved greatly, which was important for my last semester before the internship, and helped me avoid or overcome many challenges.

This project definitely cultivates practical talents. It advocates teamwork, promotes brainstorming, and conducts innovative education approaches: all of which helped me to grow as a person. It improved my understanding of learning and social life and the ability to adapt, and raised my awareness about the benefits of participating in social issues closely related to myself. I learned how to choose a career that suits me, and properly plan my career life. I was able to adapt to changes in my social life in advance, formulate a financial plan according to my own situation, and develop a healthy way of living. I mastered the methods to protect my rights at work and protect myself in life. I learned how to deal with different interpersonal relationships, and how to use the Internet to solve real problems in life and in learning.

This training also helped me make great progress in my manners, and positively change my personality a great deal. I have become much more mature. I hope this sort of training can reach more middle school and primary school students. I hereby wish every success in the non-formal education project for teenagers and more students will benefit from it!



Adolescent Education Project Case Study (2011-2015)

During the three-day course on Profession and Development organized by the County Association for Science and Technology, although they did not know each other at first, more than 30 students got acquainted with each other through the interactive games directed by the teachers. That was the first time she learned some knowledge and skills about youth employment and entrepreneurship under no pressure, which was all so novel. To make her even happier, she participated in the youth forum themed "Open up Your Dream and Look into the Future" held by the Teenager Science and Technology Center of Provincial Association for Science and Technology. During the three-day event, she acquired skills in social psychology, interpersonal communication, and job recruitment. This experience really opened her eyes and brightened her heart.



"I know mom and dad are working hard away from home for our family. I wish I can grow up fast and find an ideal job to share their burden. I think I can, I believe I can!"

— Wang Ziqi, Linli, Hunan

I ran into my former student Wang Ziqi by chance. If she had not run after me calling my name during a mountain trip, I would never have believed that this was the same solitary and wayward girl that I had known. There she stood in front of me, wearing her school uniform, full of youth and vigour, cheerful and natural, clever and polite. Due to my professional sensitivity, I picked up my camera and took a few candid pictures. When she noticed that I was shooting, she cooperated by slowing down for me to take photos. "Mr. Xue, you have not changed, still so into taking pictures," she giggled. We chatted while walking and I learned a lot about how she had developed as a student and as a person.

An 18-year-old, Wang Ziqi was born into an ordinary rural family in Qichong group of Xiejia village, Shanban town, Linli county. She is now studying at Class 1203 of computer major at Linli Vocational Secondary School, and is preparing for the National College Entrance Examination as an ordinary 12th-grade student.

Before she was in eighth grade, her parents were working in other cities, and she stayed with her grandparents at home. During that period, seeing that other children had their mom or dad with them, or even both, she was envious, always missing her own parents. This impacted on her emotional state, and her performance at school deteriorated. Every now and then she developed a hatred for learning, and even thought about missing lessons. In the eyes of her teachers and classmates, she was a very disobedient girl. In view of the situation, her mother returned home to keep Wang Ziqi accompany when she was in the ninth grade, which made her secretly thrilled for a while. However, every night, she was deeply upset by her parents' who were quarrelling over the phone, feeling that her parents didn't care for her. Deep down, she felt inferior and alone. She spent every day spiritless and aimless, and even thought about running away. During the summer, after the senior high school entrance examination, she refused to talk to anyone other than her grandparents. She secretly made up her mind that if her parents really got divorced, she would go outside for work.

At this time, her uncle, Wang Shuangquan, who was a teacher at Shanban Middle School, visited her at home and suggested she take part in UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project organized by the County Association for Science and Technology. She thought as long as it was not studying, she might as well give it a try.

During the three-day course on Profession and Development organized by the County Association for Science and Technology, although they did not know each other at first, more than 30 students were acquainted with each other through the interactive games directed by the teachers. That was the first time Wang Ziqi gained knowledge and skills about youth employment and entrepreneurship under no pressure, which was all very unique to her. To make her even happier, she participated in the youth forum themed "Open up Your Dream and Look into the Future" held by the Teenager Science and Technology Center of Provincial Association for Science and Technology. During the three-day event, she acquired skills in social psychology, interpersonal communication, and job recruitment. This experience really opened her eyes and brightened her outlook for the future.



Afterwards, she developed a clear plan for her career life, and decided to study computer at Linli Vocational Secondary School. During the two years at the vocational secondary school, she cherished the learning opportunity and achieved a good performance, being among the top 5 in class. Her goal is now to take on a challenge in the National College Entrance Examination and go to Hunan Agricultural University. Her parents and teachers all noticed the changes. No matter what the occasion, Wang Ziqi is always polite, actively greeting others and talking with them; she is also modest and earnest in listening to others' opinions. In class, she is quite popular and amiable; her classmates love to hang out with her.

As a project staff member, I witnessed Wang Ziqi growing from a shy and timid girl to a natural and graceful young lady. Though our meeting and talk as we walked was brief, we were reluctant to part. In the end, I asked her to say something to cheer herself on as the big examination was approaching; she said an English phrase, "I think I can, I believe I can!" I did not understand English, so she wrote it down and translated it for me.

Xue Jiuping is a manager of UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project and also an educator of the course on Independent Life and Self-Management. He is now working as the leader of Disciplinary Inspection Group in Linli Statistic Bureau, Hunan.



Adolescent Education Project Case Study (2011-2015)

I suddenly realized, there is no such thing as a "problem student". They behave improperly in class because they lack and desire attention and respect from others. They all have goodwill but may have no idea how to communicate with others, or do so in an improper manner. The participatory method of UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education activities was the type of learning that allowed them to become fully engaged and involved.

"I find that there are so many people around who are connected to me, my parents, teachers, and classmates. I have been living in a big family. We are a team. If someone does something to hurt the team, the whole team will be affected. I should not do anything to hurt the team like I used to."

— Li Wentian, Yiyang, Henan

This thin, dark-skinned, energetic boy left us a deep impression during the project activities. Behind his smile, there are thought-provoking stories from the bottom of his heart that moved us deeply. UNICEF-CAST non-formal education training course changed him into a different person.



Li Wentian is 13 years old, a seventh grader at No.3 Middle School of Xianglushan town. He was born into a poor rural family, with both parents being typical farmers. He has a brother and a sister. His mother has been deprived of the ability to work by chronic illness. The whole family depends on his father, who makes a living by selling local groceries in the rural fair. As a result of his family circumstances, Li Wentian lacked discipline and education, and turned into a 'wild boy'. At home, he led a group of children who made trouble around the village. At school, he was either late, skipping classes, being rude to the teachers, cursing and fighting with others. He was a serious headache for all teachers, especially the class teacher. He swore at his classmates, fought with other boys and girls, and violated school discipline, and thus was seen as a "problem student". His class teacher talked with him on a number of times, but all in vain.

Almost as a last resort, when the teachers from the County Association for Science and Technology came to our school in 2014 to organize non-formal education training, the school authorities sent him to the training project. The project training teachers provided the students with training on "My Network of People" and "How to Be a Popular Person". During the training, every student participated in the activities including games, drawing, and role play. To our surprise, Li Wentian showed great interest in learning during the training, and actively cooperated with the teachers by answering questions. He presented original ideas and outstanding performance, almost like a different person than he used to be at school. All the training teachers agreed that he was smart.

After a day's training, he went to his class teacher and said, "Teacher, today's training is so much fun. We have been playing games. It is much more interesting than taking lessons. I have learned many rules of dealing with things and people." His class teacher became curious about his words, and asked, "Can you tell me what you have learned exactly?" He then shared what he had gained during the day.

"After I drew my network of people, I realized that there are so many people around who are connected to me, my parents, teachers, and classmates. I have been living in a big family. We are a team. If someone does something to hurt the team, the whole team will be affected. I should not do anything to hurt the team like I used to. The teacher then mentioned that people needs cooperation in interpersonal contact. After playing the

game of 'sitting up and down together', I understood that to succeed, one person's strength is not enough, and we need everybody's joint efforts to make it work. I used to fight with my classmates at school, so they all hate me. This is why I have few friends and feel upset in class. I promise that I will get rid of these bad habits, observe the discipline, love the class, be nice to others, and become a good student." After saying this, he lowered his head and blushed.

After hearing his heartfelt speech, I suddenly realized there is no such thing as a "problem student". They behave improperly in class because they lack and desire attention and respect from others. They all have goodwill, but may have no idea how to communicate with others, or do so in an improper manner. The participatory method of our non-formal education activities was the type of learning that allowed them to become fully engaged and involved.

After the training, the class teacher and other teachers have noticed that Li Wentian has changed. He is no longer late for school, has fewer conflicts with his classmates, and has made some friends. In class, he is willing to study hard for lessons that catch his interest, and behaves better in class. I think the non-formal education training for students is very effective. I hope more sessions can be carried out in our school and help more girls and boys who are not benefitting fully from their education.

Miao Xiangyu, She is currently working at the No.3 Junior Middle School of Xianglushan town, Yiyang county, Luoyang city. She is a teacher and also an educator of the course on Interpersonal Contact and Communication in the non-formal education training held by the County Association for Science and Technology.



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I believe, it is the core of this program to approach adolescents, help them express themselves, and engage in social life. The next thing on the agenda is to think about how to influence a group of young people through this program, develop some role models with refreshed mindset, thus helping more vulnerable adolescents adapt better to society, have more choices in life, and enjoy a virtuous cycle in their future work and life. Besides, a multilayer, cross-departmental cooperation model is the very basis for running an effective program. We should also consider how to expand our training courses and approaches, and develop flexible school strategies accordingly.

Adolescent non-formal education and me: my observation and reflection

— Zhang Lili, Project Expert

As a participant and promoter of the adolescent non-formal education program, I have witnessed its development in the past ten years, and its essence and social significance often come to my mind. As a researcher and practitioner of gender education, I have been exploring effective program models and approaches from the gender perspective.

