



SUPPORT EDUCATION IN RURAL CHINA PROGRAM SERIES

認助中國鄉村教育項目系列

2005 Annual Report



A happy day for students, teachers and the community when two primary schools in China's northwest region received the library books donated by Mr. Siu Kuen Au and the K. P. Tin Foundation, through the SERC program



Adopt a Rural School Library. Both schools, Dongjiao Primary and Shili Primary, are located in Qinghe Township of the Yuanzhou District in the Ningxia Autonomous Region. Local education officials and ESS local representatives attended the ceremonies held at the schools to mark the occasion. As students helped the school librarians set up the designated bookshelves, they became totally absorbed in the stories they were reading.

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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 to help raise literacy levels and improve the quality of education.



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2005 Annual Report

Editor Josephine Pun



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

Support Education in Rural China (SERC) Program Series

2005 Annual Report

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Supporting Education in Rural China

Dr. Lungching Chiao, ESS/SERC Executive Director

This is now the 17th year for the Support Education in Rural China (SERC) Program Series. With generous contribution from sponsors, our dedicated team of volunteers in the Education and Science Society (ESS) has helped many schools in poor rural areas in China obtain books for their libraries, set up equipment for their laboratories, and refurbish their dilapidated classrooms. We have also helped many rural teachers upgrade their professional skills through the provision of training and reference material, and supported many rural students in the continuation of their education.



Our efforts have focused on three main areas: (a) providing reading material; (b) improving the quality of teaching and learning; and (c) financial aid for rural students. The major results and activities of the SERC Program Series over the past 17 years are summarized in the table on page E-5. I would like to highlight the following developments in 2005.

Providing reading material. We have added a number of *Adopt a Rural School Libraries* (ARSLs) in the poor rural areas. To ensure that the library books are actually used by the students, we encourage the ARSL schools to initiate a mobile library system, moving the books into the classrooms rather than letting them sit on the shelves.



Teachers enjoying a laugh at an ESS education conference in 2005

Improving teaching and learning. We are keenly aware of the difficulties faced by rural teachers, not only for lack of teaching material and training opportunities, but also in terms of the hardships they face in their living environment. Those teachers who stay and persist in their work in the poor and remote rural areas deserve our respect and support. Since 1993 ESS has organized annual basic education conferences for rural teachers in selected counties, and held essay contests for students and teachers (*Read to Discover* and *Teach to Inspire*). Through these activities, we hope to bring new concepts to the rural teachers, create opportunities for the exchange of ideas and experience, and enliven the spirit of learning and teaching in the rural schools. In the summer of 2005, a series of basic education conferences and seminars for rural teachers were held jointly with the local governments in four poor counties in Gansu, Ningxia and Shaanxi, in China's northwest region. The response was overwhelmingly positive. In future, we plan to invite teachers who have won awards in the *Teach to Inspire* essay contests to participate and share their experience with us.

Scholarship for rural students. We are aware that with over 70% of China's population living in the rural areas, government resources alone could hardly meet their needs for education. Official statistics indicate that



while secondary students in the rural areas are four times those in the urban areas, their share of the central government budget for secondary education is only 38%. The government has announced that it plans to eliminate all fees for primary and junior secondary education in the rural areas within the next two years, starting in 2006. The SERC scholarship program will hence shift its emphasis to senior secondary and vocational education, providing assistance especially for those students who intend to serve the rural communities after they complete their studies. Support for students with disabilities will also be considered.

ESS is a non-profit intermediary service organization without any funds of its own, and does not have any paid staff. It plans and manages the SERC Program Series according to the educational needs in rural China, and supervises program implementation through its representatives in China. ESS local representatives, who have devoted freely their time and service, are crucial to the effectiveness of each and every project. Excerpts from articles written by ESS provincial representatives in Gansu and Nei Monggol, included in this report (pages E-9 - E-12), enhance our understanding of the commitment and heavy workload undertaken by our team of local volunteers. All ESS personnel within and outside China are not paid for their services; their only reward lies in the outcomes of the programs.

Education is the ultimate key to poverty reduction. Education programs will only achieve results over the long term through steady, practical and sustained efforts. We would like to thank everyone who has persistently supported our work over the past years.

The achievements of the SERC Program Series belong to all of us.

A Letter from a former SERC Scholarship Recipient



The SERC Scholarship Program is now in its 9th year. It has supported many students through primary, junior secondary and senior secondary education over the past decade. Recently we received a letter that moved us deeply. It came from a former student whom the SERC scholarship program supported for seven years. He has now returned as a teacher to his native village in Gansu. We would like to share with you below some excerpts from his letter to his sponsors.

