



# SUPPORT EDUCATION IN RURAL CHINA PROGRAM SERIES 认助中国乡村教育项目系列

## 2013 Annual Report



*ESS volunteers went on stage to thank supporters at the end of the charity concert, "Let Music Carry Our Love," which was held in Maryland, USA, on September 14, 2013, to help raise funds for ESS programs and to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the SERC Program*

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Education and Science Society, Inc. (ESS) is a non-profit, non-political educational organization, registered as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization in the State of New York. Its missions are to promote understanding between the peoples of the United States and China, and to promote human and social development in rural China by raising literacy levels and improving the quality of education.

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##### Rural Public Libraries

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The ESS Board of Directors holds regular meetings every quarter; The SERC Executive Committee holds regular meetings bimonthly.

## SUPPORT EDUCATION IN RURAL CHINA (SERC) PROGRAM SERIES

### 2013 Annual Report

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## SERC Program Series 1988-2013

### Major Results and Activities at a Glance

<b>SERC Series I: Providing Reading Material and Information Resources</b>		
◆ Rural School Library (RSL)	(since 1989)	5,601 RSLs
◆ Rural Public Library (RPL)	(since 1988)	47 RPLs
◆ Rural Multimedia Information Center (RMIC)	(since 2007)	21 RMICs
<b>SERC Series II: Improving Teaching and Learning in Rural Schools</b>		
◆ Basic Education Conferences/workshops for rural teachers - Jointly held with provincial/municipal institutions	(since 1993)	49 conferences
◆ Summer Camps (Science)	(since 2009)	40 camps
◆ Summer Camps (Music and General Activity)	(since 2009)	12 camps
◆ Summer Camps (Reading and Writing for Rural Students & Teachers)	(since 2012)	1 camp
❑ Rural Classroom Book Clubs	(since 2012)	15 schools (2 provinces)
◆ Essay contests and publications		
❑ Read to Discover/Teach to Inspire *	(since 1996)	17 <sup>th</sup> year
* Since 2009, Read to Discover essay contests have included both students and teachers. Award winning essays are posted on the ESS website.		
◆ Read Classics projects	(since 2000)	270 schools (18 provinces)
◆ Teaching Equipment and Facilities		
❑ Science laboratory equipment	(since 2002)	26 schools
❑ Teachers training VCDs	(since 2002)	28 schools
❑ Audiovisual equipment	(since 2002)	12 schools
❑ Classroom desks, chairs and tables	(since 2002)	60 schools
❑ Students beds for boarding facility	(since 2002)	1 school
❑ Musical instruments for rural schools	(since 2003)	389 schools (20 provinces)
❑ Sports equipment/material for rural schools	(since 2003)	60 schools
❑ Teaching equipment/material in specially poor counties	(since 2003)	63 schools (5 counties in 3 provinces)
❑ Equipment/material for rural county teachers training centers	(since 2004)	10 centers (8 provinces)
❑ School broadcasting systems	(since 2005)	2 schools (2 provinces)
❑ Computer equipment	(since 2007)	657 sets (at 21 RMICs)
<b>SERC Series III: Financial Aid for Rural Students (FARS)</b>		
<b>Total number of scholarship awards</b>	(since 1997)	<b>21,050</b>
Of which: Primary students (PS)		2,334
Junior secondary (JSS)		10,150
Senior secondary students (SSS and vocational school students)		6,786
College students (HE)		896
Students with disabilities in special education schools		884
<b>Special Projects</b>		
◆ Tree planting project (Inner Mongolia & Gansu)	(since 2003)	70,000 saplings
◆ Soya bean workshop & pig farm (Fuping County, Hebei)	(2003)	1 school
◆ Arts/skills training for girls in specially poor counties (Gansu)	(2003)	2 schools
◆ Multimedia equipment for earthquake disaster area (Beichuan, Sichuan)	(2008)	10 schools/disaster shelters



EDUCATION AND SCIENCE SOCIETY

Welcome to our website  
[www.esscare.org](http://www.esscare.org)

Inspiring rural children  
to learn about science,  
the environment,  
language skills, culture  
and art, music and ...





