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2000
Directory
of
International
NGOs
Supporting Work in
CHINA

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2000
Directory of International NGOs
Supporting Work in CHINA

Compiled and edited by Fong Ku
with an introduction by Nick Young

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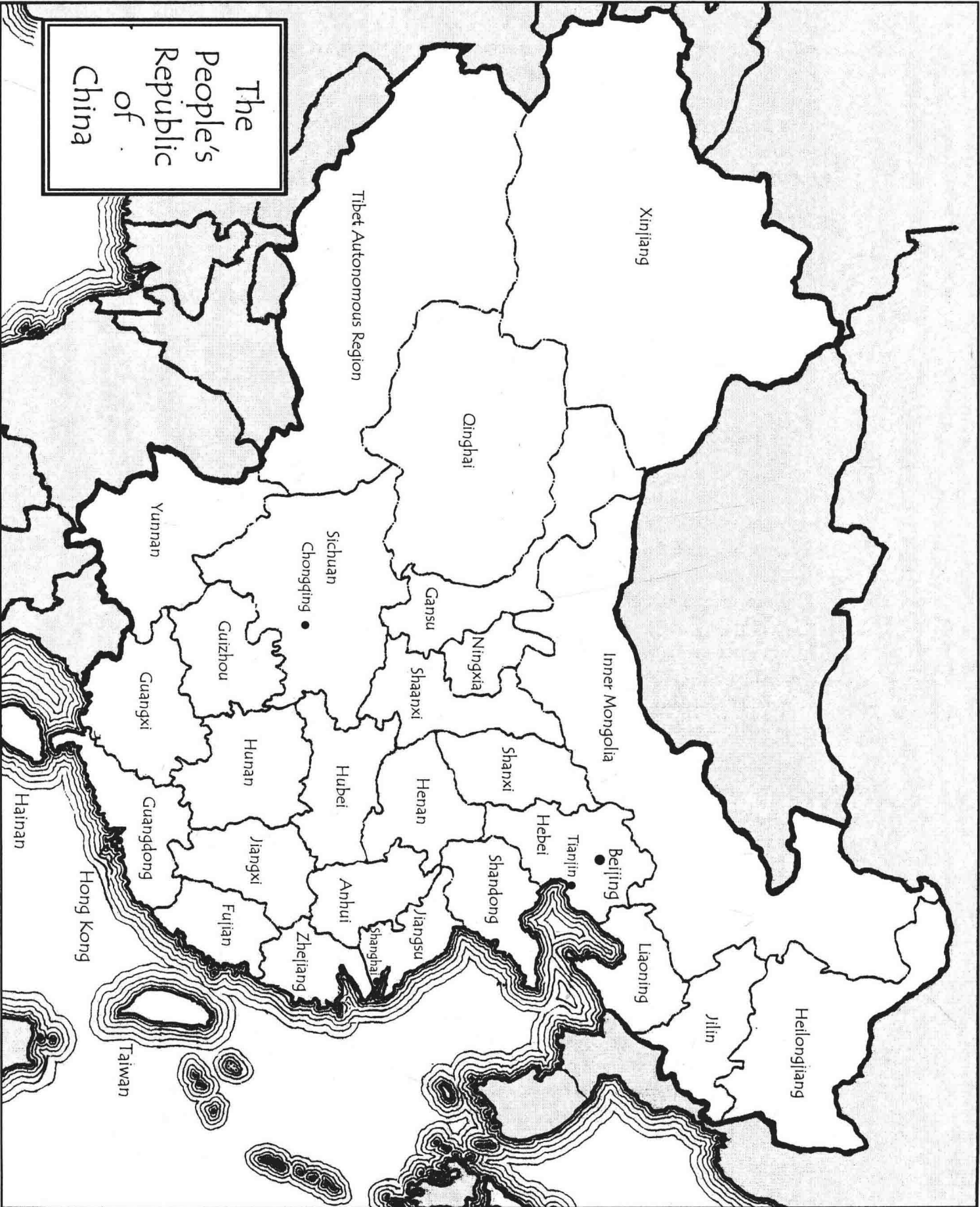
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The
People's
Republic
of
China



