



2022 STEPPING STONES ANNUAL REPORT

IMPROVING THE EDUCATION AND GENERAL WELFARE OF
DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN IN CHINA



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Director's Words

2022 was the year that the rest of the world started to recover from the pandemic, while China doubled down on its zero-covid policy, resulting in continued school closures and disruption of activities. Shanghai, the beloved home city of our organisation, was completely locked down for almost three months, causing unprecedented distress and hardship for all of its residents, and testing our resilience and commitment as never before.

During that toughest of times, as we watched from inside our homes as the beautiful spring unfolded outside, and were bombarded every day with depressing stories on our social media, what kept me going was the sheer commitment of my team, our volunteers, our students and their teachers and parents to continuing to try every day to make a difference, however small. As schools closed down, our program managers immediately set to work moving our programs online. Our students continued to attend their online classes and our staff continued to deliver their work, even when they were taken away to mass quarantine centres. Our volunteers initiated a fundraising campaign for students struggling to feed themselves during the lockdown. Our fundraising manager proposed a new social emotional learning (SEL) program in response to the mental health crisis caused by the pandemic. One of our program managers volunteered to help the sick and elderly in her local community, even while she was busy keeping the videolink programs going in rural areas and caring for her daughter and elderly parents. This kind of community spirit and humanity is why I love Stepping Stones!

Uncertainties continued to dominate the rest of the year. We took every opportunity to return to the classroom and resume offline activities when we could, but were always ready to go back online if and when the situation changed. We have taken flexibility to a whole other level in China in the last three years! They say that necessity is the mother of invention, and in our case, restrictions on indoor activities combined with the need to get children outdoors for some fresh air and exercise gave rise to piloting outdoor learning activities for the first time in the summer! It was great to see the kids outside of their homes and classrooms for once and enjoying themselves running around in the great outdoors.



Everything changed again just before the end of the year, when the government announced very suddenly the end of covid restrictions, and the epidemic started to sweep through the whole country. For what we hope is the last time, our autumn term finished a little earlier than anticipated, as staff, volunteers, students, teachers and parents all came down with covid one by one.

After such a turbulent year, we were amazed when we started to look at the program numbers at the year end to discover that in spite of all the uncertainties and interruptions, we somehow managed to deliver more lessons than in the previous two years, a great testimony to the determination of the whole team to persevere, come what may. We can only imagine what an amazing year this would have been without all the obstacles! Lockdown turned out to be a good time to make innovations to our program management, training and curriculum, improving our efficiency at the same time as helping our volunteer teachers to deliver ever higher quality lessons.

I hope you enjoy reading about all our new initiatives in the coming pages. I finish, as ever, with a big thank you to all of the volunteers and donors who make all of this possible. It is both humbling and inspiring to witness the great changes that happen when good people work together to make a difference.

Corinne Richeux Hua
Executive Director



Year in Review



13

Staff



791

Volunteers



8,128

Lessons Taught



16

English Teachers
Trained



5,289

Students



15.8

Average Lessons
Per Student

In 2022, 791 people volunteered with Stepping Stones and 5,305 beneficiaries benefitted from our interventions, receiving on average 15.8 lessons each over the course of the year.

Volunteers delivered 6,967 English lessons to 4,825 disadvantaged children and youth at 21 project sites in Shanghai, 30 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 Digital Literacy Program's teachers and volunteers provided 1,145 digital literary lessons to 729 students at 16 online or offline teaching sites in Shanghai and Zhejiang, as well as online to hundreds of students' homes.

Volunteers provided 16 online and offline English corner sessions for 16 English teachers at two of our partner schools, impacting the English education of 1,200 children.

Our I Care Program organised eye screening and eye care awareness training for 25 beneficiaries from Chiheng Foundation, donating spectacles to 9 of them.

About Us

Stepping Stones is a non-profit organisation 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 recruits, trains and supports volunteers to help children and youth discover the joy of learning a foreign language, digital literacy and other subjects critical to their holistic development. We also provide professional training to foreign language teachers.

