

2015

STEPPING STONES

ANNUAL REPORT



- MISSION -

TO IMPROVE
THE EDUCATION
AND GENERAL
WELFARE OF
DISADVANTAGED
CHILDREN
IN CHINA.



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INTRODUCTION

to Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones was founded in October 2006 by long-term Shanghai expatriate Corinne Hua in response to requests from principals of local migrant schools, which struggled to provide a reasonable standard of English teaching to their students. English is one of the three core subjects in the Chinese school curriculum, and the one that poses most challenges to rural and migrant children. English level is therefore the biggest differentiator between urban and rural Chinese children, and this above all perpetuates the gap in educational and employment opportunities.

Shanghai benefits from a large expatriate and local English-speaking community, many of whom are eager for high-impact volunteering opportunities. Stepping Stones was founded to match this rich resource to a real need in the community.

Stepping Stones is committed to promoting responsible, high-impact volunteerism among China's citizens and expatriates, from all walks of life.

Stepping Stones is Shanghai's

first and only city-wide voluntary English teaching program. It currently recruits, trains, coordinates, and supports hundreds of volunteers to teach thousands of students in more than 30 migrant schools and community centres in Shanghai and Zhejiang province.

Stepping Stones' vision is equal access to a quality education and general welfare for all children in China.

Stepping Stones teaches English to disadvantaged students to help them gain confidence in English, in order to help them pass their key examinations and access a brighter future. The classroom setting is a forum where people from all different parts of society can get to know each other better, actively breaking down prejudices.

Over the years, Stepping Stones has extended its English programs to other beneficiaries, including disadvantaged youth and homeless people in Shanghai and left-behind children in rural China, and has expanded its services to address other needs, for example providing eye care services to migrant children (I Care Project).

As well as organising volunteering programs for individuals, Stepping Stones works with a wide range of volunteering groups, including high school students, university students and companies.

Objectives

- To increase students' confidence and self-esteem;
- To optimise students' access to better quality education and work opportunities in the future;
- To connect communities to promote inter-cultural understanding;
- To promote responsible and high impact volunteering.

Legal Status

In December 2013, Stepping Stones was officially registered in Minhang, Shanghai as non-profit 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.





STAFF TEAM

2015

Stepping Stones' staff team was led by Executive Director and Founder Corinne Hua. Morgan Banaszek continued to manage Stepping Stones' core Classroom Teaching Program, and was promoted to Manager mid-year. Stepping Stones volunteer Anupama Sharma took over the Training Manager role from Oliver Pointer in January. At the same time, Nicki Trinh came on board as Program Manager and took over the running of the After School Program from Su Han, who left for studies overseas.

Sherry Jia joined our growing team in August 2015 to provide maternity cover for Gloria Han, with particular responsibility for partner communications.

Sebastien Carrier took on a new role as Program Director, overseeing the I Care and Rural Tours Programs and Stepping Stones' Corporate Events, supported by Projects Manager Gloria Han. Sebastien also manages Stepping Stones' monitoring & evaluation work.

We were delighted that Wang Cui returned to Stepping Stones after an extended maternity leave to take over from Rose Xu as Fundraising and Communications Manager.

Eva Hua continued to keep the office running smoothly as Stepping Stones' Finance & HR specialist.



VOLUNTEERS & BENEFICIARIES

2015

In 2015, across all Stepping Stones' teaching programs (including regular teaching programs, Short- and Long-term volunteer placements, corporate events, and rural tours), **965** volunteer teachers donated a total of **6,254** English lessons (1 lesson ~ 40 minutes), increased from **5,587** lessons in 2014. Thanks to all our dedicated volunteers, around **16,807** migrant or left-behind children benefited from Stepping Stones' teaching activities in 2015!

In addition, **6,062** migrant children benefited from Stepping Stones' I Care Project in 2015. They were given eye examinations, an interactive class on eye care delivered by **115** trained volunteers and free treatment as required. Through this project **1,005** children received a pair of spectacles!

Volunteers also helped us with such diverse activities as training, curriculum development, marketing, I.T., accounting, fundraising and photography.