INTRODUCTION

In China to attempt comprehensiveness is to invite failure. No matter what field one considers, the panorama is always too vast, and too complex, to be captured from a single viewpoint, however apparently wide the chosen lens. We invariably end up like budget tourists with a series of smudgy snapshots, always needing to call attention to what lies outside the frame. (*'This is the Forbidden City; and just over there to the left, where you can't quite see, is Zhongnanhai?'*)

We knew this at the outset of this project: we would never match up to our own terms of reference. But we decided to proceed anyway, because we felt that some rough and ready baseline guide to international NGO involvement with China should be in print. Why?

- i) A lot of international agencies are trying to make some kind of contribution to the development of this huge and complicated country, but often each is only dimly aware of the existence and activities of others. A directory might help promote greater networking, information exchange etc.
- ii) By our calculations, China currently receives at least USD 100 million each year in project funding either directly from, or channeled through, international NGOs and foundations. This is a substantial sum. Roughly equivalent to the combined, annual China budgets of IFAD, ILO, FAO, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, Unicef, UNIDO, WFP and WHO. More than the annual China budgets of most bilateral technical assistance programmes. Such a sizeable NGO contribution deserves recognition -- more, certainly, than that provided in the Development Cooperation Reports occasionally published by UNDP in Beijing, which have so far signally failed to do justice to the amount, scope or -- in many cases -- the quality of international NGO activity in China.
- iii) In terms not just of recognition but also of accountability, so much money, and so much effort, should somewhere be a matter of public record.
- iv) Drawing disparate programmes together, however sketchily, into a single document can provide an interesting -- and perhaps useful -- overview of NGO development trends, priorities and approaches.

Having spent four years reporting in *chinabrief* (originally known as *China Development Briefing*) on international NGO projects, we were uniquely placed to compile a directory, and this seemed a worthwhile sideline project. But we were also uniquely placed to know how hard it would be to give a full picture.

We have come up with snapshots of 120 organisations. (And tender apologies in advance if some are rather blurry and out of focus; in nearly all cases, however, the information given here is drawn directly from material supplied to us by the agencies concerned.) This undoubtedly represents more than the tip of the iceberg, and includes most of the more active groups with sizeable programmes: but a lot remain submerged. Very roughly, I would estimate that our listings



embrace perhaps two thirds of the current total of international NGO funding (although many organisations were not prepared to disclose their budgets) but probably no more than a quarter of the total number of organisations engaging with China at some level.

Who have we left out? How many international NGOs are active in China? Here is my best guess (I won't even dignify the figures by calling them 'estimates'):

Grant making foundations: 70. Our listings include only a handful of these (although, we believe, most of those with large programmes in China are included). We know of, but did not have sufficiently detailed information to include, several more (eg, the Starr Foundation and Kundstater Foundation [both US]). In addition, we are aware that numerous Japanese and Western corporate foundations, and numerous Hong Kong foundations have made grants to Chinese agencies; but we have even less information about their activities.

Groups whose primary function is advocacy: 70. Again, our listings include only a smattering of these. The omissions in this case largely reflect the fact that *chinabrief* focuses mainly on rural and social development aid programmes -- that is, upon organisations which are *doing*, rather than upon organisations which advocate what ought to be done. Our institutional knowledge of pure advocacy groups is thus weaker. Nonetheless, we are aware that we have omitted numerous international environmental groups, human rights groups and others with a 'watching brief' which would certainly count themselves as 'working on China'. And among these are a number of agencies (such as Rehabilitation International [not covered here], which advocates for the rights of disabled people) which do not merely observe, but have significant links with Chinese agencies.

'Implementing NGOs' (also known in mainland Europe as 'humanitarian organisations') -- those that not merely fund projects, but play a large part in carrying them out, often (but not always) in close working partnership with Chinese organisations: perhaps as many as **200**. Here we do rather better, probably covering more than half the number of organisations that merit the tag, and most of the aggregated funding. But (again, for the want of sufficiently detailed information), there are significant omissions: eg, EZE, Misereor, and several members of the international Caritas family. Beyond these significant others lie, we suspect, many organisations which, in money terms, are tiny. We know of at least a dozen, not listed here, working in Chinese orphanages alone.