Ten years ago, I started to evaluate the UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education program. Rich activities and lively young people at CAST out-of-school adolescent learning and resource centers attracted me in my first field visit. With the guidance from CAST colleagues, adolescents took pictures of their hometown and presented in PowerPoint formats, advocated community clean-up and environmental protection activities, and organized recreational activities during festivals. **My first impression of the out-of-school adolescents is vitality. They would turn a somersault in front me, and their martial arts and piano playing talents were so energetic and lively. I have witnessed changes brought by the training sessions, such as a once introverted girl being able to naturally and gracefully present herself in front of officials and experts.** I have also felt the emotional connection they have with CAST officers, parents and program members. I have seen program staff handing out books in the “mobile book toolkit” at the Inner Mongolia grassland; front-line counsellors travelled to Guangdong for out-of-school adolescent trainings. What I observed is a top-down and bottom-up aligned belief and vision, an inner dynamic from everyone involved, an effective model and approach for educating out-of-school adolescents, and a possibility for vulnerable out-of-school adolescents to engage in community activities and future development. This is all closely aligned with what I have been thinking and doing in the field of education for a number of years.

Changes such as universal nine-year compulsory education, actions to reduce the number of children who drop out of schools, and adolescents moving into the workforce have been identified by CAST for new initiatives. The adolescent non-formal education program has expanded from only being based in regular schools to vocational schools and their surrounding communities, as well as reaching out to drop-out and migrating adolescents. As a curriculum developer, I have witnessed the possibility offered by the life skills-based education approach for further education opportunities beyond the test-oriented education system.

Education for girls has long received wide attention, but is still faced with bottlenecks and difficulties in practice. The adolescent non-formal education program has a dedicated course for girls, aiming at improving their basic life skills with a gender perspective. This has showcased the innovation and foresight of the program. I am deeply inspired and motivated for my gender education work. As a participant and promoter, I have witnessed intergenerational differences between girls of varied eras and social environments. No matter if they are drop-out girls, female migrant workers or girls at vocational schools, they all have similarities but many



differences. Girls of this generation are fashion-conscious, beautiful and self-aware. They are faced with many emerging issues like self-protection, vocational development and planning, gender relationship and cyber-romance. They need a lot of support along the way, and the non-formal education program is able to help them eliminate bewilderment, build confidence and capabilities through clear-targeted, diversified and flexible training sessions. "Life skills for girls" is a course dedicated for girls, integrating gender perspectives while improving their life skills and gender convergence. The curriculum and its Wechat public account advocacy channel are joint achievements of adolescent non-formal education and gender education programs.

Since the program launch, the changes to students and teachers have been very visible. Many program participants I know have become more talented and enthusiastic about education: they are able to better empower children to be able to freely express their talents. The most significant changes I have seen are in the vocational schools where the program philosophy and training model have endowed teachers with new perspectives for education, students and their own career development.

The adolescent non-formal education program is a good practice from China. With the program cycle having come to an end, it is imperative for us to summarize what has been learnt and focus on the next steps. At the core of this programme was reaching out to adolescents to help them express themselves and to engage in community social life. The next thing on the agenda is to think about how to build on this to develop some role models with refreshing new outlooks on life, and empowering them to also reach out to help more vulnerable adolescents adapt better to society, have more choices in life, and have a fulfilled career and family life. In addition, ensuring that the program expands as a multi-layer, cross-departmental cooperation model in order to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability. We should also consider how to expand our training courses and approaches, and develop flexible school strategies according to the specific context in which the students live.

Zhang Lili, professor from Faculty of Education, Beijing Normal University; deputy director of Multicultural Education Research Center, Beijing Normal University. Expert for the UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education program since 2005, responsible for program evaluation, field research, curriculum development, teacher training etc. Developer of Life Skills for Girls textbook. Expert advisor for the "life skills for girls" Wechat public account.



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Due to the long-term influence of traditional teaching philosophy and methods, many teachers were challenged to change, however chance to experience new approaches and to slowly adopt them. They started to pay more attention to the living background and learning background of the students, and understand the importance of learning about the children's background before teaching. They cared about the children's feedback in class, and gave the initiative in class to them through group discussion, question sharing, and one sentence for each person. They cared about the student's questions and emotions generated in class, were concerned about their growth experience and cooperation.

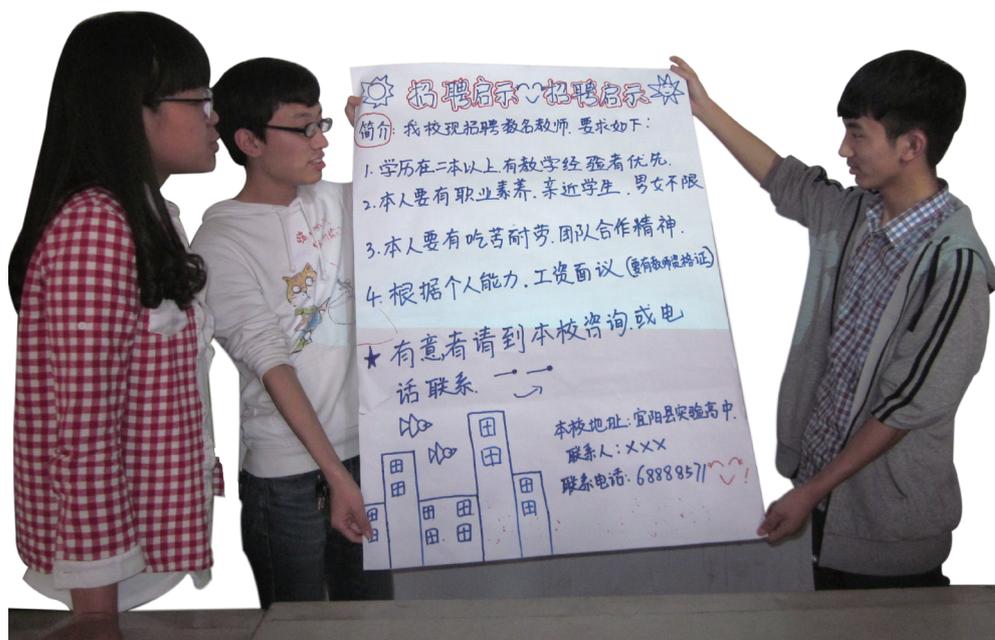
"The change of ideas brought on the change of behaviors."

— Meng Yanhong, Project Expert

I was fortunate to have participated in the research and editing of the elastic courses of UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project since 2009. From 2011, I participated in the teacher training, frontline training and supervision of the project. I witnessed the growth of project managers and teachers. Here I would like to share my memories of peers who care about the development of the project.



One of the most important tasks in adolescent non-formal education is teacher training. The teachers participating in our project came from various sources. There were project heads, science and technology tutors, teachers from middle schools, vocational schools and continuing education schools for teachers. Their individual work experience caused them to think differently of the way the project should be carried out. Traditionally, teachers are more concerned about the transfer and accumulation of knowledge, and were used to a teacher-oriented class in which the students carefully listen and receive information. However, the approach of the project was to pay more attention to the experience and feelings of the students: to conduct student-oriented classes in which the students are guided to link the knowledge they already have, understand the value of their growth to sustainable development, and learn about all the support they can get from various social resources, and thus help them establish a better self-awareness. Due to the differences in teaching ideas and methods, our preliminary training did not achieve ideal results. Many participants mainly acquired the knowledge, but did not meet the desired requirements of the project. Therefore, to conduct ideological and methodological training according to the teachers' diversification became the important task of the project.



The advancement of our project is abreast with the educational reform in China. Many teachers had started to try leaving more room for students to experience and think in class. However, it was not easy to change the traditional teaching ideas that had been used for years. Our teachers often wanted to "teach the students" instead of "involve the students", so we often saw students sitting in a circle "listening to a lecture" instead of "discussing learning".

As such, every teacher's training started with explaining children's rights, peer education, and life skills. The CAST project supervisors monitored the training courses all along, and appointed teachers who had been highly involved in the project to teach the courses. They would prepare the lessons, take the lessons, and supervise the teaching and learning process all in a group, so that the teachers being trained could systematically understand the educational philosophy and features of the participatory teaching model. The teachers were also guided to use the participatory teaching model to experience the teaching process and objectives of the Life, Employment, Development series.

Due to the long-term influence of traditional teaching philosophy and methods, many teachers were challenged to change, however, the project training gave them a chance to experience new approaches and to slowly adopt them. They started to pay more attention to the living background and learning background of the students, and understand the importance of learning about the children's background before teaching. They cared about the children's feedback in class, and gave the initiative in class to them through group discussion, question sharing, and one sentence for each person. They cared about the student's questions and emotions generated in class, were concerned about their growth experience and cooperation. In 2012, during the interpersonal relationship training at Zen Martial Arts School in Henan, one learner was overly expressive, but the teacher did not use the common strategy of "interrupting, diverting and sharing after class". Instead, the teacher directly turned to this topic and let the students form groups to discuss what kind of behaviour is most liked by all in interpersonal communication.

After everyone shared the results of group discussions, the teacher summarized the knowledge point: the principles of interpersonal communication are respect, sincerity and mutual benefit, tolerance, cooperation, and understanding. The students gained better self-cognition and growth during their own learning process. In this sort of class, there are no comments in negative forms such as doubt, criticism, and interruption, only guidance for the learning process.

The adjustment of teachers' educational philosophy gave them new ideas about teaching design. The first step of teaching design is to know the students, including their background, current situation and specific needs for the training. This step is vital to the subsequent training. In the teaching design, they also established such steps as pre-test, post-test, identification of training objectives, selection of training content and methods, and teaching assessment. These changes were all brought about by the change of teaching philosophy.

Another outstanding change was that the description of teaching objectives become specific and detailed. At first, the teaching objectives of the training teachers were rather broad and did not focus on the theme of the training. It often occurred that the process was lively, but the effect was merely superficial. After several training sessions, the learners were more impressed and reported feedback in terms of their feeling and sentiments, which was an indication that the training had been beneficial. A teacher from Shaanxi said that after she took the teacher training course, she applied the "participatory teaching" philosophy to her own teaching practices. She made the teaching activities in class more lively and interesting, and the teaching became very smooth and the teacher-student relationship became more



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harmonious. The other teachers envied her, and asked her what she did. So she told them the key points of participatory teaching method. In later training, she shared with everyone this experience and her thoughts. Everyone felt that the training of non-formal education project changed their educational and teaching mindset, and **the change of mindset brought about the change of teaching behaviors.**

Meng Yanhong: She started to take part in the UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project for teenagers in 2006, and participated in the textbook development and compilation of the non-formal education project. She also attended a number of teacher training sessions and field visits.