On behalf of China's migrant community, Stepping Stones sincerely thanks all of our volunteers, without whom our work would not be possible.

Number of Beneficiaries

16,807 Children (English Teaching Programs)

6,062 Children (I Care Project)

Number of Volunteers

965 Volunteers (English Teaching Programs)

115 Volunteers (I Care Project)

Number of Lessons Taught by Stepping Stones

6,254 English Lessons

118 Eye Care Lessons

Number of Children Receiving Spectacles

1,005 Children





1. WEEKLY ENGLISH TEACHING PROGRAM

Throughout Spring and Autumn semesters 2015, Stepping Stones had around 350 volunteers teaching regularly to more than 5,000 migrant students in the following schools and community centres (teaching a total of 4,741 English lessons in the year):

Classroom Teaching Program (CTP)

Since 2006, teaching oral English lessons to migrant children in a traditional classroom setting has been Stepping Stones' core program. Our original CTP continued at Huabo Lixing Hang School (both the Jiwang and Huacao campuses), Huahong School, Zhenxing School, Yongmei School and Sunflower Centre (Minhang district); New Citizen Life Centre Guijing Village, Tangsi School and Wanliao School (Pudong district); Shanghai Young Bakers (Putuo district), Jiuqian Community Centre, Shanhai School and Yangdong School (Baoshan district); and Renewal Centre (Zhabei district).

Our program at Dantu Lu School (Hongkou district), Wenbo School (Minhang district), New Citizen Life Centre Shuanglin Kindergarten (Pudong district) and East Red School (Qingpu district) came to an end, but we launched six new programs in Shanghai, at four schools: Jinding School (Putuo district), Tangshan Road School (Hongkou district) and Xujing School (Qingpu district), one new community centre in Jinhang (Pudong district) as well as teaching English to university students from Educating Girls of Rural China (EGRC).

Meanwhile, thanks to sponsorship from Australian telecoms company Optus and Idgroup's Okworld Foundation, we have been able to expand our Classroom Teaching Program outside of Shanghai for the first time, into two migrant schools located in Zhejiang province (Jiashan county). Stepping Stones' volunteers taught English in these schools to more than 740 students every week.



After School Tuition Program (ASP)

Launched in 2012, the ASP continued to thrive as around 147 volunteers, mostly high school students, joined to provide small group tuition to around 170 migrant children on weekends. In total, our volunteers gave 1,706 English tuitions throughout the year 2015.

We continued to teach at Xupu Village community centre (Minhang district), Lotus NGO Centre (Changning district) and New Citizen Life Centre (Hongkou district), while expanding our program to teach at Xinqiao Centre (Songjiang district), Zhixue Centre (Hongkou district) and Xujing School (Qingpu district).



2. SUMMER PROGRAM

During the summer, 94 dedicated Stepping Stones volunteers braved the heat and rain to deliver 425 free English classes to 401 students in 13 community centres in different parts of Shanghai.



3. VIDEOLINK ENGLISH TEACHING PROGRAM

Stepping Stones is proud to have continued to partner with Chiheng Foundation in 2015 to operate a videolink teaching program at 2 different locations in rural China - Zhumadian (Henan) and Lincang (Yunnan). This program reached more than 40 children and created an environment where volunteer teachers supported the education of disadvantaged children through online teaching (teaching a total of 28 English lessons during the year).

4. RURAL VOLUNTEERING TOURS

In 2015, Stepping Stones organised 5 rural tours, taking 147 volunteers to teach 617 lessons to local children in rural China. Our rural tours were in partnership with rural schools in Anhui, Henan and Jiangsu provinces.

This year we organised three tours specifically for high school volunteers, taking groups of students from Shanghai United International School - Gubei campus and Christian Heritage Academy (Oklahoma, USA) to teach in Anhui province, and from Shanghai Singapore International School to teach in Jiangsu province.





