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# 2020 **STEPPING STONES** ANNUAL REPORT

IMPROVING THE EDUCATION AND GENERAL WELFARE OF

DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN IN CHINA



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# Director's Words

What a year! Never before have so many of us faced so many new challenges, shocks and uncertainties, and so fundamentally changed our way of living, working and thinking, accepting previously unimaginable new restrictions. The coronavirus pandemic has forced us all to stop and reflect on what is important, and has made adaptation essential for survival.

We have always counted flexibility and resilience as two of Stepping Stones' strengths. These qualities were put to the test in 2020, and I am very proud to say that we more than rose to the challenge, and found new opportunities in the unique new situation.

I remember a call with the Stepping Stones team during the (extended) Chinese New Year holiday at the end of January. Our staff were on holiday in different parts of the world, or back home in different parts of China. Everyone was worried. Schools were closed, and we had no idea how long this would go on. Millions of school children were stuck in their homes, suffering both anxiety and boredom. Staff members and volunteers who had left Shanghai for the holiday had no idea if or when they would be able to return.

Until this point, all our programs, including our online Videolink Program, depended on our students being in their schools or community centres. We had never considered delivering those programs any other way. But as we discussed the situation, we suddenly hit on a new idea: could we possibly teach children online in their own homes? Did enough of our students have the necessary hardware and wifi connection to facilitate this? Would our school and community centre partners help us to connect with the students' parents, and would the parents support this initiative? Would volunteers who were stranded overseas be willing to volunteer remotely?

Our anxiety turned into a cautious excitement – perhaps there was something, however small, we could do to improve the lives and education of our students under lockdown. Perhaps we could bring them some moral support through fun online lessons? There were many more questions: Could we adapt our Videolink lesson plans to use in this different context? How many children was it possible to teach together online, and which platform would work best? How to communicate this program to our stakeholders? Everyone went away from that meeting energised, and with a long to-do list.

Looking back now, it's incredible that we delivered a pilot English class to eight children from one of our partners schools as early as 12th February, and by the following week, we already had mobilised eight of our most experienced volunteers to teach 82 students in Shanghai and rural areas. It was touching to see the excitement on the children's faces when they saw their friends again online, and I was very struck by how quickly a strong bond formed between the volunteer teacher and their little class of 5-6 students. We were all very impressed by how effective and efficient this format could be for learning English.

The numbers grew rapidly from then on. One of our concerns was whether it was worth investing in this initiative, if the schools might re-open in a month's time! We are so glad we decided to go ahead with it in spite of all those uncertainties, not only because the schools remained closed for almost the whole semester, but more importantly because this program turned out to be immensely successful and popular with students and parents alike.

Our Stepping Up (Digital Literacy) Program faced an even greater challenge than our English programs. Although we had discussed putting this program online in the past, we had not actually planned to do this yet. Obviously, the hardware aspect presents more challenges to teaching digital literacy than with English teaching. But our intrepid Stepping Up team, inspired by the success of the Home Classroom Program, set to work to develop curriculum and teaching methodology to allow them to teach students remotely, and in April, we were proud to be able to add digital literacy and life skills to our Home Classroom offerings.

Over the rest of the year, some but not all of our programs resumed, and you can read all about this in the following pages. Not only have we gained a new Home Classroom Program in 2020, but what we learned about adapting in a crisis and about the flexibility and resilience of our organisation will be another enduring legacy of 2020.

A huge thank you to Stepping Stones' staff, volunteers, teachers, parents, students and donors for your on-going trust and support, helping us not only to survive in this strange year, but also to grow stronger.

Corinne Richeux Hua  
Executive Director



# Year in Review



Staff



Volunteers



Lessons Taught



English Teachers  
Trained



Students

In 2020, 482 people volunteered with Stepping Stones - and 4,426 children and youth benefitted from our interventions, receiving on average more than 12 lessons each over the course of the year.

Our volunteers delivered 5,316 English lessons to 3,658 disadvantaged children at 14 project sites in Shanghai, 17 sites in other provinces (some sites with both online and on-site programs), as well as at thousands of students' homes through the internet.

Our Stepping Up Program's teachers and volunteers provided 652 digital literary, life skills or career development lessons to 850 students at 9 teaching sites in Shanghai and Zhejiang Province (some sites with both online and on-site programs), as well as at

dozens of students' homes through the internet.

We supplied professional training and follow-up support to 20 English teachers from Xingan County, Jiangxi Province, impacting the English education of about 2,000 children each year.

Our I Care Program organised eye screening and eye care awareness training for 16 students from a vocational school in Shanghai, donating spectacles to 7 of them.

# About Us

**Stepping Stones** is a non-profit organization registered in Shanghai. With a mission to improve the education and general welfare of disadvantaged children in China, Stepping Stones has hosted numerous programs focused on children's education and well-being since 2006. Stepping Stones has more than a thousand volunteers teaching online and offline English and digital literacy classes to migrant and left-behind children in 10 provinces each year. We also provide professional training to English teachers.

Our program benefits 10,000-15,000 students each year, the majority of them attending weekly lessons. Students who participate in our English classes have better exam results and are more interested and confident in English, which improves their access to educational and work opportunities in the future. Additionally, students are exposed to different cultures, and get early exposure to volunteer programs and volunteering spirit.

## Our Mission

To improve the education and general welfare of disadvantaged children in China.

## Our Vision

Equal access to a quality education and general welfare for all children in China.

## Legal Status

In December 2013, Stepping Stones was officially registered in Minhang, Shanghai as a private non-enterprise organisation. Stepping Stones' official Chinese name is 上海闵行区华漕铺路石青少年发展中心 (Shanghai Minhang District Huacao Pulushi Youth Development Centre). Stepping Stones is subject to the laws of the People's Republic of China. Stepping Stones is strictly non-political and non-religious.



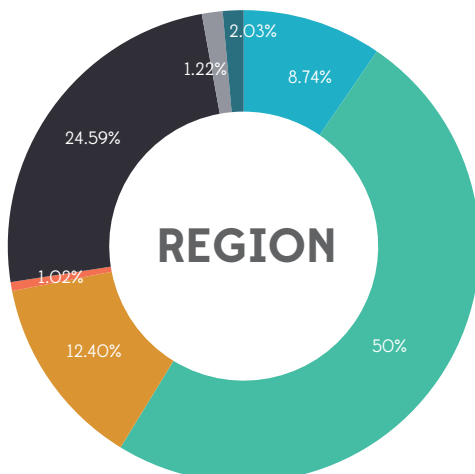
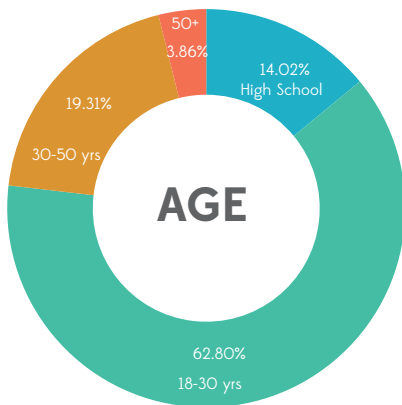
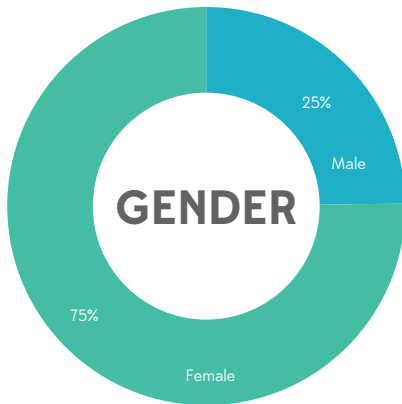


# Volunteers

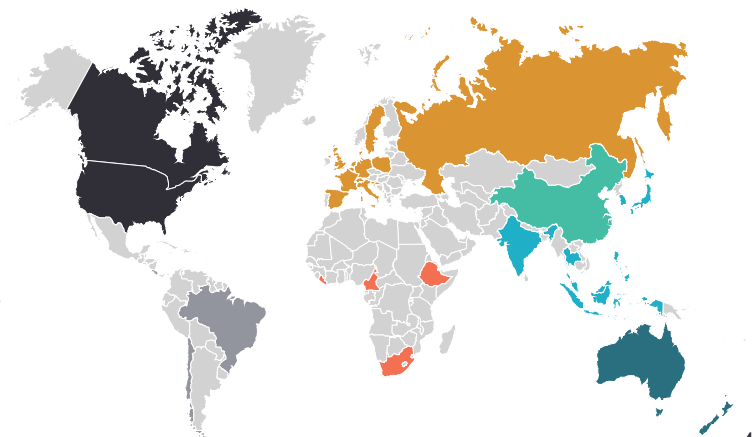
Stepping Stones' greatest is its large community of volunteers, who are eager for high-impact volunteering opportunities in China.

