



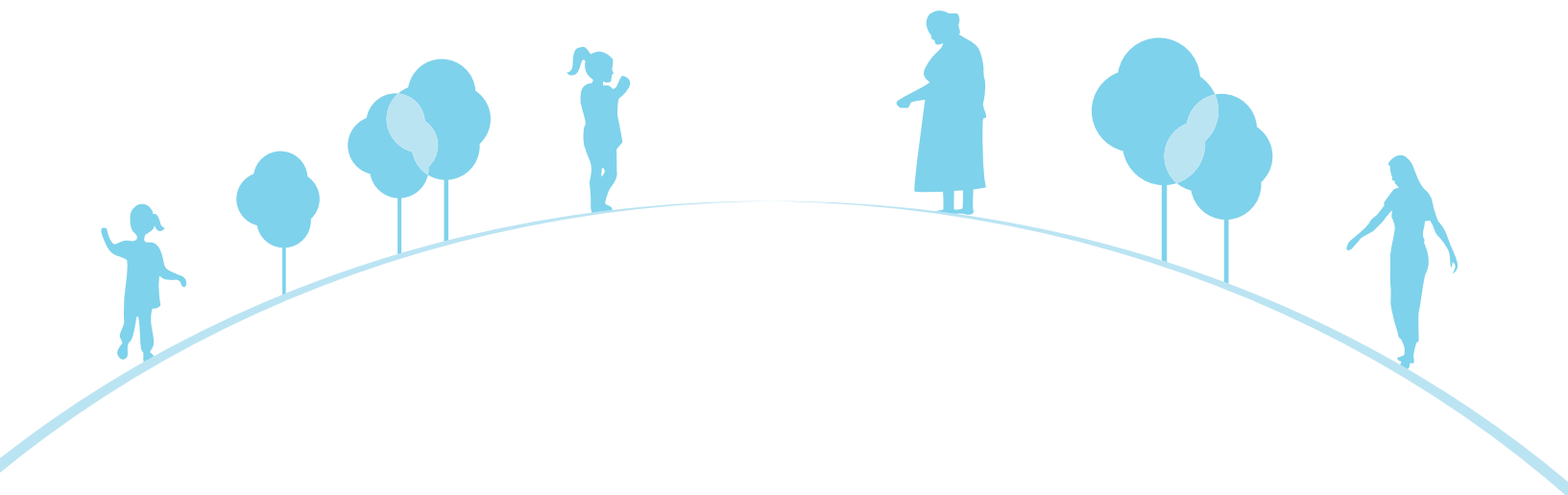
Chinese Women Go Global: Empowerment through Education

Beijing, China
中国·北京

UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education
Beijing Normal University

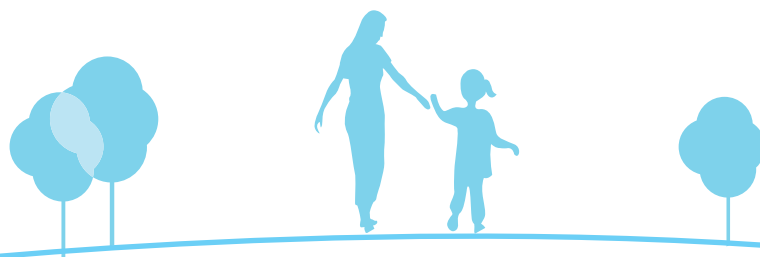
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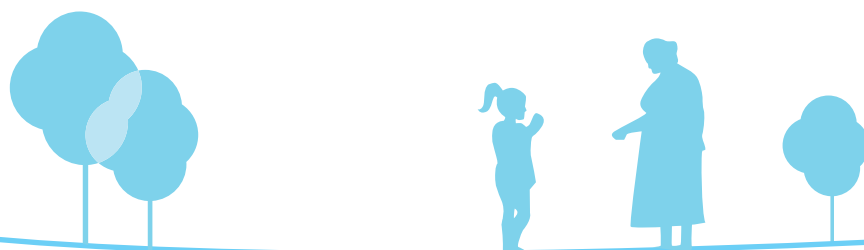


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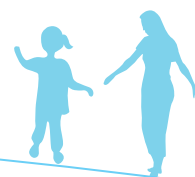


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Acronyms

ACWF	All-China Women Federations
CCP	Communist Party of China
CCTF	China Children and Teenagers' Fund
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLC	Community Learning Centre
CPC	Communist Party of China
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CYDF	China Youth Development Foundation
CYL	Communist Youth League
CVTE	Continuing Vocational Training and Education
DAP	Developmentally Appropriate Practice
DFID	Department for International Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education for All
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GB	Grameen Bank
HVC	Higher Vocational Colleges
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INRULED	International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education
IVTE	Initial Vocational Training and Education
JVC	Junior Vocational Schools
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOHRSS	Ministry of Human resources and Social Security
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NPC	National People's Congress
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NWCCW	National Working Committee on Children and Women



OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRC	People's Republic of China
SSWS	Senior Skilled Workers Schools
STS	Secondary Technical Schools
SVS	Senior Vocational Schools
SWS	Skilled Workers' Schools
TRO	Teaching Research Office
TVE	Township and Village Enterprise
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WCEFA	World Conference on Education for All

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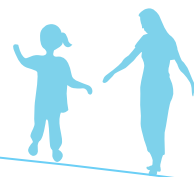
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Executive Summary

This report presents a historical review of the process of liberation and emancipation of Chinese women from a gender and international development perspective and aims to share the Chinese experience with international community, policy makers, private sector, civil society, NGOs and media so as to document and report the laudable progress the Chinese women have made during the last Millennium until recently.

The report presents the facts about the liberation process of Chinese women, evolution of their socio-economic status overtime and reviews briefly the key national policies, laws, rules, the implementation strategies processes formulated from time to time by the Government of People's Republic of China (PRC) for the emancipation and empowerment of Chinese women. The report also presents policies, projects and research undertaken by the Government and progress made with respect to girls' and women's 9-year Compulsory Education and women literacy since 1990 from a gender and international perspective so as to share China's experience with the international community. Finally, the report underscores the key lessons learnt in uplifting the socio-economic status of women and enlists the major policy imperatives for streamlining the emancipation and empowerment of women globally based on the experiences of China.



Chapter I

Emancipation and Empowerment of Chinese Women

1.1 Introduction

"The history of men's opposition to women's emancipation is more interesting perhaps than the story of that emancipation itself."

——Virginia Woolf: "A Room of One's Own"

The world today is undergoing a historical change and international competition is increasingly getting tenser. The competition in economy, culture, science and technology in the world is fundamentally a competition for the quality of a nation as a whole. The quality of women affects the quality of a nation and the development level of women enhances the comprehensive strength of a nation. Within the context of sustainable development, the issue of women has become one of the focuses of international attention and to work to get equality, development and peace with actions has become an irreversible tide of the international community. The Chinese government has made solemn pledges for the observance of relevant international conventions related to women's rights and development.

1.2 Chinese Women's Liberation: The Struggle

The struggle for the transformation in the status of women in China was closely connected with the struggle of the people of China against feudalism and imperialist control. Their long struggle for self-assertion within the family and society, against patriarchy, for the right to vote, for free choice of partners and divorce, for education, for property rights etc., drew sustenance from the revolutionary movements in China. The movement proceeded along a zigzag path; it was attended with advances and retreats. At times, women's right movements strengthened revolutionary struggles aimed at fundamental social transformation; at other times, those movements were fed by revolutionary flavour. There also were times, particularly during the



War of Resistance against Japan (1937-45) when the needs of the national or social revolution took precedence over the cause of the women's movements.

Mao Tse-tung wrote that the Chinese people had three ropes round their necks, but women had four: political authority, clan authority, religious authority and the authority of the husband. These authorities embodied the whole feudal and patriarchal ideology and the social system. For thousands of years, political power in China, whether in slave society or feudal society, had been closely associated with the control of women. Neither did the women have any right over property, nor did they enjoy any independent decision-making power in matters affecting the family and clan (Samyorp: undated).

But the history of the Chinese women over the past hundred years or so is an evidence of the commitment of the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) to liberate Chinese women from the scourge of the Chinese society exclusively dominated by their counterpart males. Since the beginning of the 20th Century, Chinese women have followed the path of emancipation with unique Chinese values, tradition and customs. Generation after generation they have linked their futures and destinies closely to those of the country, regardless if it was during a time of war or the periods of socialist construction and reform and opening-up.

With the strong sense and recognition of the importance of self-esteem, self-confidence, self-reliance and self-improvement, women in China from all walks of life have not only achieved outstanding transformation but have also contributed significantly to the rejuvenation and prosperity of the Chinese nation and to the global women's movement.

The rigorous and arduous struggles of the 20th Century and innovative practices witness the laudable developments in the women's movement in China and at the same time notice significant improvements in their livelihood conditions, quality of life and socio-economic status. These movements are testimony to the fact that women are a great force in promoting social civilization and progress as well as to the fact that for the true liberation of humankind; women's liberation is the key to a nation's prosperity and the wellbeing of its people.

A review of China's experience in the field of women's emancipation and empowerment reveals that the process of liberation has not been adequately summarized and shared until recently. This report gives a brief historical background of the status of women in China and presents a well-documented history of the evolutionary process of Chinese women's emancipation since the beginning of the 20th Century. In particular, the Report presents a snapshot of the major

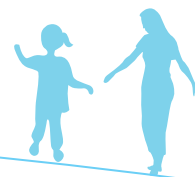


developments and progress made mainly in the field of girls' and women's education since the landmark Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. The report also sheds light on other fields such as politics, economics, law, health and media. In narrating this evolutionary process, the report analyses the various forces behind the changes as well as the social, cultural, and political issues that were intertwined with the women's movement in China.

How China has been successful in emancipating and liberating women? What types of mechanisms, processes, policies, government laws, decrees, rules, and regulations have been formulated? How they have been successfully implemented? Such questions are important for understanding the women's liberation movement in China. This section of the report shows an analysis of these mechanisms and processes from a gender and international development perspective and aims to share the Chinese experience with international community, policy makers, private sector, civil society, NGOs and media so as to document and report the laudable progress the Chinese women have made.

The report contains five Chapters. Chapter I presents the historical facts about the socio-economic status of Chinese women since the beginning of the 20th Century until recently. Chapter II reviews important national policies, laws, rules and regulations (Government decrees, enactments, constitutional framework of CPC), and implementation strategies. Chapter III explains the development of girls' and women's education with particular emphasis on the 9-year compulsory basic education and women's literacy since the landmark EFA Conference held in Jomtien in 1990. Chapter IV underscores the major lessons learnt during the process of emancipation and empowerment of Chinese women. Finally, Chapter V enlists the major policy imperatives for streamlining the emancipation and empowerment of women globally based on the experiences of China.

The remarkable results achieved in basic education in China are well known and admired widely, but the process and mechanism of planning and management leading to these results are not so well known and understood even less. Today, with a resurgence of international interest in 'education for all' and a renewed commitment in many developing countries to achieving universalization of primary education and literacy, the Chinese experience in girls' and women's education becomes particularly relevant as a source of knowledge and understanding of the ways by which a poor developing country can offer access to basic education opportunities to all its people.



1.3 From Slavery to Emancipation

In order to understand the process of transition in the status of Chinese women and the roles they currently play in the national economic development, and the reasons behind current laws and policies that the Chinese Government has passed to improve their situation, one must have a certain amount of cultural and historical knowledge. The transition can be explained in two broad but distinct periods: “Husband's Assistant and Son's Teacher (China Pre-1949)”, that is, before the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) took power in 1949 and “Half the Sky: The Status of Women (Post-1949)”, when the Chinese Communist Party took power from the Nationalists in 1949 and formed the People's Republic of China (Yong-King: 2005). This background on the history of the emancipation of Chinese women provides a foundation for understanding how the societal perception of women affected their place in the society, polity and economy with the passage of time.

1.3.1 Husband's Assistant and Son's Teacher (China Pre-1949)

Prior to the founding of the PRC, a woman's traditional role in China was found within the home, where her purpose was to care for her husband and raise children. This role was enforced for centuries by Confucian teachings that instructed “it is a virtue if a woman has no ability” and generally taught women to be subordinate to men (Allison: 1996). The life of a Chinese woman was very typical of the oppression and subjection Chinese women endured for thousands of years. The depravity of women taught by Confucian ethics was the basis for this subjection. Practices such as marriage, property, and education and the foot binding, polygamy, and patrilineal wealth distribution, as well as notions like “an incapable man is better than a capable woman” permeated society and prevented women from joining the workforce.

Confucian philosophy and ethics dominated Chinese family and cultural dynamics after Han Wu Di (156-87 B.C.), Emperor of Western Han Dynasty, adopted a policy to “reject all other schools of thought and hold only Confucianism in esteem” (Zhangling: 1989). The patriarchal and patrilineal family structure dictated by Confucian ethics taught the inferiority of women and became the basis for sexual discrimination and subjection of Chinese women and girls (Kay: 1983). According to Confucius, a virtuous woman had three obedience forms: to her father and brothers before marriage, to her husband after marriage and to her child if she was widowed.

A woman was subjugated throughout her life to an unending series of authorities: her own mother and father, her in-laws, her husband, and finally her child. The marriages were blind marriages arranged by family heads in which neither the groom nor the bride had any voice.



Under this arrangement, the groom's family paid a "bride price" to the bride's family, reimbursing her natal family for the expense of raising her. The situation was such that divorce was next to impossible for an unhappy wife. Even if her husband died, her in-laws retained control over her.

Further, if a wife failed to bear a son, a man could bring a secondary wife or a concubine into the household. A concubine was usually acquired by purchasing a young girl from a poor family. "Ancestors required male descendants. If one woman did not produce them, another should be given the opportunity to do so" (Florence: 1971). A concubine's duty was to serve the first wife and bear children (Dorothy: 1999). Whether taking a concubine for reproduction or as an object of pleasure, the practice was degrading and humiliating for women.

In the Chinese kinship system, divorce was nearly impossible for a woman. A man could divorce his wife for any one of seven reasons, but women had no rights in regard to divorce, separation or property (Albert & O'Hara: 1971). The fate of concubines was even more precarious. The husband could expel them at any time and also by his family after his death (Kathryn: 1999).

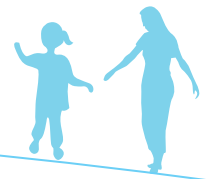
A widow was obligated to continue serving her dead husband's family (Karilyn: 2003). Confucian norms were that she would remain a widow, but her in-laws had the right to sell her if they chose. Any children she bore into the husband's family legally belonged to the family (Box 1). The practice of immolation was quite common and widows were exalted if they "followed their husbands on death" (Kay: 1983). Immolation for many widows was more desirable than the prospects of continuing with the dead husband's family.

Box 1

Women's Liberation in China

Chinese women's journey over the last hundred years from feudalism to emancipation, to full equality under the law has engendered great pride in China. The history of gender equality in China is more complex than is often portrayed.

Patriarchy was one of the defining features of traditional Chinese society. It imposed profound oppression on Chinese women and deprived them of their rights in politics, economy, social and family life. Economically dependent, women did not have property and inheritance rights and possessed no independent source of income. Family succession and inheritance passed through the male line. They enjoyed no freedom in marriage but had to obey the dictates of their parents, and were not allowed to remarry if their spouse died. Women married out of their natal families and into their husband's household - often in a distant village - where they became subordinate to their



mothers-in-law as well as male family members, and where domestic power came only gradually with age and the birth of sons. Male children were valued over girls. Remnants of this system persist today and in some aspects are experiencing revivals, especially in rural areas. In general, Chinese women were subjected to physical and mental torture, being harassed by systems of polygamy and prostitution, the overwhelming majority of them forced to bind their feet from childhood in the feudal patriarchal system. For centuries, “women with bound feet” was a synonym for the female gender in China. Women were called “neiren” or inside people, signifying that their roles were primarily and ideally within the realm of the household. However, poorer women of necessity participated actively in farming, manufacturing and trading. Still, they were deprived of the right to receive an education and take part in social activities.

Source: J. Du, and Kanji, N. (2003): Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction in China: issues for Development Policy and Practice, DFID Reports.

One of the most graphic examples of the restrictions Chinese women had to bear was foot binding imposed on them in many parts of the country. Foot binding was introduced in the 11th Century and was performed on the eve of the fifth birthday of girls by their mothers. The toes are bent under the soles of the feet and the broken feet are then bound with bandages—an operation that lasts 10 to 15 years. This inhuman physical suffering led to the turning of the young girl into a fetish, an object of love. These bound feet or “golden lily” in the eyes of Chinese poets, became the erotic part of the female body. After her marriage, this bound foot gained for her the recognition and respect of the in-laws because this was an undeniable proof of her capacity to suffer and obey (Samyorp: undated). But, many young girls did not survive the effects of rotting flesh and broken bones. The physical act of binding feet was confining, and women with bound feet experienced physical pain and limited mobility throughout their lifetimes. In a Confucian culture, foot binding was a symbol of dependence and subservience.

On the education of women, Confucian thought was “... women indeed are human beings, but they are of a lower state than men, and can never attain to full equality with them. The aim of female education therefore is submission, not cultivation and development of the mind” (Margaret: 1911). The thrust of women's education was how for women to properly fulfil their role as virtuous wives and good mothers (Wang: 1995). There is, however, evidence that many girls of the elite class were taught to read and write.

Educated women in early China were the exception. Few women possessed more than basic literacy, and peasant women would not have had even that. Early missionaries reported they seldom met a Chinese woman who could read. One female missionary reported, “With very



rare exceptions women are never educated. Of heathen women possibly one in two or three thousands can read" (Margaret: 1911). From Chinese, comments like, "can you teach the horse to read and write" and "oh, but the women . . . they can't learn" were common. Girls usually married in their teens and became the property of another family, so the expense of educating girls was thought a waste of resources (Wang: 1995).

Late in the 19th century, Chinese intellectuals began to be more vocal about women's issues, especially the education of women and girls. Liang Qichao in 1897 expressed his views in an article:

"In China today, whenever the subject of women's education is debated, someone is bound to say, 'There are much more important and urgent issues that this business of women's education' ... However, I think the cause of weakness and failures in our society can be traced to the fact that women's education in this country has long been ignored" (Wang: 1995).

Concurrent with education was progress in other social issues. Chinese historians often credit the Taiping Rebellion of 1851-1864 as the beginning of emancipation for Chinese women. Under the Taiping government, women served in the military as generals and soldiers. The Taiping government also outlawed foot binding, concubinage and prostitution. The traditional practice of arranged marriages was replaced with free choice monogamous love matches. In addition, land was distributed to women and men equally. A new era for Chinese women had been ushered in (Kazuko: 1989).

The leaders of the Self-Strengthening movement (1860's-1890's) began to see women in light of industrialization and modernization. Women were being recognized as potential factory workers. By the late 19th century, a large number of women and girls were employed in the silk-reeling industries around Wuhan and Shanghai.

Several other events took place as well. However, the 1911 Revolution and the establishment of the Nationalist Government provided women with the opportunity to change drastically. The reforms included outlawing foot binding, promoting universal education, and discouraging polygamy. Women began pursuing higher levels of education and left the home to work in factories or even pursue professional jobs. While they may have been allowed to join the workforce, during this time, women made up approximately 7.5% of the workforce (Christine: 2000-01).

Briefly speaking, in China the years from 1900 until 1949 were years of nearly constant unrest. The nation had to deal with the civil wars between the Nationalists and the Communists, as well as the imperialistic aggression of Japan. Women's social issues were again secondary to



the issue of preserving the nation. The establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 was the catalyst that brought women's issues back into the mainstream of social reform.

1.3.2 “Half the Sky: The Status of Women” (Post-1949)

In the movement of women emancipation since the beginning of the 20th Century, two critical and distinct factors are worth mentioning: the introduction of Marxism and development traits of women's liberation.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) established in 1949 by the Communist Party of China (CPC) quickly began a mass movement in social reforms, particularly in the area of women's rights and equality. The PRC put an end to thousands of years of history during which Chinese women were oppressed and enslaved. It also ushered in the era of women's movement. Millions of Chinese women began to embrace new lives; they played important roles in various sectors and they became co-owners of the nation. With great enthusiasm and the spirit of self-independence and self-improvement, they made remarkable achievements, like the men, and they held up “half of the sky” (Mao Tse-tung), especially when it came to social development. They completed a new, splendid chapter in the history of the women's movement in China.