Our program delivers lessons to thousands of students each year in 10 provinces. Students who participate in our program show increased interest and confidence in their studies, which improves their access to educational and work opportunities in the future. Additionally, students get to experience 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.

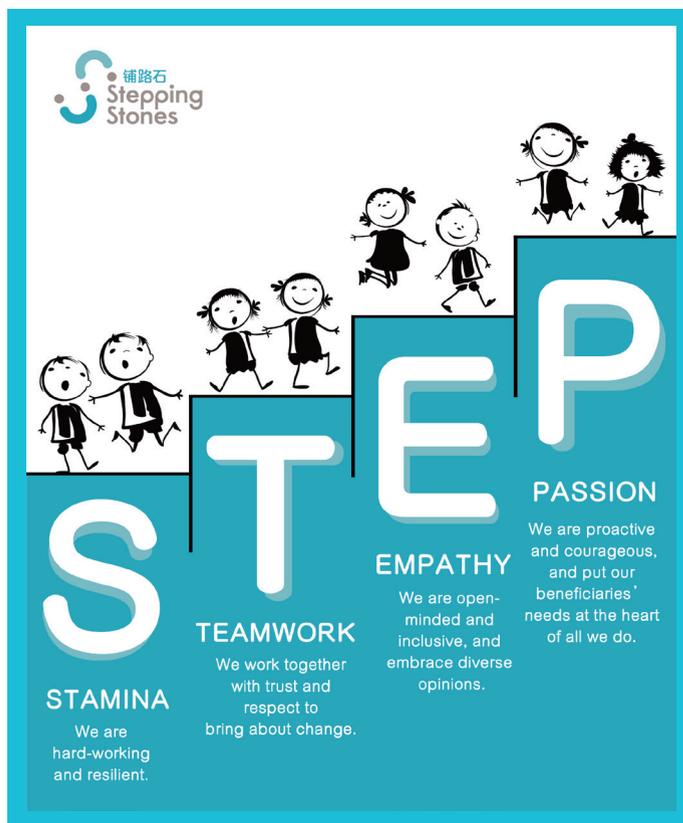
Our Vision

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.

Our Values



Stepping Stones 铺路石

S
STAMINA
We are hard-working and resilient.

T
TEAMWORK
We work together with trust and respect to bring about change.

E
EMPATHY
We are open-minded and inclusive, and embrace diverse opinions.

P
PASSION
We are proactive and courageous, and put our beneficiaries' needs at the heart of all we do.



Volunteers

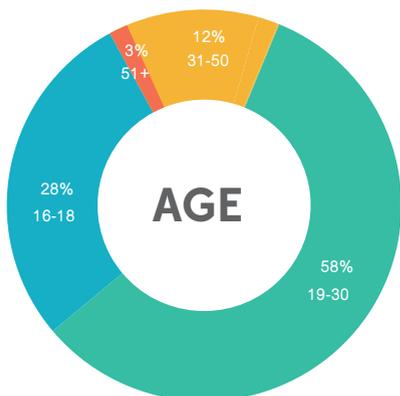
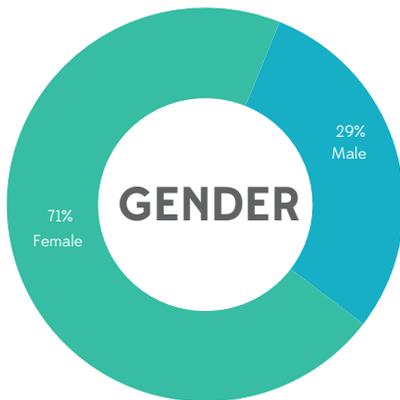
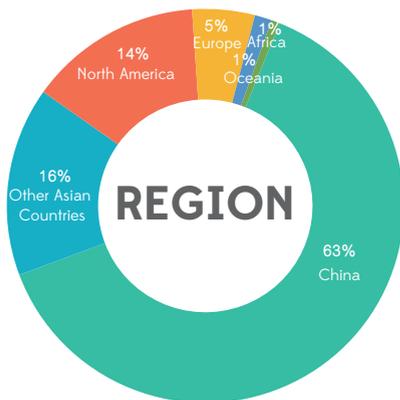
Stepping Stones' greatest asset is its large community of volunteers, who are eager for high-impact volunteering opportunities in China.