Church-based charitable groups: at least 150. Very many, usually small, church-based groups of various denominations raise money for China projects. The Amity Foundation alone (a Chinese NGO for which I have a high regard) receives funding support from more than one hundred (predominantly Western, but also Korean, Japanese and Singaporean) church groups. These range from Christoffel Blindenmission, (not listed here), which supports a substantial blindness prevention programme implemented by Amity, to individual congregations stumping up a few hundred dollars each. To track down, describe and quantify so many widows' mites, would have required time and resources well beyond our tiny means.



Why was it so hard for us to present a more comprehensive picture? The question bears pursuing, not just as an extended editorial *apologia*, but because it raises important issues about the status of current international NGO work in China.

We can in the first place safely discount any suggestion that we have merely been incompetent. For a wage so small that either she is mad or else single-handedly demonstrates the falsity of the economists' nostrum that human beings will always seek to maximise their personal gain, Fong Ku has for several months worked assiduously at garnering the information presented here. I am confident that no-one could have done a better job with the (very limited) available resources. As was nevertheless to be expected, the information she finally obtained was not uniform in terms of either detail or clarity. Many organisations declined to supply information about, eg, their funding or staffing levels. A significant number declined to supply any information at all, and several specifically asked to be omitted.

Some organisations, particularly grant making foundations, were reluctant to publicise their programmes because they feared a deluge of funding applications. Small foundations with few staff often prefer to work through personal networks and contacts. I am broadly sympathetic to this position; and no doubt it is the prerogative of people who give away money to decide the manner of their doing so. Nonetheless, I would argue that 'private' donations are in fact inseparable from the public realm, and that enhanced information flows aid not just openness, transparency and professionalism, but also the equitable allocation of resources. For this reason I applaud the example of, eg, the Kadoorie Charitable Foundations, which decided to give us a full account of their funding portfolio.

On the doing, as opposed to the giving, side, some organisations working in China prefer to keep a low profile, believing that they can achieve more quietly than can be achieved in the glare of publicity. Again, I have some sympathy for this view (even if *chinabrief's* modest activities hardly count as the glare of publicity), but on balance disagree with it. In the first place, it is remarkable how many issues which even five years ago were generally considered highly 'sensitive' -- eg, HIV/AIDs, prostitution, trafficking of women and children, human rights, care for children in orphanages -- are now discussed quite openly between international and Chinese agencies. This is a healthy development insofar as international organisations can help to stimulate and expand the parameters of debate, within China, about difficult issues. Indeed, this is probably one of their most useful roles, since Chinese social problems will never be merely swept away by charitable foreigners, but have to be addressed by Chinese agencies. In this sense, honesty and openness on the part of the foreigners strike me as being not merely morally virtuous but also the only coherent development policy: if you have something worth saying, spit it out. And in terms of practice in the field, if an organisation's work is worthwhile it should not be hidden under a bushel.

For a number of organisations, a major factor in shyness about publicity is anxiety over registration status. The lack of a clear procedure for official registration of international NGO representative offices makes some nervous that permission for their activities will be withheld or withdrawn. This is an understandable



concern, but in my personal view it is very often exaggerated. If an international organisation is bringing resources into the country, and not doing anything clearly illegal, the most significant hazard it is likely to face is not official obstruction as such but predatory overtures from competing institutions keen to access those resources. This may require careful and firm negotiation, and careful selection of partners but it does not require secretiveness. On the contrary, to improve understanding in China of the NGO sector (and to aid the development of the indigenous NGO sector), it is important that organisations should be clear, consistent and straightforward about their aims and ways of working. Pending introduction of (long promised) regulations formalising the international NGO registration process, organisations can quite properly forge their own working partnerships, and find their own space.