## “Let Music Carry Our Love” Charity Concert

In September 2013, a very special concert was held in the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theatre in Maryland. It was special, because the organizers were all volunteers, the performers were all volunteers, and the audience all came with a common purpose – to give support to education programs that benefit rural children in China.

“*Let Music Carry our Love*” was the theme of this concert. Lingling H. Peng, a mezzo-soprano of the Washington National Opera, had originally planned this concert as part of her professional performance program. A meeting of ESS volunteers in the spring of 2013 turned this event into a charity. As discussions focused on the lack of resources for music education in rural China, Lingling generously offered her concert performance to help raise funds for ESS programs, and to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ESS program series, *Support Education for Rural China (SERC)*.

After half a year of intensive preparation, the Charity Concert finally took place. The concert hall was fully packed as it resounded with the musical presentation of a highly professional team of performers. Other than Lingling, the team included Tim Augustin, a tenor known for a “particularly lovely voice” (*the Washington Post*), who has been with the Washington National Opera for many years; the Glorystar Children’s Chorus, a well-known multicultural choir founded in the Washington area; and Kai-Ching Chang from Taiwan, who has served as collaborative pianist for many choir and opera groups in Washington and New Jersey. They performed a selection of arias by Handel, Fauré, Bizet, Cilea and Webber, and a number of Chinese folk songs. A video program on the SERC programs was shown during intermission.

No one could count how many volunteers had contributed to make this event a success, how much effort went into the organization of ticket sales, to the design of the concert program, to publicity work prior to the performance, or to the preparation of stage setting and acoustics on the day of the performance, or to the cleaning up afterwards. As the evening drew to a close, the audience and volunteers lingered and mingled, sharing their thoughts and feelings for this memorable event. Everyone was touched by the spirit of care and giving – “*Let music carry our love*”, to the children in rural China.



## Twenty-five Years of the ESS Program Series Support Education in Rural China (SERC)

2013 was the 25<sup>th</sup> year of the *Support Education in Rural China* Program Series. Reflecting on the past quarter century, ESS volunteer Fang Wu wrote: “Whenever I think of the ESS SERC Programs, two lines from Du Fu’s poem would come to my mind, ‘(the spring rain) creeps in with the wind during the night, silently nourishing the earth.’ In the past 25 years, the SERC programs have sent millions of books to schools in remote rural areas in China, and provided financial assistance for more than twenty thousand rural children to help them complete their schooling. Like the spring breeze that gently brushes across the fields or the spring rain that slowly moistens the earth, the programs have soothed the children’s thirst for knowledge. Those who were primary school students have now grown up and started to work. The faces of children and teachers who received help in the past two decades have been changing, but the ‘spring rain’ is still silently, gently, continuously dripping, helping children fulfil their dreams for education, and improving the teaching and learning environment in rural schools. All this has been made possible by the nameless heroes who have silently and persistently contributed to the SERC programs -- the volunteers and the donors.”

With generous donation from our sponsors and selfless dedication of our volunteers, ESS has been able to develop and carry out a series of programs to support education in rural China over the past twenty-five years. The main objective of these programs is to help improve opportunities for rural children to receive quality education and build a firm foundation for bettering the future for the vast rural population. Starting with the provision of reading material for a few rural school libraries in 1988/89, the SERC programs have grown to encompass a series of activities that benefit many poor rural children across the country.

While improvements are needed in many aspects of education in rural China, the SERC programs have been designed around three main themes: (a) providing reading material and information resources to rural communities; (b) improving the quality of teaching and learning in rural schools; and (c) financial assistance for poor rural students. In practice, many projects work across all three themes.

### Providing Reading Material and Information Resources



- **Adopt a Rural School Library (ARSL) Project:** In 1988/89 ESS provided supplementary reading material to four rural schools in Hunan and Yunnan provinces. This was the beginning of the ARSL Project, which has remained a key component of the SERC Program Series. By the end of 2013, the number of ARSLs all over the country has increased to 5,601 (see chart and tables on page B-2).
- **Rural Public Libraries:** At the same time, ESS helped local governments in the provinces of Guizhou and Guangxi to set up public libraries for the rural communities. From 1988 to 2012, forty-seven public libraries were established (see Table 5, page B-4). ESS provided financial support for each library in the first five years of its operation, and gave incentive book funds for those libraries that were well managed.
- **Rural Multimedia Information Centers (RMICs):** In late 2007, ESS launched a new project to help disadvantaged rural school communities connect with the outside world through computer networks. Each RMIC was equipped with a server and user terminals linked to the Internet, allowing students and teachers, as well as local residents, to access online information. By the end of 2013, RMICs have been set up in twenty-one rural schools (see Table 6, page B-4).