Another significant move of the CPC was the commemoration of International Women's Day which boosted dramatically the progress of the women's movement in China. “Influenced by the cultural shock and intercultural communication, some modern leaders and pioneers of the women's movement in China launched the Enlightenment Movement, during which they were instrumental in the abolition of foot-binding and the establishment of schools, newspapers and societies for women. Chinese women began to fight for freedom in marriage and social communication, and they demanded emancipation and equal opportunities to education” (Women of China: 2015). With the spirit of self-esteem, self-confidence, self-reliance and self-improvement, women from all walks of life made outstanding achievements in and contributions to the rejuvenation and prosperity of the Chinese nation and to the global women's movement.

The launch of the Third Session of the 11th Central Committee of the CPC in 1978 was another milestone in Chinese women's development. The formulation of the Basic State Policy of Gender Equality and the Programme for the Development of Chinese Women and the promulgation of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women effectively protect women's development.



The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 generated significant influence on promoting the progress of gender equality and women's development not only in China but also around the world. Since then, the Chinese Government, civil society and international organisations have jointly carried out initiatives including policy making, economic support, capacity building, dialogue and advocacy to promote women's and girls' development and facilitate gender mainstreaming in China.

In recent years, the Chinese Government has made fairness and justice, with gender equality included, the key priority areas to build a harmonious socialist society. The Government has been utilising economic, legal, administrative, public opinion and other measures to ensure that women enjoy equal rights with men in terms of politics, economy, culture and social and family life, and continuously pushing forward women's development in an all-round way (State Council: 2015).

Briefly speaking, the historical development of Chinese women drives home the point that the women's movement in China must be pursued under CPC's leadership, and that it is crucial to stick to the socialist road with Chinese characteristics; women should always link their destiny with that of the country and improve themselves through participation in the great cause of national development; and that women's indispensable role as a main force of the country and society must be fully recognized, their initiative and creativity be mobilized and brought into full play, and their overall development be greatly promoted (ACWF: 2011). Such lessons have been learned from the experiences of prolonged exploration and the endeavours of hundreds of millions of Chinese women during the past hundred years. They are valuable wealth for new development of women's movement in modern China.



Chapter II

Process and Mechanism of Liberation and Emancipation of Chinese Women

2.1 Introduction

Gender equality is a human right. Women are entitled to live with dignity and with freedom from want and from fear. Gender equality is also a precondition for advancing development and reducing poverty: Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities and they improve prospects for the next generation.

The attempts and achievements of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in promoting gender equality, freedom and empowerment since its establishment in 1949 have been the result of a well articulated and planned strategy that includes strong public support, national policies that emphasise cooperation across various sectors of society and a planned implementation mechanism at each level of its administrative hierarchy. For more than 60 years, PRC has advocated for women and girls by promoting legal and policy reforms and gender-sensitive data collection, and by supporting initiatives that improve and foster Chinese women's socio-economic status, emancipation, empowerment, livelihood conditions and expand their choices in life. Laws, economic measures, administration and public opinion guarantee women's rights.

This chapter describes the mechanism and the unremitting efforts the Chinese Government has been making to streamline and improve its legal system to promote and foster gender equality and development of women by protecting women's rights and interests. In other words, it explains how the Chinese Government has been successful in emancipating and liberating women. Within this context, the chapter presents the programme formulation and implementation strategies, relevant working organs and the financial support for strengthening social awareness. The discussion followed herein is in five critical areas, namely: gender equality and women's rights; women and poverty; women's employment and livelihood; women in decision-making and management; and women and education. For further understanding the mechanisms in domains such as women health, marriage and family, environment, etc. reference to the paper entitled "Gender Equality and Women's Development in China" is suggested.



2.2 Gender Equality and Women's Rights

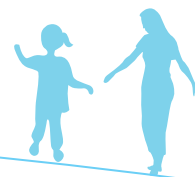
China is well known for its unique tradition and the remarkable changes it has undergone since 1949 Revolution. In fact, the development and social status of Chinese women has evolved differently compared to women in other countries. It is only in the first half of the last millennium China could cast off the feudal monarchy and it is nearly 60 years since the creation of the People's Republic of China following civil war and the War of Resistance against Japan during 1937-1945.

Since then, the Chinese Government has taken the issues of women's liberation very seriously and judiciously. The Government took several bold steps and developed a robust mechanism, process and policy framework for addressing the repression and atrocities faced by women since time immemorial with immense success. In the following paragraph, an attempt has been made to review the salient features of this mechanism so as to inform and share Chinese experience for the emancipation and liberation of its women folk.

We have noticed how above forces such as imperialist power, clan authority and patriarchal traditions practiced in the home played a dominant role and contributed significantly to the atrocities and repression of Chinese women in the past. Since 1949 after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the nation has been reinforcing its momentum against class struggle and propagating the development of the socialistic society. For its economic development, the country followed initially the policy of "planned economy" with full assurance of guaranteed income and food to all. It is during this phase that the emancipation of women took off in earnest.

It should be noted at this stage that the movement of liberation of Chinese women has been much different than it has been in the West. In the West, the movement started largely from the educated middle class as the result of spontaneous initiatives within the movement itself. Women played an active or a pro-active role in the movement's evolution. This was not the case in China where women's roles in the emancipation movement were passive and, in a sense, involuntary. Rather than being a spontaneous arising, emancipation processes came about as the result of a state-initiated policy.

As a matter of fact, the early years of the emancipation of Chinese women proceeded from the requirements of nationalistic government policies. The emancipation neither emanated from the economic requirements of the marketplace nor from the efforts of a feminist woman's movement. In ideological terms, emancipation reflected the ideals of Chinese communist justice



based on the principle of equality for all. On the social plane, emancipation served the interests of the state administrative goal of greater centralization.

The process of women's emancipation started with the introduction and implementation by the State of forced administrative measures. The first bold step was the promulgation of State laws and decrees to prohibit and eliminate completely foot binding, prostitution, marital autonomy and women's employment followed by women's right to education, employment and to vote at par with men. During its entire journey to women's emancipation and liberation, the Government has made unrelenting efforts to improve its legal system to protect the rights and interests of women, formulate and implement programmes, further improve relevant working organs, increase financial input and strengthen social awareness.

As a result, women's status and position in society continues to record remarkable improvements. One of the greatest achievements of China in this domain is in building awareness and consciousness. Chinese women, possibly for the first time, gained an awareness of their inherent value and rights, their true capabilities and the greater possibilities opening up for them. During these times, ideas about equality were highly popular topics in social affairs.

The State established in 1949, the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) and developed a network of organizations for the protection of women's rights and benefits. The Federation has played an important role in maintaining a series of accomplishments for women. Today, there are more than 70,000 women's associations covering all provinces, municipalities, counties and villages of China.

The Election Law enacted in 1953 gave rights to women to vote. The 96th provision of the 1954 Constitution reiterates: "The women in the People's Republic of China enjoy the same political, economic, cultural, social and domestic rights as men in all respects." Since then, almost all Chinese women vote to elect their own representatives.

The Outlines for the Development of Chinese Women (2001-2010) - a national programme – have been developed for carrying out the Beijing Platform for Action and for pushing forward gender equality and women's development in a comprehensive way. This document outlines 34 major goals and 100 policies and measures in six fields: women and the economy; women's participation in decision-making and administration; women and education; women and health; women and the law; and women and the environment.



The National Working Committee on Children and Women (NWCCW) under the State Council, the coordination and consultation organ of the Chinese government in charge of women affairs, plays an important role in coordinating and promoting relevant government departments to ensure women's rights, protect them from repression and to formulate, organise, supervise and monitor the implementation of the Outlines for the development of women. The NWCCW provides necessary human, financial and material resources and guides the work of its subordinates in all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government. To date, working organs for women have been set up across China's mainland.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) related to the development of women such as the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), All-China Federation of Trade Unions, Central Committee of the Communist Youth League (CYL), China Disabled Persons' Federation and China Association of Science and Technology have all effectively pressed ahead with their gender equality work in line with their respective guidelines. The All-China Women's Federation is the largest NGO in China dedicated to promoting gender equality and women's development. It has an organizational system that covers women's federations and group members at various levels, and enjoys wide representation and mass involvement. The ACWF and local women's federations play a significant role in uniting and motivating women to participate in the country's economic construction and social development, encouraging them to take an active part in the democratic management and supervision of state and social affairs, and representing and safeguarding the rights and interests of women as a whole.

The central and local treasuries have both increased their inputs for the implementation of the outline for the development of women year by year, and optimized the allocation of resources to facilitate women's development. Since 2000, quite an amount of funds has been appropriated from the central and local treasuries to help achieve the key objectives of the outlines, with priority being given to the western and poverty-stricken areas. The state also pays great attention to the collection and study of statistics about the situation regarding women, and has set up a special organ to monitor and assess the implementation of the outline, and formulated a statistical monitoring indicator system and assessment programme. In addition, networks for statistics monitoring and working systems have been established in various provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government. Over the past decade, materials on gender statistics have been compiled and published by the State Departments of Statistics.



The Chinese government sets great store by cooperation with the United Nations and other international organizations, and has actively strengthened its exchanges and cooperation with other governments and women's organizations around the world. China is serious about implementing international conventions. In May 2000, it submitted to the United Nations the Report on the Implementation Result of the People's Republic of China of the "Beijing Declaration" and the "Platform for Action" Adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. In February 2004, it submitted The Fifth and Sixth Regular Reports on the Implementation of the UN "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women"; and in March 2005, it submitted the Report on the Implementation of the People's Republic of China of the "Beijing Platform for Action" (1995) and the Document of Results of the 23rd UN General Assembly Special Session held in 2000 (China State Council: 2005).

2.3 Women and Poverty

Economic reform has irreversibly transformed the Chinese economic and social landscape. Reform has created new prosperity and many new opportunities for both women and men. Since 1980s, China has conducted a large-scaled systemic poverty-reduction programme and has reduced significantly the population in absolute poverty. Starting from 2000, Chinese government included the low-income households whose income was just a bit above the poverty line into poverty alleviation targets. Until 2011, it has made remarkable success that the number of poverty-stricken and low-income households decreased remarkably. During the process, a great number of women have shake off poverty.

The continuous improvement in China's economy brings much benefit to rural poverty-stricken women. Economic development has created more job opportunities for women, especially in labour intensive industry and service industry. They absorb a great number of female labours and have their income increased. Started from 1994, the state government has successively issued the 8th National Seven-Year Poverty Reduction Plan (1994-2000), China Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development Programme (2011-2020) and other guiding documents for poverty reduction. Adjustments have been made constantly on detailed measures for special poverty alleviation, industry poverty alleviation, social poverty reduction and many others. In January 2014, CPC Central Committee and State Council issued "Guideline on Steadily Promotion Poverty Alleviation and Development in Rural Areas through Mechanism Innovation", clearly stating that the government should put more efforts on supporting ethnic minorities, women, children and the disabled in poverty-reduction and development.



In enforcement of generalized welfare rural policies, poor women are among the most benefited ones. For example, the increasing extension of the lowest income protection policy guarantees poor women to have a reasonable income. Multiple policies and measures to strengthen vocational trainings for women have been launched, actively creating public-service jobs. Moreover, related laws and regulations have been issued to build up legal guarantees to eliminate employment discrimination, ensure equal labour rights and equal employment for women, such as the approval of International Labour Organization (ILO)'s "Convention concerning Discrimination in Employment and Occupation" (Convention No. 111) and issue of Labour Contract Law and Employment Promotion Law in 2007. In 2010, the All-China Women's Federation expended Yuan 2.9 million to build 14 "March 8th Green Engineering Bases" and 49 science and technology demonstration bases in 12 economical underdeveloped provinces (regions and cities) in west China. These bases now provide agricultural practical trainings on planting, breeding, agro-processing and marketing so as to motivate and develop women economic cooperative organizations and help them develop production and combat poverty. The wide replication of micro-credit has effectively activity increased rural women's employment. In 1994, the Grameen Bank Microfinance Model (GB mode) was introduced in China. All-China Micro-credit targets poverty-stricken women and provides them with financial support in order to improve their self-developing capacity as well as realizing the project's sustainability.

In recent years, domestic service industry has become one of the most important channels for poverty-stricken women to enter into non-agricultural job market. It is an important measure to integrate women's poverty reduction into the main policies for pushing forward the development of poverty-stricken women. Based on the needs of poverty-stricken women, All-China Women's Federation unites Poverty Alleviation, Education, Health and many other departments to conduct poverty reduction activities jointly. Since 1995, the central government has issued three "China's Women Development Outline" successively and include women's poverty reduction into the state's working objectives. In large-scale national poverty reduction campaigns, indicators on women's poverty reduction have been developed. In 2004, in the Global Poverty Reduction Convention held in Shanghai, the Chinese government made a policy statement on relieving and eradicating poverty.

Thematic programmes are designed to enhance social involvement of women, improve women's livelihood and advocate gender equality. These programmes include trainings, community services, public education to policy research and advocacy. Through these programmes, information on gender equality has been spread, women's status raised. The China Women Development Foundation has been cooperating with different government sectors and



departments and implementing many projects that focus on women, such as Water Cellar for Mothers, Health Express for Mothers, Poverty Alleviation Fund for Mothers and Vision Recovery and Poverty Alleviation Programme for Mothers.

Women's Poverty reduction is one of the most important elements in China's poverty alleviation. The China Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development Programme (2011-2020) launched at the end of 2011 emphasizes poverty problems of women and children. The newly elected Government in 2013 attaches more importance to improve targeting for poverty-reduction in related policies. It is anticipated that the work of poverty reduction on rural women would have bigger policy support.

2.4 Women's Employment and Livelihood

Most of the population of rural China are farmers. However, the gradual industrialization of the countryside (especially in the form of township and village enterprises or TVEs), the increasing availability of jobs in urban areas for rural migrants (combined with the increasing rural labour surplus), and the progressive diversification and market orientation of rural production have transformed the character of rural life since the mid-1980s. These developments have affected women and men differently, and as such, have contributed to a phenomenon now termed the "feminization of agriculture".

The reform era and the free-market economy of Chinese society have opened doors for many women to become entrepreneurs and professionals, creating opportunities beyond simply taking the jobs of their mothers or fathers. The service sector has become the main source for women employment. There are also an increasing number of women opting for computer, communication, finance and insurance and other high-and new-tech jobs. They own small and medium-sized enterprises. The Government's policy thrust is in areas such as recruitment, training of professionals and technicians as well as promotion in ranks and granting of professional titles (DFID: 2003).

In order to ensure social security for urban women, the government has established a system ensuring pension, unemployment benefits, medical and employment hazard insurance and maternity insurance. It has also introduced key reforms in the urban social relief system and has established three funds: minimum urban living guarantee fund, basic living guarantee for laid-off workers fund and unemployment guarantee fund.



For rural women, the government enacted several laws and regulations. For instance, the Rural Land Contracting Law states that women and men enjoy equal rights in contracting land in rural areas, and no organization or individual shall deprive women of the right to contract and operate land or infringe upon their right to do so. In recent years, the Chinese government has adopted active policies and measures to solve the problems concerning agriculture, rural areas and farmers, increased its input into agriculture, pushed forward tax reform in rural areas, and implemented the strategy of invigorating agriculture by applying science and technology. Government departments and women's federations at all levels have jointly organized activities to encourage rural women to acquire knowledge and learn science and technology, and compete in their development and contributions so as to bring their role in invigorating and developing the rural economy into full play.

In the cities, women's almost universal participation in the paid workforce was achieved largely through the creation of small neighbourhood workshops and collectives rather than through jobs in state-owned enterprises, thus placing them at the lower end of the economic hierarchy. Women were under-represented compared to men in the state sector, which employed the majority of the workforce and provided comprehensive benefits and lifetime job security.

The government has reduced or eliminated the restrictive regulations on the employment of rural people in cities, and made great efforts to solve the problems of salaries in arrears, vocational safety, equal pay for equal work and social security for them so as to relieve rural migrant workers' anxiety regarding residence registration in cities and the schooling of their children, protect the legitimate rights and interests of rural women working in cities. The state also encourages and supports the building of training schools and legal aid centres, and the publication of typical cases of infringement as a means to raise awareness of their rights among migrant women workers and enhance their ability to safeguard their rights in accordance with the law.

To actively promote gender equality in employment and raise women's ability to find employment or start businesses, the Chinese government has begun to cooperate with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Labour Organization (ILO) and other international organizations.

2.5 Women in Decision-Making and Management

In recent years, an increasing number of women are present at business meetings, not as entrepreneurs but as key members of Chinese management. It is interesting to note that since



early 1990s, more and more women are occupying management and administrative positions in both public and private sectors.

Several studies undertaken in the recent past demonstrate that Chinese women play more prominent roles in starting and running companies than women do in the U.S. and Europe. For instance, a recent study by the accounting firm, Grant Thornton, women hold 35% of the senior management positions in China compared to 20% in other parts of the world including in the U.S. and Europe. The percentages are also moving in opposite directions with a great proportion of top jobs going to women recently. Women now hold 35% of management jobs in China while women involved in senior management in Europe and the U.S. is down to 24%. It is also interesting to note that women are not dominant just in human resources and accounting as they are many times in the West. Nineteen per cent of the women in management in China are serving as CEOs. Also a significant number of partners with private equity firms in China are women. Half of the world's billionaires are from China and 10% of those are women.

The economic reforms in China in the 1980's and the transition to a market economy have led to an expansion of the private sector and an increase in entrepreneurship. Many Chinese women, particularly those who are better educated, have seized the opportunity brought about by economic reform. Chinese society is changing dramatically. Women, particularly the young and better educated, are motivated to meeting higher professional goals and become successful administrators and managers.

The Outline for the Development of Chinese Women clearly defines the specific goals to be reached for women to participate in government work. All these have laid the legal and policy foundation for increasing women's participation in government work. The Law passed in 1995 stipulates that deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC) and local people's congresses at all levels should include a portion of women.

The state has clearly defined the objective for training and selecting women cadres, and has strengthened the work of training and selecting women cadres. As a result, women are now widely participating in the state and social administrative work, and a large number of outstanding women serve as leading cadres at various levels.



2.6 Women and Education

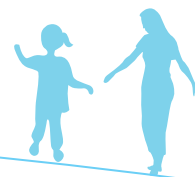
Educated women in early China were exception. Few women possessed more than basic literacy, and peasant women would not have had even that. Early missionaries reported they seldom met a Chinese woman who could read. Confucianism probably is the biggest influence on Education in China throughout the entire history of China.

Before 1946, China had only 1,300 kindergartens, 289,000 primary schools and 4,266 secondary schools (Wang: 1995). With the adoption of the policy of reform and opening to the outside world in 1978, basic education entered a new era of progress.

In 1985, the Central Committee of the CCP issued the “Decision on the Reform of the Educational Structure”, laying down the principle that local governments should be responsible for basic education. The new policy was an incentive for local governments, especially those of the counties and townships. In 1986, the NPC promulgated the “Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China” thus placing basic education in the country on a firm legal basis.

In 1993, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council jointly issued the “Guidelines for the Reform and Development of Education in China”, clarifying the directions and basic policies for the development of basic education till the early years of the 21st Century. In early 1999, the State Council ratified the “Action Plan for Educational Vitalisation Facing the 21st Century” formulated by the Ministry of Education, laying down the implementation strategy for “Invigorate China through Science, Technology and Education”. In June 1999, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council jointly promulgated the “Decision on the Deepening of Educational Reform and full Promotion of Quality Education”, clarifying the direction for the establishment of a vital socialistic education with Chinese Characteristics in the 21st Century.

Women enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men to receive education. Such rights and opportunities are clearly defined in China's Education Law, Compulsory Education Law and Vocational Education Law. The state takes concrete measures and actions to ensure that girls receive nine-year compulsory education and that women have more opportunities to receive secondary and higher education. The state is determined to eliminate illiteracy among young and middle-aged women, promote lifelong education for women and extend their average years of education.



To conclude, Chinese women now enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men in all domains of their socio-economic development. Such rights and opportunities are clearly defined and articulated in China's overall policies, laws, decrees, rules and regulations. The Government has formulated special policies and taken concrete measures for the emancipation and liberation of Chinese women.