Another major headache in any information gathering project of this kind (and, again, one of which we now have considerable experience) is the fact that many international NGOs have poorly developed external communications strategies and procedures. (This is by no means a weakness which is unique to NGOs. Much the same can be said of many multilateral and bilateral agencies). Information requests can generate any manner of response, from silence, through peremptory dismissal (*'We're far too busy to deal with this -- go and look at our website'*) to painstaking efforts to provide detailed answers. This puts the independent researcher/reporter in a difficult position, since it is hard to be fair to agencies which communicate poorly. We are inclined to suppose that an organisation which can't even answer an email is probably not doing much for the greater good of humankind. But you never know.

I do not wish to appear unduly harsh. NGO managers really are (or at any rate should be) busy. (This is, indeed, to a large extent the rationale for both *chinabrief* and this directory: to ease the pressure on decision makers by providing clear, concise, reliable and relevant information and analysis.) At the same time, NGO communication strategies are often vexed by complex accountability structures. An international development NGO may be accountable to multiple constituencies, each with perhaps quite different expectations. These typically include its board and supporter groups (and the development principles they espouse); the donating public; other donors (including government and multilateral agencies); overseas partner agencies, and project beneficiaries. Meanwhile, NGOs are often under pressure on the one hand to engage in innovative, experimental work (which may involve significant costs and unavoidable failures), whilst on the other to demonstrate cost effectiveness and 'success'.

Not surprisingly, therefore, NGOs are often fastidious about how their work is presented. We have found that some are prepared to supply information only if given the opportunity to vet copy prior to publication. This may be understandable, but it is not reasonable. In most countries of the world, few people would now expect, much less want, politicians or businesses to vet media reports; and there is no good reason why NGOs or development agencies should enjoy special privileges in this respect. Journalists often get things wrong, and

quite a lot of them write spurious nonsense; but these are simply the inherent hazards of an independent media.

I raise these issues not merely to vent editorial spleen (which, in any case, the vast majority of entrants in this directory do not deserve), but because they are of growing, if relatively seldom recognised, importance for organisations working in China. As the global non profit sector becomes larger and more diverse, it is beginning to receive more critical scrutiny. Organisations can no longer expect to be judged only by their registered charitable status or the quality of their intentions. Some recent critiques of NGO performance in Africa have turned in harsh verdicts.¹ In China, which receives more Official Development Assistance than any other country and, by our reckoning, a large slice of ('unofficial') NGO aid as well, social change is so rapid, and policy issues so complex, that international organisations of all kinds need to be extremely clear headed in the design and implementation of their programmes. Alert, intelligent and, perhaps above all, independent reporting can help clear thinking by pressing organisations to articulate what they are doing, and why.

Improved information flows to and between Chinese organisations are of even greater importance. Lateral communication between agencies is poorly developed, and decision making processes are often largely uninformed by consultation with major stakeholders, including intended beneficiaries of social investment programmes. This is a major constraint on the efficacy, as much as the equity, of such programmes. For these reasons, as we have repeatedly asserted, 'improved communication' is not merely a desirable accompaniment to development processes, but in itself an important development objective.

In all of these areas, *chinabrief* is hardly a sufficient, or even in itself a particularly useful instrument. But we have tried at least to wave a flag in the right direction.

Having gathered together this information on international NGO activity, it is worth pausing to ask what the sector as a whole can contribute to China's development. Much could be said about the classic virtues commonly attributed to NGOs, such as their relative closeness to beneficiary communities, attentiveness to local conditions and their generally participatory approaches. But beyond this, one striking feature of the range of organisations assembled even in this far from comprehensive directory is its diversity.

This in itself is healthy, and a good indication of the extent to which international experience and perspectives have become relatively accessible to China since the country decided to open the doors and engage with the international community. Yet the diversity of the international NGO presence may also be a useful paradigm as China sets about fostering a non profit sector of its own.