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

In 2022, volunteers from 22 different countries got involved in our programs. Our volunteers are from many different walks of life, including high school and 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 administration, fundraising, communications, design, photography, curriculum development, volunteer coordination, translation, etc.

Stepping Stones' regular volunteering programs offer high impact, sustainable volunteering opportunities to many outstanding schools and companies. We are grateful to all the organisations listed below for providing high quality, committed volunteers, who play a significant role in our various programs.

- Bloomberg
- Concordia International School Shanghai
- Dulwich College Shanghai Pudong
- East China Normal University
- Fudan University
- Joyview Education
- Lake Forest Academy
- Lucton School Shanghai
- Mintel
- New York University Shanghai
- Pricewaterhouse Coopers
- Shanghai American School
- Shanghai Jiaotong University
- Shanghai Korean School
- Shanghai Normal University
- Shanghai SMIC Private School
- The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen)
- University of Melbourne
- WLSA Shanghai Academy
- Yew Chung International School



Beneficiaries

Stepping Stones' beneficiaries are children and youth who are disadvantaged in terms of access to quality education and resources in China. These include:

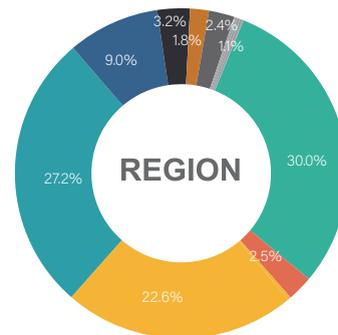
1. Migrant children & youth;
2. Rural children & youth, including many left-behind children and minorities;
3. Children and youth from low-income families in Shanghai and other urban areas;
4. Children and youth with special needs.

While we serve a wide range of disadvantaged children and youth from different locations and backgrounds, the majority of them have 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.

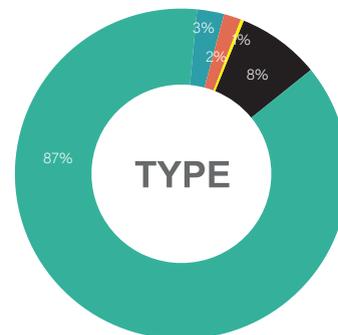
Other migrant workers' children are unable to go with their parents to the cities, and are left behind in rural boarding schools or living with other family members. The educational standards in rural schools lag significantly behind urban schools, and in addition to the disadvantages faced by rural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

Most of our students are primary-school age, but we also have kindergarten, middle-school, high school and vocational school students. 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 and children with special educational needs.

Since 2016, we have increased the impact on our students' English education by providing professional and language training to their English teachers in rural and migrant schools.



- Shanghai
- Yunnan
- Guangxi
- Fujian
- Hebei
- Zhejiang
- Jiangxi
- Henan
- Others (Anhui, Guizhou, Gansu, Jiangsu, Sichuan, Ningxia)



- Primary school students
- Kindergarten students
- Middle school students
- High school or vocational students
- English teachers

Staff Team

Our staff team remained stable with 13 paid staff members, and our office volunteer team increased from two to three people.

Corinne Hua continued to lead the team as Executive Director, supported by Program Director Sebastien Carrier and Operations Director Eva Hua. Claire Ding continued in the Curriculum Director role for the English teaching program, with Sally Wangsawijaya as Training Manager for the English teaching volunteers.

Teddy Shi and Sherry Jia were promoted mid-year to Senior Managers of our Stepping Up and Rural Programs respectively. Ann Zhao continued to manage our offline English Teaching Programs (SET & RIV), and Julie Li our HCR Program, while Viviana Chen, Miki Gu and Yili Huang continued to work together as Communications Manager, Fundraising Officer and Events Manager respectively.