Chapter III

Girls' and Women's Education in China: Tracking the Progress

3.1 Introduction

China has a rich educational history dating back to more than three thousand years, but women did not become part of the mainstream education system until the last seventy years. As mentioned earlier, the Confucian ideology, which has been deeply rooted throughout Chinese history, confined females to an oppressed social status. Moreover, this historical ideology continues to cause deep resistance to the changes that would promote women's education, which, in turn, would help uproot the ideological foundation of discrimination against women. Feminist literature has indicated the importance of women's education to their political and social emancipation. Acceptance of women in public educational settings, availability of educational opportunities for women, and equal treatment for female students are variables that affect women's entrance to school, their retention, and their advancement through education.

In the present era, the Chinese society has established a number of laws, rules, regulations and institutions for the development of girls' and women's education. Following these policy measures, women have come a long way in modern China. Chinese women are now at par with men in all kinds of tasks. All this has become possible just because of education and the profound impact it has had on women.

Education has enabled Chinese women to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and to change their life. As a result and within the framework of socialist policy, Chinese laws, development policies, plans and programmes have focused on women's progression in different spheres. Since the economic reforms in China in the 1980's and the transition to a market economy, there has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. The All-China Women Federation (ACWF) set up in 1949 safeguards the rights and legal entitlements of women for laying a sturdy basis for their contribution in decision-making at all levels of administration.



This chapter describes the history of women's education development in China. The review presented herein adopts indigenous, contextual and integrated perspectives to understand the achievement of girls' and women's education in China. By reflecting on the main policy initiatives and strategic measures undertaken by the Chinese Government since the establishment of PRC in 1949, the section summarizes, in particular, the experiences and mechanisms used by the Government in promoting girls' 9-Year Compulsory Basic Education and female literacy. Wherever necessary, anecdotal references to other levels and types of education have also been cited. The discussion touches upon various issues such as political will, educational goals, legal rights protection, administrative support, flexible development measures, gender-responsiveness, incentive and supportive policies, education quality assessments, and balanced development.

One of the caveats of this review is the non-availability of officially reliable, timely and disaggregated data by sex on several EFA indicators. Thus, recourse to other sources of data has been sought with proper references.

3.2 Transformation of Women Education

The 20th Century was an era of turmoil for China. After exposure to western challenges from late 19th century, the long-lasting ancient Empire collapsed in 1911 and followed by political fragmentation, the World War II, civil war, Chairman Mao era and then finally economic reform period. The transformation of the Chinese education system took place in the face of these economic, political and cultural changes.

Before proceeding to a quantitative estimation of educational stock in China, it would be useful to provide a summary and introduction of huge changes in Chinese education system in both the pre- and post-20th Century eras which resulted in the dramatic transformation of girls' and women's education. There were at least three distinct structural breaks one can distinguish and observe in the Chinese education system; the first happened at the turn of the 20th century; the second occurred after the Communist Party came to power in 1949; and the third took place as a result of the landmark EFA World Conference (Jomtien, 1990) which became highly instrumental in introducing further dramatic structural changes in the education system in general and the recognition by the Chinese Government of the importance of girls' and women's education in particular.



What is the level and pattern of girls' and women educational growth in China in 20th century? To what extent did girls and women education rise? Under different political regimes, how changes in educational attainment were affected by Chinese educational system and political uncertainty? Comparing to other Asian counterparts, did China share the similar characteristics of its relatively high progress in education? In order to answer all those questions, more empirical evidences need to be presented, and as a starting point, we offer a long-term assessment on human capital stock in the following paragraphs. Even though the quality of data in hand is neither satisfied nor readily available, the analysis presents a comprehensive status-of-the-art of girls' and women's education until recently.

3.2.1 First Structural Break (Pre-1900)

Mary Ann Aldersay in Ningbo established the first school for girls in China in 1844. Within a year, Aldersay had fifteen students and by 1852 she had forty girl students. Within the next fifteen years, schools were opened in Shanghai, Foochow, Canton and Arnoy, all under the direction of various missionaries. The Treaty of Tianjin in 1858 opened all of China to missionaries. Thereafter, the opening of girl's schools began to move inland and north. Schools were opened in Tianjin and Peking in 1864 and Chefoo in 1872. By the early 1900's, mission schools had more potential students than they could accommodate. These schools provided education free of charge for girls from the poorer families. Many of the students from these early missionary schools became teachers in public education institutions established early in the 20th Century (Lewis: 1919).

Growing sentiment such as this caused the Chinese to take some initiative by establishing private schools for girls. The first was established in Shanghai in 1898. This school was the forerunner of many private schools that were established in the first decade of the 20th Century (Lewis: 1919). By 1907 in Shanghai alone, there were over 800 girls attending schools established and funded by private Chinese citizens (Burton: 1919).

Empress Dowager Cixi issued a verdict in 1901 permitting the establishment of government-sponsored schools for girls. Nothing was officially provided until 1907. Boys and girls attended schools together in lower elementary grades, but had to have separate classes in higher primary schools (Lewis: 1919). After the founding of the Republic of China in 1911, females in primary education made up only 2 per cent of the primary school enrolment. This figure increased to 19.2 per cent by 1936. The percentages for secondary education raised from 9.8 per cent in 1911 to 17.6 per cent by 1930. Figures gathered in 1916 give a better perspective on how young female education was. Estimates are that 95 per cent of school age girls were not in school (Burton: 1911).



Opportunities for higher education for women before the May Fourth Movement (1919) were available only through three all-woman universities ran by foreign churches. Female secondary school students participating in the May Fourth Movement became torchbearers for women's liberation and equality in China. They had a voice that could no longer be ignored. Cai Yuanpei, the first Chancellor of Beijing University, and Sun Yat-Sen, the founding father of the Republic of China, were both the driving forces behind the advancement of women's education. On May 6, 1921, Sun, speaking at a girl's school in Guangdong Province, remarked "there would be no equality between the sexes without women being educated, and ... without sexual equality there would be no representative movement" (Wang: 1995). Cai, Chancellor of Beijing University, admitted two female students in 1920. Those students, however, were not allowed to take the entrance examination and were considered "visiting" students. Cai was publicly defiant, declaring that the university charter did not prohibit the admission of females and there was no reason to refuse them. Cai stated "the road to our country's prosperity is through universal education: in order to achieve this, one should begin in earnest with women" (Wang: 1995). Females were officially enrolled in Beijing University in the late 1920's. After that, females were admitted into secondary schools and universities across China. This was the beginning of higher co-education in China (Wang: 1995).

There is no denying that the traditional education system generated fairly high education demand and high social mobility. However, the weakness of the traditional education is critical. The major weakness of the traditional education system lies in its striking narrow focus content: mastery of the Confucian classics. This directly caused the curriculum to focus excessively on social science education, and overlook the importance of natural science and other subjects (Gao: undated). Additionally, in traditional China, instead of governments, local lineages and social elites played an extremely active role in providing schooling to children. The absence of public funding for education meant that schooling was still quite limited to middle class and rich families. Furthermore, the schooling system had no rigorous formal regulation, namely, clear classification of grades and formal training for teachers. The informal home schooling was the most common education format witnessed in traditional China, and teachers were primarily private tutors, directly engaged by the elders. The final shortcoming of traditional education was that it failed to educate females. The rationale behind women being excluded from schools is easy to understand. The function of schooling was to select bureaucrats through exams; as women were not allowed to be a part of bureaucrat class, they were therefore not included in the formal educational system. Table 1 shows the differences between traditional and modern education systems in China.



Table 1: Differences between Traditional and Modern Education Systems in China

Education System	Aim	Content	Characteristics
Traditional System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation for civil service examinations, path to bureaucrat class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confucian classic works.• Writing skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Civil Service Examination oriented.• Private provision of schools.• Informal schooling system without clear classification of grades.• Female have no educational opportunities.
Modern System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disseminates knowledge and cognitive skills.• Vocational instruction.• Publicizes modern ideology (nationalism and democracy).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Western subjects:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mathematics.- Physics.- English.- Etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mostly public financed and public provision of schools.• Formal schooling system with clear classification of grades.• Gender neutrality.

In short, the ancient Chinese did not think it was important to educate women. The traditional education system was centred around the civil service examination, which had existed for about 1300 years. This exam served the function of selecting senior positions in the State's bureaucracy; therefore, a high reward to high achievement on this exam generated considerable demand for education in Imperial China, and provided people with a channel of upward social mobility. However, under this system, the aim for people to receive education was quite narrow – pursuing success in the Imperial Civil Service Exam to become a member of bureaucrat class.

3.2.2 Second Structural Break (1900-1949)

At the beginning of the 20th Century, educational system underwent a thorough reform. The three major progresses in this educational transformation lie in:

- Great improvement in education content.
- Equal educational opportunity towards both sexes.
- Shift from informal schooling to formal education.

Firstly, the greatest improvement was the curriculum change. The changes made to the school curriculum were significantly western-influenced and they were along three general lines:

- Elimination of Chinese Confucian classics as a subject in itself.
- Introduction of new western subjects.
- Emphasis on manual work and military drill.



Additionally, the modern system offered equal educational opportunities for both sexes. In 1908, the Ministry of Education issued 36 regulations for normal schools for girls and 26 ones for primary girls' schools. Since then, educational opportunities began to open to females, and this was the beginning of formal education for women in China (Djung: 1934). The third transformation of the educational system is that private informal education institutions (Sishu) began to be replaced by public formal schools. From 1904, the Ministry of Education called on village, county, and provincial officials to achieve compulsory primary schooling, in format of modern institutions. Thus, modern educational institutions became more prevalent (Se: 2010).

In 1949, after the Communist Party came to power, the education system underwent major changes again. The education began to be mostly public provided, and the traditional education was greatly weakened and then phased out. All schools used the same textbooks and arrange their courses according to teaching plans issued by the national Department of Education.

3.2.3 Third Structural Break (Beyond 1949)

During Great Leap Forward (1959-1962) and the Great Cultural Revolution (1967-1977), the development of education was seriously disrupted, especially during the Cultural Revolution. After 1978, when economic reform took place, the education system began to return to normal and tend to follow US model. Chinese government put economic growth as its priority; therefore, more and more attention began to be paid to pursue education development. A significant improvement happened in 1986; 9-year compulsory basic education was introduced; however, the local authorities have never managed to support sufficient number of primary schools so that all children could attend. After many modifications through the trial and error model, the new educational system was gradually consolidated.

China is not often thought of in the EFA context but its education sector since 1980 in general and after 1990 in particular provides many lessons for countries that are approaching Universal Primary Education (UPE). The most important lesson may be that the need for educational reform does not diminish in China even after universalising primary education (UPE). The first challenge is to expand education opportunities. As coverage expands, however, new challenges inevitably emerge that require constant attention and frequent updates to education policy and financing mechanisms.

The importance of gender equity and quality in education has been well emphasised in the State Council's Outline for Development of Women 2001-2010 (State Council: 2005). Besides women's participation in decision-making and management in broader public contexts, the



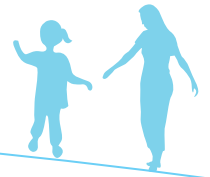
outline defined detailed targets and strategies for the education of women and girls especially with respect to gender-sensitive curriculum, contents and methods, gender balance by field of study, ensuring that women and girls have equal share of educational opportunities and resources, and special measures in favour of education for women and girls in disadvantaged circumstances. Some progress made in implementing the components related to EFA within this major gender policy is described below.

In 1990, China took part in the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held in Jomtien and signed the “World Declaration on Education for All” and “Framework for Action: Meeting Basic Learning Needs”. Following its commitment to the WCEFA, the Chinese Government issued in 1993 the “Outline for Reform and Development of Education in China” stressing, in particular, the attainment of two basic education goals by 2000, namely, the “universalization of 9-year compulsory education” and the “elimination of illiteracy among the youth and mid-aged population”. By 2011, China realized the twin goals of universal 9-year compulsory education and succeeded in eliminating the youth and mid-aged (15-50 years) illiteracy in all the counties including outlying poverty-stricken counties.

Following these dramatic achievements, China’s education system has become a high priority for the Government. On 29th July 2010, China’s Ministry of Education released guidelines for education reform and development over the next 10 years. The guidelines cover almost every aspect of the education spectrum—from kindergartens to universities, from public to private institutions, and from academic to vocational education.

The guidelines clearly underscore girls’ education both as an intrinsic right and a critical lever to reaching other development objectives. The guidelines assert that providing girls with education helps break the cycle of poverty: educated women are less likely to marry early and against their will; less likely to die in childbirth; more likely to have healthy babies; and are more likely to send their children to school. When all children have access to quality education rooted in gender equality, it creates a ripple effect of opportunity that influences generations to come. Girls’ education is essential to the achievement of quality learning relevant to the 21st Century China, including girls’ transition to and performance in secondary school and beyond.

In the following paragraphs, we take an account of the progress China has made in the provision of pre-school education; 9-year compulsory education and adult literacy and skills development with particular reference to girls and women since the landmark WCEFA (1990). The section also describes the national policies, plans and programmes beyond 2015 that PRC



has outlined to address all forms of exclusion and discrimination, disparities and inequalities in access to and completion of education and gender equality. Statistics cited herein are based upon national reports, where statistics from other sources are used and proper references are provided. Quotations are also from the national reports unless other sources are indicated.

3.3 Progresses and Development of Girls' and Women's Education

3.3.1 Pre-School Education

In the field of education, wherever in urban or rural areas, in regions with more developed or less developed economy, or in areas where the Han ethnic group (the majority in China) is concentrated or the ethnic minority groups, education levels of Chinese girls and women have been rising. Although gender gaps still exist in terms of EFA indicators such as literacy rate, years of school attainment, enrolment ratios and dropout rates, the gaps have been bridging up steadily and are at the verge of total elimination.

China, like many other countries, has two distinct pre-school programmes: nurseries for children at the age of 2 months to 3 years, and kindergartens for older youngsters. The Ministries of Public Health and Education jointly oversee the nurseries, where the goal is to ensure that children are healthy and ready to learn. Mostly nurses staff them. Chinese kindergartens prepare children socially and academically for primary school.

The several indicators of the development of pre-school education are shown in Figures 1-4.

At the end of 2013, China had a total of 198,553 kindergartens (pre-schools), rising to 17,302 or 9.5 per cent from 2012. The number of kindergartens recorded an average annual expansion of 3,637 during 2003-2009 and 16,044 during 2010-2013. In the year 2013, the country's new entrants to kindergarten accounted for 19.7 million children-an increase of 581,117 or 3.0 per cent over the last year; enrolments in kindergartens grew by 2.1 million or 5.7 per cent from 2012 to 39.0 million; gross enrolment ratio in pre-school education (3-5 years old) reached 67.5 per cent, up by 3 percentage points from 2012 and 16.6 percentage points as compared to 2009.

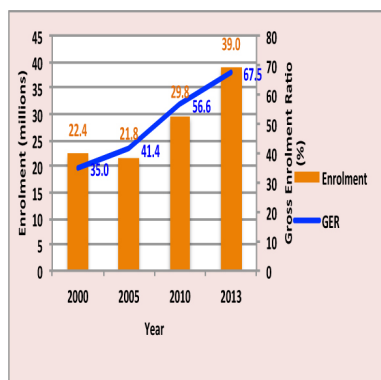


Figure 3: Percentage of New Entrants to Primary Grade I with ECCE by gender (2001-2010)

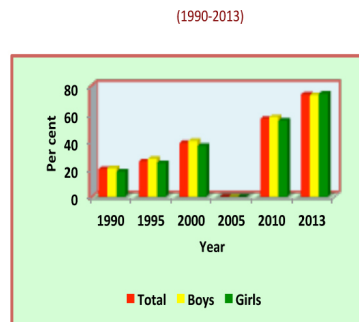
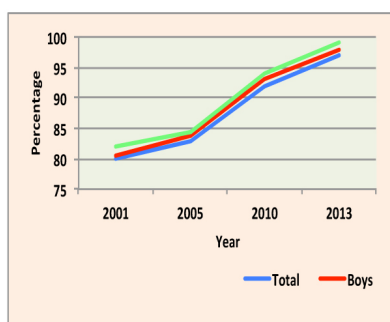
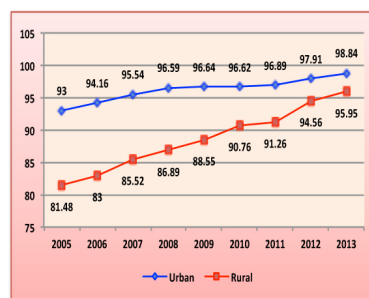


Figure 4: Percentage of Pre-school Completers Entering Primary Schools by Rural-Urban Categories (2005-2013)



Source: Ministry of Education

In China, private kindergartens developed faster than public ones in recent years. By the end of 2013, there were 133,451 private kindergartens, a jump of 8,813 or 7.1 per cent from 2012, accounting for 67.2 per cent of the total number of kindergartens nationwide. Nearly 9.1 million new entrants (46.1% of the total) and 19.9 million pupils (51.1% of total enrolment) were enrolled in private kindergartens in 2013.

A worth mentioning feature of pre-school education is that more and more girls completing this level of education are now entering the first grade of primary education (Figure 3). They now outpace the boys – the remarkable progress being recorded during the period 2005-2010. In 2013, this proportion stood at 96.8% - an increase of 16.9 percentage points over 2001. Likewise, the rural-urban divide is also shrinking steadily (Figure 4). Pre-school enrolment as percentage of all eligible girls increased from 20.3% in 1990 to 72.4% in 2013 (Figure 2). It is interesting to note that girls outpaced the participation in pre-school education as compared to their counterpart boys.



During recent years, pre-school education in rural areas, particularly in remote, poor and minority areas, has developed rapidly (Figure 4). The kindergartens combine in a harmonious way childcare with teaching so that the children become ready for their formal schooling.

The educational activities conducted in kindergartens constitute a systematic, purpose and multi-faceted process of education conducive to lively, invigorating and sound development of children.

Guided by the provisions of the Regulations on Kindergartens and the Guidelines on Kindergarten Education (for trial implementation), the quality of China's Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) lies in the all-round development of children, physically, intellectually, morally, and aesthetically, in their harmonious physical and mental growth, laying a sound basis for their development throughout their lifetime. Accordingly, China's ECCE institutions cooperate closely with the family and the community, endeavouring to effectively utilize all available educational resources and create a good environment conducive to the development of children. All the incumbent and adults working in ECCE institutions respect the personality and rights of children, to observe the laws governing the physical and mental development of children, to pay due consideration to features characteristic of children's learning, and to satisfy their needs in multi-faceted development so that they acquire experiences conducive to physical and mental development in a happy childhood, and be able to fully develop their potentialities, and acquire a development rich in personal colours.

It can be justifiably said that with the coordination of the government and through the concerted efforts of various quarters concerned and effective mobilization of resources, ECCE in China has kept developing healthily and steadily, and that a system of ECCE has basically taken shape in China, being adapted to China's national conditions and consisting of both public and non-state/private institutions and providing both formal and non-formal programmes.

3.3.2 Nine-Year Compulsory Education

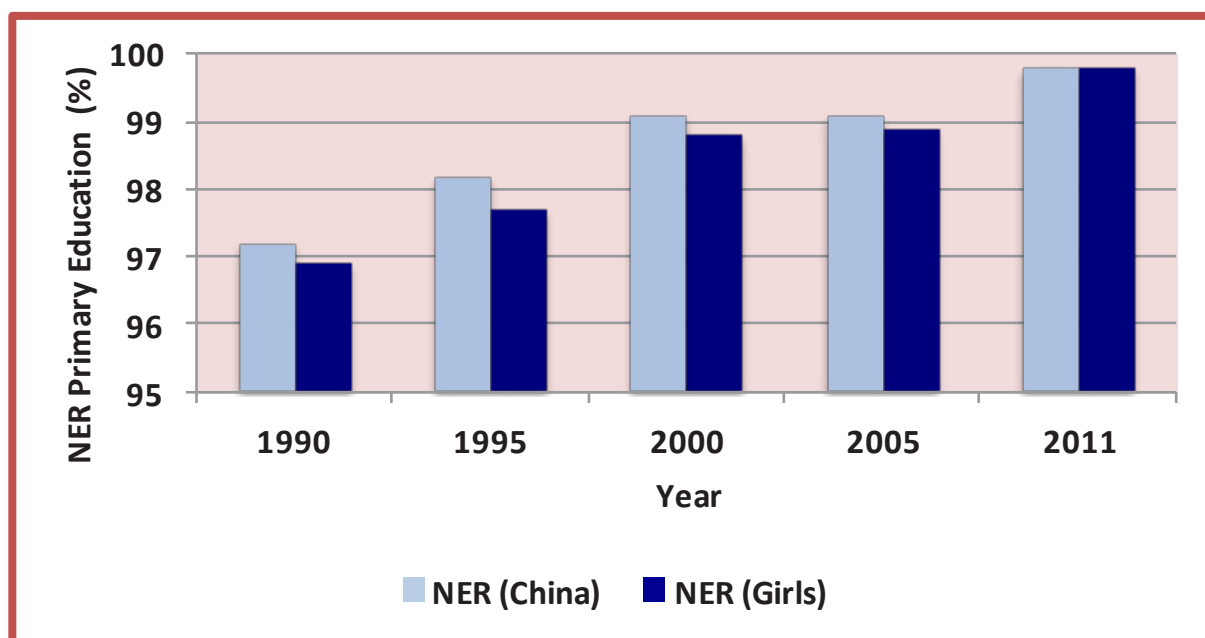
In China, primary and secondary education takes 12 years to complete, divided into primary, junior secondary and senior secondary stages. Primary education lasts six years in general, with a small proportion of five years. At junior secondary stage, most have three years schooling with a tiny part of four years. Almost 98 per cent of students are enrolled in the former schools. The nine-year schooling in primary and junior secondary schools pertains to compulsory education. General senior secondary education lasts three years.