"I am deeply concerned about these rural children, because I was one of them. I can still remember the first time I picked up a phone in the city, I was too nervous to hear and talk, and I did not know how to answer it. That was because I had never touched such a thing, and I could not make it if I had not seen it or learned it. So one of my principles in being involved in the project is to be intuitive. Let the children see as much as possible, then they may be inspired of something else. "

— Xie Meiqing, Anding, Gansu

Xie Meiqing: This is how we should teach!

In January 2011, when young migrant workers returned home for Chinese New Year, we seized the opportunity to organize the UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education course titled "An Introductory Course to Career Life" to this population group. I carefully studied the textbook, prepared the lessons, and made powerpoint slides. In the sessions, I introduced to the students to the basics about a working life through videos, performance, case analysis, role play, group discussion, quiz, games, and presentations. I also invited successful out-of-school girls to give a speech based on their own experience. In the meantime, I put forward some suggestions on the final revision of this course.

In October, the first training course for the teachers was held in Beijing, in which I also participated. After I returned, I immediately started to prepare lessons and find training participants. After several twists and turns, the students from the employment class at Dingxi Vocational Secondary School of Science and Technology became participants of the training course, just as I wished.

We then held the training course on Life Skills for Girls for out-of-school teenagers in February 2012. It was warmly welcomed at Dingxi Vocational Secondary School of Science and Technology by the teachers and students. But I heard that some counties still have not held it. Based on my experience, I think one of the reasons is that the male teachers feel awkward to give such lessons, and the training course requires the presence of both genders. Often, the teachers feel awkward to give the lessons with boys around. However, our training practices have proved that this course can be successful with boys and girls present.

In late April, when we gave this training course to the employment class at Dingxi

The issues this course deals with needs as much discussion as possible. For example, what is perplexing the teenagers at this age and what are their problems requires time for open discussion and a lot of sensitivity, which the teacher must allow for. In one case, a girl mentioned that she had four or five very close friends since childhood, but they had drifted apart. Some of them were still contacting each other on the phone but others were out of touch now. She could not understand why the previously close friends would not communicate with her any more, but they would still get in touch with others. She wondered if they looked down upon her and felt inferior. In another case, a girl's parents wanted to have a boy but had a number of girls instead. They gave her away to another family. After she grew up and learned the truth, she resented her parents and wondered why, among all her siblings, they gave her away. She always felt that she was not welcomed in the new family and could not get along with her parents. In another case, the child felt inferior and at loss because of stuttering; and in another, the parents' divorce caused a negative impact on their child. These are all sensitive issues which need a sensitive and open environment in which to discuss.

Vocational Secondary School of Science and Technology, Ms. Zhang Yan, who involved in the curriculum development, came specifically to attend the class. This class had 29 students including six boys. At first, they were embarrassed and unwilling to participate; so we assigned them all to one group. Ms. Zhang and I also joined this group to guide them to have a discussion. Then they discussed very well and searched information online with their cellphones on gender-related issues. The group of boys presented to the class the results of their discussion. So, it appears that if the teacher guides well, the students' shyness will gradually disappear. They will think that they are merely discussing a question.

I believe that in this course, the teacher must first lighten the atmosphere in the classroom, and let the students open themselves up, before turning to the subject. The teacher should not apply the rules adopted by general knowledge courses mechanically to this course. In this course, there are no good students or problem students. Everyone just needs to actively participate. These basic principles should be understood by the students before the course; otherwise they will think they are taking lessons at school, which will not allow them to fully benefit.

I taught the course for two years, and in 2014, I trained a young female teacher from the Vocational Secondary School of Science and Technology, who also taught quite well. Her son was at the same age with her students, so she drew on her own experience of communicating with her son, and told the real story of her son's interaction with a girl to her students. This is what I also emphasized to the teachers: they should use examples and situations from their real life.

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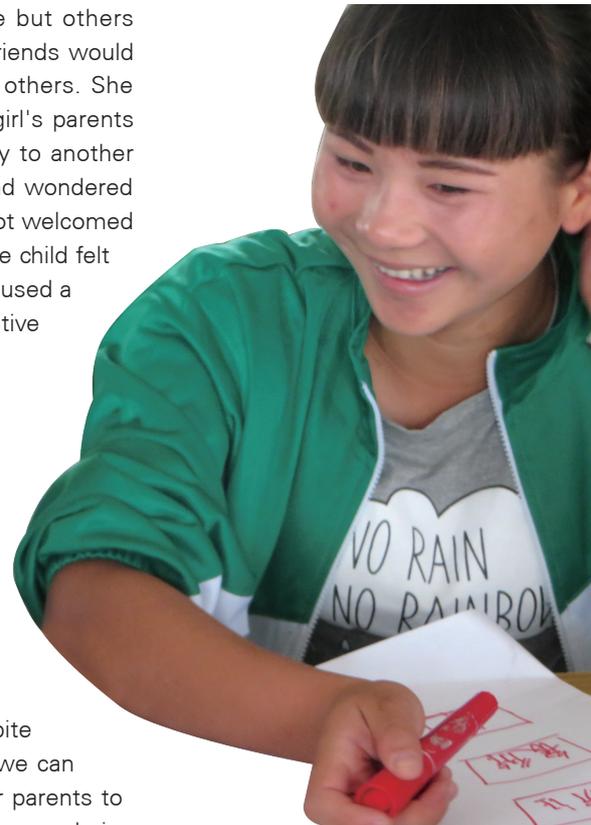
These discussions were real. In such an environment, the students will reveal their true feelings. Some discussions may not actually solve the problem, but the children will feel relieved by talking about it. However, some discussions can actually solve problems. For example, the case of the girl who was sent to another family. In open discussion, the teachers and other students can talk about how this happens because traditional mores continue to be strongly held in many parts of the country; and that it is not about whether parents love a child or do not. We can talk about the dilemma of their parents: that even in recent times in some rural areas, people would have been looked down upon if they did not have a boy child. We can discuss that despite these social pressures, parents still love all their children. In the discussions we can share how the fine for breaking the birth control policy was too much for their parents to bear. In the case of the stuttering child, I would give her opportunities to speak more during the training.

As for parents' divorce, usually the students would not tell their own teachers about such a situation. We should try to communicate with their teachers to see if they can help, and we should also communicate with the kids, encourage them to directly talk to their parents about how they feel. If you keep silent, how can others know your feelings? The same situation may induce different feelings at different ages.

The training must be based on real life for the students. Even if the teacher could not finish the course within three days as planned, he or she should discuss with the children the issues and questions pertinent to their peers as much as possible. The teacher must keep in mind the course questions they encounter, or questions that their own children or those of the same age may have, and try to make the course more targeted. The course should not be carried out according to set rules or only based on prepared materials. For example, if a stuttering girl intends to speak but cannot say anything for the moment, we should try to let her speak out slowly even if it should take 10 minutes.

We must understand the real purpose of the training. **It is for the children, not just for the sake of accomplishing an assignment.** As teachers, we should not do it perfunctorily, but ensure that the best interests of the children are placed first. If we do so, the kids can feel it and think it worthwhile.

The children all reported in their summary that the teachers had a nice attitude, and **this was the first time they experienced being treated as a friend by the teachers in so many years of schooling, and that they felt happy.** Our training is not just to give the lessons, but is meant to target the students in a particular class. The course is made for them. We should let them talk about or write down the questions they have in all aspects of life, and



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try to collect the questions as many as possible for analysis and application.

Teenagers these days are quite complex, and we cannot expect that every child will benefit as equally from a course. However, **I think that every training session is worthwhile, even if there is just a** one or two students who experience some change. I also insisted on collecting information on the children's gains, feelings, opinions and suggestions after each activity or training. When I first started doing the project, some of the children had difficulties in writing their feelings and thoughts, so they spoke, and I wrote.

Many of the children receiving our training were very motivated and mentally prepared. For example, the children who had never been to school before had a deep desire for development, although they had not had been given the chance. When the discussions and real life situations in the course matched their needs, sparks would be produced, and the children would become fully engaged, find extra motivation, and be focussed on learning and developing.

Xie Meiqing: She is currently the deputy director general of the Bureau of Science and Technology of Anding district, Dingxi city, Gansu province. Chairman of Dingxi Association for Science and Technology, and member of the 9th Anding Committee of CPPCC





It is not for the sake of accomplishing an assignment that we give training. We do it to popularize family knowledge. After the girls acquire the knowledge, they can teach their friends, sisters, and mother. This is why we say the real training is a soul-stirring sublimation of beauty.

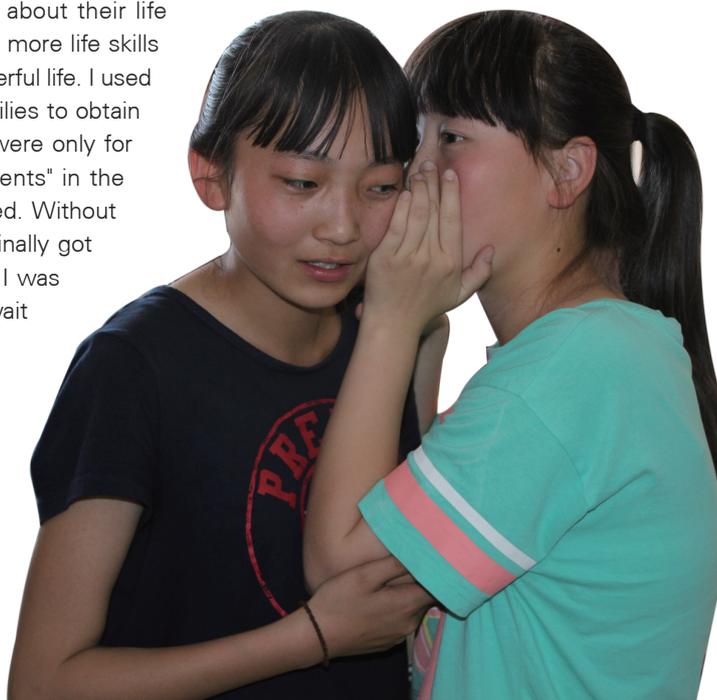
"Living under the same blue sky, every child is a bright star. They all deserve a happy and romantic life. The rural kids especially need our care and love. The training is not just about the popularization of knowledge; it is a continuation of love."