We were very sorry to say goodbye to both Jian Gao and Wenjian Tu, who left China this year, but we are delighted to welcome Nova Shao to fill the resulting Volunteer & Internship Manager vacancy and are fortunate that former volunteer Rebecca Mao offered to take on the Finance Manager role.

We are grateful to Stella Wu for continuing to offer professional assistance to our operations team, and Linda Li, who joined our office volunteer team this year in an HR capacity.

A big welcome to our new staff members and thank you to the whole team for their on-going dedication and for remaining positive and motivated in a very challenging year.

From Left to Right:

Back row:

Claire Ding, Julie Li, Yili Huang,
Sebastien Carrier, Teddy Shi,
Nova Shao, Ann Zhao

Front row:

Viviana Chen, Sherry Jia,
Sally Wangsawijaya, Corinne Hua,
Rebecca Mao, Eva Hua, Miki Gu



Board of Directors



Hua Lei
Chair

Architect - Retired



Eva Hua
Vice Chair

Stepping Stones - Operations Director



Whooper Huang
Director

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



Leo Jia
Director

Inclusion Factory - General Manager



Rita Jia
Director

Stepping Stones - Volunteer



Wang Lin
Supervisor

BSR Advisory Services Ltd. - Director



Steve Pan
Supervisor

PricewaterhouseCoopers Zhong Tian LLP
- Partner



Aaron Xin
Supervisor

O'Melveny & Myers - Senior Legal Counsel

English Teaching

Since the early establishment of Stepping Stones, volunteers have been teaching fun oral English classes to disadvantaged children and youth in China. We are committed to helping kids improve their communication skills and discover the joy of learning a foreign language, making them more open-minded and more confident to express themselves in English.

Shanghai English Teaching

In spite of the many ups and downs for our Shanghai English Teaching (SET) Program, the great contributions and flexibility of our volunteers, the dedication of our program partners, the earnest efforts of our students and the diligence of our colleagues still yielded great rewards!

In the Spring, we had to suddenly switch from on-site to online teaching due to the Shanghai lockdown. It was an incredibly difficult period for everybody, but we persisted and achieved. Mandatory community PCR tests obliged our volunteers to reschedule classes, and also affected student attendance. A few students participated in class from quarantine hospitals, and so did our program partners.

In the summer, we returned to offline teaching at community centres. Epidemic controls presented many challenges to delivering face-to-face classes, which, looking back, now also seem like opportunities.

Volunteers said: "I really like teaching the students."; "The group of adult-students was fantastic!"; "I enjoyed every minute of teaching-interacting with them." One student's mother said: "My kid is shy and doesn't speak in his school online classes. The volunteer teacher encouraged him to practise, which helped build up his confidence, and he's willing to talk in class now. Thank you!"

By the autumn, as well as classes in various community centres, including Shanghai Qingcongquan Training Centre, we were also able to resume after-school lessons in one migrant primary school and three kindergartens. We kicked off online classes for young adult students from Shanghai Young Bakers, who will finally arrive in Shanghai in the coming spring.

Service-learning teams from Shanghai American School Pudong, Yew Chung International School and Shanghai New York University played their part in helping us to achieve the goals of the SET program.

Our 188 volunteers delivered 2,482 English lessons to 1,270 disadvantage children and youth at 21 teaching sites, online as well as offline.



Students



Volunteer Teachers



Lessons



Teaching Sites



Rural Volunteering Program



Volunteer Teachers

13



Students

330



Teaching Sites

3



Lessons

138

During the continued pandemic situation, we seized every opportunity for rural individual volunteering (RIV) activities wherever and whenever the epidemic was under control. We sent our volunteers to a school in Henan and community centres in a suburb of Xiamen, which was close to where some of the volunteers lived.