Stepping Stones' task is to recruit, train, support, resource and coordinate volunteers to provide services needed by our beneficiaries.

Our volunteers come from 39 different countries and from all walks of life, including high school students, university students, company employees and retirees. As well as teaching English and digital literacy to our students, they also take a myriad of other roles, including fundraising, communications, design, photography, curriculum development, volunteer coordination, translation, etc.



- China
- Rest of Asia
- North America
- Europe
- Australia & Oceania
- Central & South America
- Africa





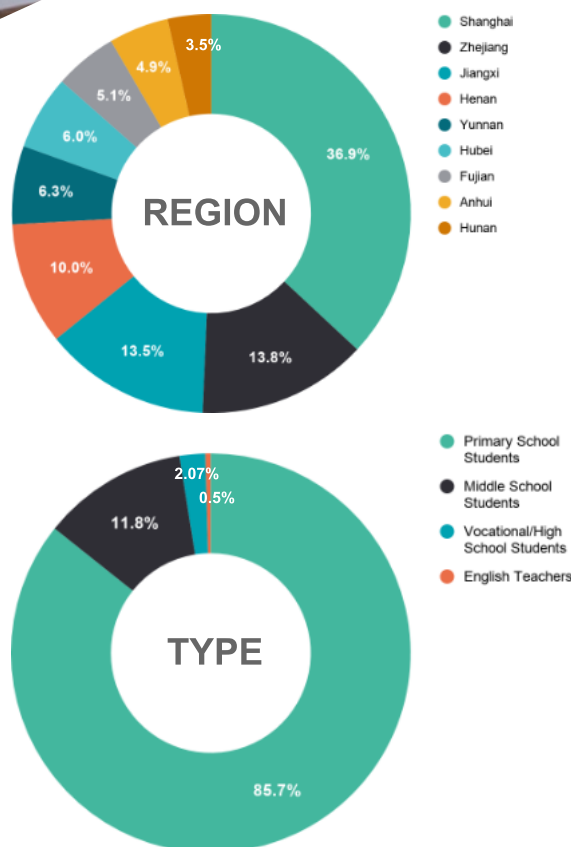
# Beneficiaries

Stepping Stones' main beneficiaries are children and youth, whose education has been negatively impacted by rural-urban migration in China. Some of these children have moved with their parents to cities where they do not have access to regular public schools due to residence issues, and are enrolled in schools for the children of migrant workers, whose educational standards fall behind the urban public schools. Others are enrolled in public schools, but need extra help with their schoolwork, which their parents are often unable to provide.

Other migrant workers' children are unable to go with their parents to the cities, and are left behind in rural boarding schools or living with other family members. The educational standards in rural schools lag significantly behind urban schools, and in addition to the disadvantages faced by rural children, these "left-behind" children also lack parental support.

Most of our students are primary-school age, but we also have middle-school, high school and vocational school students. We increase the impact on these students by providing professional and language training to English teachers.

As the number of migrant children decreases in Shanghai, and the educational provision improves for those who remain, we have been approached by local social work organisations to provide educational assistance to other local disadvantaged communities, in particular low-income families. We also continue to teach English to children with special needs.



# Staff Team

Stepping Stones' staff team was stable throughout 2020, with 15 paid and one volunteer staff member. The team was led by Founder and Executive Director, Corinne Hua. Sebastien Carrier continued as Program Director to oversee the strategic direction of our programs and their impact, while directly supervising the Stepping Up and Videolink Teacher Training Programs. Due to the epidemic, he worked remotely from Europe for most of the year, and we are very much hoping he will be able to join us back in Shanghai soon.

Since our school-based programs were suspended in the spring term, our English Teaching Program team, led by Sally Wangsawijaya, all worked together to roll out the new Home Classroom (HCR) Program. Once the program was up and running, Julie Li took the lead, and was promoted to HCR Manager.

Since the Teacher Training Program and Rural Individual Volunteering Programs were both still affected by the epidemic situation, Xiaolan Gao added the community-centre based Shanghai English Teaching Program to her portfolio in the autumn term. Sherry Jia continued to manage the Videolink Program, as well as assisting Julie with the HCR Program in the rural areas. Claire Ding resumed her training and curriculum development management responsibility for all the English Teaching Programs after her maternity leave.

Teddy Shi was promoted to manager in the summer for the Stepping Up Program, supported by computer teacher Ben Hu.

The operations side was stable, with Senior Finance Manager Eva Hua leading the finance team, supported by Naya Wang and Ada Xu, and with Dóra Havassy as HR manager.

Cui Wang continued in her role as Fundraising Senior Manager, supported by Communications Manager Yikai Zhu (KK) and Events Manager Yili Huang.

When we were not working remotely during the epidemic, we continued to enjoy our comfortable co-working office space in Xuhui District with Tiny Tots Educational Group.

Corinne Hua

Sebastien Carrier

Eva Hua

Cui Wang

Dóra Havassy

Yikai Zhu

Yili Huang

Ada Xu

Naya Wang

Sally Wangsawijaya

Sherry Jia

Julie Li

Xiaolan Gao

Claire Ding

Teddy Shi

Ben Hu

Executive Director

Program Director

Finance Senior Manager

Fundraising Senior Manager

HR Manager

Communications Manager

Events Manager

Finance Officer

Finance Officer

Senior Program Manager

Rural Program Manager

HCR Program Manager

SET & RIV Program Manager

Training & Curriculum Manager

Stepping Up Program Manager

Computer Teacher



# Our Board



**Hua Lei**  
**Chair**

HMD (Shanghai) Engineering Consultancy  
Corp. Ltd. - Vice President



**Gloria Han**  
**Vice-Chair**

Stepping Stones - Long-term Volunteer



**Whooper Huang**  
**Director**

PAAT (Shanghai) IT Co., Ltd. - Partner



**Leo Jia**  
**Director**

Save the Children in China - Area Manager



**Eva Hua**  
**Director**

Stepping Stones - Finance Senior Manager



**Wang Lin**  
**Supervisor**

BSR Advisory Services Ltd. - Director



# English Teaching

English is the third most important subject in the Chinese school curriculum after Chinese and maths, and the one that poses the most challenges to rural and other disadvantaged children, due to lack of access to adequate English language learning resources. Lack of attainment in English skills restricts educational and employment opportunities for these children. Stepping Stones' work began in response to requests from the principals of migrant schools in Shanghai and rural Chinese schools to teach English to their students.

## Shanghai English Teaching



Volunteer Teachers



Students



Teaching Sites



Lessons

After a whole term of schools and community centres being closed, we were delighted to be able to return to classroom teaching at 8 community centres in the summer. The schools were unable to welcome volunteers for the rest of the year, but we were glad to be able to expand our Shanghai English Teaching (SET) Program to 12 community centres by the autumn. We were pleased to start a new partnership with Shanghai Ruijia Social Work Centre, to teach English to the children of low income families in Gaohang and Gaoqiao.

85 volunteers in the SET Program taught a total of 818 lessons, benefitting 433 students. Our training managers and staff provided timely advice and support for volunteer teachers. Our impact assessments, which are detailed at the back of this report, showed an improvement in the students' oral English as well as their interest and confidence in English. The epidemic gave us a little more time to work on curriculum development, and as most of our program sites now have multi-media equipment, we started to convert our lesson plans into PPT format.

We continued to provide vocational oral English courses for adults and youth training with Shanghai Young Bakers and Shanghai K Foundation. In addition, we are happy to continue our collaboration with Shanghai Qingcongguan Training Centre for Children with Special Needs and provide English lessons to their students.





## Rural Volunteering

Our plans to send volunteers to teach in rural areas were extremely hampered by the epidemic in 2020. However, despite this challenge, we were still able to organise rural volunteering placements for some volunteers by working together with our partner organisations in Fujian, Zhejiang and Henan provinces.

In the summer, we cooperated with Xiamen Tongan Charity Library. Two volunteers, one from the USA and one from the UK, provided oral English classes to local migrant kids.

Over the summer, we worked together with Shixingzhe, a non-profit organisation based in Jiaxing, Zhejiang and organised volunteers to teach English to children of migrant workers working in the Lego factory there.

In the autumn semester, our volunteer went to a village school in Henan Luyi and taught English classes to left-behind children for two weeks. Our creative teaching method was welcomed by local kids and teachers.



Students



Volunteer Teachers



Lessons



Teaching Sites



## Videolink

In 2020, our Videolink Program expanded significantly to benefit more students in the rural areas. Our program partners continue to value the benefits of online classes to improve their students' oral English abilities. We scaled up to 15 schools, covering Anhui, Fujian, Henan, Hubei, Jiangxi and Yunnan.