"... In the deep of winter in this northern land, I trudged along the snow-covered valley. Snow got into my pants, water seeped into my shoes, the wind blinded my eyes, but I was not deterred. Nothing seemed to have changed in my village, except my identity, or rather my role. The familiar yet estranged scenery brought back many memories. I remembered the year when I entered junior secondary school, we had a bad harvest. My mother was ill in bed, and my father helplessly shook his head and sighed, secretly wiping away tears as he saw the yearning for knowledge in the eyes of me and my brother. As I began to lose hope of ever continuing my schooling, I found my name listed among those to receive scholarship awards. ... The thrilling joy that I felt at that time still warms my heart. ... Your support over the past few years has instilled in me the spirit to do my very best, urging me on to win admission to the most popular vocational school in our region – Tianzhu National Minorities Teachers training College. Now with all the lovely children before me, I will try my best to broaden their horizon and enrich their lives. ... Without your help, I would not be here today. Without your loving support, I would not have nurtured the values I now cherish in life ..."

– Tong Yushan, writing from Dagou Primary School, Dahonggou Village, Tianzhu County, Gansu

SERC Program Series 1988-2005

Major Results and Activities at a Glance

SERC Series I: Providing Reading Material			
 Adopt a Rural School Library	(1989-2005)	4,029	ARSLs
 Adopt a Rural Public Library	(1988-2005)	43	ARPLs
SERC Series II: Improving Teaching and Learning			
✧ Basic Education Conferences Jointly held with provincial/municipal institutions	(1993-2005)	35 conferences	
✧ Demo workshops for rural teachers	(2005)	4 workshops	
✧ Essay contests and publications			
▪ <i>Read to Discover</i>		10 th year	
○ Collection of award essays	(1996-2005)	6,000 vol./year	
▪ <i>Teach to Inspire</i>		7 th year	
○ Collection of award essays & selected basic education conference papers	(1999-2005)	8,000 vol./year	
✧ <i>Read Classics</i> projects – pilot testing in selected schools	(2001-05)	5 provinces	
✧ Teaching Equipment and Facilities			
▪ Musical instruments in poor counties	(2002-05)	147 schools	
▪ Science laboratory equipment	(2002-05)	14 schools	
▪ Teachers training VCDs	(2002-05)	28 schools	
▪ Audiovisual equipment	(2002-05)	12 schools	
▪ Classroom desks, chairs and tables	(2002-05)	39 schools	
▪ Students beds for boarding facility	(2002-05)	1 school	
▪ Equipment/facilities for schools in specially poor counties sponsored by the Raybin Q. Wong Foundation	(2003-05)	6 counties	
▪ Equipment/teaching material for rural teachers training centers	(2004-05)	10 counties in 8 provinces	
SERC Series III: Financial Aid for Rural Students			
Total number of scholarship awards	(1997-2005)	11,549	
Of which: Primary students (PS)		2,118	
Junior secondary students (JSS)		7,641	
Senior secondary students (SSS)		1,777	
College students (HE)		13	
Special Projects			
✧ Tree planting project in Nei Monggol & Gansu	(2003-05)	>10,000 saplings	
✧ Soya bean workshop & pig farm in Fuping County, Hebei	(2003)	1 school	
✧ Arts/skills training for girls in specially poor counties, Gansu	(2003)	2 schools	
✧ School-wide broadcasting system in Guyuan County, Ningxia	(2005)	1 school	

Students opening packages of books that have just arrived for the ARSL in a primary school in Jiangxi



SERC Program Series I – Providing Reading Material

Adopt a Rural School Library (ARSL). In 2005, ESS implemented 374 ARSL projects in 21 provinces and regions in China. The total number of ARSLs since 1989 has increased to 4,029. Details regarding their growth and distribution are shown in Chart 1 and Tables 1 and 2 (pages B-1, B-2).

SERC Program Series II – Improving Teaching and Learning

In the 10th *Read to Discover* and 7th *Teach to Inspire* essay contests held in 2005, the ESS review panels selected 150 students and 120 teachers, respectively, to receive awards for their outstanding contribution. Under the *Read Classics* project, which was in its 5th year of operation, additional schools have been added to the program.