Keenly aware of the role that reading and writing skills play in education and development, ESS has devoted a large amount of resources to the provision of supplementary reading material and supported a number of projects to promote reading and writing in the rural areas. The *Adopt a Rural School Library (ARSL)* projects have provided books to over 5,000 rural schools since 1988/89, and the *Rural Public Library* project helped rural governments set up libraries for the local communities in Guizhou and Guangxi. Annual essay competitions were organized (1996-2012) for the ARSL schools to encourage students and teachers to make good use of the library books. A special workshop for reading and writing was held in 2012 for rural students who received awards in the essay competitions. In addition, Chinese classics textbooks have been provided to nearly 300 schools under the *Read Classics* project since 2000, to help strengthen language skills and appreciation of cultural heritage.

At the same time, ESS has been deeply concerned about the quality of teaching and learning in the rural schools. To help upgrade the knowledge and skills of rural teachers, ESS began in 1993 to work with provincial education bureaus and academic institutions to organize *Basic Education Conferences* each summer. Professional educators and outstanding education workers from within and outside China were invited to give presentations and lead discussions on basic education concepts, pedagogy, school and classroom management issues, and trends in education reform. Each year about 800-1,000 basic education teachers, school principals, researchers and administrators attended these conferences. The 49<sup>th</sup> Basic Education Conference was held in Fuzhou in 2013.

To help children from poor rural families that could not pay for their schooling expenses, ESS started the *Financial Aid for Rural Students (FARS)* program in 1997. In that year, ESS assistance was provided to 33 junior secondary students to help them stay in school. By 2013, the accumulated total number of FARS awards has increased to 21,050. Initially ESS support geared towards primary and junior secondary students. As government input for these levels of education increased, ESS assistance shifted to senior secondary and university students, and to groups which specially needed support, including children with disabilities and children without parental care.

### ***Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning in Rural Schools***



***ESS Basic Education Conferences*** from 1993-2013 provided training to more than 30,000 education staff from rural villages and townships in China. The conference halls were usually packed (*above left*), with participants engaging in enthusiastic exchanges and group discussions (*above center*).

The 49<sup>th</sup> Basic Education Conference was held in Fuzhou, Fujian Province, from July 24-26, 2013 (*above right*). Over 800 participants from 20 different provinces/municipalities attended the morning lectures and the afternoon group discussions. Lecture topics included: macro policies in basic education development, education reforms in China and the US, the human brain in learning and character development, and the teaching of language and writing skills. Group discussions focused on issues specific to school management, the teaching of language, science and mathematics, early child development, etc. Education experts from the US, Taiwan and other Chinese academic and educational institutions made presentations and led the group discussions. Feedback from participants indicated general satisfaction especially with regard to the professional quality of the presentations, but some discontent about insufficient interaction with the speakers and among themselves.

As the country went through rapid social and economic development in the past few decades, new issues in education have emerged. To help rural children meet the challenges that these changes have brought about, ESS has developed new programs to target specific needs. For example, in late 1997 ESS launched a new project, *Rural Multimedia Information Centers (RMICs)*, to help schools in remote rural areas access information resources and learning opportunities through the use of the Internet and computer technology. The project has helped 21 rural schools set up RMICs by the end of 2013.

The *ESS Summer Camp program*, partly designed to promote science education and environmental awareness in the rural areas, was initiated in 2009. It has since become a regular component of the SERC program series. Over 5,000 rural children participated in the 52 summer camps ESS sponsored in the past five years. These camps have been an enrichment process not only for the rural children but also for the volunteers who served as camp instructors. Many of the volunteers were students from universities and research institutions that helped to plan and organize the camp activities. Having closely interacted with the children at the camps, the volunteers came away deeply touched by the children's eagerness to learn and their need for love and care. Many volunteers found the experience gratifying and became committed to work with the camp program every year. Their experience has in turn inspired their friends and fellow students to join the camp program as volunteers.

