

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN CHINA

G4S's JIFU Action Project expands to help teach more Shanghai orphans with special needs

THE SUPPORT BEING given by G4S in China to a Shanghai orphanage is helping transform the lives of many youngsters in its care.

During a recent visit to Shanghai, Michael Clarke, G4S director of public affairs, was invited to see what a difference the company's involvement is making at a school run by the Shanghai Nan Hui Tao Yuan Orphans Foster Home Centre, in the Pu Dong district of the city.

"The name JIFU sums it up perfectly," Clarke explains. "It was chosen by our Chinese management team because the characters that represent the name mean 'lucky' and 'happiness' in Mandarin and they also sound very similar to how we pronounce G4S.

"The children were remarkably happy, considering many of them have physical or mental difficulties. They receive a basic education and what really impressed me was how very enthusiastic the kids were about learning."

Michael Clarke was shown around the well maintained school by Wen Zhou, director of Shanghai Children's Home, and Mrs Binbin Gong, director of the Tao Yuan Orphans Foster Home Centre in Nan Hui. He also got to meet teachers and pupils. →





"Mr Zhou and Mrs Gong spoke very highly of the support they are receiving from G4S China, both in financial terms and encouragement. It means a lot to them."

With him during the visit was Oyana Ye, G4S senior HR and admin manager (China), who monitors progress and gives any assistance that is required to make the partnership a success.

The project – part of G4S's "Giving Back To The Community" programme – was announced by Ken May, G4S regional managing director, Greater China, at the end of 2007 when he handed a cheque to Cheng Nangang, president of the Pudong area branch of Shanghai Charity Foundation.

The orphanage is a non-profit charity that does not receive government funding. It was established by Shanghai Children's Home and Shanghai Nan Hui Industrial Park to help 217 orphans with slight disabilities, of whom 93 are school age children and

the rest are pre-schoolers.

Because the only special education school in Nan Hui district had limited places and was a considerable distance from the foster home centre, the orphanage decided to create its own solution.

It found a three-storey building to use as a school but it needed funding to employ two rehabilitation staff, a further two to make home visits and a fifth involved in cognitive education.

That is where G4S stepped in, offering its support over a six-year period, from 2007, by helping to pay teachers' salaries, buy teaching aids, supplies and sports equipment, as well as meeting various other expenses.

In the first academic year – 2008 – G4S supported 12 children and that number will increase progressively over the six-year period. It is currently helping 36 youngsters, aged between eight and 12, in three classes that have also been equipped by the company.



Pictured with some of the children being helped by the G4S JIFU community project are Mrs Chen Nangang, president of the Pudong area branch of Shanghai Charity Foundation (partly hidden by boy's hand), Zhou Wen, director of Shanghai Children's Home, and Mrs Gong Binbin, director of Shanghai Nan Hui Tao Yuan Orphans Foster Home Centre.

Eventually, the programme will expand to include 82 children.

Well-planned charitable support, such as the JIFU project, is essential, but there are also times when communities need spontaneous help.

In May last year, for example, when an earthquake in the Sichuan province of China killed more than 68,000, with a further 18,000 listed as missing, 374,000 injured and 4.8 million homeless, G4S staff in China quickly raised £12,000 for the victims. The company also donated a further £20,000 to help the immediate needs of survivors, including the provision of food, water, blankets, tents, clothes and other essential supplies.

Michael Clarke, together with G4S finance director Trevor Dighton, was part of a trade delegation which accompanied Lord Mandelson, UK Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, on a visit to China in September, giving him the opportunity to visit the school.

G4S's involvement in China over recent years has been largely limited to facilities management, the supply of electronic security systems to foreign multinationals and maintenance of ATMs, due to government legislation that prevents direct foreign involvement in its security industry.

That is about to change, Nick Buckles, G4S CEO, told investors and the media in November, after announcing the Group's nine-months results. Only £3 million of G4S's £5.9bn turnover last year came from China.

Discussing future expansion, he said deregulation of China's security industry, which comes into effect in the new year, would mean foreign companies may be able to own local security companies and, in conjunction with the state, run cash transportation services.

G4S is keen to invest in China, he added, but will start by growing organically. ■