

# NUS schools of Hope for China village children

■ BY YEO SHANG LONG

THE business of generating hope is not what an MBA generally gets one into.

But it is what some alumni of the National University of Singapore (NUS) Business School are spawning in China, by setting up primary schools in three provinces for village children.

These alumni, mostly from China, have taken the initiative to raise funds to build the schools, and then turned them over to the local governments to run.

These "NUS Hope Schools", as they have come to be called, provide the children with proper education facilities and thus, a shot at a brighter future.

Three have been built so far - one each in Jiangxi, Sichuan and Hunan provinces. The oldest is Jiangxi province's two-year-old NUS Shatian Hope School, which has two buildings on a 4,000 sq m plot and an enrolment of 300.

It is a far cry from the school Shatian's children knew.

Madam Hao Yi Hong, the secretary-general of the South-China Alumni Network and a Chinese national herself, remembers being appalled by what passed for a school during her visit there four years ago.

She said: "It looked like a village school from the 50s or 60s - the windows did not even have panes and students were working in poor lighting conditions at night."

She was the one who mooted the idea of NUS Business School aiding in the construction of schools in China. Armed with photos and information, she raised 300,000 yuan (S\$62,000) from other Chinese national alumni like herself.

NUS Shatian Hope School, the fruit of these efforts, has since replaced the ramshackle village school.

"We want to pass the gift of knowledge to these children," said the graduate of the NUS Asia-Pacific Executive Masters of Business Administration (Apex-MBA) programme.

The 15th and 16th batches of Apex-MBA students have carried on her work, setting up the NUS Qingshan Hope School in Sichuan and the NUS Hanpo Hope School in Hunan. Both opened late last year.