Many people within and outside China have become involved in the SERC programs over the past 25 years, not only giving donations but also contributing their time and expertise to various aspects of our work program. Many of our sponsors have missed schooling opportunities when they were young, and especially appreciate the importance of education in the development process. Mr. K. P. Tin, one of our major sponsors for many years, firmly believes that *"the hope for China lies in education."* Mr. Siu Kuen Au, another staunch supporter of our programs, points out that *"money in a bank earns little interest; investment in children brings infinite dividends."* Indeed what has sustained the SERC programs over the years are the care and concern, shared by our volunteers and sponsors, for the future of the children in the vast rural areas in China. Education is a long-term investment. Only with everyone's concern and support can we hope to make a difference in the quality of education for the rural children.

### ***Financial Aid for Rural Students (FARS)***



Between 1997 and 2013, ESS gave out 21,050 FARS awards to help rural children from poor families to continue their studies in school. Of the 1,019 FARS awards given out in 2013, 741 were for primary and secondary school students, 174 for university students and 104 for students with disabilities (*see charts and tables on page B-3*).

ESS support went mostly to primary and junior secondary students in the initial years of the FARS program. As these children did well in school and gained admission to senior secondary schools and further to universities, many sponsors continued to give them support if their families could not afford to pay for the higher levels of education. In recent years, government substantially increased its inputs for the first nine years of education, waiving tuition fees for all primary and junior secondary students. The FARS program hence shifted its focus towards senior secondary and college students, and to children from especially disadvantaged groups including those with disabilities and those deprived of parental care.

Many students who received support in the initial years of the FARS program have now finished their studies and started to work. Some of them have returned to their native villages to teach or take up jobs in various capacities. Grateful for the timely assistance given to them at critical junctures of their development, they appreciate the care and concern of the ESS sponsors, and are inspired to make their own contribution to the rural communities they serve.



## Promoting Reading and Writing in Rural Schools



- **Annual essay competitions**, *Read to Discover* and *Teach to Inspire*, were organized for the ARSL schools between 1996-2012. Each year ESS reviewed thousands of essays submitted by students and teachers and selected winners for awards and publication (*above left*).
- **Read Classics** project was launched in 2000, initially on a pilot basis. ESS provided schools with Chinese classics texts and encouraged them to organize extracurricular reading sessions for the students (*above right*). Finding that these exercises have helped students improve their language skills as well as their understanding of Chinese culture, many more schools have applied for the project, bringing the total number of project schools to 270 by the end of 2013.
- ESS organized a **Read and Write Workshop for Rural Students and Teachers** in Beijing in the summer of 2012. Participants included rural students who had won awards in the essay competitions in previous years, and their supervisory teachers. As a follow-up program to the workshop, ESS helped some of the teachers set up **Rural Classroom Book Clubs**.

## ESS Summer Camp Programs



Children in the ESS science summer camp held in Inner Mongolia learned to collect water samples and carry out experiments (*above left and center*); an art class in a summer camp in Hunan (*above right*).

Between 2009 and 2013, over 5,000 rural children participated in the ESS Summer Camp programs (see *Table 8, page B-6*). In 2013, ESS sponsored 17 summer camps for rural children (*Table 9, page B-6*). Science and environmental issues were the main topics in 12 of these camps. Four other camps offered general programs, and one camp focused on local musical and cultural heritage. About 1,800 children took part in these activities. Volunteer teams from a dozen universities, research institutions and charity organizations were involved in the planning, preparation and organization of the camp programs. In addition, many local education offices, schools and other institutions provided logistic support.

## ESS Music, Sports and Art Programs

Since 2003 ESS has given musical instruments and sports equipment to some poor rural schools. These resources have made music and sports activities more substantial and enjoyable for both the teachers and the students. Rural schools also suffer from the lack of properly trained staff to teach music, art and sports. In 2013 ESS worked with local institutions in Hunan to pilot a training program in these subject areas for 45 teachers from especially poor villages in the hilly ranges of the Wuling mountains.