5. SHORT- AND LONG-TERM VOLUNTEER PLACEMENTS

In 2015, Stepping Stones arranged five Short- and Long-term volunteer placements, up four programs from the previous year. There were four individual volunteers and one group of volunteers who taught English at four different locations around China. Two volunteers went to Zhoukou county in Henan province, one group of volunteers taught in Minhang and Songjiang districts in Shanghai, another volunteer taught in Minhang district and one volunteer taught in Gansu province. Combined a total of 236 40-minute lessons were conducted to more than 1970 students.

The ages of the students were mixed, ranging from grade one to university students. We were pleased to see a great improvement in the student's interest in learning and speaking English during each of these volunteer's placements.

Volunteers benefited from the experiences as well. One of the volunteers described her experience as follows:

"I have had a truly inspiring four days. [...] It has made me think a lot about the 'bare bones' of my teaching practice. [...] The children and staff were so enthusiastic and welcoming it was a privilege to be a part of their lives for a short while. It has also made me determined to properly learn Chinese!"



6. TRAINING AND CURRICULUM

In 2015, Stepping Stones continued to supplement its training resources, producing a model class video and a number of self help videos and training programs. These helped volunteers to understand the classroom environment, and equipped them with simple techniques to teach the students in a friendly environment. We also created a bank of tips for our volunteers, which are accessible through our website and news-letter.

Stepping Stones launched a pilot teachers training program for one of our partner schools. This three day program was well received by the teachers and helped them in creating a English speaking environment in their classrooms. This was followed by a weekly English corner for teachers at two partner schools.

We plan to enhance our teachers training coverage for more schools in the next year after the rousing response from the teachers.

We also created standardised teaching aids and materials for our after school program for supporting high school volunteers, keeping in mind the Shanghai school curriculum and our teaching goals.

Stepping Stones' Training Program has been sponsored by United Way Worldwide, through the generosity of Target Foundation, since 2012. We are grateful to Target Foundation for continuing to fund this important aspect of our work.



7. I CARE PROJECT

The objective of Stepping Stones' I Care Project is to improve the vision of disadvantaged children in China in order to increase their chance of educational success, through the free provision of essential eye care equipment and services.

In 2015, with the support of Essilor Vision Foundation, the Australian Chamber of Commerce, Paper Stone Scissors, Wing Hang Bank and many generous individual donors, we have secured sufficient funds to double the scale of our I Care Project, arranging eyesight screening for 6,062 students in five migrant schools in Shanghai. Thanks to our sponsors, the number of children receiving free spectacles rose significantly, from 565 in 2014 to 1,005 in 2015!



CORPORATE & SCHOOL PROJECTS

2015

In 2015, Stepping Stones took 406 volunteers from various corporate and school groups to visit migrant schools and community centres in Shanghai. These volunteers taught 230 English lessons and 118 lessons on eye care to migrant students and engaged in inter-cultural exchange and learning activities. Visitors came from New York University, Shanghai Livingston American School, East China Normal University, Concordia University Irvine, University of Notre Dame, Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Duke University, Yale Club of Shanghai, IBR Groningen, Bloomberg, Target Kurt Salmon, Wing Hang Bank and AustCham Shanghai.

A Shared Learning Experience for New York University and Migrant Students!

On January 15th, 17 students from New York University Abu Dhabi spent a busy afternoon at one of Stepping Stones' partner migrant schools, as part of their one-month exchange program in China. The NYU students engaged in roundtable conversations with migrant students in Grade 4 to better understand their daily lives.

To end to an eventful day, everyone played games including Pictionary, Charades and "Guess Who".

An educational experience for Shanghai Livingston American School students

On April 9th, 90 high school students from Shanghai Livingston American School spent an eventful day at one of Stepping Stones' partner migrant schools. Before interacting with the children, all students were trained by Stepping Stones' staff. The students from Livingston American School then played English games with the children in small groups. The students from both schools enjoyed learning about each other through an interactive and fun approach.



Bloomberg Office Visit

Stepping Stones has been working with Bloomberg for years. This year, we brought 17 primary students to visit Bloomberg's office in downtown Shanghai and participated in a series of activities. The children made posters based on items found in the office, and presented their artwork in English at the end. Stepping Stones and Bloomberg staff were very glad to see the students communicating confidently in English.