In line with expanding our program, we continuously review and update our teaching materials to ensure they stay relevant and practical. Our Curriculum Development Manager developed new lesson PPTs for complete beginners as well as a new story-reading format. Next year, we plan to add more exercise and audio materials for students to review after class, making our teaching materials even more holistic and comprehensive.

We continued to teach Chi Heng Foundation's students in two primary schools in Hubei and one primary school in Henan. We kick-started the second program at two rural primary schools in Jiangxi, and collaborated with Shanghai Shen'ai Social Work Development Centre and Shanghai Ruijia Community Service Organisation to deliver Videolink English classes in Lincang and Pu'er in Yunnan. We revisited schools in small towns and rural areas in Jiangxi, and hope to start programs in another two primary schools there next year.

A special thank you to Bloomberg for supporting this program both through donations and through staff volunteering to teach our students in Yunnan, Henan, and Jiangxi.



Students



Volunteer Teachers



Lessons



Teaching Sites



## Home Classroom

At the height of the fight against the epidemic in China, the Stepping Stones team started to think about what role we could play in the response.

After two weeks of intensive work, Stepping Stones launched its Home Classroom (HCR) English Program towards the end of February 2020. Children, with the support of parents at home, can log into the online platform via a smartphone or tablet to attend the English lessons taught by volunteer teachers. We recruited and trained 71 young volunteers to help to coordinate the class groups and initiate the conference call.

We tailored our Videolink PPTs, produced preview videos and after-class worksheets for teaching grades 2-5. Altogether, 198 volunteers received online training from Stepping Stones covering our lesson plans, online platform, teaching context and teaching techniques before they started teaching.

To ensure the good quality of the teaching, we maintained a small class size, with one volunteer to four to six students. Volunteers taught two classes per week, 30 minutes per class. Although there is only one lesson for each child, students are able to sustain their interaction with the volunteers by completing the worksheets and getting comments from the volunteers in a group chat.

Up to January 2021, 1,796 students participated in the program and volunteers taught 3,957 lessons. Through visiting the students' teachers and parents, together with online feedback from volunteers and children, we received their positive comments, and the majority wish to continue participating in the course. We will open more HCR classes in the Spring of 2021, enabling more children to practise oral English at home and boosting their interest in learning English.



Students



Volunteer Teachers



Lessons



## Curriculum Development

The sudden decrease in our offline programs in 2020 presented a golden opportunity for us to focus on curriculum development work.

We converted 120 Videolink lesson PPTs to accommodate our Home Classroom (HCR) Program. We mobilized our volunteers to develop a homework pack for HCR, which includes a homework sheet and a video clip for each lesson. Thank you to volunteers Simon Harrold and Jessie Sullivan for recording the video clips. We received very positive feedback on these additional learning materials from parents and students, and we plan to feed these materials back into our older programs.

When we started our Videolink Program at two new village primary schools in Jiangxi province, we saw a need for English classes for Grade 2 students to be better prepared when formal English study begins in Grade 3. Thus, we created a set of ten beginner lesson PPTs to support the students. These lesson plans were also very well-received by higher grades of students in the remote parts of Yunnan province. The interactive features of the PPTs enabled better communication between volunteers and students.

For some time, we have wanted to refresh the lesson plans for our Shanghai English Teaching (SET) Program, and this year provided us with the opportunity we needed to do this. We piloted seven new Grade 5 lesson PPTs at a community centre. From the positive result of the classes and the feedback from the volunteers, we realised that our volunteers, many of whom have little experience of English teaching, find it easier to teach with PPTs than a detailed paper-based lesson plan, and we plan to continue to adapt the SET lesson plans into PPT format over the coming year.



## Volunteer Training

Throughout the whole year of 2020, we continued with our online volunteer trainings for our online programs. We have conducted 20 volunteer trainings and 198 individual demo classes for volunteer teachers in the HCR Program, and 4 volunteer trainings and 71 individual demo classes for volunteer teachers in the Videolink Program.

While the pandemic was contained in China in the second half of

Reading English stories has proven to be a very natural and effective way to learn English, and many commercial companies in big cities have adopted the method of TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading Stories) in their programs. In 2020, we experimented for the first time with English story reading lessons offline and online. We created 21 story reading lesson PPTs for our summer SET and HCR Programs. In the fall semester, we create another nine story-reading lesson PPTs for our Videolink Program in Anhui Guangde. The reading lessons became a very good addition to our regular English class offerings.

Thank you to our long-term volunteer Ginger de Ridder, who donated many English story books in digital format, and Jessie Sullivan, who produced the lesson plans.

In 2021, we will continue to create beginners' Videolink PPTs in order to have a complete set of 24 lesson PPTs for the whole school year.

In 2020, we received a lot of requests from our partner schools and community centres to open classes for teenage students to practise their oral English. So, in 2021, we plan to develop an Online English Corner package for our older beneficiaries. The package will consist of 20 lesson PPTs, 10 for low level and 10 for high, to be used in the HCR format. These new lessons are planned to be piloted in the spring semester of 2021, and officially rolled out in the second half of the year.

Another big project for 2021 is the SET Grade 1 syllabus revamp project. Based on the current syllabus and the analysis of textbooks and the evolving learning needs of our beneficiaries in Shanghai, we plan to deliver 24 new lesson packages by the end of the year. Thank you to Shanghai Charity Foundation for sponsoring this work.

the year, we managed to offer two offline volunteer trainings in our office for the autumn SET Program. As a precautionary measure to another wave of the pandemic, we piloted a volunteer training video for the Story Reading Program.

Our training and curriculum development team members helped to cover online and offline classes throughout the year.



# English Teacher Training



Our Shanghai Teacher Training Program was postponed to Spring 2021 due to Covid. Luckily, we were able to proceed with our plan to provide online training to teachers in Jiangxi.



Teachers Trained



Trainers



Teachers' English  
Corners



Volunteer Teachers



Training Sessions

## Videolink Teacher Training

A total of 20 teachers from schools located in Xin'gan County participated in our online teacher training throughout the year, impacting the English education of about 2,000 children.

The program included eight training sessions focusing, for example, on lesson planning, how to improve students' fluency/reading/writing skills, how to teach grammar in a more interactive way, and on how to use games and songs to increase engagement and student excitement while learning English. After each session, the trainees were asked to send a short video of themselves using the techniques discussed in the session. Our trainers were then able to give them constructive feedback. Trainees also attended five online English corners delivered by our experienced volunteers to help them to improve their spoken English confidence and ability.

Despite the travel restrictions, some of our trainers were also able to visit Xin'gan County at the end of the year to observe some trainees in the classroom and provide additional feedback.

The trainees reported that the training had been very helpful in expanding their teaching methods with new ideas on how to engage and motivate their students, thus creating more opportunities for them to practice and improve their English.

# Stepping Up



Teachers



Teaching  
Sites



Lessons



Volunteers



Students

Digital literacy is basic for survival in the modern world. Unfortunately, many rural and migrant Chinese children have no computers at home or school, and no computer lessons, so their digital literacy skills are very poor. This contributes to a low rate of high school or vocational school enrollment, and the risk of exploitation, abuse and disadvantage when they enter the workplace from junior middle school.

By providing the schools with the necessary hardware, along with a carefully planned curriculum and properly trained teachers and volunteers, our “Stepping Up” Program helps children develop the life skills and digital literacy skills they need to meet the challenges of a tech-focused future.

In 2020, we provided regular computer/life skills lessons to 850 students at 9 teaching sites in Shanghai, Zhejiang and Jiangsu, and through the internet. We would also like to extend our thanks to a growing number of local and international partners - in particular Deloitte, Gengyuan Education, Teensgeeker and EP Academy for contributing to the program in different ways.

One of our major achievements in 2020 is to have developed more small-class community teaching activities with new partners. We started to provide STEAM programming courses to migrant children at Jiuqian Volunteer Centre. Thank you for the curriculum and professional teacher training provided by Gengyuan Education. We also started to provide 17-22 year-old vocational trainees with self-growth awareness, design thinking and career planning training courses. The students used the computer skills alongside the professional qualifications they gained to find the most suitable job for them and start a new chapter in their lives.

This year, because of Covid-19, we also launched online courses. We carefully planned and designed a course named “Travel all over the world with just a mobile phone” to help students in remote areas to make better use of their spare time and learn new things through a smart phone. Thank you to Teensgeeker for the online programming teaching platform, which provides more in-depth help for students, whether it is offline teaching in small classes, or our online courses.

In 2020, we mobilised more than 100 regular volunteer teachers, which helped us increase the reach and impact of our program. Our volunteers included university students from Shanghai Ocean University, Sanda University Jiashan Campus, Tongji Zhejiang College, New York University (Shanghai), Fudan University and East China Normal University, and employees of Gengyuan Education.