— Shan Xinfang, Ruyang, Henan

I am an ordinary vocational school teacher. In daily life, I am a typical girl from mountains with a kind, sincere, and warm heart. 25 years ago, unwilling to accept the life of my forefathers as toiling peasants, I decided to leave the mountains and see the world. I got enrolled at a university with my own efforts, and set off to find my own path.

My first encounter with the Life Skills for Girls course was at the early summer of 2012. I was fortunate to be appointed by the Ruyang County Association for Science and Technology to attend the UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education training in Beijing. In my work, I mainly get in touch with teenagers of 15 or 16 years old, who are at the time of life where they should be blossoming and developing. However, with many of these children I saw helplessness, confusion and misgivings about their life and future. I always wondered how to help them master more life skills knowledge so that they can live an independent and wonderful life. I used to do volunteering work and help children from poor families to obtain funding. But these activities had their limitations. They were only for children with good grades. The so-called "problem students" in the eyes of school, parents, and society were seldom noticed. Without formal training, my efforts could not go far. This time I finally got the right opportunity through the UNICEF-CAST training. I was filled with positive emotions and thoughts. Lucky kids, wait for me!

Towards non-formal education, I felt both strange and familiar. The specific content and methods of the project were new to me, but I felt familiar with its objectives, which were closely aligned to my longstanding wishes. So I studied hard the training methods taught by the teachers and mastered their teaching techniques. I remember the first time I talked about my thoughts about the training over the microphone. With tears in my eyes due to excitement,



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I said, "Although this is the first time I am involved in this project, I am confident that I will do well. Teachers, you can wait for my good news!" After this training, I finally understood the essence of "participatory" teaching. It is not just about letting the kids participate, but more importantly, about the results of the participation, which is the ability to analyse and solve problems raised by the other students or the teacher. I started by improving my own teaching skills. As a reward for my efforts, I won the first prize in the municipal high-quality class competition in two consecutive years, and won the second prize in the provincial high quality class competition and became the city-level subject leader in the same year. I owe all these achievements to our project. As a result, the project became increasingly enjoyable for me as it stimulated me to grow fast.

When we began the life skills training to students, problems inevitably emerged. For example, are we supposed to only give training to girls when teaching the course on "Life Skills for Girls"? Our project training requires that both genders are covered. I recalled the words of Ms. Zhang Lili and Ms. Zhang Yan during the training. They said, the Life Skills for Girls is not meant to change the girls, but to help them master some life skills and properly play the role of a girl, a mother, and a grandmother in their future life. Maybe a small session will change the life of the three generations in their family. In family life, there are both men and women. With this inspiration, I gathered all the training participants before training and shared with them these notions; meanwhile, I formed a group with other project teachers to discuss and prepare training materials suitable for both genders.

After the first training, our worries were all relieved. Everyone spoke freely and forgot the gender difference. Once we discussed whether the virginity of a girl is important. A frail-looking boy stood up and said, "If there is a beautiful flower and we just pinch off the pistil, can it still bloom beautifully?" The whole class burst into an uproar, and then fell into silence. The following discussions were more and more heated, and the training carried on smoothly.



It is not for the sake of accomplishing an assignment that we give training. We do it to popularize family knowledge. After the girls acquire the knowledge, they can teach their friends, sisters, and mother. This is why we say the real training is a soul-stirring sublimation of beauty. Once in a training in the countryside, during the break, a girl secretly passed me a note saying that her mother was often beaten by her father. Every time this happened, she was too frightened to say anything, and she had even thought about not getting married and becoming a nun. After getting her consent, we had a discussion on this issue. After the training, she said happily, "I have completely put away my worries. I have learned that the situation in my family is an individual case, and now I know that children should be protected and can safeguard their own rights through formal ways."

Living under the same blue sky, every child is a bright star. They all deserve a happy and wonderful life. The rural children especially need our care and love. The training is not just about the spread of knowledge, it is about helping children to have the skills and confidence to develop to their full potential, to lead a healthy and happy life, and to be able to contribute to their family and community.

Shan Xinfang: She has been involved in UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project for teenagers since 2011. She is currently a teacher at Ruyang Vocational Secondary School of Henan, and won the first prize in the municipal high-quality class competition in two consecutive years, and the second prize if the provincial high quality class competition, and became the city-level subject leader in the same year.



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The participatory teaching method inspired me, and the equal relationship between teachers and students changed my previous thinking. In this special teaching environment, the bold performance of the kids shortened the distance; they behaved actively and thought freely, which all contributed to a harmonious atmosphere.



"After the strong earthquake at Lushan on April 20, everyone actively worked on the post-disaster reconstruction, hoping to rebuild their home as early as possible. As the post-disaster reconstruction went on vibrantly, the parents devoted most of their energy to construction and tended to overlook the issues of teenagers in their growth after the serious disaster. The non-formal education project for teenagers changed the status of the kids in society and led people to pay attention to them."

— Luo Zhiqin, Lushan, Sichuan

I am Luo Zhiqin. I started to work as the vice chairman of Lushan County Association for Science and Technology in 2012. The first time I encountered this project was at the end of 2014 when I just returned to the Association for Science and Technology from the Reconstruction Office. The parents of the students who participated in the non-formal education project were mostly working in other cities or engaged in post-disaster reconstruction at home, and had little time to take care of their kids. The kids showed limited self-care ability, self-management, security awareness, and adaptation to society. They were mischievous and undisciplined, yet the teachers indulged them and left them alone.

This was also the first time I came into direct contact with these students. To be honest, I was very disappointed. However, these disappointments all went away as I got more involved in the project.

The students who participated in the project were either in-school students or rural teenagers who did not go to school. We publicized the project and recruited students through a variety of ways, such as contacting the schools, going to rural households to encourage registration, posting flyers, releasing announcements on online platforms including WeChat and QQ, and media reports on the county TV channel. By these means, we made the school and society know about the opportunities provided through the project and increase their attention on the needs of teenagers. During the recruiting process, we gradually attracted the attention of



parents. They consulted about the project and signed up on-site or over the phone, hoping their children could participate, learn life skills, and achieve better growth.

When the activities first started, many teenagers were quite shy and reserved, unwilling to talk, but under the guidance of the teachers, they actively shared their stories. In the situation performance activity, they performed audaciously. From these moments, I saw that the teenagers from the countryside have the desire to express themselves and win recognition and be positive. However, they appeared to be unsociable only because they lacked the right skills, guidance and encouragement in daily life. **The non-formal education training is a way to make up for the lack of care and encouragement for these teenagers and allow them to know and understand themselves, and find a better self during the activities.**

Along with my participation in the project, **the image in my mind of the children changed.** The children of my friends and relatives are like most of the teenagers - often disobedient, undisciplined, always hanging around or picking up fights. In my eyes, they were a bunch of good-for-nothing kids. Gradually, I found that I had prejudice against them because I knew nothing about them. It was the non-formal education project that brought us together. The participatory teaching method inspired me, and the equal relationship between teachers and students changed my previous thinking. In this special teaching environment, the bold performance of the kids shortened the distance; they behaved actively and thought freely, which all contributed to a harmonious atmosphere. In a discussion on their biggest wishes, most children from rural areas said that they wished to grow up quickly so as to share the burden of their parents and let them have some rest. Tears welled up as I listened. I felt ashamed of my previous prejudice, and felt warm about the inspirations brought about by this project. As various activities went on, I completely changed my views of the children. If you are willing to discover, you will always find many shining points on them. They were energetic, loyal, active and ambitious, and were also working hard for their own pursuits.

Since the implementation of the project in 2014, so many of the children have developed and changed. In my initial contact with them, I found that playing was in their nature. It was the hobby of many teenagers to fool around with friends, play online games, and lie in. They had no plans for their future. These attitudes worried me and other teachers

We do not require the students to learn much knowledge, but at least we should let them have a clear picture of their life to come, which has always been the primary task of our training. I believe our subtle educational method had some influence on them. Most of the children who were involved in the training were inspired. Their ways of talking, acting, and thinking were not as casual and careless as they used to be. They have grown calm and mature.

Just as importantly, the parents, teachers, and government staff all started to pay more attention to the health and growth of children after the disaster. I realize that my colleagues start to take interest in teenagers' education and they often asked me about the non-formal education project. The parents of the teenagers who participated in our training sometimes talk with us and discuss the growth of their children.

The adolescent non-formal education project has built a bridge connecting us and the teenagers we care about, which is a good start. I believe that as the activities carry on in the future, more teenagers will get involved and we will help them develop their ability and build a better future.

Luo Zhiqin: She started to take part in UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project for teenagers in 2014 and was in charge of this project. She used to be the vice chairman of Lushan County Association for Science and Technology in Sichuan.



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Interpersonal communication serves as the bridge between counsellors and out-of-school adolescents, and the lubricant for smooth project management. Appropriate, effective, timely, sincere and equal communication not only facilitates our mutual understanding, trust and cooperation, but also takes the project to effective implementation. A project platform with sincerity, understanding, trust and respect has been created this way, enabling children to enjoy themselves in a relaxed and happy environment.

“Thanks to UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project, the children and I have been endowed with the best time of our lives. The joint project is also a long-awaited platform for realizing our dreams and stepping up to success.”

— Li Ximing, Anding, Gansu

I was born in a military family. When I was a kid, I was an average boy at school and enjoyed playing around with my buddies. My parents often scolded me for hanging out, but they never listened to my explanations, let alone communicating with me. And it is not rare for rural children to be shy and feel unworthy, especially a drop-out girl in impoverished mountainous areas, as they have not seen much of the outside world.



I have been engaged in adolescent education for more than a decade. As I understand, non-formal education starts with communication. Good communication is the prerequisite for non-formal education, and proper communication skills will make our efforts more efficient and successful.

To overcome the difficulties of communicating with adolescents in impoverished areas, I decided to start from my side from the very beginning of activities. Playing with children is the love of my life. When 50 out-of-school adolescents arrived at the provincial capital for an event, I received them at the entrance to the hotel. I was waving and shouting: “Welcome my kids! I’ve been waiting for you for a long time!” This made the children smile.