Kurt Salmon Worldwide Service Day

On August 28, as part of Kurt Salmon's Worldwide Service Day, 26 employees from Kurt Salmon volunteered at Xinqiao community centre in Songjiang district. After preparing their lessons in the morning, the volunteers taught English to 70 students from grade 1-8 by playing games in small groups.



Volunteers

Completed by 101 volunteers in 2015, our volunteer feedback survey showed continued high overall satisfaction with Stepping Stones' programs. We are delighted that 90% of surveyed volunteers considered their overall experience positive! Comments included:

"At first, many of the students were shy and had great difficulty answering basic questions in English. However, the students were eager to learn and quickly absorbed the lessons. It was so encouraging to see them grow more and more confident in their English skills as each week went by. I had the joy of seeing the students' faces light up whenever they learned something new. I loved getting to be a part of such an exciting project. [...] The student's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning was contagious and made me excited to be teaching them. I was humbled by the hospitality the staff and students showed all the volunteers. [...] I learned a lot from my time at Stepping Stones and I'll carry these experiences with me wherever I go" (Valeria, Stepping Stones Volunteer, June 2015).

"Volunteering as a teacher in a suburban Chinese school was definitely an eye opening experience. For someone who has had no experience teaching and very little experience speaking Chinese, the program was a challenge. However, I learned a lot from it. [...] The sense of fulfillment that came with communicating with my students made a lot of the challenges I had to go through worth it. Despite a few instances of misbehavior, the students at this school made us feel very welcome, and were always excited to see us walk in their classroom in the morning. I may not have gotten to know every student's name, but I now recognise their faces and got to know a bit more about them every week. The English level of the students at this school was very low, but I think we made at least a small difference in terms of sparking their interest in English and improving their overall English level. My experience teaching here has been a valuable one" (Mika, Stepping Stones Volunteer, December 2015).

“There’s nothing more rewarding than seeing the moment that the children understands what you are teaching them. It’s like see little lightbulbs light up in their brain. It also brings me a lot of comfort to know that their minds are constantly getting sharpened through these summer English courses. I hope the children are as happy as they have made me, being a part of an interactive and fun learning environment” (Judy, Stepping Stones Volunteer, July 2015).

Moreover, the results of the survey indicate that 88% of volunteers were highly satisfied regarding interaction with children. The interaction with co-teachers was also highly satisfactory (82%) as was the teaching experience itself (86%).



Thanks to all who participated in the survey for the positive feedback and helpful suggestions!

Sponsor

“Stepping Stones has been promoting volunteerism for years and send hundreds of volunteers to teach migrant children in Shanghai. We feel very pleased to see that all the beneficiaries improved a lot in their English learning and confidence in speaking English and their life” (Ms. Guan Jianhua, Secretary General, Shanghai Soong Ching Ling Foundation, 2015).

Children

“We learned a lot of English songs from the volunteer English. And I feel my vocabulary and pronunciation improved a lot. We love the lesson so much!” (Tingting, Grade 4, June 2015).

“The first time I had English class taught by foreign teachers, I couldn’t understand what they were saying. Now I can understand a lot more! [...] Foreign teachers are really funny, and because of them I am more interested in English now!” (Guiyu, Grade 3, June 2015).

English Teaching Programs

Stepping Stones conducted three main evaluation studies in 2015 to measure the impact of its programs on students' test scores and confidence in English. We are pleased to report that 2015 was another successful year for our programs! The results of the studies indicate that many of our beneficiaries improved their confidence in several areas such as completing English homework, understanding and using English, and even improving English grades.

Stepping Stones' first study in 2015 assessed the impact of its 2014-2015 teaching program at one of its sites located in Baoshan district, Shanghai (131 students). The most encouraging result found in the study is towards students' confidence in improving their English grades. By the end of the program, the number of children feeling 'very confident' in improving their English grades rose by 27 percentage points. Along with this increase, there was also an increase in the number of students finding English 'very important' and 'very easy' at the

end of the program. The percentage of children finding it 'very important' and 'very easy' rose by 23.7 and 21.9 percentage points respectively.