Over the past year, ESS continued its efforts to help improve the teaching and learning environment in a number of schools in rural China, providing equipment and facilities for their science laboratories, instruments and material for music lessons, audiovisual equipment and VCDs for teaching and learning, and classroom furniture for students and teachers. In addition, with specially designated funds from sponsors, ESS helped a school in Ningxia set up a public announcement system, and assisted another school in Gansu to carry out a tree-planting environmental project.



Having fun in Chinese classics

2005 Basic Education Conference and Seminars for Rural Teachers

The quality of rural teachers remains a central area of our concern. In the summer of 2005, ESS organized a group of experienced educators, from the US and other parts of China, to give lectures and lead discussions in a series of education seminars and demonstration lessons for rural teachers in four poor counties in the northwest region of China. About 2,400 rural teachers participated in these activities. Questionnaire surveys and discussion sessions were conducted by local education officials to evaluate the experience for students and



Thanks to donations from generous sponsors, rural teachers in China's poor counties have TV monitors as teaching aids; students have new desks and chairs for their classes, and instruments for their music lessons.



A packed conference room in an ESS education seminar held in the summer of 2005 in northwest China

teachers, as summarized in the sections below. In future, ESS plans to strengthen its program to help train core teachers in a few counties each year, with the expectation that the core teachers will then train other rural teachers in China to achieve a multiplying effect.

Tongwei County and Zhenyuan County, Gansu Province. During the ESS basic education conference held in these counties from July 23 to 27, 2005, visiting lecturers gave a total of eight demonstration lessons. Evaluation questionnaires were distributed to the primary and junior secondary students who took part in these lessons. The students' responses indicated that they remembered very well what they learned. They liked especially the lively atmosphere in the classrooms, the method of learning through game playing and story telling, the linkage with real life situations, and the way the lesson plan was adjusted according to the actual progress of the students. The teachers were also inspired by the innovative teaching methods and the different ways used (including, for example, flexible classroom arrangements) to stimulate students' interest to learn and to take initiative. For the rural teachers in these poor and remote areas, the workshops provided rare opportunities to learn about new pedagogical concepts and methods. The few lessons they had will encourage them to improve their teaching quality, and to adopt ideas and skills that place the students in the center of the learning process. We hope the workshops last summer was only the beginning of more to come, as our teachers could really benefit from such training activities.

– Wang Chengwu and Wang Wenjie, ESS local representatives

Guyuan County, Yuanzhou District, Ningxia Autonomous Region. The students responded that they found the demonstration lessons very interesting because (a) the teacher encouraged students' participation; (b) the teacher followed the students' thinking process and adjusted the lesson plan accordingly; (c) the cooperative learning among the students was real and effective; and (d) the respect the students had for the teacher was genuine as the teacher treated them as equals. The teachers believed that this type of training was very useful because: (a) within a short time they could learn from the successful experience of other teachers to improve their own teaching methods; and (b) seeing that the same students could behave differently with different teachers, they understood that some of the usual problems they encountered in class were rooted not in the students but in the teacher. The teachers urged that this type of activities should be held often.

– Wei Yi, Director, Teachers Training Center

Teachers became students at an ESS education seminar in 2005



Discussion meeting on SERC Program activities

SERC Program Series III – Financial Aid for Rural Students

At the start of the fall term in 2005, SERC scholarships were awarded to 2,709 students, including 588 primary, 1,503 junior secondary, 607 senior secondary and 10 college (higher education) students. Development of the SERC scholarship program from 1997-2005 is shown in Chart 2 and Table 3 (Pages B-3). Details of the geographical distribution of scholarship recipients are given in Table 4 (page B-4).



Mrs. Molly Kao Yen meeting with SERC scholarship recipients



Primary school students in Tongwei County, Gansu

In recent years, China has started to implement policies to reduce schooling expenses for peasant families in poor rural areas. All school fees (including expenses for books) will be waived for primary and junior secondary students, and living expenses for boarding junior secondary students will be subsidized. At the 5th UNESCO Education for All meeting in 2005, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said that, “Within two years starting from 2006, China will eliminate all fees for nine years of compulsory education in the rural areas.”

This process has already begun and school fees for some ESS-sponsored students have been waived. Therefore, ESS has made the following decisions regarding the SERC scholarship program in 2006:

- (a) as parents are expected to be able to pay for the relatively low expenses for primary schooling (less than RMB 100 yuan per year), SERC scholarships will no longer be awarded to primary students;
- (b) while ESS will, prior to the full elimination of all fees for compulsory education, continue to assist junior secondary students who meet the poverty criteria, the amount of the SERC scholarship awards for these students will be reduced;
- (c) as compulsory education in China does not yet extend to the senior secondary level, the SERC scholarship program will increase assistance to students who perform well in senior secondary and vocational schools to help them pay for the relatively high fees.