In the spring, Angela from Italy, who has studied and worked in China for years, went to Luyi in Henan Province for two weeks to teach left-behind children in a rural boarding school which takes in children from kindergarten to Grade Nine. The children not only learnt English, but also had fun playing football and taking photos with Angela in the village. It was a greatly rewarding experience for both Angela and the students. Angela continued to teach the children online in the autumn after she moved to South Korea.

In the summer, two planned RIV assignments were cancelled due to covid outbreaks. Luckily, former Stepping Stones volunteer Samuel organised and guided his students from Chiway Repton School Xiamen to teach English at Xiamen Tong'an Charity Library. Those high school students delivered two-weeks of wonderful classes to the migrant children there. A fellow teacher Lucie from the same international school taught there for one week afterwards. As the site representative Ms. Sun said: "The volunteer teachers' fun & humorous style helped the kids find an interest in learning. They brought joy and warmth to the kids."

At the same time, Kim, a volunteer in Shanghai, who has been with Stepping Stones for years, went to Xiamen Bird's Nest Reading & Culture Promotion Centre. She taught there for three weeks.

We were unable to proceed with our rural individual volunteering in the autumn due to epidemic controls.



Teacher testimonial:

Ms Zhang, a school teacher partnering with Sunrise Library, Henan:

"Thank you very much to the volunteer teachers from Stepping Stones. I'm not only a teacher but also a mom of two kids who joined in Stepping Stones' program. My children loved the classes very much. The lessons were very lively and interesting. The students were proactively involved in classes every time. The volunteer teachers were very patient and caring, they always reminded the students of the class time in advance. The students never missed the class, and greatly improved their spoken English and listening skills."

School Videolink Program



Students



Volunteer Teachers



Teaching Sites



Lessons

Though the number of School Videolink (SVL) lessons was reduced a bit due to school closures resulting from epidemic controls, the program expanded to more remote areas and reached more students, mostly left-behind children in rural areas. Many of them live with their grandparents, because their parents have migrated to cities for work. The program expanded to 26 teaching sites in Guangxi, Guizhou, Henan, Jiangxi and Yunnan, and we started teaching more students from ethnic minority groups at new program sites in Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan, and Guizhou.

At the same time, we continued to review our teaching materials in order to ensure their relevance and applicability and to improve their quality and impact. In addition to the entry-level courseware developed for beginner-level students in 2021, the first-level courseware we use most often was also upgraded. The courseware developed by our Curriculum Director better supports our volunteers' teaching, and our teaching material is becoming ever more systematised and comprehensive.

In order to help students review what they learned in class, the student book "Stepping Stones Fun English" that we prepared in 2021 was published, printed, and distributed to students. In the fall, we piloted "talking pens" in 3 schools in Yunnan. The pens allow students without access to the internet to listen to the audio recording of the words in the smart student books, letting them practise their pronunciation between lessons.

We continued to run SVL programs for Jiangxi Xin'gan Education Bureau as well as non-profit organisations such as Chi-Heng Foundation and Xiamen Bird's Nest Library. We also launched a new cooperation with Shanghai Yangpu District Beautiful Nostalgia Culture Promotion Centre to serve three primary schools in Baofeng County, Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan. Additionally, as scheduled, we opened SVL classes at two new primary schools in Yunnan Lincang, in cooperation with Shanghai Shine Social Work Development Centre.

Special thanks to Bloomberg for providing long-time support for our SVL Program, as well as many employee volunteers, who are teaching our students in Yunnan, Jiangxi, and Henan. Welcome and a big thank you to Mintel, who started organising staff from multiple offices to teach students in Yunnan.



Home Classroom Program

In the third year of our Home Classroom (HCR) Program, we added a new teaching site: Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region Children's Welfare Institute. The HCR Program currently covers 40 primary schools in villages, towns and townships in Henan, Jiangxi, Zhejiang and Ningxia, 296 volunteers were recruited, trained and supported to provide a total of 3,591 lessons to 1,218 students.