¹ See, eg, *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa* by Alex de Waal (James Currey, 1997) and *The Road to Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity* by Michael Marcen, Free Press 1997)



China needs a thriving non profit sector not simply to relieve budgetary pressures on government but to release the innovative energies and talents of the country's most abundant resource -- the Chinese people. The Communist Party and government have shown growing, albeit ambivalent, interest in the role and potential of non profit organisations, and the sector seems set to expand -- although it will certainly have to contend with official fears of releasing 'social forces' that might prove difficult to control. One manifestation of those official concerns is the current, highly restrictive approach to the range of organisations allowed to operate at each administrative level. The diversity of international NGO activity in China may help to show that something more like a free market in non profit activity can be a source of strength, rather than weakness.

Support for 'civil society' initiatives in China seems set to become a significant trend among large donor organisations in the coming decade. This is probably a good thing: there's a great deal of local initiative that's worth supporting (and support for local initiative should by now be axiomatic among aid organisations). International NGOs have much to contribute here, and we look forward to reporting on more collaborative ventures in the future.

A few final points. Firstly, we have included Hong Kong based organisations, even though they can't properly be described, in this context, as 'international'. They were simply too important to leave out (although, yet again, we have not included as many as we would have liked). In light of this, we should perhaps have called the document a 'Directory of International and Hong Kong NGOs Supporting Work in China'. The decision not to do so reflects nothing more than a dislike of cumbersome titles.

Secondly, we had originally planned to offer the directory both as a book and as a computer database supplied on diskette. Technical difficulties finally decided us against offering the latter; but we are now maintaining our own database of all of the information contained in the directory, and will be updating this as and when we obtain new project information, (and information about groups not yet included). As a service to organisations which purchase the directory and/or subscribe to *chinabrief* we will be prepared to answer email enquiries with specific search questions (eg, we can list and provide contacts for the organisations working in a specific province, or sector).

Thirdly, I would like to thank the Japan Foundation for covering the printing costs of this publication. Insofar as the directory contributes to greater communication and understanding between and among Chinese and international agencies working for equitable development in China it will, I am confident, prove to be money well spent.

Nick Young,

Publisher, *chinabrief*

October 1999



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Since 1961, the Academy of Educational Development has supported education and human resource development work in over 100 countries. It is currently working long term in 33 countries and providing short term assistance to 60 countries.

Mission: 'To meet today's social, economic and environmental challenges through education and human resource development; to apply state of the art education, training, research, technology, management, behavioural analysis, and social marketing techniques to solve problems; and to improve knowledge and skills throughout the world as the most effective means for stimulating growth, reducing poverty, and promoting democratic and humanitarian ideals.'

Academy for Educational Development in China

In China since: 1995

Average annual China budget (USD):

Number of staff on mainland:

Past AED projects have included: ADB funded regional and country research on education and public policy in Asia; ADB funded assistance to the Chinese Department of Ethnic Minority Education in policy formulation and development, bilingual education, education research and management information systems; and World Bank funded review and training for maternal and child health workers.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Sector	Activity	Time Scale	Partner(s)	City/County District/(Autonomous) Prefecture	Municipality/Autonomous Region/Province
HIV/AIDS	HIV prevention intervention design for female prostitutes conducted by AED's Center for Applied Behavioural Research. Funded by Ford Foundation.	1999-2000			Beijing



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ActionAid was founded in 1972 and has grown to be the third largest NGO in the UK, working in over 30 countries worldwide. ActionAid's work in China is managed by ActionAid India, the oldest and largest programme of ActionAid. In India, AAI works mainly in integrated rural development with socially and economically marginalised castes, tribes, women, children and people with disabilities. Recently, it has expanded to disaster relief and work with urban poor.

Mission: 'To work with poor and marginalised people to eradicate poverty by overcoming the injustice and inequity that cause it.'

ActionAid in China

In China since: 1998 Average annual China budget (USD): 200,000
Number of staff on mainland:

ActionAid India plans to finish drafting its short term strategy for work in China by the end of 1999.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Sector	Activity	Time Scale	Partner(s)	City/County District/(Autonomous) Prefecture	Municipality/Autonomous Region/Province
Rural and/or community development	Micro-level planning (exploratory phase).	since 1998	NRSTD and local governments	Huaian County; Yiyuan County	Hebei; Shandong
Information and advice	Funding support for <i>chinabrief</i> .	1999	China Development Research Services		