# I Care



## Spectacles Donated

Rural and migrant Chinese children have roughly the same levels of myopia and other vision issues as urban children, but their parents rarely buy glasses or fund corrective surgery or treatment for lack of funds and medical insurance, and above all lack of understanding of the importance of correcting poor vision. Studies show that vision problems can seriously impact a child's educational success. We have witnessed a sudden improvement in the grades of children receiving glasses or eye care treatment through our I Care Program.

At the end of 2020, the 13th batch of Shanghai Young Bakers' students participated in our I Care project. Students visited Shanghai Ai'Er Eye Hospital, accompanied by SYB's Social Educator and Stepping Stones' Project Manager. The ophthalmologists ran eye tests for the students and provided eye glasses for those who are short-sighted. After that, ophthalmologists gave an interactive lesson to the students on eye health. Students benefitted a lot from the lesson and improved their understanding of vision correction as well as glasses wearing. In total, we provided 7 eye glasses for those students with vision problems.

Our I Care activities were restricted in Shanghai during the epidemic. Our aim for the coming year is to continue to provide eye care services to our beneficiaries in a time-efficient manner.

# Our Volunteer's Story

## The days I spent with the kids in Luyi, Henan

By Kathie Li

At the end of October, I came to Luyi, Henan province as a teaching volunteer to start an 18-day English Teaching Program. I've been an intern at Stepping Stones since June of this year. In August, I spent a week teaching in Jiaxing with other volunteers. The experience left a deep impression on me. So when I learned about the opportunity to volunteer in Henan, I immediately set aside two weeks of free time. I love teaching and have a lot of fun with the kids. However, before I went to teach in Henan, I was a little confused because I had never been to the countryside in China. On the rickety minibus towards the county town, I looked out of the window at the gray sky and listened to the blaring of tricyclists and thought of my favorite North China song: County Town. The thought of living alone in a completely strange environment for more than two weeks, and in charge of English classes for nearly 200 children, made me nervous.

The day after I arrived, Principal Liu picked me up and drove me to school. When we gradually moved away from the county town, the vast expanse of green wheat fields appeared in front of my eyes. I was very surprised. Green wheat brings renewed hope and vitality to the bleak winter. For more than ten days after that, Principal Liu would pick me up and drop me off every morning and evening. She was very enthusiastic to share with me what happened in the school every day, and answered all my questions about the school.

Every day when I walked onto the campus, I would be constantly greeted by children, "Hello teacher!" "Good morning!" Even when I was having lunch, kids always came up to me to say hello. The innocent smiles of the children brightened my mood every day. During recess and lunch break, many junior and senior girls liked to gather around me and chat with me. They liked nothing better than to hear me share my life in New York and Shanghai. I used to take out my phone and show them pictures of me at school. "Teacher, are there many tall buildings in Shanghai?" "Teacher, do you have good friends?" "Teacher, do you like school?" After I became more familiar with them, sometimes children would find a quiet moment to share unhappy experiences with me. Although my experience is limited, I tried to soothe them and offer them some tips. Perhaps because I spoke only English in class, my children would ask me, "Teacher, are you Chinese or a foreigner?" When they found out that I was born and raised in China just like them, they started running after me asking for my Chinese name and asking me to sign it for them. From then on, groups of children of different grades gathered around me every day and asked me to

sign autographs. It was a kind of starstruck feeling. Many children were eager to have an English name, so I made a lot of small cards, on which I wrote my favorite English names and their meaning. Getting autographs and having an English name were two of the children's favorite things.

Because the textbooks here did not match the courseware we already had, all the lesson plans and resources were made by myself every day. The teachers here used only the most traditional teaching tools - chalk and blackboard. I made my own English flashcards for the first few days. Later, I was pleasantly surprised to find that the school had multimedia equipment. This discovery made me very excited, because I could prepare a PPT by myself and share more interesting content with the children. My daily teaching was based on the practice of words, phrases and dialogues. Meanwhile, I designed a variety of small games for the whole class to participate in. When I learned that children have a strong curiosity about the outside world, I collected a lot of videos about cities, universities, careers, etc., combined with the content of our course on that day, so that children could connect what they learned in class to the real world. For example, when we were learning about "Jobs", I would prepare videos related to my career: the day of a pilot, the daily work of a doctor, the training process of a dancer, etc. I would also give the children the space to develop their imagination and ask them to write about their dreams in the future. After I handed out the post-its, the noisy classroom would suddenly quiet down and the children would begin to write down their wishes for the future in earnest on little pieces of paper.

I've found that even the simplest conversational exercises could get kids excited. In order to get more children involved, I would design various forms of exercises such as role-playing, two-person dialogue and group dialogue. They loved to get up on stage and start performing or reading. At the beginning, the students who raised their hands every time were the students with good grades. They were confident in their English, so they dared to show their skills to the whole class. I liked to walk around the classroom while teaching. I often called on some quiet students sitting in the back row and encouraged all students to participate in our activities and exercises. I gradually found that the originally more introverted and unconfident students also began to actively raise their hands. They progressed very quickly, from reading after me to reading a whole sentence on their own. It was a tenet of my teaching to involve every student with praise and smile.





Because of volunteering, I have been fortunate to meet many lovely and enthusiastic teachers. Headmaster Liu was very responsible and treated her students as if they were her own children. Her concern for children and love of education always moved me. I loved the short chats with her in the morning and evening. Many teachers, such as English Teacher Sun and Teacher Zhang, warmed my heart. Since I was not familiar with the environment, they would invite me to have dinner with them every day, and share information about the students with me. Students were lucky to have responsible, loving teachers.

On my last day of teaching, I received many cards, notes and trinkets from the children. The small gift that touched me the most was a leaf, on which was written, "Please do not forget us." The leaf was from a third-grade boy. In the morning class, he whispered

to me, "Teacher, I want to give you a gift, but I haven't decided what to give you yet." When I was in the senior class in the afternoon, I found him, quietly waiting at the door with a leaf in his hand. He was the only one waiting for me after school.

After school in the evening, the teachers and children came into the canteen to cheerful music. I had so many memorable moments in my few days here. In addition to these wonderful memories, I also learned about the living and learning conditions for rural Chinese children, such as left-behind children, single-parent families, school admission and other problems. I even learned about many interesting local customs. It was an unforgettable experience for me. I hope I could go to Luyi to be with the children again in the future.



# Fundraising

Many offline fundraising activities had to be cancelled in 2020, leading us to focus more on online platforms such as Alipay and GlobalGiving to raise funds for our activities. Alipay is mainly open to potential donors in China, while the latter is mainly for donors who are overseas.

Our fundraising campaign on Alipay was launched in December 2019 and ended in October 2020. During this time, 32,989 online donors donated. The total donation reached 50,800.89 yuan. All the donation will be used to support Stepping Stones' Rural Volunteering Programs and send more volunteers to provide oral English classes for rural and left-behind children.

This year, we also started another fundraising activity on one of the biggest crowdfunding platforms around the world – GlobalGiving (GG) – to support our Videolink and Home Classroom Programs. Besides regular donations, we also participated in the GG Accelerator and Giving Tuesday fundraising campaigns. Total donations reached more than US\$10,000.

At the end of November 2020, Stepping Stones decided to fundraise on the lianquan.org platform. After months of preparation, we finally launched our monthly donation campaign. We plan to build up a group of long-term monthly donors to support the stable and sustainable development of Stepping Stones. We will maintain a high level of transparency and responsibility to every donor and beneficiary we serve.



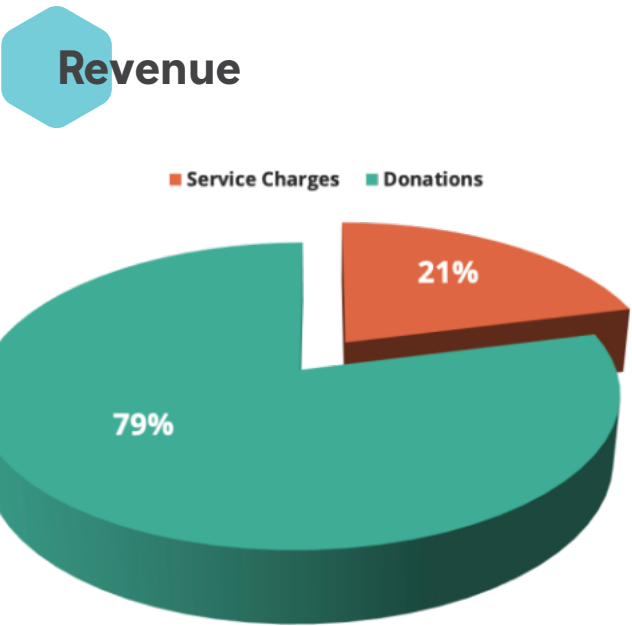
Scan QR below to become our monthly donor.

