



What we do in China

- We're improving education for 329,000 children
- We're protecting 88,000 children from harm
- We're improving the health of 29,000 children
- We're helping more than 72,000 children recover from the Sichuan earthquake



The standard of living in China has risen impressively over the past 30 years. Yet there are widening gaps between rich and poor, and urban and rural areas. Two-thirds of China's 367 million children live in rural areas. Many of them, especially those from minority ethnic groups living in remote areas, lack access to good quality health services and education.

The expansion of urbanisation and the increasing number of migrant workers means that hundreds of millions of children are either left behind at home or migrate with their parents to urban areas. Their parents, who are struggling to provide for their basic needs, have no time to look after the children. These children are vulnerable to abuse such as trafficking, unsafe migration, or coming into conflict with the law. In addition, street children, children with disabilities and children affected by HIV and AIDS also lack care and protection.

Save the Children in China

We helped people affected by severe floods in China in the 1930s and provided food and shelter to victims of the war with Japan. We worked with Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong during the 1970s and 1980s, and in 1988 our work resumed in mainland China. The programme office relocated in 1995 from Hong Kong to Kunming, Yunnan province. And in 1999, we moved the head office to Beijing, where we work directly with government ministries and other organisations to improve policies and practices that affect children's lives.

We have programme offices in Yunnan province and in the autonomous regions of Tibet and Xinjiang. We also work with migrant communities in Beijing and Shanghai. Immediately after the 2008 Sichuan earthquake we opened an emergency programme office in Chengdu, and have since set up a permanent programme there.

We run projects in more than ten provinces and regions. We focus on:

- ensuring that all children can attend school and get a good quality education
- protecting children from harm – in particular, children affected by migration
- improving children and women's health and saving children's lives
- responding to emergencies, assisting in long-term reconstruction work and preparing communities to prevent and respond to future disasters.

In the last year we've reached more than 440,000 children through our projects and emergency response.

We're improving the quality of education

According to official statistics, 98% of children complete their compulsory nine years' education. The government abolished fees in autumn 2008. But it's not just fees that keep children out of school – in the poorest areas, many schools have no resources other than desks and chairs, and offer only a limited curriculum.

We've been involved with teacher training in Tibet since 1992, helping teachers make their lessons enjoyable and stimulating for all students. We've now extended the training to two more prefectures outside the Lhasa valley, where we're working with nomadic groups, often at altitudes above 12,000ft. The huge distances between towns and poor communications in these remote communities present great challenges.

In Yunnan, where we've worked with local schools since 2000, local education authorities last year took over full responsibility and funding for three of our county-level project offices. It's mainly teachers from Yunnan, trained by us, who are in turn training teachers throughout the provinces where we work. Through this work, we've improved the quality of education for 187,000 children over the past year. Our model of teacher training has been replicated in Xinjiang, Jilin, Anhui, Shanxi and Qinghai.

We're providing safe places for children

Some 22.9 million children are left behind in the rural areas while their parents have migrated to the cities. Normally they stay with relatives, but too many are poorly cared for and some are abused. A further 20 million children have migrated to the cities with their parents, but unless they are registered there they are unable to go to school or get medical care.

We've set up children's activity centres in villages, poor communities and schools. The centres provide safe places for children to play, learn and socialise. They also function as hubs to coordinate government units and other NGOs to offer comprehensive services for vulnerable children. For example, in Anhui province, we set up activity centres in designated fostering communities and offer rehabilitation clinics, classes and activities for children with disabilities. In Yunnan province, we created centres as a support network for young offenders who are allowed back to the community to receive an education and provide crime prevention education to middle school students.

We support the government in developing policies to protect and improve the lives of children. We worked with the Ministry of Civil Affairs to develop new regulations on street children to offer them better protection. We contributed our experience from our own anti-trafficking programmes to help develop a National Anti-trafficking Action Plan.

We're saving children's lives

A child born in the remote areas in the west of China is much more likely to die before the age of five than a child born in the industrialised east. In cities, babies born to parents who have migrated from the countryside are also far more likely to die, often because they can't afford medical care. In January, the State Council passed a long awaited medical reform plan to introduce free basic healthcare throughout the country. One of its aims is for at least 80% of rural mothers to give birth in hospital by 2015.

In December 2007, we started pilot projects in Yunnan, Anhui, Xinjiang and Beijing to improve the health of mothers and children. With the National Working Committee for Children and Women, we're now training health workers to run workshops and provide care. We're also supporting local communities to provide toilets and safe water, and we've set up committees to promote healthy living and good hygiene.

In Tibet, we're helping villages and schools improve their water supply and sanitation, and we're running workshops promoting healthy behaviour, such as always washing hands before eating or after using the toilet.

We're helping disabled children realise their rights

According to official statistics, there are more than 3.8 million disabled children in China under the age of 14. We're working with the Disabled People's Federation and other disability groups to advocate for disabled children's rights. We supported the establishment of a local NGO, Rights into Action, which provides rehabilitation training and services for children and young people with disabilities, especially children with cerebral palsy, learning difficulties and autism.

We're also organising workshops for community members to raise their awareness of disabled children's needs, and to reduce discrimination. We train foster parents and welfare home staff about childcare and rehabilitation. We set up parents' clubs to offer a network for parents with disabled children to share information and support each other. And we work with the media to promote children's rights and proper care for disabled children.

We're urging the government to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled Children and to develop a child welfare act to strengthen legal protection for vulnerable children and their families.

We're helping children recover from emergencies

The Sichuan earthquake in May 2008 had a devastating impact on children, thousands of whom died when their schools collapsed. The earthquake claimed the lives of more than 86,000 people and destroyed the homes of more than 11 million. Our response team was on the ground within 48 hours, conducting an assessment and working with government partners to help children and their communities. More than a year on, we're still repairing buildings, providing healthcare and education, and helping communities prepare for future emergencies.

Immediately after the earthquake, with the Red Cross and Ministry of Civil Affairs, we set up safe areas where children could play and get emotional support. Nearly 4,000 children benefited from these safe places.

We set up nine baby care centres where mothers can bathe their babies and where we

distribute food and mosquito nets. The centres also serve as a base to raise carers' awareness about the importance of breastfeeding, nutrition and hygiene. We organise discussions among carers on different health issues. We've developed and distributed booklets on basic hygiene, prevention of common childhood illnesses, and breastfeeding. More than 1,400 babies and children have benefited from the baby care centres, and we've reached more than 2,500 children through our community health, nutrition and hygiene work.

To help children get back to school as quickly as possible, we distributed educational supplies to around 65,000 students and more than 2,000 teachers in 67 primary and middle schools and 70 kindergartens. We've also provided 49 prefabricated classrooms for six kindergartens and we're training kindergarten teachers to improve the quality of preschool education.

In Huagai, An County – one of the worst affected areas – children helped plan and perform at our International Children's Day celebrations on 31 May. At the event we also launched *In Our Own Words*, our one-year-on publication in which children who survived the earthquake share their experiences. We're continuing to work with affected children and their communities in four counties in Sichuan province to help them prepare for and protect themselves from future disasters.



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