

Preschools of the Future



Rural preschool for poor children in Southwestern China

Humana People to People China

HPP China

Preschools of the Future Project



Early childhood provides a foundation for the development of all cognitive abilities and personality. It is a critical time during which children need love, adequate nutrition, access to health care and mental stimulation.

Early childhood education is a wise investment for society. Children who have attended preschool show greater learning capacities and future careers than children who have not attended. One study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on preschool education and social economy found that a one dollar investment on early childhood education has a 13 dollar return value to society – which means young people who have had early education can contribute more to society with fewer social youth problems.

Poverty is an obstacle for poor families in giving their children the adequate resources needed in early childhood to secure their development and protection. China has 50 million children ages four to six years old, of which 23 million children have no access to three year preschool education.

According to the 2011-2015 educational framework issued in March 2010, preschool development is now a focus of government policies. Chinese government has a goal to provide 75% of all children with three year preschool education by 2020. However the 25% of children who will still have no preschool education are in the remote mountainous rural areas in China.

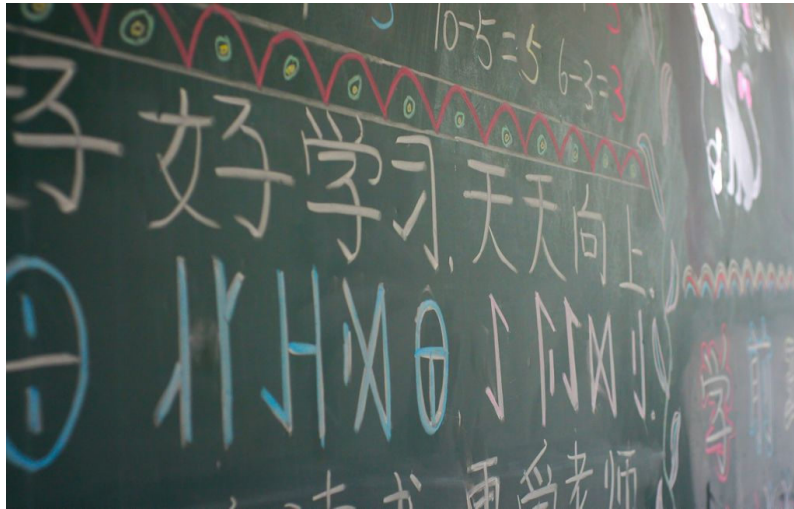
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Preschools of the Future (POF) rural community preschool project works to prevent poor children in becoming poor adults. Breaking the cycle of poverty takes many concerted efforts. For children, to develop confidence and trust in their own capacities is crucial so they can change their expectations of their own life.

The preschool classes are established in natural villages in remote poverty stricken areas. Closed down schools in the village are renovated or other rooms are found and used as classrooms. The children are from three to six years old. This age is the optimal time for building up childrens' capacity and learning abilities and laying the foundation for their social and logic intelligence. Besides traditional school subjects the children also learn about nature, animals, nutrition, hygiene and how to express themselves through arts and music. The preschool considers all the people in the village as their teachers and the world outside as their classroom.





The preschool teachers are young people recruited locally and trained by HPP. The preschool teacher is a role model in the community. The teacher and the parents have good cooperation with each other. The preschool has its traditions and clear structure every month with a headline stating the program theme for that month.

The project will mobilize the communities to form parents' committees, which will be active in starting up and running the preschools. The parents' committees will give support with ideas, decide how many hours daily to run the preschool, collect a small amount of money from the parents for the preschool teacher allowance and hold special events. The parents' committee will help to organize training for the parents, including childhood early education, child psychology, hygiene knowledge, nutrition and health knowledge, and how to encourage the children.

Now 1,209 rural children are in the POF classes in southwestern natural villages of Zhenkang, Yuanyang, Shangrila and Butuo. The Poverty Alleviation Office and Bureau of Education are our partners in local villages.

Surveys among primary school teachers have shown that the children who have attended HPP's preschools are more active, more eager and able to learn, more social and more responsible, and the present preschools have succeeded in significantly reducing the drop-out rate.

For minority children it is particularly useful that they learn to speak Mandarin, so they are able to follow the lessons at primary school level. Not being able to follow the lessons in Mandarin is a common reason for dropping out of school in rural, impoverished areas.