# Finance

In 2020, Stepping Stones' revenue was CNY 3,387,354.80, and expenses were CNY 2,953,722.02, making a net gain of CNY 433,632.78.

The opening balance was CNY 66,799.59 and the closing balance was CNY 489,671.15. This includes all foreign currency revenue and expenses at the exchange rate at the year end.

Stepping Stones' accounts are audited annually by an independent accountant.



Revenue	Amount (RMB)
Donations	2,667,505.32
Service Charges	718,607.00
Other Revenue	1,242.48
TOTAL	3,387,354.80

# Donations

Thank you to everyone who donated to Stepping Stones in 2020. Every donation of whatever size is always appreciated.

Donor	Amount (RMB)
Tiny Tots Education Group	640,000.00
Shanghai Soong Ching Ling Foundation	540,000.00
Stepping Stones China Limited - Hongkong	518,512.31
Anonymous	404,229.33
Wanlin Modern Logistics Co. Ltd through SUF	100,000.00
Homeslice Pizza	75,978.61
Global Giving	65,633.73
Shanghai Charity Foundation	61,999.69
Other Donors through SUF	61,480.25
Texas Instruments through SUF	51,811.40
Ms. Mona Wang through SUF	50,000.00
Consulate General of Ireland - Irish Aid	39,860.00
Shanghai Shine Social Work Development Centre	30,000.00
Kidsland through SUF	20,000.00
Shanghai Expatriate Association	8,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,667,505.32</b>

\* SUF = Shanghai United Foundation



## Expenses

Expenses	Amount (RMB)
Operational Costs	2,728,035.97
Accommodation	104,730.00
Communications	20,168.97
Housing Fund	51,423.00
Labor Cost	123,600.00
Meals	113,216.83
Medical Cost	3,088.00
Office and Training Space	643,592.80
Professional Fee	60,274.00
Salary & Bonus	1,327,514.44
Miscellaneous Costs	3,739.90
Social Security	161,060.80
Tax	1,725.51
Teaching Materials	14,574.58
Transport	99,327.14
Management Costs	216,741.26
Housing Fund	10,385.00
Salary & Bonus	156,133.64
Social Security	30,884.90
Sundries	5,833.22
Welfare	13,504.50
Fundraising Cost	8,944.79
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,953,722.02</b>
<b>Net gain</b>	<b>433,632.78</b>

# Pro Bono Supporters

A special thank you to the following companies, who generously contributed high quality professional services to us for free, thus helping us to significantly reduce our operational costs and improve the quality of our program.



Booklife, EP Academy, Teensgeeker, Gengyuan Education, Storyland for providing teaching resources.



Homeslice Pizza, who generously provided refreshments for important meetings.



Campanile Jing'an for providing venue for events.



Mingdao for providing an office management solutions platform.



O'Melveny & Myers and Roedl & Partner for professional legal advice and financial accounting services respectively.



Nisseiwell for free printing services.

# Non-Profit Partners

Stepping Stones is proud to have partnership with many well-known community organisations, as follows:



# Looking Forward

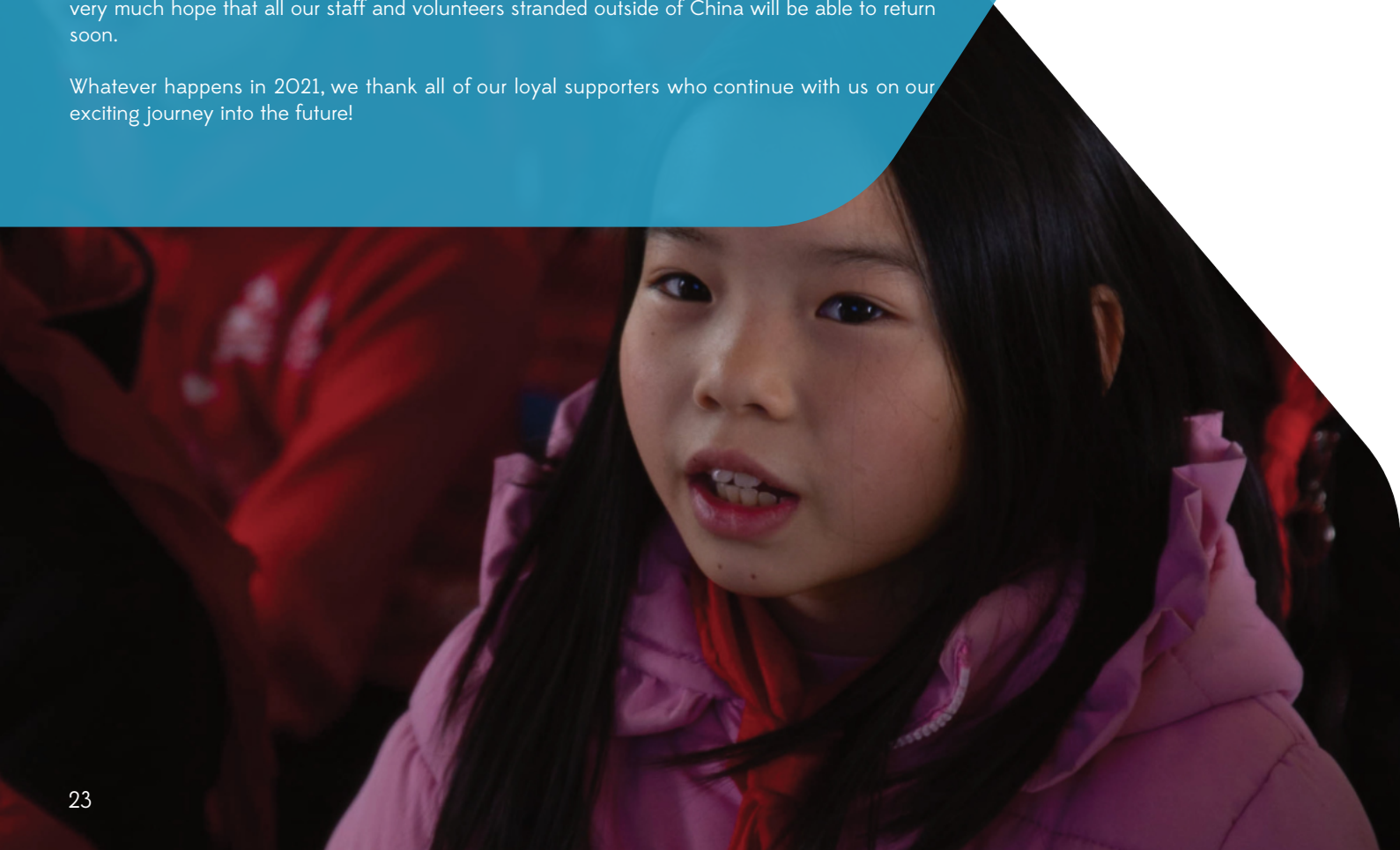
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At the beginning of 2021, there are almost as many uncertainties as at the beginning of 2020. We don't know whether the schools will open to our volunteers in the Spring semester, and we don't know when international travel restrictions might be lifted. The difference is that whatever happens, we are prepared - 2020 has taught us how to be agile and ready for anything!

Some of our staff and volunteers have still not made it back to China, and many volunteers have now settled in other countries, having had others pack up their Chinese homes for them. So, we have fewer volunteers in Shanghai than before - but more overseas volunteers, which by chance perfectly matches our strategic shift from teaching on-site in Shanghai towards teaching online to children in more deprived rural areas. Sometimes the time zone gap can even work in our favour, with volunteers overseas using their evenings to teach children during their day-times, and vice versa.

We look forward to the day that we can resume our regular programs in Shanghai schools, as well as being able to send volunteers to teach in rural areas. We are excited about resuming our Teacher Training Program in Shanghai in the Spring, and hope also to raise the necessary funds to continue our online Teacher Training Program for teachers in rural areas later in 2021. And we very much hope that all our staff and volunteers stranded outside of China will be able to return soon.

Whatever happens in 2021, we thank all of our loyal supporters who continue with us on our exciting journey into the future!





# Impact Report

Every year, we undertake impact evaluations to collect information about our programs and to assess the impacts produced by our interventions. In 2020, evaluations were conducted employing two different methodologies. First, a pre- and post-speaking assessment was conducted at four sites to evaluate students' progress in English. Second, 'pre-program' (or baseline) and 'post-program' (or follow-up) survey questionnaires were distributed to a sample of our beneficiaries, asking a variety of questions to assess, for example, students' confidence and interest in English and other subjects, or teachers' perceptions of the improvement in their teaching skills. Most of the respondents took part in our Home Classroom Program, which was launched in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## English Programs

We have been running English Teaching and Teacher Training Programs in China for more than 15 years, serving thousands of children every week and providing trainings to dozens of their teachers. Our main objectives are to improve students' motivation and confidence in English, which are two key dimensions of learning a second language.