Before the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, basic education in China was extremely backward. On May 27, 1985, the Central Government of China issued the "Resolution of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Regarding Reforms of the Education System". This document exemplified education reform in China since then.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, basic education in China has gained tremendous achievements. Figure 5 highlights the trends in primary level net enrolment ratio (NER) for both total school-age population and for girls. With the successful implementation of the Government strategy, the primary level net enrolment ratio (NER) reached 99.7 per cent in 2013 - an increase of 0.6 percentage point over 2000 and the gross enrolment rate (GER) of junior middle schools reached 104.1 per cent - an increase of 15.5 percentage points over 2000.

Figure 5: NER in Primary Education in China 1995 – 2011

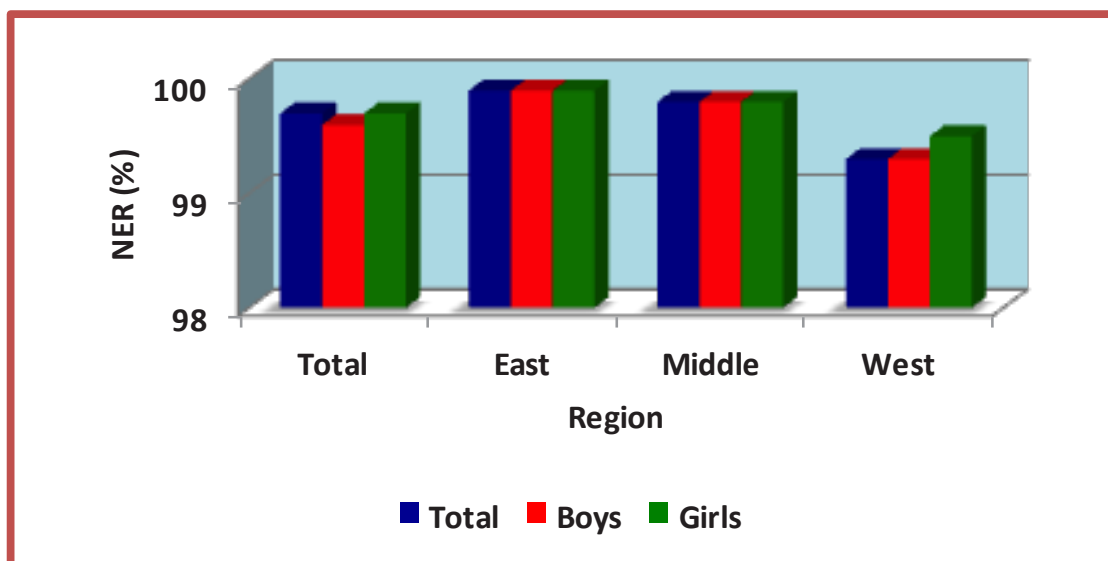


Source: China Statistical Yearbook On Education

It is evident that by 2011 China has achieved universal primary education. Gender disparities have been completely eliminated at this level of education (Figure 6). The gross enrolment ratio (GER) at junior secondary level of education also increased from 88.6% in 2000 to 104.1% in 2013. However, there are still some gender disparities among the major administrative regions of China as shown in Figure 6. In western poverty stricken provinces, 9-year compulsory education is yet to be achieved. The government has developed special plans and programmes (see below) for addressing this issue.



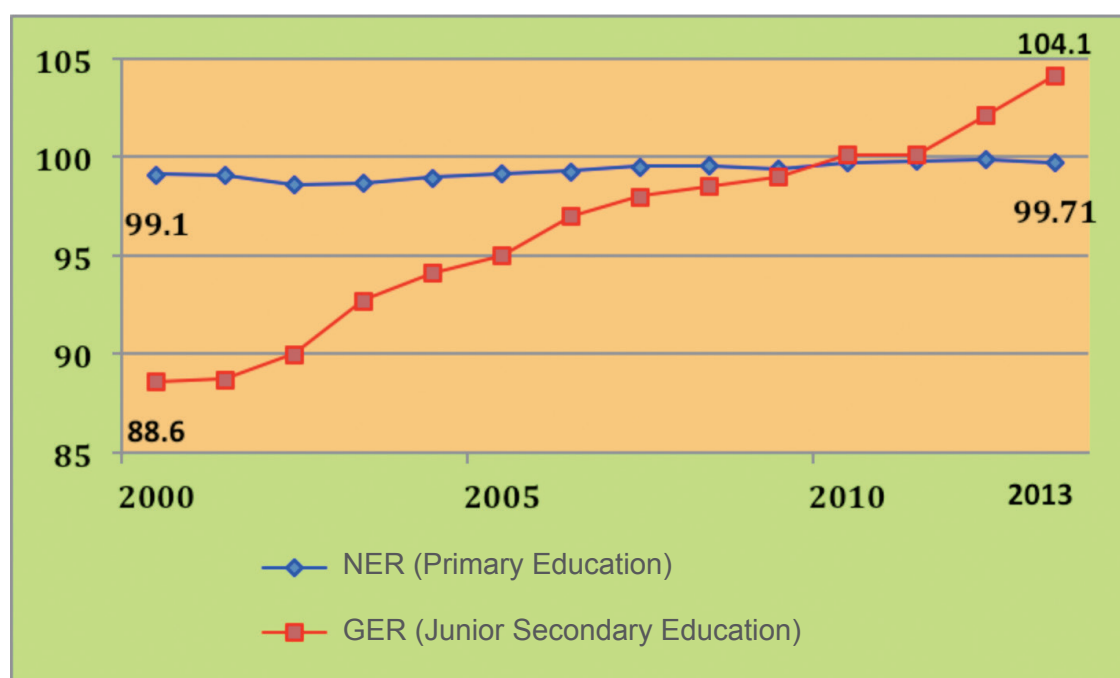
Figure 6: NER at Primary Level of Education by Region and Sex - 2010



Source: China Statistical Yearbook On Education

With regards to gender disparities, they have been almost eliminated in primary level of education during the period under consideration as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: NER in Primary Education and Gross Enrolment in Junior Secondary Education in China 1995-2011

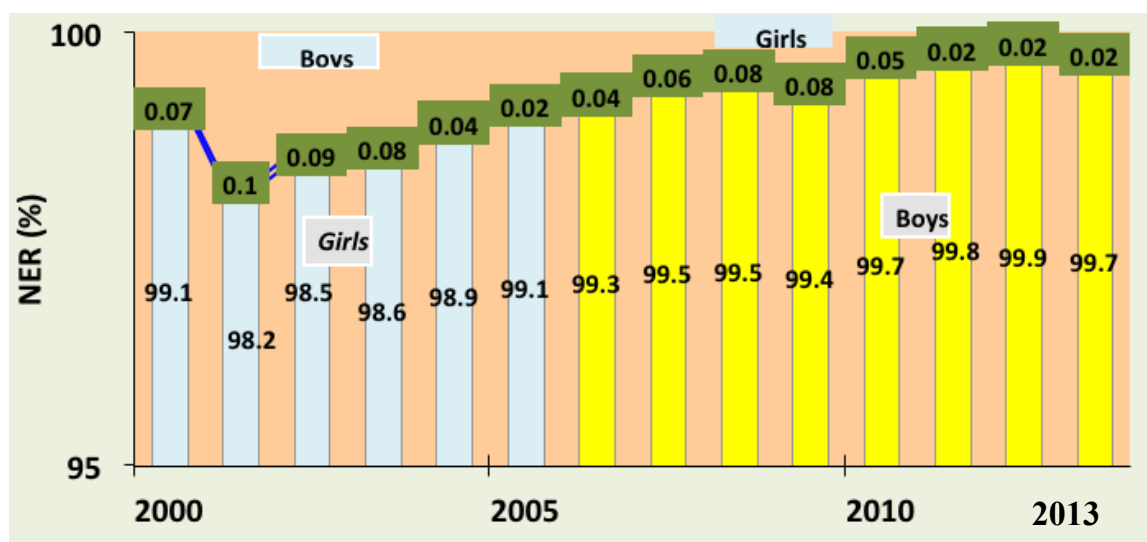


Source: China Statistical Yearbook On Education



Figure 8 highlights that, during the period 2000-2013, the percentage share of girls in total enrolment at the primary level of education decreased from almost 47.8 per cent to 46.2 per cent.

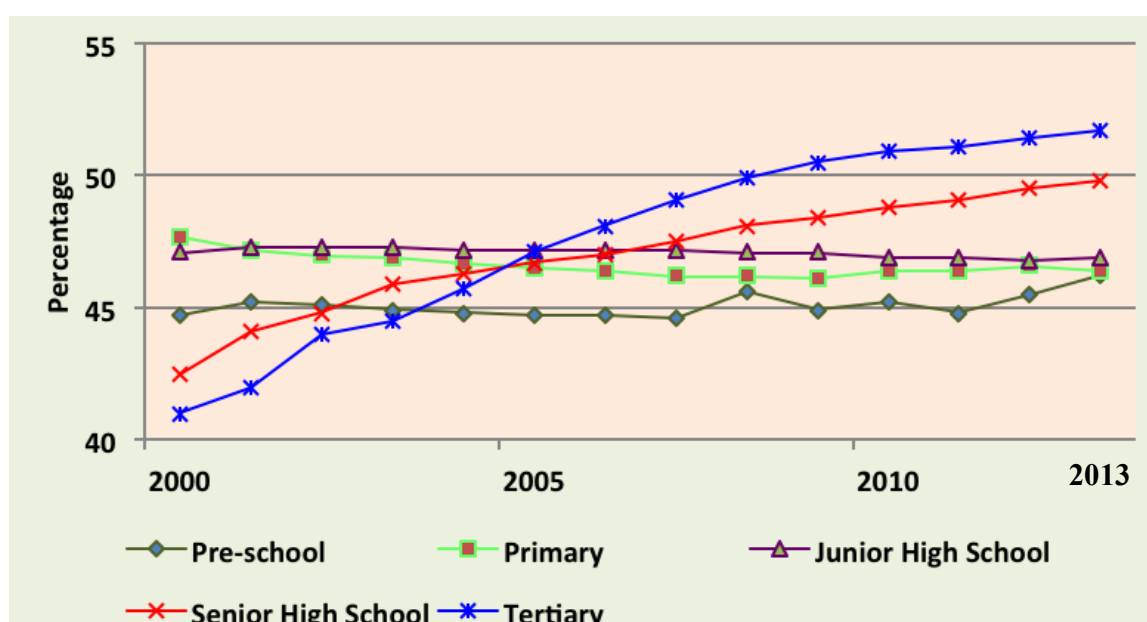
Figure 8: Gender Disparity in NER in Primary Education (2000-2013)



Source: China Statistical Yearbook On Education

Girls in China now enjoy an upper hand over their counterpart boys in terms of almost all Six EFA Goals. They surpassed boys' net enrolment in primary schools in 2007 (Figure 9) and the survival rate to Grade V in 2010 (Figure 10). What is true for primary level of education is equally true for junior middle level education.

Figure 9: Percentage Share of Girl's Enrolment in Total Enrolment by Levels of Education: 2000-2013

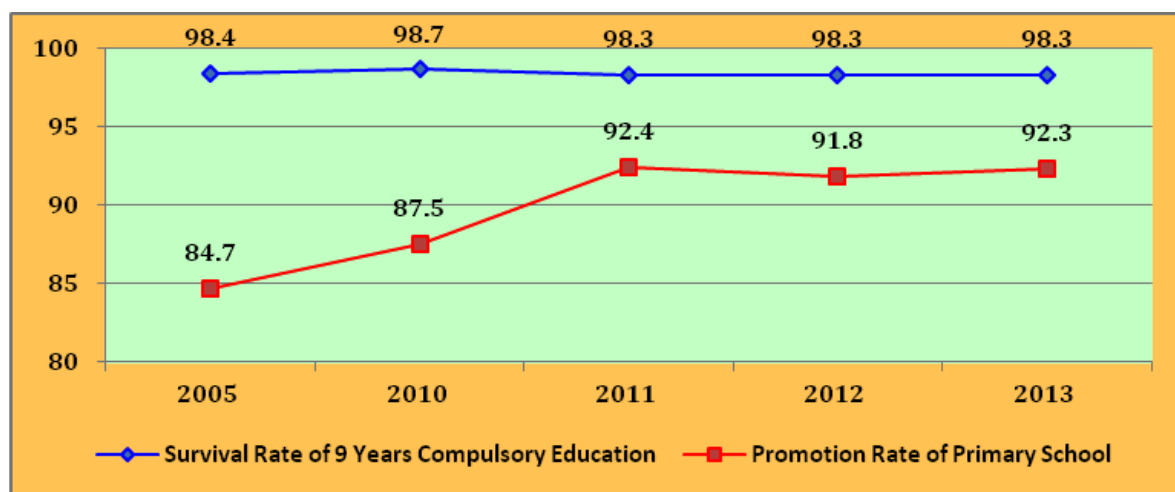


Source: China Statistical Yearbook On Education



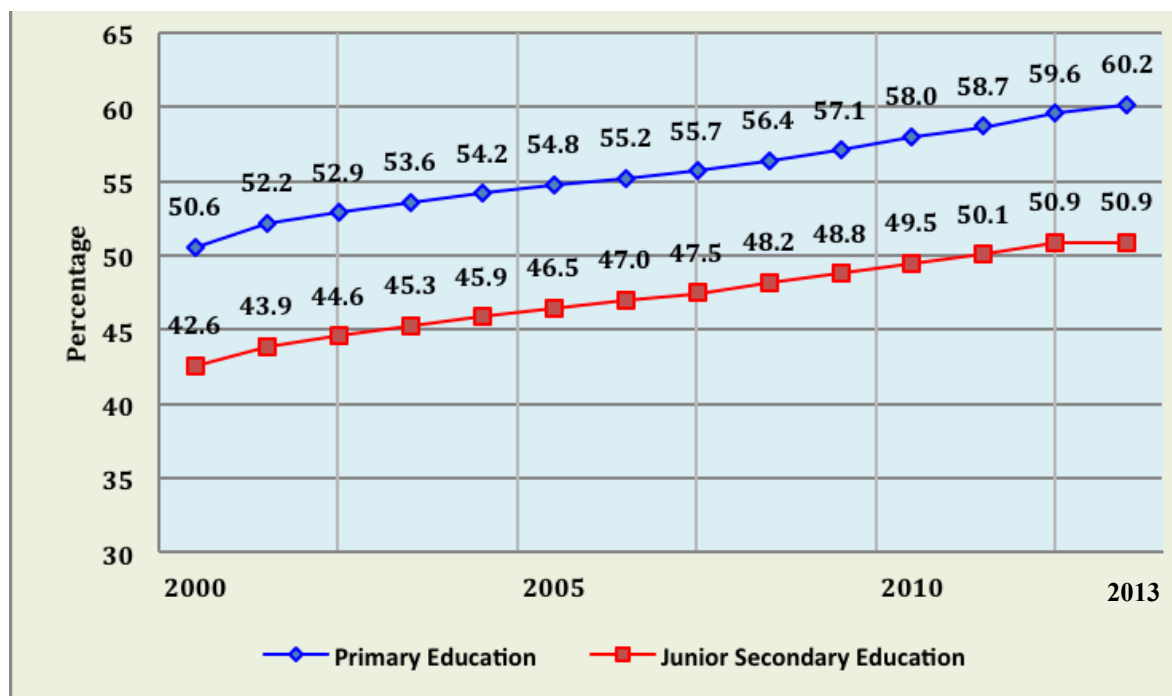
The percentage shares of female teachers in total teacher at primary and junior secondary education increased from 50.6% to 60.2% and 42.6% to 50.9% during the period 2000-2013 respectively (Figure 11). The share of female teachers with teaching diploma in primary schools rose from 97 per cent to almost 100 per cent, in junior high school and senior high school from 87 per cent to 99 per cent.

Figure 10: Survival and Promotion Rates in 9-Year Compulsory Education (2000-2012)



Source: China Statistical Yearbook On Education

Figure 11: Percentage of Female Teachers in Primary and Junior Secondary Schools (2000-2013)



Source: China Statistical Yearbook on Education



Although China's 9-year compulsory education initiative has performed remarkably well in comparison with other developing countries, it is not without its share of problems and challenges. The gap in both financial resources and education quality between the east and west, as well as the urban and rural still needs years' efforts to cover. Also, the care and education for the left-behind children as well as those moving with their peasants parents into cities caused by the rapid urbanization is a touch challenge.

As China is a developing nation, well restricted by the economic and social development level, the educational level of women and their participation in social growth are not very high as well as not at par with their counterpart men; there are still prejudices of women in society; the livelihood of the women in poverty-stricken areas needs further improvement. The task for the development of the Chinese women is still quite arduous.

But it is encouraging to note that during recent years, several initiatives by the international agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to improve education quality have taken place in China. These include building schools and improving physical conditions in existing school facilities, providing scholarships to students, helping rural teachers with financial aid and in-service training courses, extending girls' education and teaching life skills in rural areas, and partnering with the Chinese government to build energy-efficient schools in rural areas (Box 2).

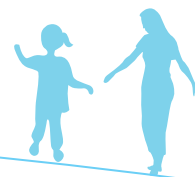
Box 2

China: Basic Education Project in Western Areas

From 2004 to 2009, the World Bank and the U.K.'s Department for International Development (DFID) supported the government's efforts to improve primary and junior secondary school enrolment of poor boys, girls and ethnic minorities in five of the poorest provinces of China. By 2009, enrolment was universal, completion and pass rates in Chinese Language and Mathematics among these groups improved and pupils were supported by a larger proportion of qualified teachers.

The Basic Education in Western Areas Project was designed to improve educational opportunities for poor children and ethnic minorities so that they would be better prepared to take advantage of economic and social opportunities. The project was implemented in five provinces in western China (Gansu, Guangxi, Ningxia, Sichuan, and Yunnan) and provided investments to complement and improve the effectiveness of good government policies and programmes. In particular, the project focused on:

- *Improving school facilities through construction and providing teaching equipment and library books (84 per cent of project costs);*
- *Strengthening management and administration (5 per cent); and*



- *Implementing strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning (11 per cent).*

The project constructed or upgraded 1,525 schools, supplied almost seven million textbooks, and trained almost 11,000 principals and more than 154,000 teachers. Today, there is universal enrolment of poor boys, girls and ethnic minorities in the primary and junior secondary schools in the five project provinces. Sichuan, which started from the lowest base among the five provinces in 2001 (particularly in the enrolment rates of ethnic minorities—84 per cent in primary education and 52 per cent in junior secondary education), has made the most progress.

By 2009, Yunnan, Guangxi and Ningxia achieved parity in primary education enrolment among boys, girls and ethnic minorities, while Sichuan and Gansu were also on the verge of closing the gaps among these three groups.

Source: World Bank, September 14, 2010.

The “Hope Project” and “Spring Bud Project”, for instance, are the two internationally well-known projects in China (Boxes 3 and 4). The Hope Project is a Chinese public service project organized by the China Youth Development Foundation (CYDF) and the Communist Youth League (CYL) Central Committee. Started on October 30, 1989, it aims to bring schools into poverty-stricken rural areas of China, to help children whose families are too poor to afford it to complete elementary school education. Through Project Hope, the CYDF has also sought to improve educational facilities and improve teaching quality in poorer regions.