During the event, I was able to help them to learn so many things: how to fill in their personal information, how to use the toilet and air conditioner, and even how to open and close the door. I carried event uniforms and materials to their rooms. We got to know more about each other by playing together and making jokes, and I knew that this was opening up the channels for better communication.

In the evening, I visited these children, learning their local dialects and playing games with them. I was playing by the rules and would be penalized whenever I failed a game, just like what they did to each other.

The event venue was designed as an open area, without any podiums or platforms. We drew lots to decide where to sit in a circle. Everyone was sitting on the ground, an equal engagement of both students and teachers.

Interpersonal communication serves as the bridge between counsellors and out-of-school adolescents, and the lubricant for smooth project management. Appropriate, effective, timely, sincere and equal communication not only facilitates our mutual understanding, trust and cooperation, but also takes the project to effective implementation. A project platform with sincerity, understanding, trust and respect has been created this way, enabling children to enjoy themselves in a relaxed and happy environment.

Communication between project managers and target audiences is a long term effort that requires meticulousness and patience. We have to be careful in how we do it, making non-formal education concepts and ideas an integral part of our daily project work. When project staff and teachers communicate with children, they should not place themselves at the

opposite side, but take every chance to sincerely try every means possible in ensuring easy communication at anywhere any time.

Our communication is quiet and pervasive. Such exchange of ideas is not shallow at all, but emotionally and conceptually inter-penetrating and inter-influential. It's not to make a splash, but to create a relaxing and quiet atmosphere for out-of-school adolescents to feel the enthusiasm and intellectual resonance, enjoying the human touch while improving their minds.

We all have to **adapt to the change of times** and be flexible. The appropriate time, place and approach have to be chosen to better communicate with adolescents. Our communication should be adaptable to adolescents' psychology and character traits, and be kept abreast of the times.

We need to **be persistent in communicating** with adolescents. It may take some time for adolescents to fully understand what we are doing in non-formal education: their understanding would evolve from perceptual to rational, and may go backward sometimes. With such fluctuations in mind, it is just being too ideal for each communication session to be perfect and each event a complete success. Only through persistent efforts can we communicate further and touch each other's hearts.

Once I met a girl from Anding District, who was too shy to speak up. With a microphone in hand, she dared not introduce herself, just lowered her head and made no sound. With hands shaking and voices muted, how could she talk and communicate with others? I guided her along the way, sitting beside her during training sessions, having lunch and playing games with her. Her peers also kept helping and encouraging her. With these efforts, she made progress.

Then at a party, she sang a song and won applause from the audience with her nice voice. This helped her smile with confidence. The next year, I took her to the "Driving Dreams" event in Beijing. She acted as hostess at the party and was highly appraised by all. This event had further boosted her confidence and improved her capabilities.

The non-formal education project has helped adolescents to be happier and more confident. This is a dream coming true for me, and a warm big family for us all.

Li Ximing, male. He has participated UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project since 2003 and used to be the project officer at Children and Youth Science Center of Gansu Province. He is now retired.



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As a project officer, I have to define the project framework and detailed tasks, identify timelines and required resources, guide and work with my colleagues closely. Through working in the field for many years, I have learned that people are the most important factor in project Management.



“Through working in the field for many years, I have learned that people are the most important factor in project management. ”

— You Xin, Henan Province

Henan Province has completed three project cycles since joining the UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project in 1999. During the recent cycle of 2011-2015, we established children and youth learning development centers in two project counties of Ruyang and Yiyang, all equipped with computers, books, recreational and sports facilities. With the support and guidance of the national project office, we have completed 81 sessions of “Step into Society: Life, Employment, Development” training, reaching more than 2,400 adolescents. Provincial and county level youth forums, teacher experience-sharing events and other themed supporting activities have also been organized.

The training has been widely welcomed by schools and students. For example, Mr. Zhang Shejun, vice-principal of Ruyang County School for Teachers’ Advanced Studies, finds the training a useful supplement to the school’s existing curriculum. It helps students to learn more life skills outside basic courses and specialized courses. Students get to know more about the society, better preparing them for the transition to society. Teachers can apply the participative teaching approach in the classrooms, improving their teaching capabilities and classroom effectiveness. The County Science and Technology Association has exerted greater influence and found more resources by organizing and promoting this training course. The staff at the science and technology association have learned various working approaches and skills, such as event planning and organization, coordination and liaison, multiple-format presentation and exhibitions.

The liaison between the project leading group and front-line staff has raised high requirements for project management at provincial level. Project officers at different levels are required to cover the following responsibilities:

1. Supervise and guide the work of staff at the County Science and Technology Association. Monitor and identify difficult problems at the county level for effective resolution and coordinated efforts.

Adolescent Education Project Case Study (2011-2015)

and shared interests. We have shared information from different places, promoting project execution and development.

As a project officer, I have to define project framework and detailed tasks, identify timelines and required resources, guide and work with my colleagues closely. Through working in the field for many years, I have learned that people are the most important factor in project management. Project execution needs collaboration of multiple parties, including staff at county association, colleagues at provincial association, project officers and leaders at national association, experts and teachers. Of all the partners, we have been working most frequently with county project officers and teachers. Through years of working together, I have developed a set of working approaches and principles for effective cooperation:

- **Trust** and offer timely support. Create a good environment and working conditions for our partners, especially technical support and room for development for front-line teachers.
- **Becoming partners.** Develop the attitude and habit of working together, shouldering hardships and handling difficult tasks with others.
- **Offering flexibility to our partners.** By defining training direction and principles beforehand, overall targets and detailed processes could be handled by our partners.
- **Taking the perspective of others.** Consider what teachers, students and project staff have in mind and make them happy.

For teachers to play a bigger role in the non-formal education project a number of actions are taken. We contact the schools to ensure they allocate more time for the life skills training; the contribution from teachers are subsidized properly; teachers are well supported in their daily work and for participation in relevant training activities. Such measures have inspired and motivated teachers to be part of the project. In all our coordination efforts, we have followed the principle of equality, respect and trust. **Teachers are attracted because the benefits of the project itself are meaningful, and they are invited as our significant partners.**

On the basis of quality training and good partnership, the Provincial Science and Technology Association has kept a stable and close relationship with project schools. At the annual year-end meeting, all departments and counterparts for this project exchanged work experience, identified and solved problems, improving training and execution capabilities as a team. We have also leveraged TV, website and newspaper campaigns, encouraged students and teachers to help us reach a wider audience through We media. We have adjusted our textbooks to adapt to social development, asked for support from other schools and counties, and tried to include the training curriculum as optional courses at schools. When we are even better prepared, we will offer training sessions to the general public, benefiting more adolescents through our project

You Xin. He joined UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project in 2001 and is currently a project officer at Henan Children and Youth Science Center.





"We have been actively exploring resources and collaborating along the way, meanwhile engaging in more publicity efforts."

— Song Hao, Shaanxi Province

Shaanxi Province launched UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project in 1990 (phase 3). Adolescent development training centers were established in two project counties of Yongshou and Danfeng, where "Step into Society: Life, Employment, Development" skill training sessions have been offered. A series of activities including "project organization and management", "project curriculum training" and "teacher team building" were carried out at provincial and county levels. Our practices and experiences are shared as below:

I. Reviewing and planning prepare for objective-oriented full mobilization.

At the beginning of the year, project staff and teachers were been mobilized at provincial and county levels for work reviewing and planning. They summarized project progress and identified problems through workshop discussions and data analysis. A "project workshop" was organized to report and discuss project achievements, improving their professional capabilities, thus laying a solid foundation for the year ahead.

II. Project staff and teachers trained for team capability building.

Outstanding and enthusiastic teachers were selected to attend various training sessions organized by the project head office. Experience sharing events, teaching demonstration sessions and workshops have been organized at provincial and county levels. Such activities motivated and enabled project staff and teachers, contributing to overall project improvement.



III. Research, monitoring and guidance in place for timely problem identification and solution.

Project counties have organized field visits to monitor project progress, convened workshops to share experience and achievement and surveyed target groups to guide course promotion efforts. The authority has supervised project training activities and inspected development of the training centers. These supervision and quality assurance activities helped to adjust and improve implementation measures.

IV. Collaboration and communication enhanced for greater appeal and impact.

We have been actively exploring resources and collaborating extensively, thus enhancing publicity for the project. Out-of-school adolescents in villages have been attracted to be part of the training program. QQ groups have been created for participants to share activity information and feedback. Besides online media, news reports, feature presentations, bulletin letters, popular science galleries, bulletin boards and publicity caravans, diversified activities like “the spring of science and technology”, “popular science day” and “Youth Forum” have been held to reach a wider audience. Materials and textbooks donated during these activities help further enhance visibility and gain influence for the project.

V. Coordination at all levels for further buy-in and collaboration.

Joint efforts have been made to improve “adolescent development training centers”, share training events, teachers and facilities, and drive efficiency. Education authorities have coordinated schools for project promotion efforts through various channels and formats. Such activities have updated concepts held by project staff and teachers, promote growth of adolescents at different stages and with different backgrounds. Education diversification and socialization have been achieved at project sites.



VI. Project management improved for smooth implementation.

Drawing from successful experiences, the collaborative management mechanism has been improved. Project plans have been made and followed; event materials collected and analyzed; experiences summarized to improve working approach. We have strengthened communication and liaison efforts, for example, sending project documents and materials in a timely manner, summarizing and updating project recommendations, plans and summaries, and resolving problems and meeting demands along the way. Awareness for serving the front line and a sound working order have also drove project results significantly.

VII. Performance evaluated to drive motivation and results.

County project offices have evaluated project progress along the dimensions of organization, implementation, coordination, facility improvement, information reporting, publicity, teacher training etc., issuing a circular on annual project progress accordingly. Project offices have also evaluated teacher performance on course preparation, class timings, working attitude, and training results, and awarded staff and teachers with outstanding achievements. These events have provided motivation to project organizers, staff and teachers to boost the effectiveness of their overall performance.

Song Hao, project officer at Children and Youth Science Center, Shaanxi Province, has been engaged in UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education since 1996.