Based on data gathered during 2020, the figures below outline the impact of our program on a sample of 337 students - all of whom were attending our program in a community centre, a rural school or through the internet - by comparing their respective attitude and confidence towards English learning before and after our interventions, as well as with their confidence and attitude towards other subjects and school in general.

1

## Impacting students' attitudes towards English

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As was the case in previous years, the results of our evaluation indicate that, by the end of the program, the percentage of students finding English 'easy' rose more than the percentage of them finding Chinese or mathematics 'easy' (Figure below). A noteworthy comparison is between the number of students finding English and mathematics 'easy'. The numbers for English rose by 9.35% (from 66.67% to 72.90%) while the numbers for mathematics rose by 3.74% (from 66.67% to 69.16%).

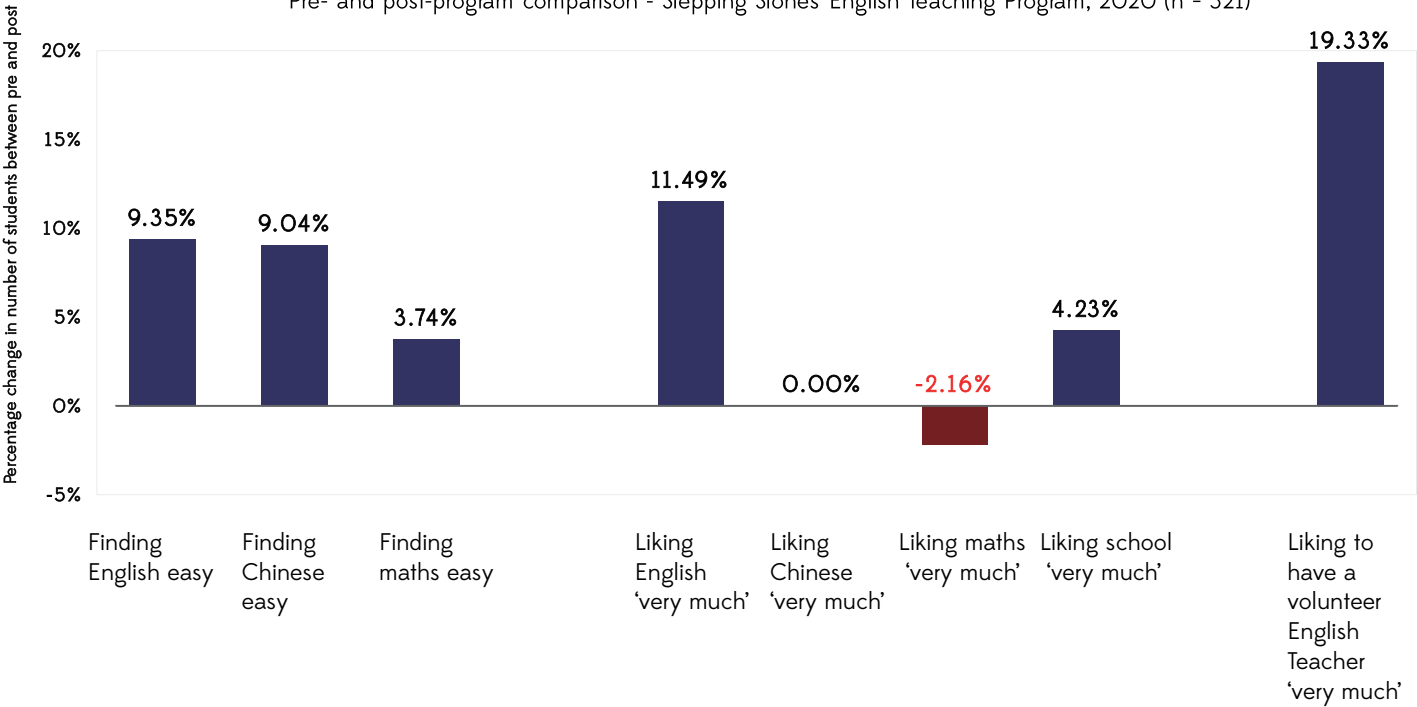
These perceptions towards core subjects are also reflected in the students' tendency to like these subjects, our program, and school in general. As can be seen from the Figure below, the proportions of students reporting liking English 'very much' and liking our volunteer teachers "very much" increased by 11.49% (from 46.25% to 51.56%) and 19.33% (from 55.56% to 66.30%) respectively in the post-survey, compared with a decrease of 2.16% (from 43.30% to 42.37%) in the number of students liking maths 'very much', and no change in the number of students liking Chinese very much (38.13%).



These results are consistent with the findings of previous years' impact evaluations. They suggest that a majority of students who join our program become more motivated and interested in English as time passes, despite on average a lower increase - or even a decrease - in motivation in school and other core subjects.

The relative changes in students' difficulties and interest in English and other subjects

Pre- and post-program comparison - Stepping Stones' English Teaching Program, 2020 (n = 321)



## 2

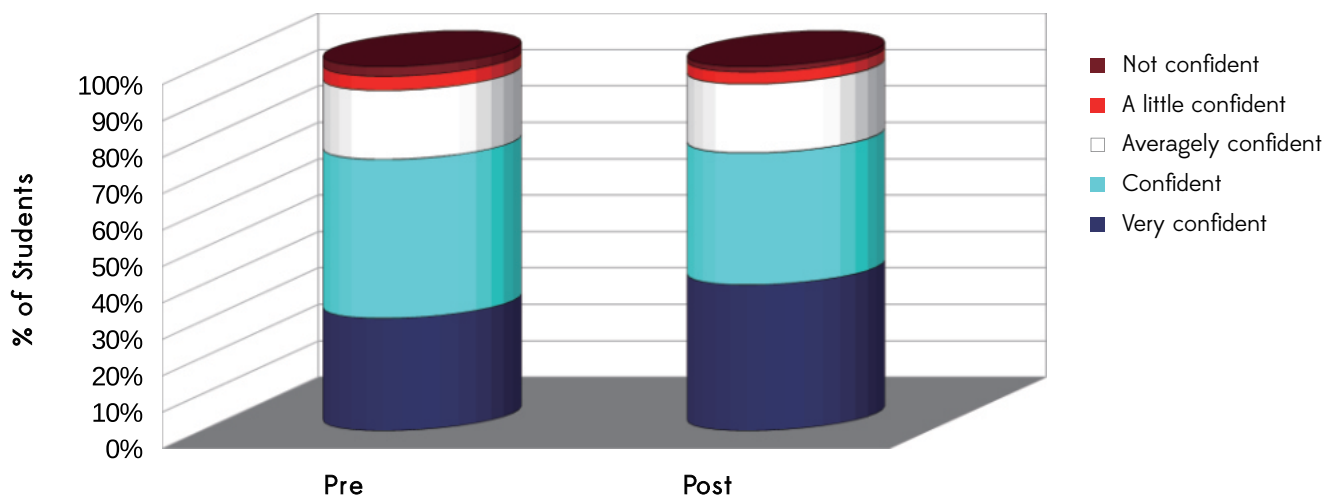
# Enhancing students' confidence to speak English

Our curriculum is designed to place emphasis upon teaching English through speaking and listening activities. Our volunteers and teachers are trained to provide and develop fun and interactive oral English lessons, which motivate and engage students by using only English in the (virtual) classroom. To assess the impact of our program on students' confidence in speaking English, we asked them to self-evaluate their confidence to use English in the classroom before and after our interventions, which is outlined by the Figure below.

The results show a significant rise between the baseline and the follow-up surveys in the number of students feeling 'very confident' to use English in class (29.81% increase, from 30.86% to 40.06%). While these results are consistent with our objectives, they also imply that in terms of speaking confidence, the students who have benefited the most from our program are probably those who were already feeling confident at the beginning of the program. Through our interventions, many of them appear to have reinforced and enhanced their confidence to speak English. We therefore need to place more emphasis on improving the confidence of the weaker students in the class.