Box 3

The Hope Project

The goal of the non-governmental Project Hope, sponsored by the Communist Youth League (CYL) Central Committee and the China Youth Development Foundation, is to support young dropouts in poverty-stricken areas. Started in 1989, the project has received donations from various resources and helped children who are at the school age, but are out of school or have difficulties to keep in school.

The purpose of China Youth Development Foundation, the founder of the Hope Project, was to “help children with funds collected from society.” Subsidization methods include: 1) establishing long-term grant-in-aid programs to help educationally deprived young students with good character return to school in spite of poor family conditions; 2) building and refurbishing schools for poverty-stricken villages; 3) providing teaching aids, writing materials and textbooks; 4) and providing special scholarships enabling outstanding primary and middle school students in poverty-stricken areas to receive college education.

Up till 2009, by raising 5.67 billion RMB (about 921,950 USD) in donations, aiding 3.46 million students from poverty-stricken families to go or return to schools and building 15,940 Hope primary schools throughout the past twenty years, Project Hope has made significant contributions to both the



development of fundamental education in the economic backward regions of China and the healthy growth of younger generation. Project Hope has grown up to a national non-profit program with great impacts and numerous participants, due to actively cooperation with domestic and international organizations, enterprises, and individuals from all sectors of the society.

Source: <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/poverty/95783.htm>

Likewise, the “Spring Bud Project” (Box 4) has been launched, organized and carried out by the China Children and Teenagers' Fund (CCTF), under the leadership of the All China Women's Federation. The goal of the plan is to assist girls of poor areas of China to return to school, which will benefit the welfare of the whole society.

By the early 1999, the Spring Bud Project has been carried out in all over China, Yuan 220 million has been collected, and 900,000 girls, who dropped out of school, have been helped back to school.

Box 4

Spring Bud Project

Due to limited socio-economic and cultural development and harmful social norms that perpetuate gender inequality, there are still a large number of children who drop out of school in many areas, over 60 percent are girls. Girls in China have a vital role to play in the nation's future development. Educating all children, especially girls and those most marginalized, will have a sustainable impact on the country's progress.

The Spring Bud Project is a public welfare service initiated in 1989 and implemented by the China Children and Teenagers' Fund under the leadership of the All China Women's Federation (ACWF). It aims to assist girls who have dropped out in poverty-stricken areas and provide them with an opportunity to go back to school. The program is also aligned with China's realization and solidification of nine years of compulsory education plan and reduction in adult illiteracy. Based on China's education objectives and practical needs, it formulates its strategies for education and development serving as a beneficial supplement to governmental efforts.

In the 1990s, the Spring Bud Project focused on girls at the compulsory education stage, by carrying out activities such as assistance in pairs (paring recipients and donors for the purpose of one-on-one assistance), skills training, girls' classroom teaching, and school construction, among others. With the popularization of compulsory education in China, children in rural areas and from poor urban families do not have to pay tuition during the nine-year compulsory education period. As a result, since 2006 the plan has extended its scope from assisting girls' tuition and living expenses for compulsory education to protecting the right to education of disadvantaged groups, such as teenage girls, left-behind and migrant children, and those from poor families in urban areas.



At the end of 2011, the program was widespread across the country, with 1.1 billion RMB raised, more than 2 million girls who dropped out of school received assistance to go back to school, and over 1,100 Spring Bud Schools were set up.

Source: Jin, Chi, Li-li Zhang. Access, Quality and Empowerment of Girls through Education: Innovations and Experiences in China. UNESCO INRULED. 2014. P49-54.

3.3.3 Vocational Education and Skills Development

China is experiencing an unprecedented phenomenon: breakneck industrialization on a scale and at a pace not seen before. It is trying to achieve in just a few decades what Western nations took more than a century to do. The arrival in the country's cities of tens of millions of rural dwellers, at most semi-skilled, has put huge strain on the country's system of vocational education and training (VET). How have the Chinese Government and its education administrators responded? Is China's VET system adapting to the rapidly evolving needs of its industry? What types of programmes has the government developed to address the vocational education and skill development for girls and women? How well China's VET system is performing compared to other countries? In fact, the available evidence suggests that much has indeed been done, from a wholesale overhaul of programmes to make them relevant to industry requirements, to major investment in infrastructure. Teacher training has been reformed, and more and more female participation at middle-level skills development has been encouraged. Joint initiatives with bodies such as UNESCO, ILO, and the World Bank have improved training and vocational education particularly at high school level.

China uses the term "vocational and technical education" (VTE) as a general term for different types and modes of vocational and technical education and training. This also includes initial preliminary and continuing training at various education levels. Furthermore, it indicates that Chinese current VTE system does not maintain a clear distinction between initial VTE (IVTE) and continuing VTE (CVTE). Both, IVTE and CVTE eventually do belong to the same uniform system, which is enforced by the VTE Law of the PR China in 1996.

IVTE consists of two components, school-based vocational education and training. School based vocational education is provided by Junior and Senior Vocational Schools (SVS, Skilled Workers Schools (SWS) and Secondary Technical Schools (STS). The tertiary sector provides vocational education at Higher Vocational Colleges (HVC) and Senior Skilled Workers Schools (SSWS). Different administrative responsibilities result in various school types. Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS) are the two main departments which are responsible for vocational education schools.



The schools and colleges under the MOHRSS (SWS, SSWS and TC) are remarkable at competency based training and skill development required by the industry. The schools and colleges under the MOE traditionally emphasize subject instruction. In recent years, they are reforming towards meeting the requirement from workplace. In all kinds of schools and colleges, girls and boys share the same portion in number for many years.

Conducted mainly in junior vocational schools and aimed at training workers, peasants and employees in other sectors with basic professional knowledge and certain professional skills, junior vocational education refers to the vocational and technical education after primary school education and is a part of the 9-year compulsory education. At present, vocational training and skills development training is mainly conducted and managed by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Human Resource and Social Security, but enterprises are encouraged to provide vocational training for its own employees.

In China, skills development training (vocational training) comprises apprenticeships, on-the-job training, re-training and short training courses that might take place before or during employment. These forms of continuing vocational education are partly organized in accordance with vocational standards. Countrywide networks of certification centres are currently being built up. Skills development training is supplied by a huge variety of organizations such as department training centres, companies, employment agencies, the unions, public and private organizations and vocational schools.

Available statistical data of TVET schools, colleges and institutions in China is shown in Table 2

Table 2: Number of all Categories of TVET Schools: 1996-2008 (Thousand)

Category	1996	1998	2000	2001	2004	2006	2008
Junior Secondary Vocational School	1,534	1,472	1,194	1,065	672	335	-/-
Senior Secondary Vocational School	22,151	22,174	20,252	17,770	14,454	14,693	14,847
Higher Vocational Colleges and Universities	82	101	184	384	872	981	1,184

Development of vocational education has focused on the employment needs of learners. Vocational institutes and schools have been working in close association with the society, private enterprises and community self-help groups. The approach followed here is to train labourers to become proprietor of small-scale enterprises. Following measures such as combining theory with practical skills, linking schools with private sector, learning while working, education reform, career development and emphasis on practical and vocational competency skill, over 95 per cent of the students have gained employment opportunities.



The skill training for the peasant farmers and women in rural areas is not sufficient in China. In order to carry out skill training for these people, the Culture and Technology Training Schools for Peasants and Community Learning Centres (CLCs) for women have been established in rural areas of the country at three levels, namely, county (city), township (town), and village levels. In 2009, there were nearly 130 thousand cultural and technological training schools for rural adults with a total numbers of classes organised exceeding 350,000 (MOE), the duration of training exceeding 40 million training/hours. As a result of national commitment, there has been a remarkable expansion of these schools throughout the country. For instance, there were 2,107 county level schools, 18,341 country run schools and 105,700 village-run schools in 2009 with a training output of 38.3 million peasant farmers accounting for 92.6 per cent of the total national training of farmers. The female participation accounted for 47 per cent.

In order to rapidly enhance the skill training of rural labours, the government organized and implemented a series of training projects, namely: “The Rural Labourers Technology Transfer Training”; “Training for Practical Talents in Rural Areas”; “Scientific Training for New Peasants”; and “The Continuous Education and Re-employment Ability for Adults” focusing on skills development. In recent years, “National Skilled Workers Training Project”, “National Rural Labour Force Transferring Training Project”, “Rural Applied Technician Training Project”, and “Continuous Education and Re-employment Training Project” have fostered remarkably the capacity and vitality of TVE in China.

During the period 2005-2009, the peasants attending the training exceeded 42 million in rural practical technology training programme. It is important to note that for improving the skill levels of migrant workers, China emphatically promoted the rural labourers training programme. The number of trainees in these diverse training programmes exceeded 30 million with a participation rate of about 7 per cent in recent years. Night schools for migrant workers have been set up in some Chinese cities providing to migrant workers training in vocational skills, civic life, traffic safety, professional ethics, labour laws and regulations. And skills training have been organized specifically targeting poor adolescent girls (Box 5)

Box 5

Skills Training for Poor Adolescent Girls

After the open-door policy, the Chinese government, international organizations and various NGOs have carried out numerous projects in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. For instance, the ACWF/DFID Partnership in Advocacy and Skills Training for Poor Adolescent Girls is a skills training program targeting girl who have dropped out of school in rural areas. It is funded by the



UK Department for International Development (DFID) and implemented by the All China Women's Federation (ACWF) as a means of providing literacy, vocational skills, and life skills training to girls.

The target group was local adolescent girls, aged 13 to 18, who met the following conditions: 1) adolescent girls who have completed primary school education and teenage girls who have dropped out of junior middle school; 2) adolescent girls from the poorest families; and 3) girls who were the most excluded and marginalized, including girls with disabilities, ethnic minority girls, girls of single parents and other special circumstances, were given priority to the training. This project was carried out in the remote, economically underdeveloped, ethnic minority populated mountainous part of western China which covers six nationally recognized poverty-stricken counties in Yunnan, Sichuan and Gansu provinces.

Due to limited research and practices on non-conventional education of adolescent girls, the program sought to prepare training materials tailored to the daily life and mental needs of girls and explore new, effective and practical ways to deliver training programs. The training covered applied Chinese language and mathematics, life skills and vocational skills. In total, the ACWF/DFID Partnership Program provided free training to 12,761 adolescent girls who dropped out of school in 1,671 villages of 92 towns in six counties in three provinces.

These adolescent girls became more aware of social norms and gender equality issues while mastered skills to earn their livelihood. It helped these girls to find opportunities to develop into a suitable career, to better adapt to real-life scenarios, and to be empowered for further learning and develop.

Source: Jin, Chi, Li-li Zhang. Access, Quality and Empowerment of Girls through Education: Innovations and Experiences in China. UNESCO INRULED. 2014. P54-65.

3.3.4 Adult Literacy

In China, literacy is measured by the number of characters recognized. For urban dwellers, the current literacy standard is 2,000 characters while rural dwellers need to know only 1,500. Minority languages and dialects do not generally factor in. Over the years, other criteria have factored into what counts as literacy including ability to write reports, read popular publications, etc.

History shows that Chinese have long held literacy as an important “moral template for cultural identity and modernity”. Wisdom and education have been highly regarded in China, and literacy campaigns appeared throughout the 20th century and continue today.

Prior to 1978, adult education had always taken precedence over children. The UNESCO Report “China Country Study” (UNESCO: undated) says that “Adult literacy was given first priority in literacy campaigns designed to ‘sweep away illiteracy’ (saochu wenmang). Because 80% of adults were illiterate they were targeted as crucial for securing new China’s economic



security". It may sound cliché, but reading was (and continues to be) power, and leaders knew that the literate could have considerable influence.

In 1950, the government set recognition of 1,000 characters as the standard for literacy and 300 for illiteracy. A reading primer for peasants was distributed in 1951 to rural people. Pinyin was developed, Putonghua became the standard for the Chinese language, and characters were simplified in an effort to make the written language more accessible to the public and to unify the country under a singular language system.

When the primary school curriculum was standardized in 1978, the focus shifted to a more consistent national education programme for the younger members of society, and adult education began to decline. (Of course, it was no longer as necessary since the newest generations picked up the language quicker). Literacy among children increased; however, the years before had seen a decline in literacy despite the campaigns to eradicate it. The trend changed however during the 80's and 90's when the literacy rate rose considerably and China reported a 15.9% illiteracy rate (1990). UNESCO reports that the majority of those who remained illiterate were unsurprisingly women.

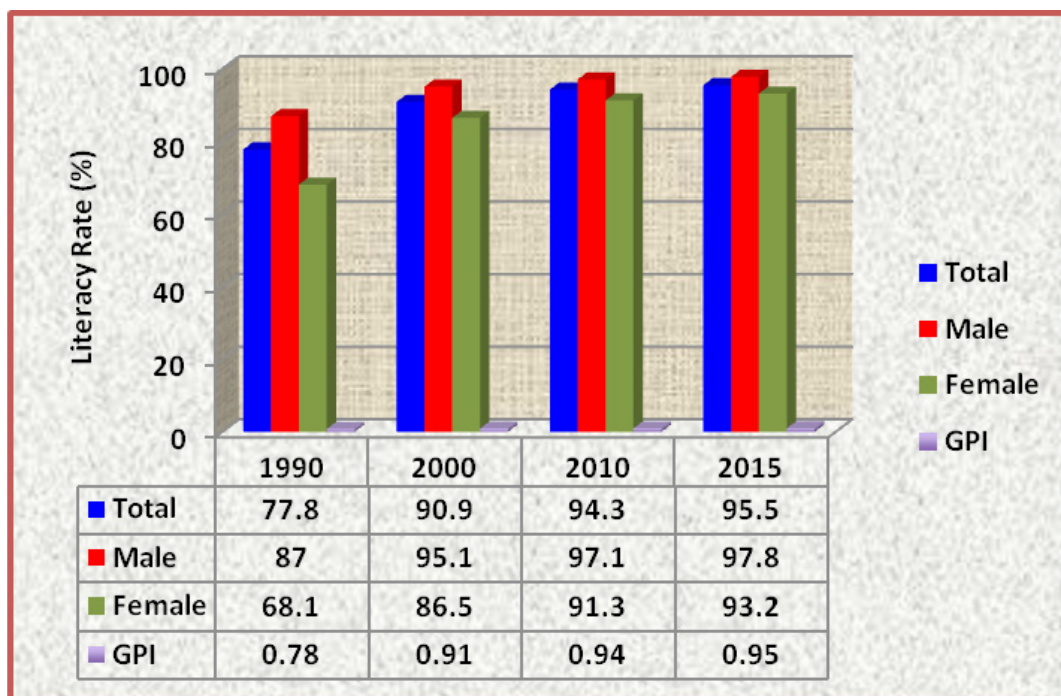
According to 2000 census data, 87 million adults in China were illiterate: of whom 20.55 million were between the ages of 15 and 50. Three quarters of these illiterates lived in rural areas. Seven provinces and regions had the highest illiteracy rates, including Tibet, Yunnan, Guizhou, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Inner Mongolia. Tibet's illiteracy rate was 37%-38%, the illiteracy rate of Yunnan, Guizhou, Gansu and Qinghai varied from 10%-15%, and the illiteracy rate of Inner Mongolia was 7%-8%.

From 1990 to 2000, China has made remarkable strides in eliminating the pandemic of illiteracy throughout the country. The adult literacy rate (15+ years) increased from 90.0% in 2000 to 95.1% in 2010. In 2000, eight provinces and autonomous regions had an illiteracy rate of over 10 per cent as compared to national average of 7.72 per cent. These provinces and autonomous regions have suffered seriously from illiteracy problem. But all of them have made concerted efforts to meet the challenge head on. The rural-urban and gender disparities are slowly but perceptibly closing.

Chinese literacy rates are quickly approaching those of developed Western states. As of 2010, China's literacy rate was just over 95% (Figure 12). This is an impressive improvement for China as recently as 1990, when it had a literacy rate of just 78%.



Figure 12: Adult Literacy Rates (Age 15+ Years) in China (1990 – 2015)

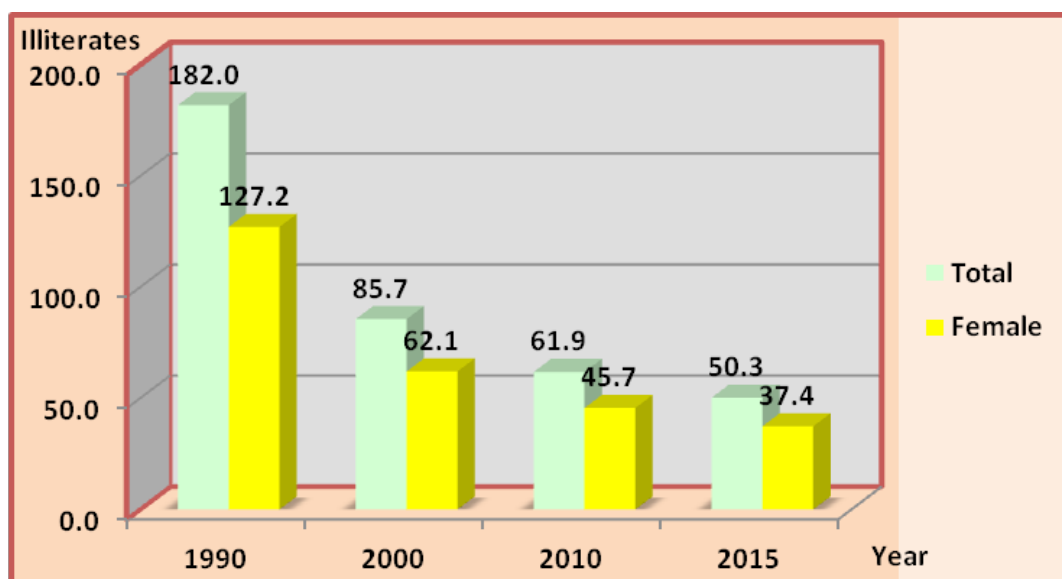


Source: UNESCO-UIS Databank.

Note: Data for 2015 are projections.

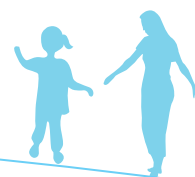
Even though just 5% of Chinese adults are illiterate, that still means an estimated 50 million people aged 15 and older are unable to read and write a simple sentence (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Adult Illiterates in China (1990 – 2015) (Million)



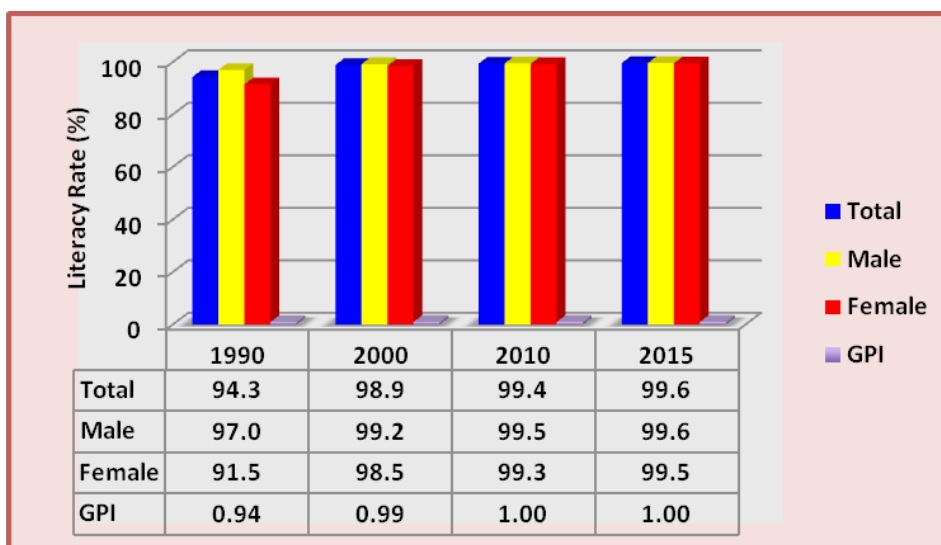
Source: UNESCO-UIS Databank.