The English HCR Program kept its usual small-class teaching mode, the oral class aiming to let students experience how to apply the vocabulary and sentence structures they have learned through rich oral activities, games, and dialogue exercises, using real life scenarios, and learning how to use polite expressions naturally and appropriately in the process of communicating with people in English. This year the HCR Program optimised the content and structure of the course, and launched English film dubbing classes and phonics video study resources to further improve students' interests towards English study and stimulate their learning motivation, making the students more confident and relaxed when they speak English.

In September, the program adopted WeCom as a project management tool, improving communication and management efficiency as well as reducing the burden of incoming WeChat messages for the program's volunteers. In addition, we are very grateful to EEO for continuing to provide us with the integrated online teaching platform ClassIn for the HCR Program.

The number of volunteer teams for the HCR Program continues to increase, with some volunteers serving three semesters or more since the program started.

In 2023, the English HCR Program will continue to improve the quality of the lessons and better serve the students. The number of students will increase organically. We will continue to update curriculum resources, add interesting classroom materials such as English songs, and strengthen communication with parents so as to better support children's English learning.

Student testimonial:

Wang: "HCR teachers and volunteers are very professional and caring. The teachers will share the class situation and the course related learning materials with my parents in the WeChat group. The classes are very lively, and words and sentences taught by the teachers are very practical. I hope I can continue taking HCR classes in the new semester."

Parent testimonial:

Xiao: "My kid has been taking HCR classes for about two years, and exposed to different cultures and different ways of life. The volunteer teachers always very patiently answer my kid's questions and continuously encourage him to make greater efforts in studying English. My child said that he would like to help other people in need like his volunteer teachers when he grows up. Thanks a lot to the volunteers from Stepping Stones!"



1,218
Students



296
Volunteer Teachers



3,591
Lessons



Curriculum Development

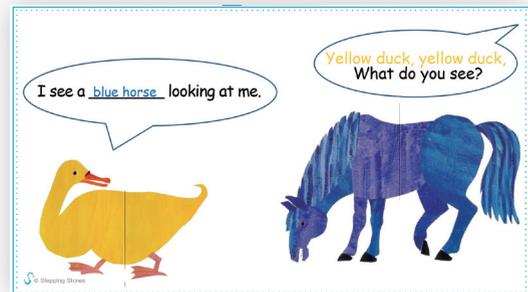
Our curriculum development work continued to make strides in spite of the outbreak of covid in 2022. We delivered 24 new Level One lesson PPTs for School Videolink (SVL) Program and adapted those PPTs for our Home Classroom (HCR) Program. With the great help of teaching professionals Yihuai Cai and Irina Chernyshova, we successfully introduced story reading lessons to our HCR and Shanghai English Teaching (SET) Programs in 2022 to enrich our offerings in the summer program. Altogether we delivered 18 story reading PPTs for three levels, i.e., six each level. The lessons were very welcomed by the teaching volunteers as well as the students. We also witnessed some fun and dynamic classes using these PPTs. We plan to continue to produce more such lessons in 2023 so that we could have a wider choice of topics and levels for our volunteers and beneficiaries.

In 2022, we adjusted the phonics materials in a way that students in our online programs could also benefit from it. We edited the phonics videos to be more concise so that it could fit into our normal HCR lesson structure. We also designed two progress check slides for each level of the phonics course to help better consolidate the knowledge.

We sourced and piloted lots of movie clips and English songs in our classes to better align our offerings with the overarching education policies in 2021. We continued to work on these resources by selecting the most relevant and level appropriate ones for the students this year. We are grateful to four remote interns Chujun He, Isabel Joan Brack, Annabelle Deng, and Jennifer Chen, who helped to edit the videos and added the subtitles to further support teaching and learning. As we collected more and more English songs, there was a growing need to categorize them for easier access. Intern Fátima Lourdes helped us to dig through our database to put together an English song library with a clear index. Intern Yiting Zhang then took it over and chose 80 songs out of the library to make it into a song book that could be an engaging supplement for our SVL students.