## Students' confidence to speak English in class

Pre- and post-program comparison- Stepping Stones' English Teaching Program, 2020 (n = 337)



### 3

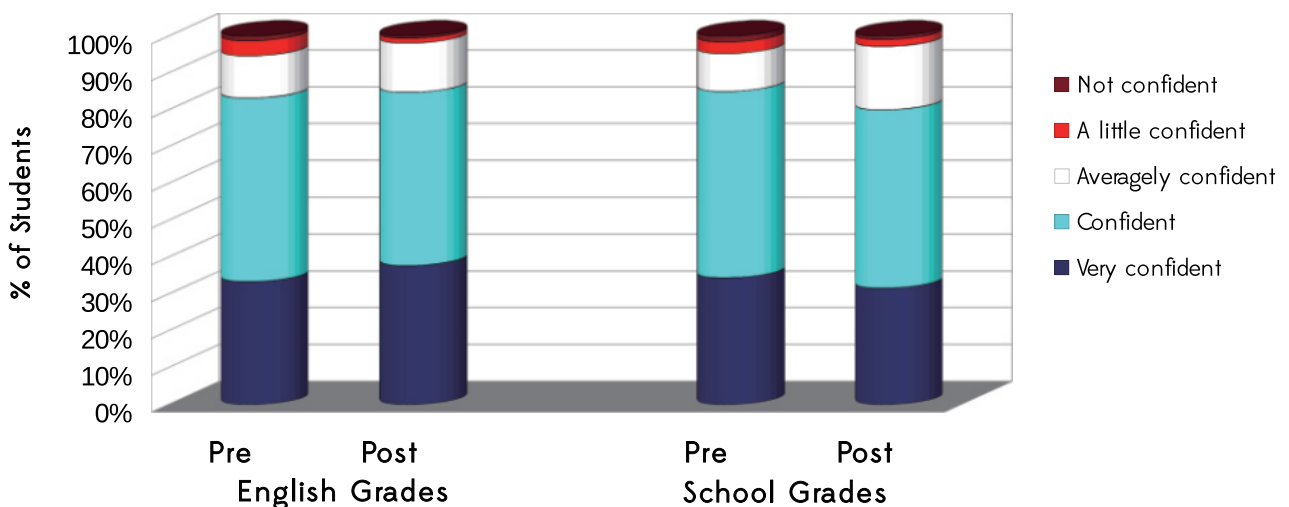
## Building students' confidence to improve test scores

While our lessons are designed to motivate students and enhance their interest and confidence in English, one of our most important underlying objectives is to better prepare them for their key English examinations, which will determine their access to higher education in the short-term and better employment opportunities in the long-term.

As can be seen from the Figure below, the percentage of students feeling 'very confident' to improve English grades increased by 13.08% (from 33.34% to 37.70%), while the percentage of students feeling 'very confident' to improve school grades in general decreased by 6.18% (from 34.38% to 31.56%). This increase suggests that students under our program become more confident about their English exams and subsequently may be more inclined to exert effort in studying and preparing for them, which can arguably be translated into an actual improvement in their test scores.

### Students' confidence to improve English & school grades

Pre- and post-program comparison- Stepping Stones' English Teaching Program, 2020 (n = 321)



## 4

## Acquiring English speaking skills

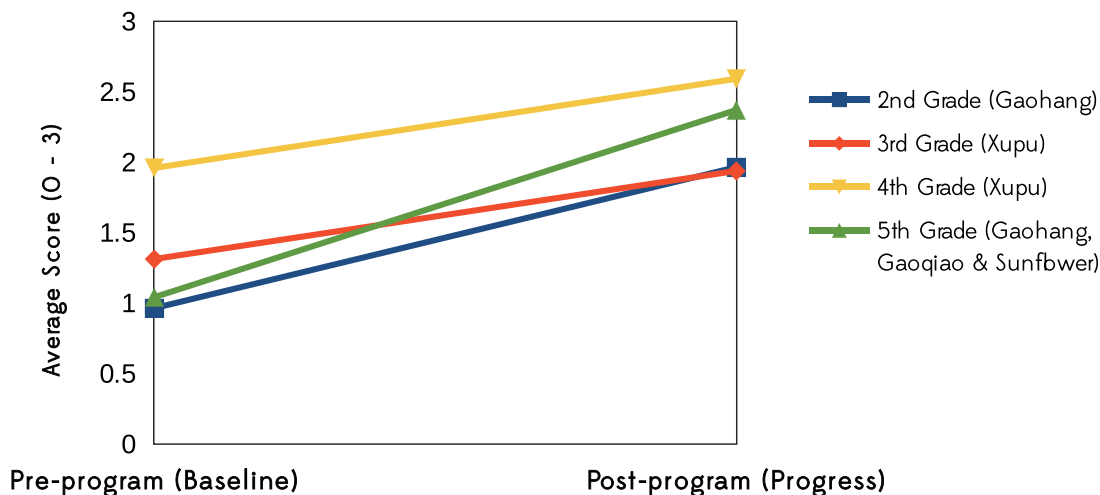
For the second year, we have conducted a pre- and post-speaking assessment to evaluate students' progress in English over the course of one semester (Fall 2020). The assessment consisted of 7 or 8 short questions asked at both "pre-test" and "post-test". The questions were based directly on our curriculum.

The assessment was conducted orally by Stepping Stones' trainers at four sites: Xupu, Gaoqiao, Gaochang and Sunflower. 37 students took part in the pre- and post-tests and they were scored for each question on a scale from 0 to 3, where 3 represents a complete oral proficiency.

As can be seen from the figure below, the students' average score for each grade has risen between the baseline (pre) and the follow-up (post) speaking assessments. The most significant increase was achieved by grade 5 students. Their average score increased from 1.04 to 2.37. As was the case in 2019, the assessment suggests that our 2020 students acquired knowledge and made progress in English.

### Students' English speaking assessment - Average score per grade

Pre- and post-program comparison - Stepping Stones' English Teaching Program, Fall 2020 (n = 37)



5

# Improving English teachers' confidence and ability

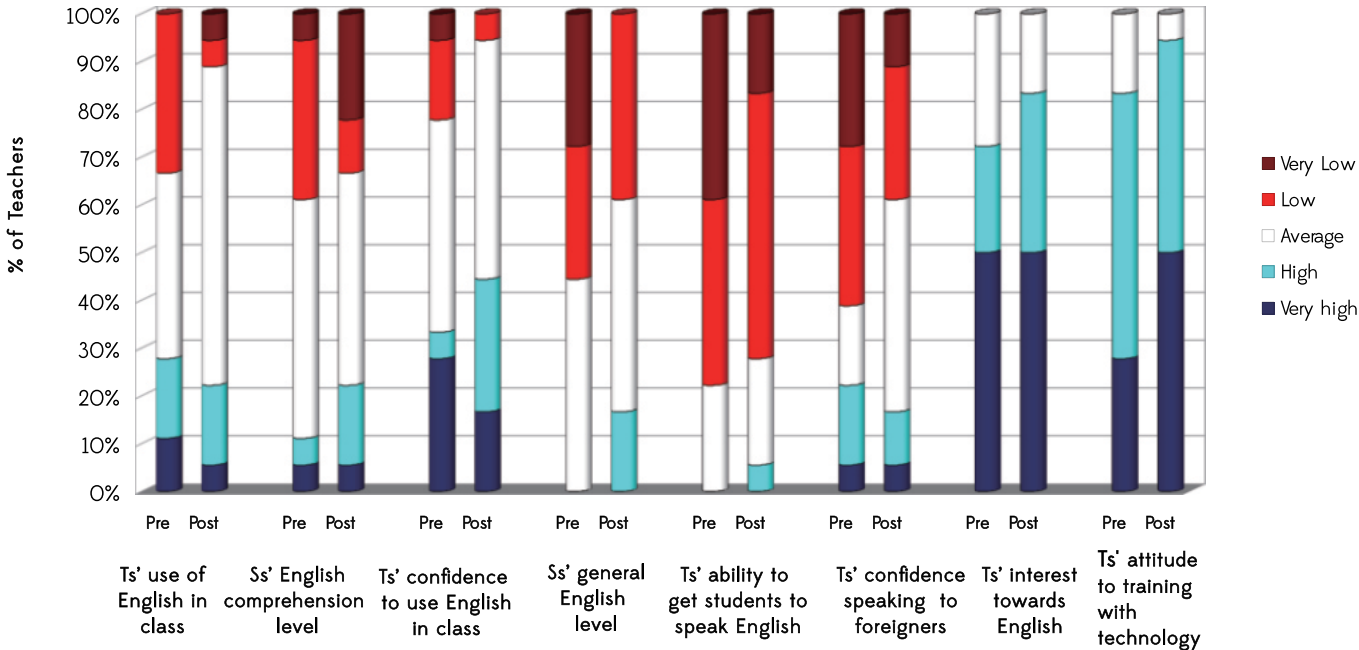
Our Teacher Training Program aims to improve the quality of English education at migrant schools and schools located in remote areas of China by providing professional training and follow-up support to their teachers. In 2020, 20 teachers benefited from this program through the internet.