Note: Data for 2015 are projections



China will almost certainly attain this level over the coming decades. Clear evidence of that is the fact that the literacy rate for China's young people (ages 15 to 24) is now 99.6% (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Youth Literacy Rate (Age 15-24 Years): 1990 -2015

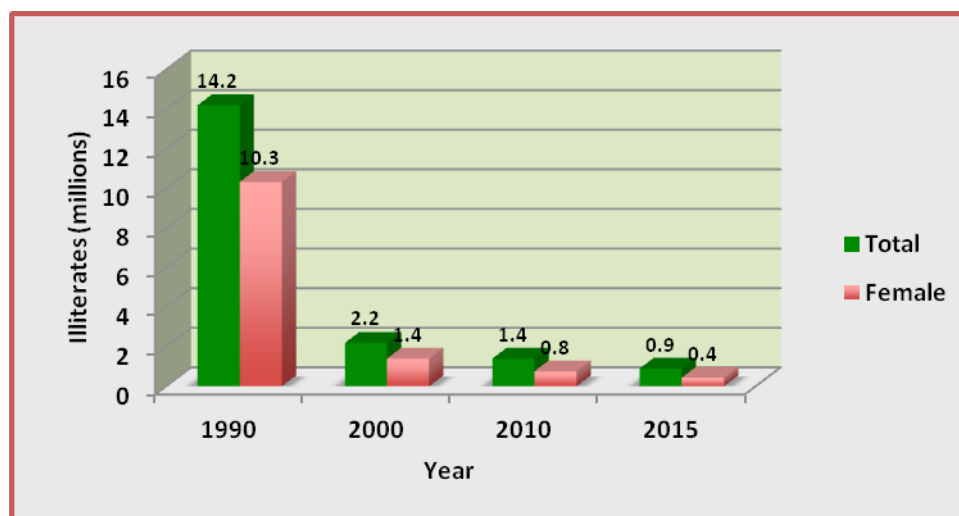


Source: UNESCO-UIS Databank.

Note: Data for 2015 are projections

Also encouraging is that China has dramatically reduced the gap between male and female literacy. Back in 1990, the adult literacy rate was 87% for men and 68% for women - a difference of 19 percentage points. By 2010, the gender gap was 5.8 percentage points - 97.1% for men and 91.3% for women (Figure 12). Among China's youth, the gender gap is almost non-existent: the literacy rate is 99.6% for young men and 99.5% for young women (Figure 14).

Figure 15: Youth Illiterates (Age 15 -24 Years) in China (1990 – 2015) (Million)



Source: UNESCO-UIS Databank.

Note: Data for 2015 are projections



For many years, the Chinese government has paid great attention to eliminating illiteracy among women, curbing emergence of new women illiterates, and preventing women relapsing to illiteracy again. Its policy priority in this respect is to promote illiteracy-elimination education for women in poor areas and areas inhabited by ethnic minorities. Relevant government departments and the All China Women's Federation have jointly launched the illiteracy-elimination drive among women (Box 6). In 2004, the illiteracy rate among women 15 years of age and above in urban areas was 8.2 per cent, a decrease of 5.7 percentage points from that of 1995; the illiteracy rate among women aged 15+ years in rural areas was 16.9 per cent, a decrease of 10.5 percentage points from that of 1995. The illiteracy rate among young and middle-aged women (15 - 50 years) across the country was 4.2 per cent, a drop of 5.2 percentage points from that of 1995.

Box 6

Double Learning and Double Emulation Program

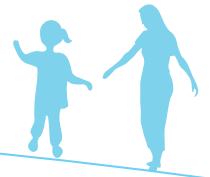
The All-China Women's Federation, with 14 ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture, State Forestry Administration, the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Education initiated the "Learning Knowledge, Science and Technology, Competing with Each Other for Development and Achievements" Program (or "Double Learning and Double Emulation" Program), among rural women in 1989.

The objectives of the program are to combine urban and rural women's development and help rural women raise their incomes. The major activities are literacy learning, knowledge and skill training (Double learning); and the competitions in work and social services (Double matching). Various sub-programs, including "Women Becoming Better-off through Science and Technology," "Women's Action in Poverty-Elimination" and "March the Eighth Green Program" have also been carried out.

Up till 2009, the program has enabled more than 20 million rural women to achieve fundamental literacy skills and trained more than 1.5 million rural women in agro-technology. With the help of the program, more than 46,000 villages and communities have started processing and weaving businesses that have given local employment to about three million rural women. The program has also motivated more than 120 million urban and rural women to take part in tree planting activities, and helped establish more than 220,000 green bases. In accordance with the "production development, life prosperity, rural custom civilization, village tidiness, and democratic management" guidelines, the program has also helped to establish 21,445 women's model villages.

Source: womenofchina.cn

While adult literacy rates are expected to rise by the year 2015, the female illiteracy disadvantage, particularly in rural areas, will not just "disappear" as part of the general educational progress. Unless the government specifically targets rural females' illiteracy, the problem will continue to fester and prove a substantial stumbling block in the move towards gender equity and rural-urban parity.



Finally, the chief concerns are now about sustainability. Meaningful post-literacy and continuing education have to be carefully strategized and implemented. The narrow concept of literacy must be broadened to include knowledge of basic life skills and enhanced competencies. Functional literacy must go beyond the 3 R's and must provide to the learner an avenue for renewed self-belief and most importantly self-advancement. Hence, initial literacy teaching must have strong follow up for retention on the one hand and imparting life skills on the other. Only then will life-long learning translate into learning lifelong.

3.3.5 Quality Education

Given the differences in needs across China's various regions and counties, well-targeted initiatives that address the needs of specific rural areas, such as those in Yunnan Province (Box 2), as well as programmes focusing on improving the educational attainment of young women and the children of migrant workers make the most lasting impact towards improving the quality of education in China.

Quality is at the heart of the Chinese education and what takes place in classrooms and other learning environments is fundamentally important to the future wellbeing of Chinese children, young people and adults. The government recognizes well that quality education is one that satisfies basic learning needs and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experience of living.

After the realization of the goal of 9-year compulsory education, China has been emphasizing its quality improvement. The concept of primary school quality in China is interwoven in the education policy. Thus, student maturity and development in regard to morality, intelligence, physique and aesthetics are the general criteria by which school quality is judged and valued in China. The issue of quality of primary education in China is highly relevant to the teaching-learning process. As mentioned earlier, the basic notion of quality education in China stresses the development among learners: (a) moral character and behaviour; (b) basic knowledge and skills; (c) physique and knowledge of health; (d) knowledge and expression of aesthetics; (e) attitudes toward labour and labour skills, and ability to take care of oneself; (f) students' interests and special skills.

Another important step in improving the quality of basic education in China is New National Curriculum was introduced in 2001. In recent years, the Chinese government has been implementing this new curriculum to address the disenchantment of learners and their parents about the quality of education. The curriculum stresses the need to change the practice of putting too much emphasis on imparting knowledge and calls for the creation of supportive



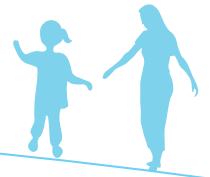
environments for students' all round development. The new curriculum has been a driving force for promoting the quality of education.

In China, the quality of primary education is closely linked with its management structure. Standards developed at provincial, prefecture and county levels for the assessment of management consist of 12 criteria: (a) school rules, regulations and autonomy; (b) the quality of principals and other leaders; (c) school objectives or plans for development; (d) internal management efficiency and instructional quality; (e) staff development with a focus on the training of key teachers; (f) responsibility of staff, (g) coordination between schools, society and family; (h) school environment and discipline; (i) instructional innovations; (j) school roll management and control of class size; (k) extracurricular activities; and (l) use and management of school facilities.

The paradigm for reforms in teacher management has changed in recent years and more emphasis is now attached to participatory and decentralized approaches taking local and regional conditions into consideration. The development of a contingent of primary school teachers possessing high moral and professional quality is highly emphasised as a prerequisite of school quality improvement. Those who fall short of the minimum requirements set by the state have to successfully pass a state-administered qualifying examination for aspiring as teachers. At present, the certification of teachers is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Regulations on the Qualifications of Teachers. Given the need to increase teachers' knowledge of basic subject matter and to build and improve their pedagogical skills, there is a corresponding need to expand access to higher quality in-service teacher training programmes.

For teachers, the policy framework recognises at least five salient features of a good teacher: (a) commitment to students, treating them equitably, recognizing the individual differences that distinguish one from the other and taking account of these differences in practice; (b) knowledge of the subjects they teach and how they teach those subjects; (c) responsibility for managing and monitoring student learning; (d) thinking systematically about teaching practice and learning from experience; and (e) membership in learning communities.

Governments at the provincial level formulate norms for the staff members of primary schools, and staff them with the needed number of teachers. Steps have been taken to ensure that all primary teachers acquire the necessary qualifications and training. Where conditions permit, the qualifications of teachers may be raised step by step. In-service training and continuing education programmes for teachers already in vogue are organized periodically to ensure the



steady improvement of their ideological level and professional competence so as to meet the ever-increasing requirements of primary education of the 21st Century.

Principals/Headmasters with high qualities are very important for the quality improvement of primary schools. In recent years, the government has taken several measures for enhancing the qualifications and in-service training of primary school principals so as to meet the job specifications set for them. Each prefecture-level education college has a training centre for primary school principals, where they can receive both theoretical and practical guidance and training.

In China, the principal-responsibility system of primary education has been implemented. This internal management pattern contains three new organic elements. First, the principal is responsible for all school affairs and s/he is the legal representative of the school. Second, a school committee on which the principal plays the chief decision-making role is set up to approve the school management activities. Third, the teachers' representative committee is established to enable the teacher representatives to fully participate in important decision-making activities, to supervise administrative operations and to guard the legal rights and interests of the teaching staff and workers. The practice of the principal-responsibility system has an active impact on both the school efficiency and the quality of instruction.

The guidelines developed by the Ministry of Education clearly explain the context of quality improvement, responsibilities of local governments, schools and families. A gender perspective has been gradually introduced into the guidelines to ensure a quality education for girls and boys. The "Child-Friendly School" Programme implemented cooperatively by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF serves as an example of Chinese government's effort to create a gender sensitive learning environment in schools (Box 7).

Box 7

Developing Standards of Child-Friendly Schools from a Gender Perspective

Beginning in the 1990s, the "Child-Friendly School" program has been developed by UNICEF in collaboration with some East Asian countries. It has been advocating for gender equitable child-friendly schools since its inception, including gender aware curriculum and teaching practices. Between 1996-2000, the Chinese government worked with UNICEF to launch a program entitled "Basic Education and Early Childhood Care in Poverty-Stricken Areas", which prioritized the construction of "Child-Friendly Schools" as a means of encouraging schools in the program area to reform the relationship between teaching and learning outcomes, improve the relationship among schools, local communities and families, and increase students' academic performance using a student-centred approach.



Between 2001 and 2005, the program expanded to cover over 4,000 schools in ten western provinces of China (i.e. Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Shanxi, Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai, Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, and Chongqing). Since then the child-friendly school program has been on-going in these areas and the child-friendly school criteria developed by UNICEF have been used as a guideline when constructing new schools.

During the period 2005-2010, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Education to adapt the criteria to ensure that it was suitable to the Chinese context. These efforts led to four adaptations in the criteria that were aligned with international benchmarks and the educational conditions in China. The Chinese version of Child Friendly School criteria includes four dimensions: inclusion and equality, effective teaching and learning, health and safety, and participation and harmony.

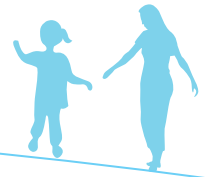
Specifically, “inclusion” refers to schools actively encouraging and helping all school-aged children, especially those most disadvantaged and excluded, to have access to and benefit from education. “Equality” stresses the need to give all boys and girls equal opportunity to accessing and completing quality education and to create a school environment that is free from discrimination and respects student diversity and difference. Inclusion and quality are basic requirements for the development of an equitable and sustainable educational system. The inclusion and equality dimension prioritizes gender equality to ensure that children, especially girls, are able to overcome other forms of exclusion and discrimination.

A national framework of CFS vision, dimensions, standards and indicators has been developed for actual implementation and scale-up replication in the country. The child-friendly school criteria have been rolled out into many places throughout China, including southwest China in ethnic minority populated areas, Haidian District in Beijing, Shenyang in Liaoning Province, Ji’nan in Shandong Province, and Hebei province.

In China, including gender quality in the school criteria is forward-looking and innovative. The criteria provide schools with requirements and guidance necessary to promote gender equitable environments, and it facilitates the creation of an educational and teaching environment that promotes gender equality. Along with the criteria being widely adapted by schools at various levels throughout many regions of China, schools were also encouraged to self-reflect of their practices and improve their systems to ensure that gender equality was being upheld. While implementing the criteria and undergoing self-assessments, schools began to provide female students with a range of diverse role models and invited outstanding women from the community to deliver lectures. School management also understood the importance providing female teachers with opportunities for professional development, helping them to gain confident and be empowered when making career choices.

Source: Jin, Chi, Li-li Zhang. Access, Quality and Empowerment of Girls through Education: Innovations and Experiences in China. UNESCO INRULED. 2014. pp. 65-75.

Quality education in China should not only aim at forming trained professional workers but also at contributing to the development of individuals who possess the skills to act and interact in the progressing Chinese society. It should also allow Chinese to participate in their communities and society in a constructive and respectful way for themselves and others. Its broader aims should be



to deliver outcomes such as personal and social growth, the respectful conduct of citizens toward each other and the provision of opportunities for learners to develop critical thinking and life skills. In order to achieve gender equity, priority should be given to the ethnic minority girls (Box 8).

Box 8

Promoting Rural, Poor and Ethnic Minority Girls' Education

To ensure the access, retention and achievement of girls in minority and poverty-stricken contexts, a national project was launched during the 8th 5-Year Plan (1991-1995). It was then included in the 9th 5-Year Plan (1996-2000) to expand the outcomes to other poor western provinces. Therefore, a 10-year strategic plan of action research has been conducted on girls' education in China.

The objective in the period 1992-1995 was to optimize the education environment systematically and make it conducive to girls' education. Participants were selected from 28 rural schools of multi-ethnic background in four western provinces in Ningxia, Gansu, Qinghai and Guizhou. The project launched thematic studies on preschool education for rural girls, non-formal primary education, the management of boarding primary schools in rural, agricultural and pastoral areas, mutual participation of rural school and the community, mobile teacher training, and oral history of girl's education, among others. The actions included strengthening school management, reforming curriculum materials, recruiting female principals and teachers, setting up model schools, preschool intervention, community mobilization, parental education, etc. Within three years, both girls' enrolment and retention improved substantially. Their confidence and self-development were also strengthened. The project established close relationships between schools and the community and increased support for girls' education. Most importantly, the solutions were translated into administrative decisions at the local government level, and applied to other poor and minority areas.

The objective of the period 1997-2000 was to enhance the quality and efficiency of basic education for ethnic minority girls. It further explored the innovative and cost-effective practices through action research in six poor western provinces, including Ningxia, Guizhou, Yunnan, Qinghai, Inner-Mongolia and Xinjiang. The project engaged 4,500 primary school students through surveys, experiments and case studies. A series of studies were undertaken, including the learning performance of multi-ethnic students in language, mathematics and life skills, the psychological and intellectual development of ethnic minority girls, the characteristics of parents and teachers, and the learning environment. It proposed projects such as "Learner-centered curriculum development strategies" and the "Development of local curriculums for the life skills of girls". The in-depth understanding of girls' learning needs derived from the ten-year action research has provided evidence-based education interventions and influenced decision-making at the local level. In addition, the research outcomes in multi-grade instruction, bilingual teaching, and local curriculum for girls' life skills have promoted the reform of educational practice, enhanced the relevance of curricula, and suggested quality and cost-effective approaches to improve education for girls.

Source: Zhang, T. (2003). Studies on the Quality and Efficiency of Education for Ethnic Minority Girls in Western China. Lanzhou: Gansu Culture Press. Available online at: <http://book.in.china.cn/detail.jsp?srcid=12648114&page=269>, 2013-07-16



3.4 National Mechanisms for the Promotion of Girls' and Women's Education

3.4.1 Pre-School Education

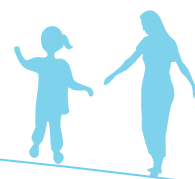
ECCE services constitute a societal systemic programme. Their effective provision requires the concerted efforts of various sectors concerned. In China, the coordinating efforts exerted by the State Council play a crucial role in ensuring the smooth provision of ECCE services.

In 1949, a Pre-school Section was established in China's Education Department. The historical development of Chinese pre-school education indicates three distinct cultural threads, including traditional culture, communist culture, and Western culture, that have shaped early childhood education in China.

Ever since the State Council Circular issued in 1987 prescribing the responsibilities of the educational departments, China has exerted efforts along several lines, including planning for developing early childhood education, promoting ECE by law, instituting a proper management system, and training teachers, and significant advances have been made. Being the government's functional department responsible for the educational sector, MOE carries the heaviest responsibilities in promoting ECCE.

After implementation of the reform and opening up policies, the State Council proposed the principle of developing pre-school education through the joint efforts of the state, collectives and individuals, and stipulated that sponsors of kindergartens in urban and rural areas might raise funds on their own to cover expenses and that they might collect reasonable fees from parents. With unremitting efforts, pre-school education has gradually developed into a great cause contributed by the nation, collectives and individuals. Education funds have increased steadily over the years.

Since 1980, pre-school education has been intimately influenced by the reforms and progress of Chinese politics and the economy. Furthermore, administrative authorities have set up an independent budget to support early childhood education in rural areas (Zhao & Hu: 2008). A higher quality of educational provisions for girls and children living in rural areas is another priority area for the Chinese government. With regard to families' support of their children's early development at home, Chinese policy on family education is highly focused. The policy aims at enhancing and promoting the collaborative partnership between kindergarten and



family. Teachers' attitudes toward family intervention are a vital aspect of the Chinese policy on teacher-family collaboration. Kindergarten teachers are required to support family members in their role as the child's first teacher and build collaborative partnerships with family (Ding: 2007). Furthermore, kindergarten teachers are considered as active researchers in children's role-play. This supports the co-construction of their teaching knowledge in relation to children's initiation/subjectivity in role-play (Liu, et al. 2003). Table 3 presents the main sectors providing ECCE in China.

Table 3: Main Sectors providing Early Childhood Care and Education Services

Age: 0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8
<i>Educational Sector</i>
<i>Public Health Sector</i>
<i>Women's Federation</i>
<i>Civil Affairs Sector</i>
<i>Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)</i>

Policies, rules and regulations are outlined in two major documents, namely, "The Guidance for Kindergarten Education (Trial Version)" in 2001 and "The Outline of National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)" in 2010. As a result of implementation of these policies, it has been found that China's kindergarten education has dramatically changed since 1990. In recent years, various western curricula and pedagogical models have been introduced, such as Montessori programmes, Reggio Emilia, Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), and the Project Approach. Since 2000, the government has introduced several curriculum reforms to improve kindergarten teachers' professional knowledge, such as their understanding of the concept of play and pedagogy, and perceptions of inclusion and kindergarten-based curriculum. Furthermore, within the process of reform, family education and family collaborations have equally been recognised in child development (Box 9).

Box 9

UNICEF's Project for Developing Early Childhood Education in Poor Areas

From 1993 on, MOE and UNICEF have collaborated in sponsoring the Project for Developing Early Childhood Education in Poor Areas. By now the project has entered its third cycle. The first cycle covered the period 1993-1995 and initiated ECE work by combining formal and non-formal



programmes in 8 counties in Anhui Province and Guangxi Autonomous Region. The second cycle covered the period 1996-2000, and similar ECE programmes were conducted in 32 poor counties distributed in 11 provinces and autonomous regions in the Northwest and Southwest of China, and very good results had been achieved. By 1999, in 11 provinces and autonomous regions of the Southwest, the average participation rates of preschool age children in 3-year pre-school education programmes reached 37.3%, and the participation rates of children in one-year pre-primary classes reached 67.9%, increasing by 5.6 and 6.6 percentage points compared with the figures of 1995. It is envisaged that during the current third cycle, efforts will be made to develop new models of ECE in 26 counties (districts) located in 6 western provinces and 4 cities in East China, aiming to develop community-based ECE in both urban and rural areas.