The second study conducted in 2015 was on Stepping Stones' first regular Classroom Teaching Program in a migrant school located outside of Shanghai, in Zhejiang province. The study took place over the course of the Spring and Autumn semesters 2015, measuring changes in pre-survey and post-survey responses (258 students). The responses of the students to the same questions, before and after participation in the program, were compared to generate the findings.



The results show a significant increase in the number of students finding English ‘very important’ and ‘very easy’ at the end of the program. Across all grades, the percentage of children finding it ‘very important’ and ‘very easy’ rose by 12 and 9 percentage points respectively.

The study also compared the baseline and follow-up results of the questions concerning students’ confidence in English (Figure 1). Students were asked to rate their level of confidence in several areas such as completing

English homework, understanding and using English, and improving English grades. We are pleased to report that, across all surveyed areas of English proficiency, the percentage of children feeling ‘confident’ or ‘very confident’ rose considerably in the follow-up (post) survey.

The largest increase was reported in improving English grades where the number of children feeling ‘confident’ or ‘very confident’ in improving their English grades rose by 20 percentage points to over 59% of the total.

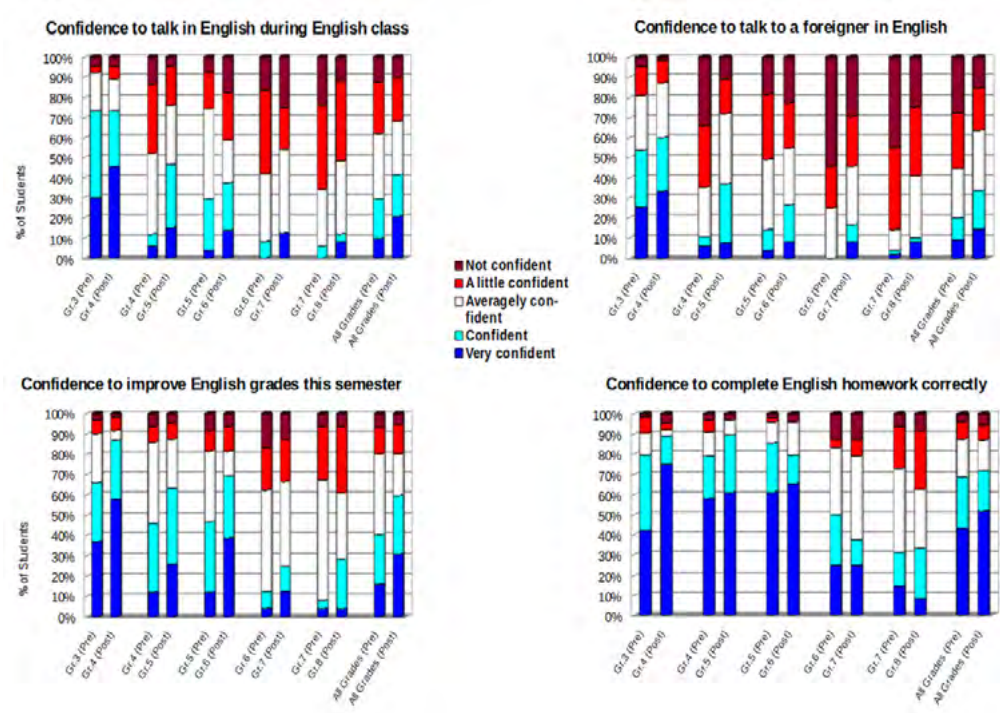


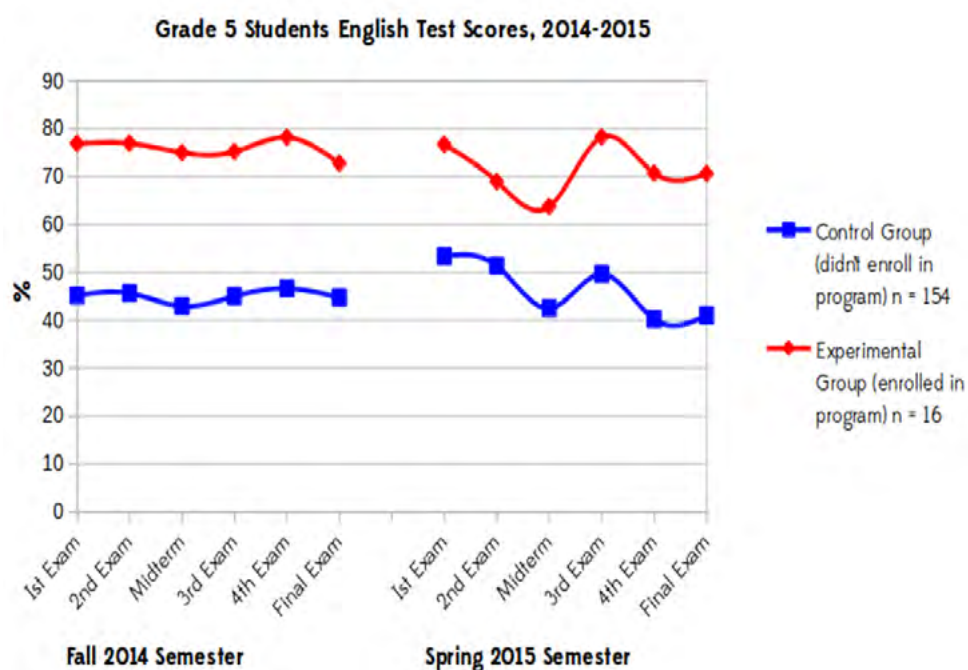
Figure 1: Students’ confidence in English at a program site in Zhejiang - Spring (pre) vs. Autumn (post) 2015

Lastly, Stepping Stones has completed a study to measure the impact of its English teaching program on children's English test scores and on their ability to pass English exams. An interesting aspect of this study was that it included both an experimental group, consisting of students who took part in the program, and a control group, consisting of students of the same grades (grades 4-5) and from the same school who did not take part in the program.

While the progress in English was similar in both groups during the first semester (Autumn 2014), the