Secondary school students in a crowded classroom in Ningxia



SERC scholarship recipients in northwest China greet the visiting ESS team in 2005



Thoughts and Feelings over the Years

– Zhang Rui, ESS Provincial Representative in Gansu

I started working as an ESS provincial representative on the SERC Program Series in October 1995. As I reflected on the ten years that seemed to have gone by so quickly, I was deeply moved by many thoughts and feelings.

Through my work over the years, I have come to know many friends from overseas, and have learned so much from them. Some of them gave up better jobs in order to spend more time working on the SERC programs. Some continued to work hard on the projects even when they were seriously ill. They put the work of the SERC programs above everything else, often neglecting matters important to their own families. They visited rural China at their own expense every year, traveling from school to school in the scorching summer heat to meet with students, teachers and parents. They carefully planned and organized various educational conferences and activities to help upgrade the skills of our rural teachers. They spoke frankly



A junior secondary school classroom in Zhenyuan County, Gansu. badly needing renovation and furniture

about the problems they saw; they cried over the poverty they witnessed . . . They touched me so deeply with their sincerity, kindness, commitment and dedication!



Zhang Rui, with teacher/deputy principal of Dongjie Primary School in Gansu, selecting musical equipment funded by the Raybin Q. Wong Foundation

Their persistence through the years has brought changes to many schools in the poor rural areas in Gansu. Learning has become interesting as the quality of teaching improves. Many children from poor families have been able to continue their schooling, and now hold a bright future ahead. The changes in these remote villages have not only been physical but also spiritual, making an impact on conventional ideas and helping to move forward the forces of development.

Many factors have contributed to the good progress we have made in our work in Gansu. The county education

bureaus and the schools have given us enormous support and many teachers have worked hard on the various SERC programs. Above all, we have a very good team of ESS representatives at the county level who have painstakingly carried out their responsibilities, putting aside their own personal comfort in order not to delay the work at every stage of project implementation. Without everyone's hard work and cooperation, we would not have achieved so much.

What has inspired us all is the profound commitment behind the funding for each and every project. We would like to do our part to ensure that these funds are used properly and effectively for the children in these poor mountainous areas. Supporting education in rural China has become our common dream and responsibility.

Mr. Fu Changshan, now a teacher at a primary school in Tianzhu County, Gansu, was supported by SERC scholarship awards for seven years. He was a classmate of Mr. Tong Yushan (whose letter to sponsors is quoted on page E-4)



Perhaps some day, when our hair turns grey and our gait becomes unsteady with age, we will have forgotten many things, but we will remember the years and months we have spent working together on the SERC programs. And we will be happy for the efforts we have made.



Students of Xiguan Primary School, Zhangjiachuan, Gansu, at the ceremony to mark the arrival of musical instruments donated by the Raybin Q. Wong Foundation. Left: Student representative speaking at the ceremony. Right: 5th grade students.



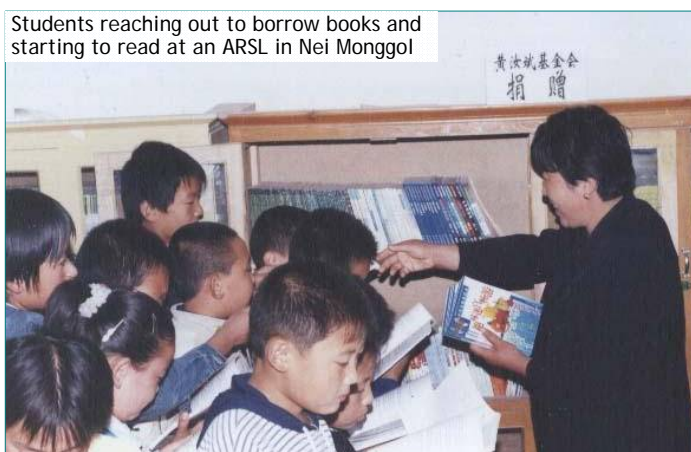
Ten Years of ESS Support to Education in Nei Mongol: A Summary Report

– Fan Youxiang, ESS Representative in Nei Mongol

Since 1995, ESS has provided increasing assistance to education in Nei Mongol through the Support Education in Rural China (SERC) program series. The program has included 343 *Adopt a Rural School Library* (ARSL) projects, 1,576 scholarship awards to rural students, and the provision of equipment and facilities to improve the teaching and learning environment in over 70 schools. The total amount of assistance is close to RMB 3.2 million yuan.