As can be seen from the Figure below, a variety of questions were asked to 18 trainees to assess the impact of the program on their confidence and ability to teach English. While the results suggest that many teachers (Ts) still struggle to use a lot of English in the classroom, they also indicate that by the end of the program, 21.42% more teachers felt confident to speak English in class and 25% more teachers felt able to get their students (Ss) to speak English in class. These increases highlight one of the many important goals of our Teacher Training Program, which is to help teachers provide an enriched English learning environment for their students and to create more opportunities for them to learn, practice and improve their English.

Another highlight of the impact evaluation is the proportion of teachers reporting an increase in their students' English level at the end of the program. The number of teachers who thought their students' comprehension and general English levels were "average, high or very high" increased by 9.09% and 37.5% respectively.

## Teachers' Self-Assessment of their Language Proficiency, Teaching Skills and their Students' English Abilities

Pre and post-program comparison - Teacher Training Program, 2020 (n = 18)



# Digital Literacy (Stepping Up)

The key objectives of our Digital Literacy Program are to improve students' digital literacy and life skills, and to increase their self-esteem, critical thinking and confidence in order to optimize their access to appropriate further education and to better work opportunities in the future.

To assess the value and impact of our program on students' confidence and attitude towards computers and towards employment prospects in adulthood, evaluations were conducted at three program sites in 2020, distributing survey questionnaires to a total of 52 beneficiaries.

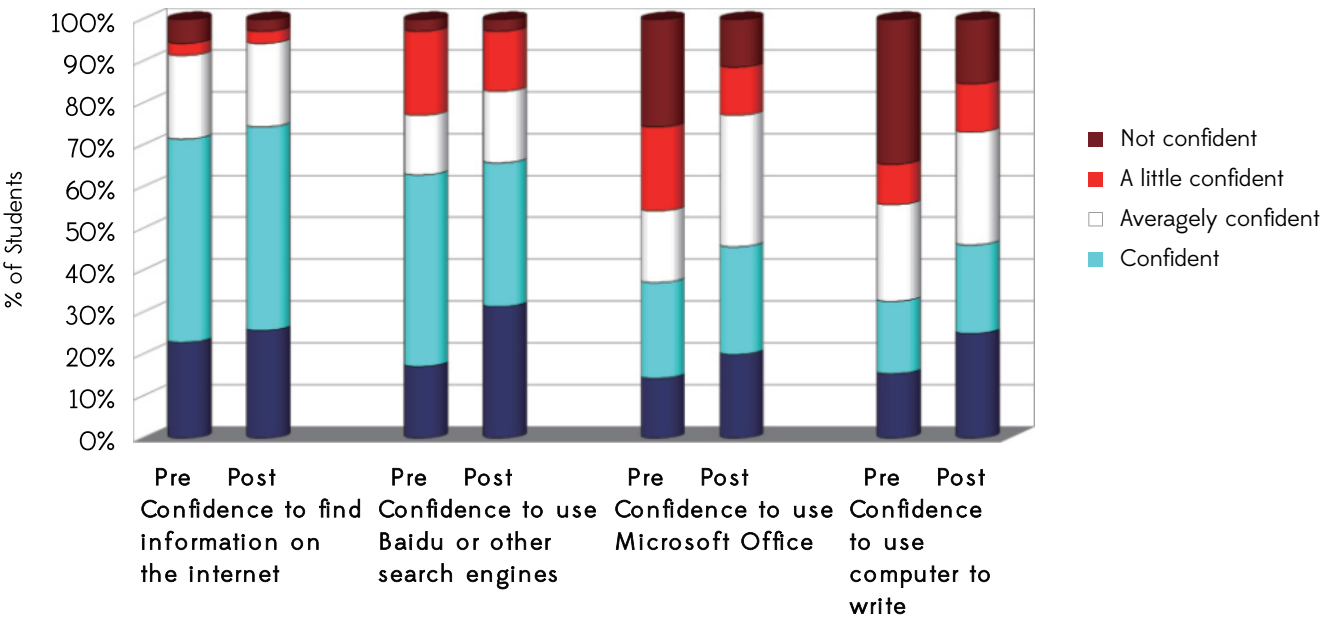
## 1

### Developing students' confidence and proficiency in computers

One of the ways that we strive to help students become more proficient, efficient and confident with computers is through project-based activities using Microsoft Office and internet search engines. The Figure below compares the baseline and follow-up results of four questions concerning students' confidence in using computers. Consistent with findings from previous years, the results indicate a significant rise between the pre-survey and the post-survey in the number of students feeling 'confident' in finding information on the Internet (4% increase), using Baidu or other search engines (4.55% increase), using computer to write (41.18% increase) and using Microsoft Office (23.08% increase). At the same time, more students reported liking computers classes in the post-survey (6.98% increase, from 82.69% to 88.46%). These increases highlight one of the many important goals of the program, which is to become more comfortable with using computers to gather information, solve problems, and communicate knowledge.

#### Students' confidence to use computers

Pre and post-program comparison - Stepping Up Program, 2020 (n = 52)



## 2

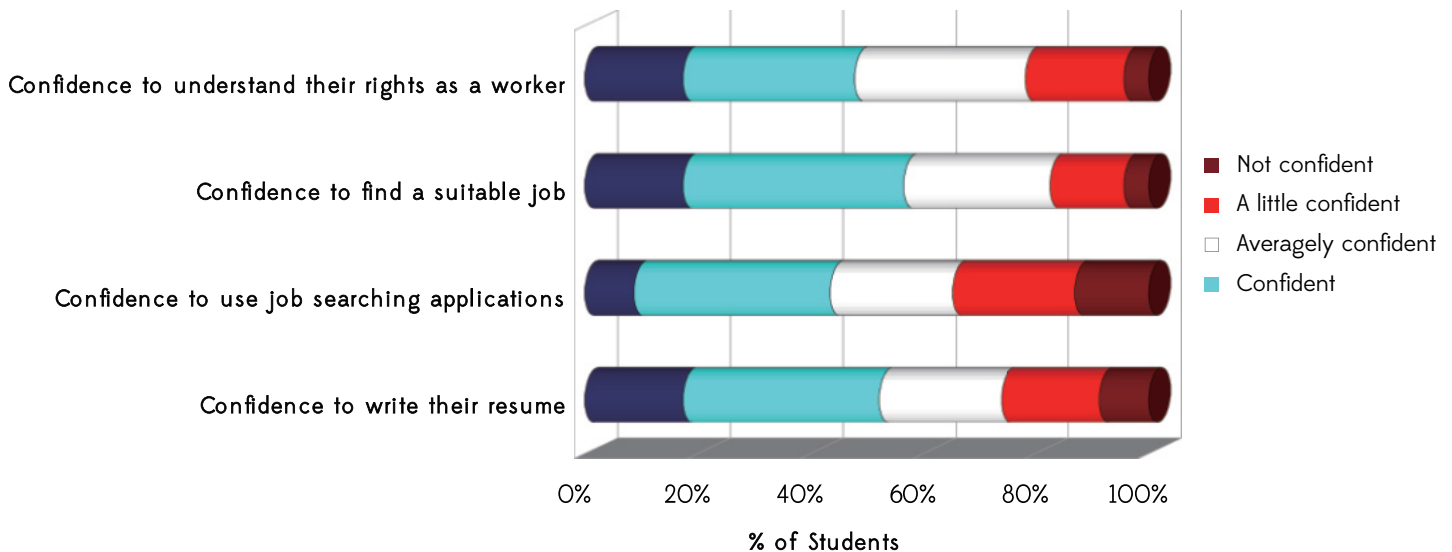
## Enhancing students' knowledge and confidence in job searching

Launched in fall 2020 to optimize vulnerable youths' access to appropriate further education and to better work opportunities in the future, our career readiness training shows encouraging results. By the end of the program, most students from our first cohort - which includes 29 students from a vocational school in Shanghai - reported feeling at least 'averagely' confident in some of the most important aspects of job searching (Figure below). A significant proportion of them reported feeling confident to write their resume using Canva (73.91%), to use job searching applications such as 51job and BOSS 直聘 (65.22%) and to ultimately find a suitable job (82.61%).

The figure below also outlines that a majority of students (78.26%) felt confident to understand their rights as a worker by the end of the program. This result is line with our objective to reduce their vulnerability to exploitation in adulthood.

### Students' confidence in job searching and to understand labour rights

Post-program self-assessment - Stepping Up Program, 2020 (n = 23)



Considering the educational challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are encouraged by the results of our 2020 impact evaluations. In many ways, they are consistent with results from previous years' evaluations, suggesting that our interventions continued in 2020 to have a positive impact on our beneficiaries' motivation, confidence and skills, and contribute to our mission to improve the education of disadvantaged communities in China.