results clearly show that students enrolled in the weekly program have made better progress in English than their classmates over the course of the second semester (Spring 2015), especially grade 4 students (Figure 2). It was encouraging to find that, during the Spring 2015 semester, grade 4 Students who were enrolled in the program improved their test scores in English by an average of 7.2 percentage points (from 62.2% to 69.43%), compared to an average decrease of 9 percentage points (from 52.44% to 43.46%) amongst those who didn't enroll in the program.

Figure 2: English Test Scores comparison between Control Group and Experimental Group at a program site in Minhang, Shanghai - 2014-2015



I Care Project

Stepping Stones has developed a survey to assess whether the provision of eye glasses to students has an effect on their quality of life.

Baseline and follow up questionnaires were completed by a sample of 140 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders who were known to be regularly wearing the spectacles provided by the I Care project in 2015. Students were asked how well they could perform a variety of activities that their peers with good vision would take for granted.

The questionnaires asked the children to self-report on a number of indicators in several categories – comfort of seeing objects at a distance; daily activities; and academic orientated tasks such as reading from the blackboard – firstly before receiving the spectacles and again after a period of four to six months, enabling an assessment of how the spectacles, providing they are worn, may affect quality of life of individuals.

The results of the study show that there is a significant improvement in children's abilities of performing daily activities and academic

orientated tasks since wearing glasses, indicating that they gained benefits not only at school but in their wider lives. The two most noteworthy results are the following:

1. 89% of the surveyed students reported that wearing glasses is helping with their studies. This result suggests that, overall, the children are likely to feel much more secure and independent in their learning than before receiving the glasses.
2. The percentage of surveyed students finding it 'easy' to copy from the blackboard rose from 21% to 56% in the follow-up survey, an increase of almost 35 percentage points. This suggests that wearing glasses may provide a significant positive impact on the children's potential to be effective learners in the classroom.