The Impact of the SERC Projects

Enlivening the school environment and Improving the performance of students. Over 200,000 volumes of books for 343 primary and junior secondary schools in Nei Mongol have been purchased with the funds donated to the ARSL projects, amounting to a total of RMB 1.5 million yuan. To promote full utilization of the library books, county education bureaus and the schools have worked out various schemes to encourage the children to read. For example, self study periods are set aside for reading, with teachers guiding the students and reading together with them. As a result, the students have read much more beyond the standard curriculum, and reading skills have improved over the past few years. The school environment has also been enriched by the musical instruments donated by the Raybin Q. Wong Foundation. The students have joined the musical activities with much enthusiasm, singing and dancing being very much part of the local tradition. School bands have been set up and have started to perform within a very short time.



Students reaching out to borrow books and starting to read at an ARSL in Nei Mongol



A special class to encourage students to read



Students learning to play traditional Chinese musical instruments donated by the Raybin Q. Wong Foundation

Supporting many poor children through school. The SERC scholarships have made it possible for over 500 children in Nei Monggol to continue their schooling. The first cohort of students who received SERC scholarship awards in 1999 is now studying in college.

Upgrading the skills of teachers. In the many poor counties in Nei Monggol where resources for education are extremely limited, teaching generally has been conducted with a black board, one piece of chalk, and one textbook. The SERC projects have brought to the teachers much needed reference books, as well as teaching material and equipment that facilitate their training and greatly enhance their pedagogical delivery.

Enhancing social values. As the schools assisted under the SERC projects improve in overall quality, they begin to gain a reputation not only in the neighboring areas but also in the entire Nei Monggol region. Through the SERC projects, people have come to appreciate (a) the need to care for others as crucial to social development, and (b) the importance of education as the key to poverty reduction.



Teachers training in Nei Monggol, conducted for the first time with equipment donated by Mr. Siu Kuen Au

Problems faced by Local Representatives

Recent reorganization has merged or dissolved some of the schools which have been supported under various SERC projects, and some school principals have been moved elsewhere. The new principals are not yet familiar with the SERC program activities. Hence, our local representatives have had difficulty getting timely support, for example, in obtaining submissions from students and teachers for the essay contests in the past two years. We also have had some problems with a few schools which are concerned more about keeping the library books intact than about their utilization.

Some Suggestions for Future Work

Our work over the past ten years has shown that effective implementation of the SERC projects depends very much on the degree to which our local ESS representatives dedicate themselves to carrying out their responsibilities at every stage. The work is tedious and time consuming. It requires constant liaison with the county education bureaus and the schools, guidance and monitoring of the use of the donated books, material and equipment, as well as the timely collection of feedback material that need to be sent onto the sponsors via ESS. It is therefore very important to build up a strong team of motivated local representatives who are willing to devote their time and effort to this task without getting paid.

The provincial ESS representative should spend one to two months each year visiting the schools where the SERC projects are implemented, to see how the donated books and equipment have been used and maintained, and to exchange ideas with the principals, teachers and students regarding the SERC program activities. It

would also be useful to organize annual meetings of the SERC project schools to discuss common issues and exchange ideas on improving project effectiveness.

The experience in several counties where the *Adopt a Most Impoverished County* projects have been implemented suggests that an effective way to ensure realization of project objectives is to concentrate assistance in a few selected counties. This approach has helped to motivate not only entire school communities but also the relevant education bureaus, county authorities as well as the general public. Assistance to individual schools would be most effective where the school principals understand and give enthusiastic support to the SERC program activities.



Glimpses of China's Rural Northwest

The SERC programs have helped many rural schools and children in China's arid northwest. But much more needs to be done, as these pictures suggest.

① This village is home to the Dageda Primary School (Guyuan District, Ningxia), which received new classroom furniture in 2005. ② In a boarding facility for secondary students, a pole holds up an upper bunk. ③ A poor rural family's home, with a sagging roof. ④ Inside the home, a pole keeps the roof from falling. ⑤-⑧ Dilapidated, dimly lit and poorly furnished classrooms are common sights; what will happen to the children's eyesight?