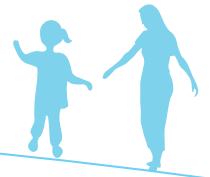
Source: All-China Women's Federation

With two-thirds of the country's children in pre-school centres, the Ministry of Education has set goals to reach universal access for one year of pre-school before primary school, almost universal access for two years before primary, and if necessary, a third year to the families who can afford it. Although the details of resource evaluation and government funding are still being worked out, the ministry hopes to achieve these goals by the year 2020.

While universality of pre-schooling is a laudable goal, China targets pre-school subsidies at poor children and considers it as a sound investment when public resources are limited. Furthermore, pre-school curricula focus on non-cognitive learning (i.e. self-discipline, health education, planning, attention, emotional maturity and interpersonal skills) and growth, in addition to academic learning. This pairing of non-cognitive and cognitive skills is critical to the development of children aged 0 to 6 and requires the attention and investment of parents and families, who can reinforce learning and positively impact educational outcomes in their homes. The government promotes periodic discussions and shares the lessons learned and further exploration of country partnerships.

As things stand now, in all the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government, in all the prefecture-level cities, and in all the counties and county-level districts there are inter-departmental bodies for women's and children's work operating under the guidance of the government at the same level.

These bodies responsible for children's work established at the central and local levels constitute important agencies responsible for the management and coordination of matters related to ECCE services.



3.4.2 Nine-Year Compulsory Education in China

With the adoption of the policy of reform and opening to the outside world in 1978, basic education in China entered a new era of progress. In 1985, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party issued the “Decision on the Reform of the Educational Structure”, laying down the principle that local governments should be responsible for basic education. The new policy was an incentive for local governments, especially those of the counties and townships. In 1986, the National People’s Congress promulgated the “Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China”, thus placing basic education in the country on a firm legal basis. In 1993, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council jointly issued the “Guidelines for the Reform and Development of Education in China”, clarifying the directions and basic policies for the development of basic education till the early years of the 21st century. In early 1999, the State Council ratified the “Action Plan for Educational Vitalization Facing the 21st Century” formulated by the Ministry of Education (MOE), laying down the implementation of the strategy of “Invigorate China through Science, Technology and Education” and drawing the blueprint of reform and development for the cross-century education based on the “Education Law of the People’s Republic of China” and the “Guidelines for the Reform and Development of Education in China”. In June 1999, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council jointly promulgated the “Decision on the Deepening of Educational Reform and the Full Promotion of Quality Education”, clarifying the direction for the establishment of a vital socialistic education with Chinese characteristics in the 21st Century.

The National Conference on Education paved the way for the abolition of the Ministry of Education and the establishment of the State Education Commission, both of which occurred in June 1985. Created to coordinate education policy, the commission assumed roles previously played by the State Planning Commission and the Ministry of Education. Although the State Education Commission assumed a central role in the administration of education, the reform decentralized much of the power previously wielded by the Ministry of Education and its constituent offices and bureaus, which had established curriculum and admissions policies in response to the State Planning Commission's requirements.

The State Education Commission, with its expanded administrative scope and power, was responsible for formulating guiding principles for education, establishing regulations, planning the progress of educational projects, coordinating the educational programmes of different departments, and standardization educational reforms. Simplification of administration and delegation of authority were made the bases for improving the education system. This devolution of management to the autonomous regions, provinces, and special municipalities

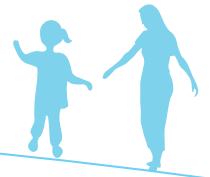


meant local governments had more decision-making power and were able to develop basic education. State-owned enterprises, mass organizations, and individuals were encouraged to pool funds to accomplish education reform. Local authorities used state appropriations and a percentage of local reserve financial resources (basically township financial revenues) to finance educational projects.

3.4.3 Vocational Education and Skills Development

The earliest vocational education in China may be traced back to the industrial education in the 1860's more than 150 years ago. The main content of vocational education at that period (late Qing Dynasty) was to study western technology and train manpower with practical skills. The "Schooling System of 1902" laid down a set of systematic regulations for vocational education, while the "Chinese Vocational Education Society", which was established in 1917, set the precedence of joint provision of vocational education by the education sector and the industrial sector in China. However, the slow economic progress and backward industry hampered the development of vocational education in China before 1949. At that time, there were only 561 secondary technical schools with an enrolment of 77,000 students and 3 schools for training skill workers with an enrolment of 2700 students. The total enrolment in secondary vocational schools represented only 4.2% of the total student population in secondary schools (MOE: undated).

In the new century, China starts a new stage that whole country will build up a fairly well off society in all aspects and increase the pace to modernization. Government raises a series of strategic targets of continuing development for economy and society: Taking development as topic, reforming as power, structuring adjustment as mainline, promoting the upgrade of industry and progressing of technology, expanding export, developing western part of China, improving development of rural area and fastening city, increasing employment, continually implementing the strategy of rejuvenating China by science and education, and to improve the quality of labour force in all-round. The human resource development should be taken as important strategy of China's advance (World Bank: 2010). The fourth National Conference for Vocational Education was held in July 2002. The document of "The Decision of the State Council on Making Great Efforts to Push forward the Reform and Development of Vocational Education" was published in September 2002 which issued the government strategic targets and policies on VTE development. In October 2005, the State Council issued "Decision on Making Great Efforts to Develop Vocational Education". Besides emphasizing the importance of VTE, the new policy provides more political and financial support to the VTE.



In 2006, MOE made 107 secondary vocational schools as laboratory school for the new education models of “combing working and learning” and “learning while working”. Instead of the traditional school and classroom oriented vocational education model, vocational education in recent years has become employment oriented via exploring models of combing working and learning, school–enterprise cooperation and learning while working. For vocational education in China, the 1st year is normally for basic knowledge learning with skill learning for the 2nd and on-post practice for the 3rd year.

In the absence of data, it is hard to assess the progress China has made in promoting vocational education and skill development of girls and women. However, the available evidence suggests that China accords particular emphasis to initial capacity building training to assist women in identifying their own challenges, initiating change and understanding of how training could impact on their lives and activities. The presence of the All-China Women Federation in each village whom the women trust and discuss their needs which ensures that a project can gain the information required to understand the needs and day to day pressures of the women.

The several training programmes designed by the responsible authorities fit well with women’s existing skill level. Women groups are able to realise benefits from training before they intend to invest in “capacity building, like literacy training”. Training in practical literacy helps build among women confidence and reduces the perception among illiterate women that they are excluded from training process. The main thrust of these policy measures is to:

- Support increased resilience to crises by encouraging women to build up financial safety nets through savings schemes and financial management; by facilitating social support structures that activate community resources to provide mutual support and insurance; and by teaching strategies to diversify livelihoods and reduce women’s reliance on a single productive activity.
- Reduce vulnerability in the market by improving women’s knowledge and confidence in negotiating terms for their products and services, and helping them to strategize to improve these terms.
- Improve long-term security by helping women demand that government policy and processes address their needs, especially in terms of enabling rural infrastructure.
- Remove barriers to women’s participation in development initiatives by shifting their position in their communities and thus enabling communities to work together.



- Involve carefully men in women's projects so as to create a supportive attitude towards changes in the productive work of women.

In short, the development of Chinese vocational education and skills development serves students and focus on employment. Vocational institutes and schools cooperate with society, enterprises and villages and are market oriented. Via various ways such as combining learning and practice, cooperation between school and enterprise, learning while working, education reform, developing career morality and emphasizing on practical and vocational competency skill, over 95% of the students have become employed. In recent years, "National Skilled Workers Training project", "National Rural Labour Force Transferring Training project", "Rural Applied Technician Training Project", and "Continuous Education and Re-employment Training Project" has remarkably increased the consciousness and capacity of vocational education's serving economic society and enhanced its vitality, which was widely recognized and supported by people in general (Box 10).

Box 10

China - Yunnan Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project

The objective of the Yunnan Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project for China is through curriculum cluster development, improve the quality of technical and vocational education and training, to produce skills that respond to the labour market demand, contributing to Yunnan's economic development during the 12th Five Year Plan.

The project has two main components: (a) Improving the Quality and Relevance of TVET Programs in Project Schools; and (b) Strengthening Provincial Capacity in Coordination, Policy Development, and Monitoring and Evaluation.

The Project is implemented within the context of Yunnan's economic development during China's 12th Five Year Plan. The direct beneficiaries are 24,078 students (about half of the total enrolments in the 9 project schools) who are currently enrolled in the targeted training programmes in four key economic sectors including bio-industry, geology and minerals, tourism, and automobile industries. Furthermore, the Project has interventions in the training of school management, which would benefit all the students enrolled in the project schools. Almost 80% of these students are from rural poor areas and about 30% of them belong to the ethnic minority groups (non-Han). At the end of the project period, total enrolment in these institutions is projected to increase to about 96,000. The proportions of students who are from rural poor and ethnic minority groups are expected to further increase. In addition, the 9 project schools also offer short-term training courses to rural farmers and urban migrant workers that need skills upgrade. The capacity of such training is also expected to increase from the current 16,000 trainees per year to 28,000 trainees per year. The project will have built-in subcomponents to encourage school-to-school collaborations so that the project schools can support similar reforms in non-project neighbouring schools. The project will contribute to the poverty



alleviation goal of the central and provincial government. As is often said in China amongst the TVET school community, one graduate employed is one family out of poverty.

Source: World Bank, Yunnan Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project.

3.4.4 Adult Literacy

The history of development of adult education in China is a long history and as such difficult to describe in this report. Nevertheless, some recent important policy measures taken by the government are discussed so as to inform the readers about the importance the Chinese government attaches to the cause of adult literacy. A comprehensive account of the development of adult education in China is contained in the “National Report Adult Education and Learning in China: Development and Present Situation” prepared by the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO and Chinese Adult Education Association (July 30, 2008).

Literacy education has been highly emphasized by the government in China. In such important legal documents as the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China and the Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, it is clearly provided that the elimination of illiteracy is the responsibility and duty of each citizen, which guarantees the seriousness and authority of literacy education. In the Working Regulations for Literacy Education, which was first issued in 1982 and revised in 1993, the guiding principles, policies and objectives of literacy education were provided for guiding the development of literacy education in China. At the same time, governments at all levels have also included literacy education into the plan of local economic and social development and treated the expected indicators of literacy education as the responsibility goal of the government.

In 1994, the Chinese government established the national system of literacy education, in which all sectors concerned make joint efforts to exert coordinated management and mobilize the participation of all social forces. For example, the national inter-ministerial coordination group of literacy education was set up by eleven ministries and commissions including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Forestry, the Ministry of Broadcast and Television, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of CPC, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, All China Women’s Federation and the National Association of Science and Technology. This group had the mission of providing macro-level guidance, check and coordination of literacy education and mobilizing the whole society to support and participate in literacy education. Meanwhile, such mass media as broadcast, newspapers, magazines as



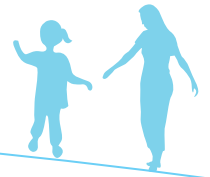
well as blackboard newspapers and large slogans were adopted for publicizing the importance, arduousness and urgency of literacy education and mobilizing all social sectors to support and participate in literacy education.

Another landmark mechanism to promote literacy acquisition is the development of a nationwide network of community learning centres.

For instance, starting in 1998, the project of “Rural Community Learning Centres (CLCs) for Poverty Alleviation” has been carried out in three poverty-ridden and under-privileged provinces of China, namely, Gansu Province, Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. The provincial governments mobilise support from local governments, the educational institutions and schools to establish CLCs at township or village levels according to the ideology of serving the local social economic development. An important task for CLCs in rural areas is to promote the development of reaching the educationally un-reached and improve the capacity of little reached to improve the quality of productive forces as well as the quality of local population and their livelihood standards. The CLCs are designed in such a way so as to improve the social development, achieve the success of sustainable development and make every community a better place for the people to live in together. As an effective measure to achieve education for all and the idea of learning to live together in the new century of knowledge economy, CLCs in project provinces have become the foundation for the establishment of life-long learning system in rural communities.

For CLC practice in China, the national slogan is “of the local people, by the local people and for the local people”. No matter it is in rural communities or urban areas, CLCs advocate firmly to local people to raise their awareness and full understanding about the functions of CLCs in community, ensure community participation and involvement in the planning, management and establishment of CLCs with support from local authorities, organizations and educational institutions. The prime objective of CLCs is to provide the local people with cultural, educational and technical services according to the practical needs in promoting the social and economic development of local communities.

The community learning centres are mainly depending on the resources of the local government, institutions, schools and community people. In the development of CLC project in China, the cooperation between local CLC and local government should be further strengthened. The other important factor is the involvement of local schools and educational institutions. As the supporting and participating institutions, all the educational equipment and facilities can be used for activities and training classes of local community learning centres.



The development of CLCs in China is in its infancy. There is still some space for improvement. With the accelerated development of information technology, the CLC should play an even more active role in dissemination the application of modern technology, such as using of computers, application of ecological agriculture. As an effective way to achieve education for all and the ideas of learning to live together in the new century of knowledge economy, CLC strategies should be made for the establishment of life-long learning system and for the character development of individuals in a learning society.

Finally, to further promote the development of CLCs in China, the following suggestions are put forward: conducting project personnel training at various levels for CLC personnel; compiling and publishing a handbook on collection of CLC project activities; and improving the theoretical research on project activities and to meet the urgent needs in practical learning and training activities.

3.4.5 Quality Education

China has a long tradition of using teaching research systems as a quality control mechanism. The system includes “teaching research groups,” where teachers teaching the same subject meet weekly to prepare lessons with “open lessons” held for peer review to identify problems. In addition, principals observe teachers’ classes, identify problems and provide guidance. Finally, the district teaching research office (TRO), which consists of subject area experts, “diagnose” teaching problems, providing guidance in teaching content and methods. When schools encounter unresolved issues in teaching, they turn to the district TRO for help.

This quality control mechanism has faced a challenge since the new curriculum was introduced in 2001. The curriculum introduces new standards for 19 subject areas for compulsory education emphasizing the necessity for change in curriculum to respond to the rapid change in technology and knowledge-based economy. Students are expected to focus on problem solving and ability to learn and to act innovatively and creatively. This is a significant challenge for teachers who are accustomed to ‘teaching to tests.’ This means that TRO members have to update their knowledge and teaching methods and then train teachers in response to the requirement laid out by the new curriculum.

To ensure high quality education, China is also facing the task of developing a national assessment system. As global trends shift the focus toward outcome-based education, there is a growing recognition that control of inputs such as resources, teachers, curriculum, school programmes, facilities and equipment are inadequate indicators for measuring outcomes. This involves a change of the function of the Ministry of Education and local education bureaus.



3.5 Education in China Beyond 2015

Concerning the Chinese Post-2015 Development Agenda, the China's policy thrust on a definite shift in the discourse from access to education to learning and it goes beyond literacy and numeracy to include cognitive and non-cognitive skills, psycho-social skills and critical thinking. There is also a clear focus on equity and the need to ensure equitable learning across gender, ethnicity, caste, socio-economic class, disabilities, geographic region and age. China recognises the importance of skills like resilience and the ability to adapt to and manage crises and disasters, given that the world is rapidly changing, politically, socially and climatically. Young people in particular emphasized that education should be relevant to their context and linked to employment. There is a welcomed focus on governance, moving beyond discussions of financing and budgets to the need for education systems that are more accountable to communities and less corrupt. While China agrees that education is the responsibility of the government, the Government also deems partnerships with civil society, the donor community (including the corporate sector) and local communities increasingly important for realizing the goal of quality education for all.

The outline identified the following three areas as EFA agenda beyond 2015 in addition to China's on-going efforts to achieve the remaining EFA goals:

- Quality education which translates into learning outcomes at all levels (early childhood development, technical and vocational training, and primary, secondary and tertiary education).
- Equitable and inclusive access to education at basic, secondary and tertiary levels.
- Literacy and skills development.

3.6 Conclusions

Over the 66 years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the cause of the Chinese women has made achievements that have caught the attention of the world. A whole set of laws, administrative decrees and local regulations, based on the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the PRC Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women, such as the PRC Marriage Law, the PRC Inheritance Law, the PRC Labour Law, the PRC Law on Maternal and Child Care and Regulations on Labour Protection of Women Workers, that are aimed at protecting the rights and interests of women and promoting the development of women has basically come into being. Corresponding organs have been



established to protect the rights and interests of women; and powerful measures have been adopted to effectively promote the development of the cause of women. Over the 30 years since the inception of the open-and-reform policy, the educational level of Chinese women has been steadily rising; the number of women employed has considerably shot up; their livelihood has improved with each passing day; and their status in society and the family and their participation in the management of the national and social affairs have steadily grown. The broad masses of women have plunged themselves into the open-and-reform efforts and the modernization drive and made tremendous contributions to economic growth and social progress. All these have shown the superiority of the socialist system and laid a solid foundation for the further development of the Chinese women.

However, as China is a developing nation, well restricted by the economic and social development level and handicapped by influences of old ideas, the educational level of women and their participation in social growth are not very high; the equality of both sexes legally stipulated has not yet been fully implemented; there are still prejudices of women in society; the livelihood of the women in poverty-stricken areas needs further improvement. The task for the development of the Chinese women is still quite arduous.

The world today is undergoing a historical change and international competition is increasingly getting tenser. The competition in economy, culture, science and technology in the world is fundamentally a competition for the quality of a nation as a whole. The quality of women affects the quality of a nation and the development level of women enhances the comprehensive strength of a nation. In recent years, the issue of women has become one of the focuses of international attention and to work to get equality, development and peace with actions has become an irreversible tide of the international community. The Chinese government has made solemn pledges for the observance of relevant international conventions relating to women's rights and development.

Under the guidance of Deng Xiaoping's theory of building socialism with Chinese characteristics, the Chinese party and the state have determined that there are three strategic steps before basic modernization is attained and explicitly stated that the second strategic target will have to be attained as early as possible. The coming few years are an important period of time not only for China's open-and-reform and modernization efforts but also for the progress and development of Chinese women. In the coming few years, the task for the development of women is: to mobilize and organize Chinese women to plunge into the open-and-reform and socialist modernization efforts, to comprehensively raise the quality of women,



and to safeguard the rights and interests of women in accordance with the law and further improve the status of women. It is imperative for the broad masses of women to display the spirit of self-respect, self-confidence, independence and self-reliance and work to attain their own progress and development in the course of promoting social development. The Chinese government at all levels, relevant departments, the social organizations and the enterprises and firms must fully recognize the importance of promoting women's participation and progress, work in coordination and adopt powerful measures to ensure that all the targets as set in the programme are realized.

As far as girls' and women's education is concerned, China's achievements are laudable. By the end of 2013, China already realized three of the six EFA 2015 Goals. Firstly, the country has achieved the target of universal free 9-year compulsory education. Secondly, the adult illiteracy rate in China has dropped to nearly 4 per cent. Thirdly, the enrolment rates in primary and lower secondary schools are almost even between boys and girls.

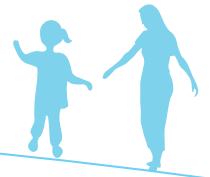
In the meantime, the enrolment rate in pre-school education (kindergartens) has increased by over 20 per cent since 2000. The enrolment in secondary vocational schools has also increased by nearly 10 million.

In 2010, the Chinese government announced Outline of National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020), and a series of policies and measures have been taken for further promoting equity and quality of education.

The first one is to provide focused support to rural education for balancing the development of compulsory education. The Chinese Government has committed to increasing the public educational budget to 4 per cent of GDP. China has also implemented the school standardization project to make sure the running of every school reaching national standards, that is, all schools provide the courses as required by the Central government; schools are all supported with enough funding and having qualified teaching staff.

The second is to improve the education for disadvantaged groups. China has established an aid system to provide financial support for students from poor families. In the past 10 years or so, more than US \$ 60 billion (MOE) has been given to help 350 million individuals in total.

China has also increased its support for schools of special education and the teacher training, in order to increase the opportunity of disabled children to quality education.



With the background of rapid urbanization, China has taken robust measures to effectively ensure education access for children of migrant workers. In 2013, more than 12 million children of migrant workers were receiving education in cities.

Thirdly, China is focusing on teacher training, especially in the rural area. The government is implementing the reform of teacher training. In the meantime, the Ministry of Education is also focusing on the problem of shortage of trained teachers in the rural area.

Starting from 2007, the six national normal universities have been offering full scholarships for the students who will work as teachers in the rural area of Western China. Up to today, 60,000 students have graduated and are now teaching in Western China (MOE). At the same time, 300,000 teachers have been recruited in this area.