Stepping Stones is encouraged by these positive results and will continue to collect and analyse survey data to validate the impact of its programs. Detailed reports can be found at <http://steppingstoneschina.net/impact>.

SPONSORS

2015

Stepping Stones is grateful to Shanghai Soong Ching Ling Foundation for supporting Stepping Stones' work since 2012, and was honoured to receive funding from Shanghai United Foundation, Paper Stone Scissors, AustCham Shanghai, Essilor Vision Foundation, Optus, Okworld Foundation (Idgroup), Consular Spouses Shanghai, Wing Hang Bank, Fonds de la Dotation Valinière, United Way Worldwide and Target Foundation.

We would like to extend a special thank you to our sustaining sponsors, especially HuaQiao Foundation for providing us with free office space ever since 2009, Shanghai Charity Foundation, PAAT consulting for providing accounting advice, O'Melveny & Myers for providing legal advice, Epsilon for donating their e-marketing system, Big Bamboo for providing us with free end of term parties for our volunteers, Nissei Well for providing us with free printing services and I.D. Creations for providing video services. Given the limitations of funding, these pro bono and in-kind donations are critical to our survival, saving us an incredible RMB832,938 in 2015! Thank you all for your sustained and valuable support.



上海宋庆龄基金会
Shanghai Soong Ching Ling Foundation



NON-PROFIT PARTNERS

2015

Stepping Stones is proud to have partnerships with many other community organisations. Stepping Stones works with the following organisations to reach a broader community of disadvantaged people in China: Chi Heng Foundation, Jiuqian Community Centre, New Citizen Life Centre, Renewal Centre, Shanghai Young Bakers, Sunflower Education Program for Migrant Children, Youdao Foundation, Children's Helpers Worldwide, Educating Girls of Rural China and Clowns without Borders.



FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES 2015

“Super Run” Runathon at SSIS

On November 14, Shanghai Singapore International School (SSIS) participated in the “Super Run” runathon at the International Family Bazaar, which raised 48,000RMB. During the event, the senior school organised games to raise another 17,000RMB, totaling 65,000RMB to support Stepping Stones’ I care Project.

2016 Calendar

This is the third time that Stepping Stone designed and produced its own calendar to raise funds for its projects. Seven talented photographers donated 14 beautiful and artistic photos of Shanghai, making Stepping Stones’ 2016 Calendar the perfect year-end gift for family and friends. After 2-3 months’ efforts in both online and offline promotion, over 600 calendars were sold, which raised over RMB40,000 for Stepping Stones.



HEAM Art Exhibition

Over the summer, Stepping Stones collaborated with six young artists in two cities-Hangzhou on August 16 and Shanghai on August 22 and 23. The young artists donated hundreds of oil paintings, calligraphy work and water colours. Despite challenges such as pre-exhibition preparation and unfavourable weather, these young artists preserved and pulled an extremely successful event. All in all, the event raised 43,650RMB, an amount which will help Stepping Stones tremendously in fulfilling its mission.



Mexican Night at Pistolera

On 4th February, Stepping Stones friends, volunteers and sponsors gathered together at Pistolera to celebrate the Chinese New Year. There was a full house, with delicious Mexican food and Margaritas to welcome the guests, exciting Mexican music, fun games and generous raffle prizes. With the great support of Pistolera, the event not only created an unforgettable night for all guests, it also raised more than RMB13,000 to support Stepping Stones' projects.







PLAN for 2016

In 2016, Stepping Stones plans to continue to grow organically all its core programs: the Classroom Teaching Program, After School & Summer Programs, Rural Tour and Short-Term Placements Programs and the I Care Project. Stepping Stones also plan to increase its Videolink Teaching Program, and develop its Teacher Training Program, building on the successes of the 2015 pilot.

Stepping Stones will be ten years old in 2016, and we are planning a big event to celebrate our achievements over the last ten years. Our sponsor, communications company Paper Stone Scissors has offered us a new brand image as a 10th birthday present, so by the time our Annual Report is published, it will be issued in our new image!

In short, 2016 promises to be another exciting year for Stepping Stones!