“Project teachers have a good mastery of the participatory teaching approach. The life skills-based education concept and course lay a foundation for rolling out the non-formal education project in Wulate Zhongqi No. 1 Secondary School and help us develop a strong team for teaching and publicity.”

— Zhang Huiqiong, Wulate Zhongqi

Wulate Zhongqi of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region joined UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project in 2011. The project has been smoothly implemented with strong leadership and innovative working approaches, bringing fruitful results and valuable experiences.

I. New measures for student recruitment

After the kick-off meeting in summer of 2011, our project office immediately set up a leading group and built a teachers' team. Before training adolescents, the project office organized student recruitment campaigns of various forms. We printed enrolment brochures to be placed in secondary schools, supermarkets, bookstores and other sites frequently visited by adolescents. However, the project was still not well known by the public. So we shifted focus to the community. We visited communities and trained community service workers, helping them to understand the objective and significance of the project. Then community service workers would directly talk with out-of-school adolescents (left behind or unemployed) and recruit them into the project. Out-of-school adolescents participated in the training as they wished. All the people around us were mobilized to help us recruit students, including project team members' friends, relatives and students. In this way, we solved the problem of student enrolment.

We also enhanced project publicity. The local newspaper and TV station reported on our training event and student feedback. As well, bulletin boards, QQ and WeChat were used



to reach a broader audience. To further motivate the students, we added themed popular science activities in our regular training agenda. Our parent-child youth forum in 2012 helped adolescents to know more about their hometown and inspired their love for this land. Participation from parents also helped us to obtain external support and smooth out our cross-departmental collaborations

II. Promoting the non-formal education program to schools

To cover a wider audience, the project office organized a promotion activity for the “Step into Society: Life, Employment, Development” course. The promotional event leveraged our experience in the previous two years and was highly valued by local government authorities and the society. At the vocational training class of Wulate Zhongqi No. 1 Senior Secondary School, the course was included in the annual teaching plan as a regular program. Up until now, the course has covered 193 students through 18 sessions/more than 340 class hours.

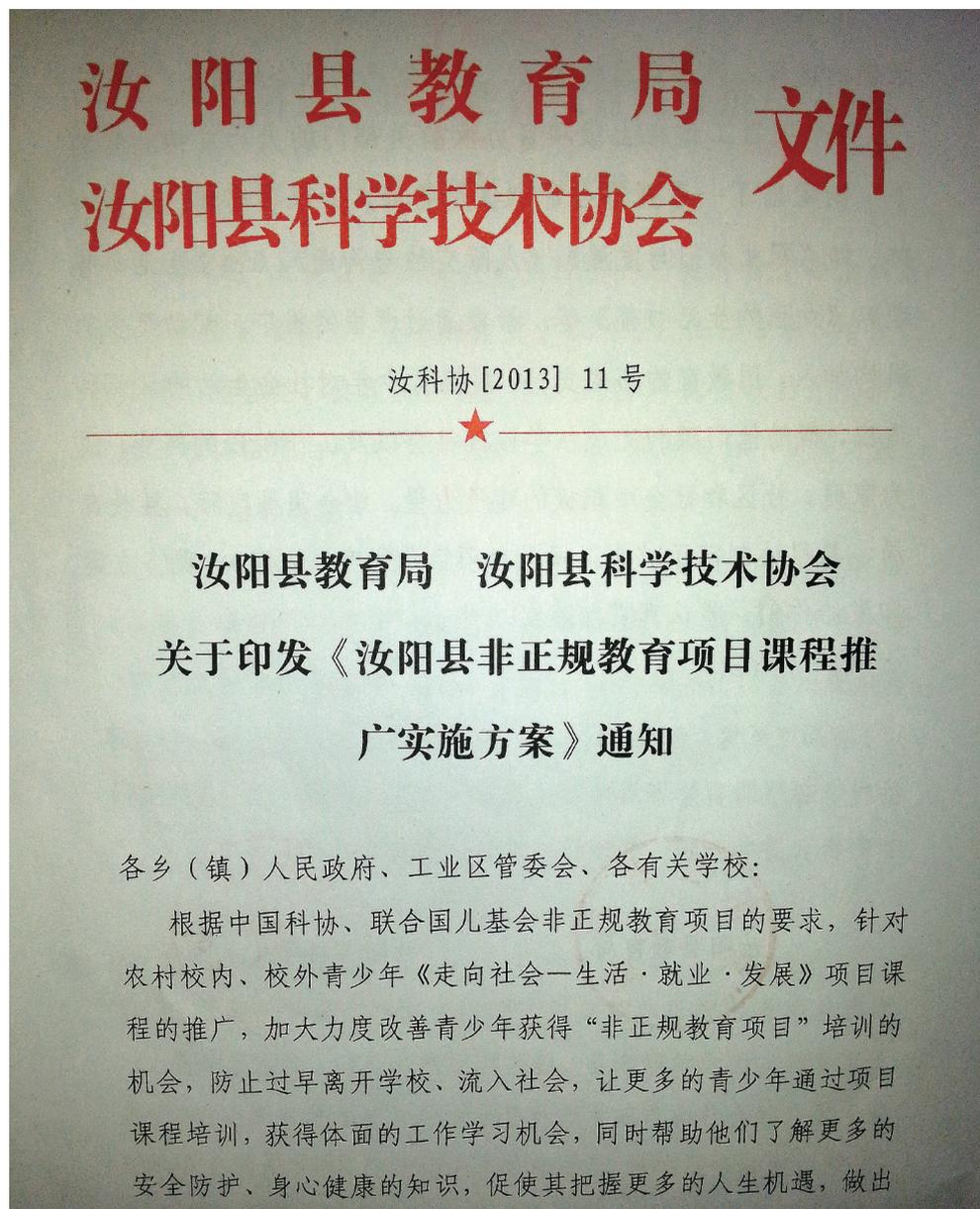
In March 2015, Wulate Zhongqi No.1 Secondary School proposed to include the non-formal education program as part of their unique school-based curriculum and use it throughout the school. Circulatory teaching has been arranged from Grade 1 to Grade 3, 8-10 class hours for each semester. The course would be finished within one academic year, Grade 2 and Grade 3 could select the course in accordance with their schedule (Grade 3 curriculum to be supplemented with other courses). The course is offered on every second Monday. If one semester is calculated as 20 weeks, that makes it 20 class hours per academic year. Student questionnaires and classroom teaching records are used for performance evaluation, making it part of the school’s regular classroom evaluation effort. The project office has coordinated support from high level authorities in a timely manner. Our promotional plan was approved and well supported by experts. Teachers involved in this project have mastered the participatory teaching approach and life skills-based education concepts. Thus, the project has trained a capable team of teachers for rolling out the non-formal education program.

With such achievements, we still have a long way to go. We sincerely hope adolescent life skills training could touch more people and exert even greater influence.

Zhang Huiqiong joined the UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project in 2011. She is the Secretary General, head of general office and director of the department for associations at the Science and Technology Association of Wulate Zhongqi, Bayannur City, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.



The non-formal education research group has defined a task-driven training model with both individual participation and group exploration. The model leverages life-long learning theory and constructivism theory, covering modules of task-driven process, individual participation, group exploration, result sharing, open evaluation and common progress.



The non-formal education project has become a unique "name card" for Ruyang County School for Teachers' Advanced Studies, and an major target for adolescents who fail to enter senior secondary school. Students have improved their cultural knowledge, life skills and overall capabilities, laying a solid foundation for a happy life.

— Zhang Shejun, Ruyang County, Henan

Ruyang County School for Teachers' Advanced Studies, as a standard institution for training teachers across the county, was established in 1983. The school has more than 1,500 students. The school serves as an intermediate between higher education and basic education, covering teaching, science education, research and training. Since 2013, with the support from the County Science and Technology Association and education bureau, the school has been actively offering UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education training, mainly for the technical secondary school. A total of 18 training sessions have been organized, covering more than 530 students. The project has reached almost all students

for pre-school education, improving their comprehensive capabilities and life skills, and has been highly praised and welcomed by teachers, students and parents. The project has also contributed to development of quality-oriented education in Ruyang County. Our school has focused on the following areas to promote the non-formal education curriculum:

Firstly, the project has won attention from our leaders. To include the project curriculum into our routine teaching program, **the school has set up a research group with a regular operation mechanism.** The non-formal education curriculum is similar to that of our school in terms of content setup, class size, age requirement, training objectives and student educational level. The project has a unique and fresh training approach, which is easily accepted by students. The school management decided to introduce the non-formal education curriculum in September 2013, making it a fresh supplement of our regular teaching program. The school also set up a project teacher research group with Principal Jiang Rongli as the director, Vice-principals Zhang Shejun and Wu Jiangjie as deputy directors. This research group **focuses on localized curriculum development** and setting up a platform for project promotion. The project follows the following procedures: project course promotion – experience summary – problem identification – reporting to senior authority – course improvement.

Secondly, we have adopted an integrated model for program promotion. The courses from the **project are integrated into the regular curriculum.** For example, the “Step into Society: Life, Employment, Development” course is combined with our “Career Planning and Career Guidance” course, and adapted to the actual needs of our school. As second graders are about to start their internships, this course is offered at the second year, while “Life Skills for Girls” is offered in the first year.

Intensive courses are integrated with regular ones. An intensive course of three days in a row is offered for each class. In addition, a regular course is held to supplement the intensive one, analysing a key issue or private matter, or solving a common problem for students in a dedicated time slot..

Courses for students at school are integrated with those for graduates. As graduates with working experience will have better understanding of certain issues, we have organized a special training for at-school students and graduated students during summer vacation of 2015.

The screenshot shows a Weibo page for the Ruyang County Association for Science and Technology. The header includes navigation links like '首页', '广场', '微群', '应用', '游戏', and a search bar. The profile section on the left shows the association's logo and a '+ 加关注' button. The main content area features a photo of a meeting with a banner that reads '汝阳县非正规教育项目课程推广会'. Below the photo is a public notice (公告) in Chinese, which discusses the promotion of non-formal education projects. The right sidebar contains a '新浪认证' (Sina Authentication) section, a '政府标签' (Government Tags) section with tags like '搞笑幽默', '旅游', '微博奇葩', '洛阳生活', and '新闻趣事', and a '他的粉丝' (His Followers) section with icons for various organizations like '常熟科协', '克州志愿', '佛山科协', and '佛山科协'.