The fourth one is promoting ICT in education. China is now making efforts to ensure that high-speed internet connection could reach every school. All the schools in rural areas could access to the best education resources.

China gives more and more attention to improving the quality of education, especially that of elementary education. Its strategy is to change the traditional outlook of stressing the book knowledge and test-scores. Its emphasis is on taking the all-round development of youth and teenage in moral, intellectual and physical education as the fundamental standards for measuring education quality. It recognizes well the importance of inculcating knowledge of morality and ability to uphold the Chinese vision of education of its children. The country is set out to develop education quality standards, advance the textbooks reforms, strengthen the teachers' capacity building by focusing specially on teachers in rural areas, increase education spending, improve schooling condition and developing a robust database (Education Management Information System) for improving the quality of education.



Chapter IV

Chinese Women's Empowerment: Lessons Learnt

4.1 Introduction

We have seen in Chapters One and Two how the founding of the PRC ends the history of thousands of years of Chinese women's oppression and enslavement by feudal society. The chapters reviewed how oppression effects fundamental emancipation for women in all aspects of political, economic, cultural, social and family life. Broadly speaking, the analysis revealed that Chinese women now enjoy equal rights and legal status with men, equal right to participate in social and economic activities with men and get equal income and progress in the Chinese education system.

The analysis revealed that the ancient Chinese women led a very tough life. They had to face discrimination in each and everything. They were ill-treated and embarrassed at every stage of their lives. They were deprived of education. They were humiliated before men everywhere.

The establishment of the Chinese Communist Party changed the lives of women in the greatest possible way. Due to the People's Republic of China, women and men are now equal under law. Women are now able to move out of their homes and do what they want to. Also, they are no longer illiterate, they are allowed to marry to whom so ever they want, and prostitution has been banned making it less acceptable for men to cheat. These changes women have gone through have made the lives of women easier and less torturous. In the struggle of women's liberation, it should be remembered that both education and market forces were highly instrumental in altering the status of the Chinese woman: not only did inter-racial barriers disappear; at the same time they also liberated the Chinese woman from her subservient state.

Under the socialist system, many steps have been taken to free women from their historic role and their isolation from political life. Women have been brought into the factories in greater



numbers than ever before-and on the job they are given equal pay and treatment as the rest of the workforce. Not only have women excelled in jobs never available to them before; but also they have come forward as leaders of the working class in many political movements.

Making life easier for women to work and take part in the political life of the country has also been a task in socialist China. The revolutionary government has set up a system of free, 24-hour day-care for working parents, public dining halls open to workers and their families and other services. The result of these programs has been the continued development of women leadership in every facet of society, including the Chinese Communist Party and the People's government.

This chapter examines in detail what lessons one can learn from the women's liberation movement exploring the multiple meanings of the discourse on Chinese girls' and women's education and the creation of a uniquely Chinese gender-and-development policy. The chapter explores several lessons of this strategy: the promotion of quality 9-year compulsory education and female literacy and skills training, the building of an organisational base for the women's movement in general and the rural women's movement in particular and the expansion of women's involvement in the world of work (market economy). The chapter is divided into two parts: part I critically examines the lessons one can draw from the women's liberation in China and Part II provides lessons from Chinese remarkable progress in achieving 9-year compulsory education and elimination of female literacy.

4.2 Lessons from Women's Emancipation Struggle

There are several facts, sweet and sour, one can explore from the history of women's struggle for emancipation in China. Keeping in mind the scope of this report, we present here the most critical lessons emanating from this discourse.

Undoubtedly, Chinese women have made great strides since Dynastic Times. Specifically, life for women in China has vastly improved since the Communists took power in 1949. Above all, Chinese women are better educated, have more work and political opportunities, and by and large, are free to marry and divorce as they choose. In addition, China's rapid economic growth has meant that washing machines, rice cookers and microwaves and other time-savings conveniences have transformed Chinese domestic life, and are even widely available now in China's less-developed provinces. The "One Child Policy" has also freed women from the need to have endless children in an effort to produce children for the husband's family.

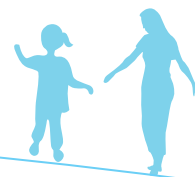


This trend toward greater personal and economic autonomy for women will continue in the coming decades. Indeed, China's economic reform has brought unprecedented opportunities to Chinese women; China today, for instance, has more self-made female billionaires than any other country.

Despite these significant transformations in the socio-economic and family structure, the struggle has also had some adverse effects. Even from its earliest days pre-dating the founding of the PRC, the support of Chinese women's rights has been less about a woman's potential to realize herself as an individual, and more about ways to use women's emancipation as a tool to achieve national objectives. Before the revolution, the mainly male voices which advocated changing the traditionally subservient role of Chinese women did so in the belief that educated, more capable Chinese women would better be able to raise intelligent, morally sound children. These children could then build a strong China that could defend itself from foreign imperialism (China Folio: 2014).

The CCP's coming in power brought radical changes to Chinese society and the new government of People's Republic of China believed that engaging women in productive labour outside the home would help advance the creation of a true Communist state built on a robust and growing economy. However, a long historical tradition of male dominance and patriarchal authority has been deeply embedded in China's culture since dynastic times and this traditional male dominance in both the work and social spheres has proven difficult to overturn within one night, despite the real progress that Chinese women have made in obtaining the right to be educated, to work, to choose whom they marry, to divorce, to own and inherit property and to participate in political affairs.

For over seventy years, Chinese women have enjoyed legal equality. Article 91 of the 1954 Constitution of the People's Republic of China specifically gave women "equal rights with men in all areas of political, economical, cultural, social, and domestic life." This status was reinforced in the 1982 Constitution and has been emphasized by numerous laws and regulations protecting women's rights and interests. The reform era and the marketization of Chinese society have opened doors for many women to become entrepreneurs and professionals, creating opportunities beyond simply taking the jobs of their mothers or fathers (Gail: 2007). The phenomenon of female entrepreneurs aside, the economic reforms have generally caused women in China to lose their jobs at a rate disproportionate to men and have effectively moved women farther away from the equality promised by the constitution, especially in the area of labour. Market opening has, in some respects, had a negative effect on the fight for women's equality in China.



In rural areas, the de-collectivization of agriculture and the dismantling of communes initially returned women to the house where they once again took up traditional roles within the household. Women in urban areas have also been displaced from the work sphere. From the 1980s onwards, the returned-youth from the countryside and privatization of state-owned industry have meant that there has been tremendous pressure on women to return home so as to free up work for their male counterparts. As the privatization of state owned enterprises gained increasing speed throughout the 1990s, women were the hardest hit with the job losses - 62.8% of the people laid off were women (Burnett: 2010). The non-technical, auxiliary and service departments in which women overwhelmingly worked were some of first to be dismantled when state owned enterprises were privatized. Once China's economy began to take-off after reforms were in place, men were re-hired in significant larger numbers compared with women.

In short, the traditional patriarchal influence has seen in recent years a relative absence of CCP leadership on gender inequality (INRULED: 2014). Since market opening, the government's fight for women has been less prioritized to its efforts to promote economic growth. As a result, women's struggle to take advantage of modern developments in employment, education and politics, while trying to balance continuing traditional expectations about their appropriate and proper role in family and society. This continued battle with traditionalism has created a situation in which women from all walks of life can find themselves limited in what they can achieve, despite a rise in college degrees, incomes and political influence.

Gender inequalities and the marginalization of the needs, roles and potential of women and girls are key factors limiting advances in development outcomes for all – women, men, boys, girls and their communities and societies around the world. Moreover, strong associations have been identified between addressing inequalities and enhancing women and girls' empowerment and agency, and improved development outcomes across sectors, ranging from maternal, newborn, and child health and nutrition to agriculture, water, sanitation, hygiene and financial services for the poor.

The ultimate goal of this challenge is to accelerate discovery of how to most effectively and intentionally identify and address gender inequalities and how this relates to sectoral outcomes; scale-up approaches known to work, in context-relevant ways; and do more to develop better measures of the impact of approaches to enhance women's and girls' empowerment and agency. In China, intentional efforts and strategies are required so that development can contribute more to gender equality and gender equality can contribute more to development.



4.3 Lessons from Girls' and Women's Education

Chapter III undertook stock of China's progress of girls' and women's education with particular focus on 9-year compulsory education and female literacy, described how achievements were made and the remaining challenges and prospects. The analysis presented in the Chapter drew lessons and insights from the many actions taken across China for the purpose of generating further reflections and debates on girls' and women's education and the education agenda for the post-2015 era.

The Outline of National Plan for Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) asserts that girls' and women's education is essential not only to promoting gender equality, but also to addressing the full spectrum of 21st century challenges. The Plan recognises the fact that investing in education is one of the most effective, high-yielding development investments that China can make. Much progress has certainly been made since Jomtien 1990, yet gaps remain, particularly for girls and women.

Broadly speaking, the analysis revealed that since 1980, there have been large gains in girls' and women's education in China. This demonstrates that with the shared goals and collective action – among provincial administration (or governments), international organisations, civil society, NGOs, media and the private sector – developing countries which are lagging far behind in providing access to quality education for girls and women can change the educational prospects for girls and women.

The chapter focused on understanding how and where girls and women are as far as their education is concerned. The message is that China has made outstanding progress in achieving universal 9-year compulsory education as well as in eliminating gender gap in learning.

In this section of the report, we review the valuable lessons from the Chinese experiences, the work that remains to be done and strategies for success. We also review how cooperation of the Chinese National Government with provincial governments, international development agencies, NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) have supported a variety of girls' and women's education programmes that have made a difference in both large and small ways.

While China's policy setting and implementation mechanisms are remarkably unique in many ways, a well-structured contextual examination of the process can bring to light many lessons



learned for its own reflection as well as for interested readers in China and other countries. The former is increasingly pertinent as China's successes in girls' and women's education are accompanied by still lingering gaps and needs, many of which involve access to and quality of education for disadvantaged population groups mostly in poverty-ridden Western provinces of the country.

China's experiences show that social attitude in favour of education and people's readiness to support and participate in education play a determinant role in achieving EFA goals. A key lesson learnt is that strong government leadership and commitment to active government policy-making, planning, guidance and support to decentralized bodies are essential for advancing the EFA agenda (INRULED: 2015). Education for All can succeed only when there is All for Education. China's decentralization consists of a clear central vision, policy guidance and delegation of authority to enable provincial and local governments to allocate their own budgets and resources and to leverage support and participation from local stakeholders. Spontaneous participation of people, communities, civil society organizations, NGOs and the media in monitoring, supervising, promoting and supporting EFA implementation can be particularly effective in alerting and activating government actions.

Ever since the historic World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, 1990), basic education has been back on the priority lists of China and in the minds of the general public. This advocacy has led to a proliferation of legislation, programmes and projects, and in the early 1990s to even an increase in the levels of resource allocation in China.

But all the awareness and goodwill, and all the projects, resources and activities that followed it, were not fully rewarded with the desired results. The gap between girls' and boys' education, between male and female literacy, remains a problem to deal with; and unlocking additional resources to cope with the inevitable increase in demand remains a challenge.

In addition, it needs a major shift in focus from schooling to learning. There is a growing realization that Enrolment for All is not the same as Education for All. It means that mainstream education cannot hope to address all learning needs and must be accompanied by alternative, tailor-made, non-formal learning methods. It also means that inscribing children in a formal system does not guarantee that their learning needs will be met.

Chinese policy-makers are also gradually getting over the dichotomy of quantity versus quality. Under this dichotomy, when budgets are limited, one must often choose between more



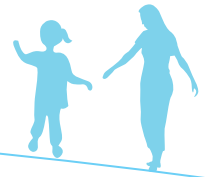
textbooks and facilities for those already in school (quality) or additional buildings and teachers for those not yet in the system (quantity). The drive towards 9-year Compulsory Education in China has tended to favour quantity or expanded access. But several countries in South Asia, for example, have reported that more schools do not necessarily translate into more educated students. This is because there is low participation and attendance when the school is perceived to be of little relevance or quality. Paradoxically, paying attention to quality enhances quantity; providing trained and motivated teachers, adequate learning materials, and most of all curricular content that meets the needs and aspirations of the local communities is the best way to guarantee expanded and sustained school attendance (Ordoñez & Maclean: 2000).

When listing impediments to progress, China's policy documents report financial resource constraints. Yet there is a change of focus here that was not evident a decade ago. Whereas the emphasis used to be the push for more money to do basically more of the same, it seems to have shifted to how to make better use of the money already available.

Some of the factors impelling or impeding progress towards the goal of education for all in China also have socio-cultural roots. On the negative side, misguided or unenlightened interpretations of an aspect of a specific sub-culture sometimes hampers the push for girls' education and the efforts to provide education to ethnic and religious minorities. On the positive side, the fundamental value given to education in China, to respect for elders and teachers, the central role of the family and the implicit faith in the importance of educating the next generation are common in China's Education system. This accounts for the continuing high levels of participation. Plotting a strategy of action for the next ten years must take into account these socio-cultural factors.

4.4 Conclusions

Despite the remarkable progress, Chinese women continue to face real limitations and inequalities. A long tradition of patriarchal authority has been deeply embedded in China's culture since dynastic times. This male dominance continues to influence Chinese society today. A survey done by All-China Women's Federation in 1990 found, for instance, that a third of both male and female Chinese respondents considered men more inherently "able" than women; and more than half agreed that a woman's place is at home caring for her family. Most Chinese women continue to take full responsibility for the home, children and family elders, regardless of the hours that they work or the income they earn.



While orchestrating the EFA Policy Agenda beyond 2015, China must look beyond counting numbers. Getting children, particularly girls, to school alone is not sufficient. What is required is to know and learn: What do we do in schools? What should be our focus on the phenomenon of “silent exclusion”? How can we harmonise the national and provincial EFA initiatives with the changing demands and expectations of the globalised knowledge economy? Mere expansion of the system will not serve the purpose. In the process of developing EFA Agenda beyond 2015, China will have to pursue a “Transformative Goal” rather than mere quantitative expansion of the system.

One of the key transformative goals which the Chinese Government need to create is “New Generation Schools” – schools as inclusive spaces – imparting besides academics, training in creative arts, languages, public speaking, physical education, sports and other subjects; promising student exchange and community service programmes; inviting and encouraging the private, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other EFA stakeholders to join hands with the school management to provide quality education.



Chapter V

Policy Imperatives: Summary and Conclusions

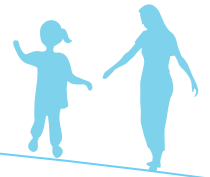
5.1 Summary

The government of China recognizes gender equality and women's empowerment as a key factor for the attainment of social and economic development. As a result, a number of measures were taken to mainstream women in the development process. Among such measures was the establishment of the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) in 1949. The Federation consists of women's representatives from all provinces, counties, municipalities, cities, towns and villages serving as its executive arm.

Immediately after the establishment of ACWF, a National Policy for the Advancement of Chinese Women was formulated, which provide the legitimate point of reference for addressing gender inequalities at all levels of government and all stakeholders.

A review of the national policy "Programme for the Development of Chinese Women 2001-2010", however, necessitated a policy shift from women's development perspective to gender and women empowerment orientation with a rights-based approach.

Among the recommendations resulting from the mid-term evaluation was to develop a gender and women's empowerment policy as a follow-up to the national policy in order to adequately address the limitations of the former policy and to ensure sustainability of the achievement of the Programme for the Development of Chinese Women. The need to take on board issues of the Millennium Development Goals as well as other emerging development issues that have implications for gender equality such as new aid modalities, sector-wide approach to planning, effective service delivery through decentralization, public private partnership and civil service reform also came out as recommendations.



In the Chinese society, patriarchal system, male hegemony and other socio-cultural factors interplay to influence the interactions between the genders and social groups. These inequalities have resulted in some cases, by the exclusion of women, girls, and people with disabilities, migrants and other vulnerable groups from actively participating in certain sectors and certainly by levels of the development process of the country. The development of a gender and women's empowerment and gender-related policies, as well as strengthening of national gender machineries to fully undertake the challenging mandates, are crucial actions particularly in addressing structural relationships of inequality between men and women in China.

Although the Chinese government has made a lot of efforts to emancipate and empower women with remarkable accomplishments, but severe imbalances in the development process between and among provinces plague the country. China still faces some challenges in relieving and eliminating women's poverty. The poverty survey data established on the basis of household shows that the incidence of poverty among women remains more frequent than men. In 2004, the incidence of women living in absolute poverty and the incidence of low-income female population are respectively 0.4% and 0.6% higher than that in male population (Zhilan: 2007), where impoverished women from non-poor households due to inferior access to nutrition, health and education were excluded.

With respect to girls' and women's education, China is very close to achieving EFA quantitative targets but the major challenges are inequality, quality and inclusive education. Since these issues are critical as well as vocal, particularly for girls' and women's education and in the impoverished and poor western provinces of China, the policy imperative for the Chinese government should be made to concentrate mainly on key thematic issues.

This chapter attempts to highlight several policy directions for post-2015 China for the empowerment of women and for streamlining the girls' and women's education on the basis of issues and challenges highlighted in chapters I – IV.

5.2 Orchestrating a Policy Agenda for 2015 and beyond

The Chinese government shall take special measures towards women's empowerment and girls' and women's education by way of bridging the existing gender gaps and creating an enabling environment for women and girls' effective participation in national development.

Apart from strategies targeted to attaining gender equity and equality, the policy should also focus key strategies on women's empowerment with the objective to addressing specific women



problems and to further bridge the existing gender gap between women and men, boys and girls in the economic, social, political and decision-making at all levels, due to persistent cultural barriers and gender gaps. Thus, special affirmative actions are required to bridge this gap. This, as already highlighted in Chapter IV, would mean redoubling of efforts towards women empowerment for the timely attainment of gender equality.

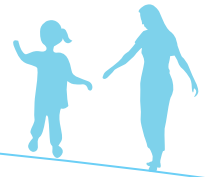
While dealing with gender mainstreaming focusing on capacity building for stakeholders (human, financial and material), advocacy, awareness creation, monitoring and research, this part of the policy should provide for specific women's empowerment strategies promoting economic, decision-making and political participation as well as access to housing, land/property, water and ICTs for women.

The renewed policy is expected to aim at:

- Building the capacity of women's organizations, groups and associations.
- Further improve women's economic situation,
- Further promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls and ensure representation in decision-making and politics.

For developing the National and provincial Agenda for girls' and women's education, the government will have to address vigorously all forms of exclusion and discrimination, disparities and inequalities, in access to and in the completion of education and learning cycles, processes outcomes, barriers to equal opportunities and support those girls who are disadvantaged or marginalised by developing comprehensive education strategies comprising intercultural, multicultural and multilingual education programme, and programmes that respond to the diverse education needs (e.g. school feeding programmes). The needs of millions of migrant girls and girls with disabilities also deserve focussed attention at all levels and types of education. Beyond numerical parity, China will have to accelerate progress towards gender equality by addressing the causes of disparities in learning achievement of girls at all levels.

Girls' and women's education is one of the most important elements in China's programme of women's empowerment. The China Rural Poverty Alleviation and Development Programme (2011-2020) launched at the end of 2011 emphasizes education and poverty problems of women and children. In 2013, the new state leaders were elected. They attached more importance to improve targeting for girls' education and poverty-reduction in related policies. It is predictable that the work of poverty reduction on rural women would have bigger policy support.



The targeting mechanism would make it better to provide help for women. Moreover, the central government has identified 14 contiguous poor areas as the focal points for state poverty-reductions efforts, which means continuous increasing investment would be put to these most remote and impoverished areas. Particularly, rear-support women in remote poverty-stricken areas would be greatly benefited from the infrastructure construction and public services.

China's politicians, educators and business leaders should unite around the ideas that "students need 21st Century skills" to be successful today. It is exciting to believe that we live in times that are so revolutionary that they demand new and different abilities. But in fact, the skills that students need in the 21st Century are not new. Critical thinking and problem solving, for example, have been components of human progress throughout history. Such skills are information literacy and global awareness is not new.

What is actually new is the extent to which changes in the Chinese economy (and the world) mean that collective and individual success depends on having such skills. If China is to have a more equitable and effective public education system, skills that have been emphasized by the providers of the few must become universal.

Drawing inspiration from China's achievements and lessons learnt in Girls' and women's education, innovative, well articulated action-oriented and well-managed strategies for learning can herald the transition of Education for All into a brand new era of Learning for All, when all people can truly learn anything at any time and in any place.



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