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Thirdly, we have measured the workload of teachers participating in the project. As the non-formal education course is different in teaching approach, the school has decided to count it as 1.6 times the workload compared to that of regular courses. At the same time, we have strengthened teaching quality control measures. Teachers help organize and guide the teaching process; their capabilities define teaching efficiency and result. The teaching quality improvement relies on the teachers. Our school has been monitoring and improving project curriculum design (with centralized class preparation and teaching plan presentation activities), teaching practice, and teaching evaluation (for example, questionnaires). A teaching quality monitoring and control mechanism is in place, covering evaluation of teaching plans, teaching practices and teaching quality.

Since joining the project, our school has attached great importance to improving overall quality of teachers. In May 2014, Vice-principal Zhang Shejun sent out an invitation to the County Science and Technology Association, inviting experts and teachers involved in the project and some teachers from Yiyang County to observe our classroom and share experiences with our teachers. Besides strengthening learning and sharing among teachers, we have also kept exploring new teaching approaches. The non-formal education research group has defined a task-driven training model with both individual participation and group exploration. The model leverages life-long learning theory and constructivism theory, covering modules of task-driven process, individual participation, group exploration, result sharing, open evaluation and common progress. Specific scenarios have been considered while designing tasks, teachers



Zhang Shejun - Experience on Promoting Curriculum in Vocational School

organize, guide and help students in their independent thinking, group review and result-sharing activities, and lead students to reflect on what they have learned as to prepare better for the next session.

To build the teaching team, we have been actively improving classroom conditions, laying a foundation for subsequent project promotion activities. In the end of 2013, our school took more than 20,000 RMB out of our tight budget for a projector and a camera. The lecture hall has been developed into a major venue for training, with the support of new computers and acoustic equipment. In 2013 and 2014, we selected five experienced and enthusiastic young teachers to undertake training in Beijing and Zhengzhou, contributing to both teacher pipeline building and school condition improvement.

The non-formal education project has become a unique “name card” for Ruyang County School for Teachers’ Advanced Studies, and a major target for adolescents who fail to enter senior secondary school. Students have improved their cultural knowledge, life skills and overall capabilities, laying a solid foundation for a happy life.

Zhang Shejun has participated in UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project since August 2012. He is the vice-principal of Ruyang County School for Teachers’ Advanced Learning, responsible for the non-formal education project and project promotion throughout the county.



Adolescent Education Project Case Study (2011-2015)

The students loved the course, because it was not boring lectures, but learning moments woven with games. The main teacher, Wang Jianhua and the sign language teacher cooperated well. The students stretched their thinking, developed new interest, showed themselves, and experienced teamwork during the games.

"In recent years, news about juvenile delinquency of deaf people often appeared on newspapers; as a result, many people developed a prejudice against them. However, seldom do people know that the reason why deaf people commit crimes is often that they have limited experiences with interpersonal interaction and sometimes hold a grudge against society and normal hearing persons, while normal hearing persons are also wary of them. The UNICEF-CAST non-formal education project for teenagers provides a good platform for eliminating the communication obstacles between the two parties. I sincerely feel glad for the children in our school."

— Yang Min, Anding, Gansu

Dingxi Special Education School of Gansu province was formerly the special education class of Xiguan Primary School. It was established in 1994 with 36 students, including 29 students with hearing impairment, four students with visual impairment, and three with an intellectual impairment.

When the non-formal education project was first designed, it did not include special needs children as the object of training. However, after President Xie of Anding District Association for Science and Technology met with some deaf-mute children and their parents at an event in 2012, she delivered some materials of the non-formal education course on "Step into Society: Life, Employment, Development" to Principal Yang Min of the Special Education School, and made many efforts to ensure that the children could take the lessons. Principal Yang read the materials, found them very good, and sincerely hoped the students of the special school could also benefit from the course.

In order to explore how to integrate the non-formal education course into daily teaching, in 2013 the special school launched a course on Information Technology, with a view to finding effective ways of communication. With the joint efforts of the teachers and students, the course went on smoothly. This successful attempt enhanced the teachers' confidence in pushing it further forward.

In 2014, the school had 17 sixth-graders with hearing impairment. The Anding District Association for Science and Technology gave a two-day training on Independent Living and Self-Management to the students on a weekend. The students loved the course, because it was not boring lectures, but learning moments woven with games. The main teacher, Wang Jianhua, and the sign language teacher cooperated well. The students stretched their thinking, developed new interests, showed themselves, and experienced teamwork during the games. By midday, the students were reluctant to take a break and eager to accomplish their works.

These 17 students found work in September 2014. They were liked by their employers, but they still encountered some problems during the communication with their colleagues.



Yang Min - Experience on Promoting Life Skills Based Curriculum in Special School

In order to help deaf students improve their ability to communicate with others in life, study, and work, to establish their own image, take a positive attitude towards interpersonal interaction, and to build harmonious interpersonal relationships, with the guidance of successful experience and support of the superiors, the school chose the textbook on Interpersonal Interaction and Communication provided by Anding District Association for Science and Technology. The school provided lessons on interpersonal interaction and communication, according to the students' actual situation. Although the school did not organize systematic training, as only a limited number of teachers had received training before, the school teachers integrated the course content into daily teaching. The teachers organized a variety of activities to enable students interact more with able-bodied persons, helping them to to communicate with others.

After these helpful attempts, the teachers discussed how to improve the design of the course. They found that although the students had their basic life skills improved greatly after the training, they were still far from being able to adapt to the complicated and sometimes discriminatory community life. At the special education school, as the students live in the school for a long time, the deaf children usually were only communicating with other deaf children plus their teachers. Although normal hearing students often visit and play with them, these normal hearing students came with love and would not get into a conflict with the deaf children. Therefore, in a sense, they do not have the opportunity to deal with conflicts in complicated environment. It was only after the hearing-impaired children moved into mainstream society that they had to get along with normal hearing people. Therefore, the teachers felt that it was necessary to bring together special needs children and those without any disability to jointly take the course on Interpersonal Interaction and Communication. In the next period, the special school will focus on how to provide such opportunities to allow special children to really practice in a simulated environment and be better prepared for future life in society.

Yang Min, started to take part in UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project for teenagers in 2013. She currently is the principal of Dingxi Special Education School of Gansu province.



Adolescent Education Project Case Study (2011-2015)

With rounds of surveys and discussions, we have discovered that a course completion certificate would motivate participation in the training. When the new program cycle started in 2011, with the support from the district CPC committee and government, it was agreed that a course completion certificate would be issued by district CAST and Human Resources and Social Security Bureau as an incentive. The certificate serves as evidence of participation for trainees, helps attract recognition from parents, schools and the public, and students could use the credential to find job opportunities.



2015 marked the fifth year for the UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education program. The program has been running since 2011, targeting graduating vocational school students aged 14-17 years and out-of-school adolescents aged 14-24 (undergraduate students, rural drop-outs, enterprise employees, service industry staff, etc.).

At the launch of the program, we encountered many difficulties in terms of prospective students, teaching resources, teaching facilities, textbooks, and training venues. Trainees were selected from normal classes, and they would have to skip general and specialized curriculum during the training week which was problematic. In addition, some trainees could not internalise the non-formal education content and approach and did not benefit from it. There were also challenges with some of the trainees outside the vocational schools being varied in age and knowledge acceptance levels, and with some parents being not well-informed and worry about the program. Another challenges included the fact that some township training venues were not easy to reach, and that the teaching resources urgently needed improvement.

These problems were eased by communication with district CAST and local authority communication, and through cross-departmental support. The higher authority has set up a leadership group with a dedicated person in charge and a clearly defined system to support smooth operation of the project. We also extended the scope for student recruitment, to include school students from outside of vocational schools, in other regular schools, communities and impoverished towns. **To support employment, attract audiences and win support from parents, teachers, schools and the society, we decided to institute an innovative incentive mechanism.** Our teachers and staff visited families to talk to adolescents and their parents, getting to know more about their needs and expectations on the program. With rounds of surveys and discussions, we discovered that a course completion certificate would motivate participation in the training. When the new program cycle started in 2011, with the support from the district CPC committee and government, it was agreed that a course completion certificate would be issued by district CAST and

Zhao Haixia - Multilateral Project Cooperation Experience

Human Resources and Social Security Bureau as an incentive. The certificate serves as evidence of participation for trainees, helps attract recognition from parents, schools and the public, and students could use the credential to find job opportunities.

Meanwhile, to reach a broader audience, we have prepared “Step into Society: Life, Employment, Development” background material, a letter to parents, a youth development center brochure and training session briefings for TV and media advocacy. Gaining more publicity in 2013-2014 has proven effective. For teacher capacity building, we continued to offer lively and interactive training sessions to teachers, helping them with diversified communication with students of various ages and personalities. Five teacher trainers have participated in the Step into Society: Life, Employment, Development training program co-organized by CAST and Beijing Institute of Education. The theories, methodologies and skills learned from the national training have benefited over 800 adolescents inside and outside vocational schools.



Zhao Haixia has been the secretary of CAST, Ledu District, Haidong City, QingHai Province since 2012 and was engaged in UNICEF-CAST non-formal education program from 2012 to 2015.



The Life Skills for Girls WeChat subscription account is a new approach to non-formal education on a modern media platform. It is intended further support the capability development of teenagers, reinforce the effects of class training, expand knowledge, and push information through technological means. At the same time, it also performs the functions of needs survey, feedback evaluation, and integrating online/offline resources.



"The Life Skills for Girls WeChat subscription account is a useful attempt and an interesting experiment. It can adapt to the features of the learners as a diversified and dispersed group, and it can meet the needs of teenagers with a more flexible and convenient form of organization and way of dissemination."

— Zhang Yan, Beijing Normal University

The Life Skills for Girls course is one of UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education

× 女孩的生活技能

正如《人际交往与沟通》课本所说，人与人的交往和沟通是我们的心灵与这个世界的交流，是我们获得财富、快乐、幸福和健康所要掌握的最重要的才能。一个有抱负的人，想在工作中游刃有余、大展宏图，就要和上司、下属、同事进行有效的沟通，才能打通自己的成功之路；年轻人谈恋爱，也要把握对方心理，才能跨入对方的情感世界；身为父母教育子女或为子女和父母相处，和谐的家庭氛围需要良好的沟通。这本书所教授的知识正是我们青少年在九年义务教育中所没有涉及的，也是这个年龄阶段青少年所缺乏的。



courses with distinctive features. The course is intended to provide necessary knowledge and skills for disadvantaged teenagers, especially adolescent girls in western and central China, and to help them form a social gender perspective and enhance basic life skills. Whilst one of the motivations for the course development was the basic needs of disadvantaged teenagers - especially drop-out teenage girls - **the object of the textbook and training service is not limited to adolescent girls. The course is meant to help adolescents to pay respect to and tolerate gender differences and promote gender equality. It is applicable to both boys and girls who participate in the project.**

The textbook for the course is highly original. Most of the cases come from real life situations. They were collected and refined by the editors, based on their long-term interaction with out-of-school

girls and female migrant workers. The activities designed in the textbook also show distinct social gender awareness and humanistic care. The textbook evolved from a state where it was not easily recognized and understood by people to a state where it was strongly approved of and actively followed. It won extensive recognition and positive comments among the teachers and students. It was trialled in more than ten provinces. Six sessions of national-level training for teachers were been carried out, and each province conducted large-scale training directly for girls and boys. A stable team of trainers was been formed with fixed training content, reaching a wide range of target population. Some good progress has been made in terms of organizational experience and social benefits, providing a strong foundation for further developing and building a new-type publicity platform.

As the project advanced and the object of training developed new characteristics, some problems and demands emerged, and as a result, the update and revision of the textbook content was been put on the agenda. Under the unified coordination of the project, while revising the textbook, the compilers opened up new ways of course innovation, which included developing and building the Life Skills for Girls WeChat subscription account. This was an experiment for the Life Skills for Girls course, and also an exploration by the non-formal education project faced with new trends and a new era.

With the technological means of communication becoming popular and convenient, smart phone and other mobile devices have become the major tool for the young population to receive information, to communicate and to interact socially. Some sophisticated cell phone apps such as WeChat are very popular and have become the primary way of interaction for young people. Since the non-formal education project features long-term and large-scale courses with wide coverage as well as diversified and dispersed trainees, the project found that it urgently needed a more flexible, convenient and modern method of communication and interaction. The WeChat public platform boasts wide coverage, easy access, flexible organization, and convenient operation, and as such, met these requirements.

The Life Skills for Girls WeChat subscription account is a new approach to non-formal education on a modern media platform. It is intended further support the capability development of teenagers, reinforce the effects of class training, expand knowledge, and push information through technological means. At the same time, it also performs the functions of needs survey, feedback evaluation, and integrating online/offline resources.



Adolescent Education Project Case Study (2011-2015)

The Life Skills for Girls WeChat subscription account started as a trial in February 2015. It is sponsored by UNICEF and CAST Youth Activity Center, and organized by China Research Center for Minority and Multi-cultural Education of Beijing Normal University, with Beijing Zhongkezhidian S&T Corporation providing technical support.

During the initial development and operation of the WeChat platform, the following two issues were prominent challenges in terms of mechanism construction and content development.

The first challenge was **how to expand and effectively develop online resources based on the textbook**. The WeChat content is based on and expands on the Life Skills for Girls textbook content, and attempts to present more flexible and rich content for subscribers. The menu design of the subscription account also takes into consideration how to express the main purpose of the course and textbook. It develops and presents content under five themes: "Self-perception of Girls", "Communication of Girls", "Self-protection of Girls", "Career and Development of Girls", and "Happy Life of Girls", and regularly publishes special article series. Specifically, the subscription account has three first-level columns: "About Us", "Growth Station", and "Youth Salon". The "About Us" column is introductory and fixed, including three sub-columns: Project Overview, Project Regions, and Trainers. The Growth Station column is topic-based and mainly depends on and expands the content of the textbook, including four sub-columns: Self-perception, Interpersonal Interaction, Self-protection, Career and Employment, and Life and Financial Planning, which correspond to the Life Skills for Girls textbook. The Youth Salon is interactive, including four sub-columns: Girls Face-to-Face, Girls' Voices, Girls' Stories, and My Questions.

Second, **how to combine online and offline resources and organize relevant activities**. At its initial stage of development, the subscription account has been given some basic functions and missions. This includes how to get first-hand feedback through the WeChat and learn about the training needs of teenagers; how to combine the WeChat platform with the whole non-formal education project and promote the overall development of the project; how to use the platform to strengthen and attract potential object of training; and how to publicize and build the social image of the project with the platform.



Zhang Yan - Innovative Project Experience through New Media Platform

The development of the Life Skills for Girls WeChat public platform is an innovative way of accumulating and passing on experiences, and is expected to have a positive influence on enhancing the methods and results of non-formal education training. This modern platform communication and interaction can help us better understand the needs of the target population and their feedback on the specific training content and methods. This promotes the organization and management of the project and is conducive to its further and sustainable development. **The construction of the WeChat platform will also facilitate the dissemination of project philosophy, attract more adolescents to participate, and thus realize greater social benefits.**

The Life Skills for Girls WeChat subscription account is a useful attempt and an interesting experiment. Although all parties involved have the same philosophy and all have expectations about its future development, they do not have a clear picture of what difficulties and challenges may occur during the actual implementation. Therefore, the WeChat subscription account has presented some challenge to them all. For example, when a traditional public welfare project encounters a new-media means of dissemination, how do they integrate the longstanding public welfare intentions with the short and fast mode of information dissemination? Influenced by the fast-food culture, consumerism, hedonistic culture and cyber language of new-media reading, how does the Life Skills for Girls WeChat subscription account draw close to the reading characteristics of teenagers and effectively share the aims of the project? In a cyber environment with rapidly-evolving information, how can we clearly position ourselves, highlight our characteristics, and find the life force of our project? These questions are real, urgent, and fundamental. We need to keep them in mind during the implementation of the project and try to find effective solution.

Zhang Yan started to take part in UNICEF-CAST adolescent non-formal education project for teenagers in 2009. She participated in the development of the training textbook and related training content for Life Skills for Girls course, and also participated in the content development for Life Skills for Girls WeChat account. She is currently working at the China Research Center for Minority and Multi-cultural Education of Beijing Normal University.



Adolescent Education Project Case Study (2011-2015)

The promotion of the course in ethnic minority areas is both an opportunity and a challenge. We combined the course with the characteristics of local cultural industry. In the course on Independent Living and Self-Management, we carried out tea art training so that the students could learn the manners of getting along with people. In the course on Life Skills for Girls, we taught Dong embroidery so as to promote this excellent culture. Faced with the language barrier, we carried out bilingual teaching, with Mandarin as the primary language supplemented by Dong dialect, and achieved good training effects.



"This project means a great deal for teenagers, especially those in poor ethnic minority areas such as Sanjiang county. Here in Sanjiang, 95% of the rural parents and work force went to work in other cities; many teenagers have never walked out of the mountains to the county and are unable to communicate in Mandarin. The education for left-behind teenagers has become a difficult social issue. They need attention and correct guidance in mentality, life, learning, and future employment."

— Liang Dingqian, Sanjiang, Guangxi

Sanjiang county is a settlement of the Dong minority. It is located among the Jiuwan Mountains in the north of Guangxi. Five ethnic groups live there, namely, Dong, Miao, Yao, Zhuang, and Han, with the ethnic minorities accounting for 86% of the population. One of the primary tasks in promoting local economic and social development has been to focus on teenager education and to cultivate modern local talents.

With the support of UNICEF and CAST, we organized and carried out the non-formal education project for rural teenagers. We established a youth development and training center, set up a team of project teachers and experts, and gave elastic courses on Step into Society: Life, Employment, Development, providing non-formal education training opportunities for in-school and out-of-school teenagers. This is different from school teaching and family education: instead, it is a camp of fun for the study and growth of teenagers.

Before promoting the project courses, we publicized the project in every township middle school and village. Local teachers and parents were initially reluctant to accept it. Some teachers were worried and said that education for teenagers must be formal and standard. They believed that non-formal education will harm adolescents. Similarly, some parents believed that their child only needs formal education, not non-formal education. The students were also puzzled. Some said that if they can't even do well in formal education what is the purpose of non-formal education and how does it work?

To enable everyone to better understand the project, we explained it in detail patiently, and pointed out that the elastic courses are conducted by professional teachers in various forms using special textbooks and are meant to provide careful guidance to teenagers about life skills. Considering the customs of ethnic minorities, we made use of social forces such as village elders to publicize our project to teenagers. In July 2014 when the training department of Sanjiang Vocational School was giving training on folk song and dance at Gaolu village, Yangxi township, our project team cooperated with the school to

Liang Dingqian - Experience on Promoting Life Skills Based Project in Ethnic Minority Areas

carry out publicity at the village and we invited the village elders to publicize for us to local teenagers. In a region where the Dong minority lives, village elders are highly respected and have great influence; therefore, through their speech and publicity, our project was much better received by the villagers.

In addition, every year before the senior high school entrance examination, Sanjiang Vocational School would go to every township junior middle school to conduct recruitment and publicity, **and invite some vocational school students who had received non-formal education training to tell about their training experience.** For example, Xiao Dongyun is a girl who once participated in our training. As a student union leader of Sanjiang Vocational School and head of the school radio station, she was invited to tell about her own experience at Fulu Township Junior Middle School of Sanjiang in May 2014. She shared with the students the confidence and success she gained from the training, and then played the cucurbit flute to the audience. Her lively speech and performance brought very positive responses. The audience actively left their contact information and signed up for the project. By generating such interest, whilst the project only has two or three hundred students each year, it has much wider influence. The information about the benefits of the training has spread to every village, and our students have been found in all places.



The promotion of the course in ethnic minority areas is both an opportunity and a challenge. We combined the course with the characteristics of local culture and industry. As an example, in the course on "Independent Living and Self-Management", we carried out tea art training so that the students could learn the manners of getting along with people. In the course on "Life Skills for Girls" we taught Dong embroidery so as to promote this excellent culture. Faced with the language barrier, we carried out bilingual teaching, with Mandarin as the primary language supplemented by Dong dialect, which was very beneficial.