When the lockdown was eased in summer, we designed and piloted two outdoor activities for students from our partners Jiuqian Volunteer Centre and Shanghai Shine Social Work Development Centre. Students got a chance to get closer to nature and meet with their friends in person. We designed games and craft activities for students to move around and explore their surroundings as well as use English in their conversations with each other and with volunteers. Sweat glistened on students' foreheads and their happy laughter rang out around the park.

In July, our curriculum developer Claire Ding's presentation on how we design teaching materials for non-professional volunteer teachers was very well received at the 5th China TESOL Assembly in Hangzhou.



Worksheet 课后练习

A. Choose the correct word to put on the line.
选择正确的单词填到图片下方的横线上。

a sheep a dog a cat a duck a frog
a bear a goldfish a horse a bird

B. Sing the song with your friends.
和你的朋友一起唱这首歌吧。

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?
I see a red bird looking at me.
Red Bird, Red Bird, What do you see?
I see a yellow duck looking at me.
Yellow Duck, Yellow Duck, What do you see?
I see a blue horse looking at me.
Blue Horse, Blue Horse, What do you see?
I see a green frog looking at me.
Green Frog, Green Frog, What do you see?
I see a purple cat looking at me.
Purple Cat, Purple Cat, What do you see?
I see a white dog looking at me.
White Dog, White Dog, What do you see?
I see a black sheep looking at me.
Black Sheep, Black Sheep, What do you see?
I see a goldfish looking at me.
Goldfish, Goldfish, What do you see?
I see a teacher looking at me.
Teacher, Teacher, What do you see?
I see a bear looking at me.
Owl, Owl, Owl, What do you see?
We see a Brown Bear, a Red Bird, a Yellow Duck, a Blue Horse, a Green Frog, a purple cat, a White dog, a Black Sheep, a Goldfish, and a teacher looking at us.
That's what we see.

This slide is intentionally set as hidden on slideshow.

Lesson aims:

- By the end of the class, students will be better able to use the color words to describe animals.
- By the end of the class, students will be better able to sing the song 'Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see' by Eric Carle.

Target vocabulary: a dog, a cat, a bird, a duck, a sheep, a goldfish, a horse, a frog, a bear
Review: color words

Target structure: What do you see?
I see ... looking at me.

Final speaking task: Sing a song 'Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see?'

Volunteer Training

This year, we continued to provide our volunteers with trainings and workshops to help improve teaching quality and optimise the quality of interactions with their students, both offline and online. We were excited to welcome volunteers back to in-person training sessions in the autumn term as students in Shanghai were making their way back into their classrooms too.

As we incorporated ever more fun and educational teaching materials into our curriculum, our training sessions have also evolved to provide volunteers with specific skills to deliver engaging and creative content such as English songs, English games and activities as well as watching and acting out short movie clips.

A total of five public training sessions were conducted for the Shanghai English Teaching (SET) program, and two training sessions were organised for the Rural Individual Volunteering (RIV) program. In addition, we conducted training sessions for high school students from Shanghai American School (SAS) Pudong and Yew Cheung International School (YCIS). Thanks to volunteer Venice Yang, we also organised a workshop on how to transfer drama skills to English teaching, which was well received by the attendees.

Feedback from the volunteers who attended the general training:

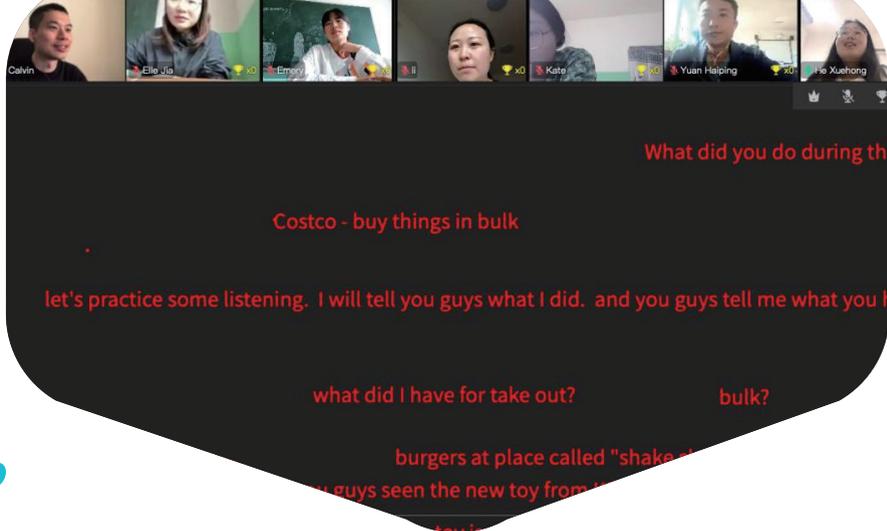
“That was really easy to understand. I think the overall training session is great, thank you so much for your time and work.”

“It is already really good and in depth. It provides the perfect amount of information for people who have never taught English before.”

For our online programs, volunteers were given access to an online briefing and training video to watch before attending an online demo class with Stepping Stones, where trainees practised their online teaching skills in front of our trainer. We facilitated 230 such demo classes for the Home Classroom Program as well as 155 for the School Videolink Program. We regularly review and update training videos prior to the start of each semester.

Our staff members observed a total of 101 classes, providing teaching tips and feedback to volunteers based on the challenges that they faced in the classroom. We would like to thank volunteer Pearl Tan for helping us to produce a video highlighting the teaching skills that she uses when teaching young learners in Lingjiang Kindergarten for migrant children.





Teachers' English Corners



Teachers Trained



Teachers' English Corners



Volunteers

We arranged two online English Corners in 2022. We resumed one for six teachers at a migrant school in Jiading, Shanghai after a long break. The other one was for a group of ten teachers at Nanyang Middle School in Dangchang County of Gansu Province.

This was the first time for us to cooperate with Nanyang school. Those teachers teach English to about 695 students from 17 classes. They wanted to improve the fluency, accuracy and authenticity of their spoken English in order to increase their confidence to speak English in the classroom. After seven one-hour sessions, they all reported that their oral English skills were improved. They also appreciated being exposed to different cultures, and were more confident to speak English with native speakers.

It is always the process and progress that are most impressive. At Nanyang School, the teachers were shy at first, and our volunteer adjusted his approach, starting with things more relevant to the teachers' daily life. With a concerted effort on both sides, they found common ground and the magic started to happen!

We hope to attract more volunteers to provide English speaking practice to rural English teachers in 2023, to unleash the multiplier effect of training the trainer!

Digital Literacy



Teaching Sites



Lessons



Volunteers



Students

We can hardly live without the Internet these days. Digital Literacy is basic for survival in the modern world. But unfortunately, many disadvantaged children and youth in China have no computers at home and are attending schools that do not provide computer classes.

The objective of our digital literacy program is to help disadvantaged students improve their 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. This program equips students with a wide array of skills - such as Microsoft Office, resume preparation, online searching, online safety, programming, coding and embedded system design - so that they are better prepared to meet the challenges of a tech-focused society.

In 2022, thanks to the support of many individual donors, private foundations and corporate partners, our teachers and volunteers were able to teach 1,145 lessons to 729 students at 16 online or offline teaching sites in Shanghai, Zhejiang, Henan and Jiangxi.

We would like to extend our thanks to a growing number of local and international partners - in particular Transparent Fish Fund and Ping & Amy Chao Family Foundation, Texas Instruments, PwC, Joyview Education, ADDA, East China Normal University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, New York University Shanghai and The Chinese University of Hong Kong (ShenZhen). In addition to supporting us through funding and/or donation of equipment, many of our corporate partners - such as PwC, Joyview Education and Texas Instruments - have also contributed to our program by encouraging their employees to volunteer with us. In total we mobilised 159 volunteers in 2022.

One of our major achievements in 2022 is that all the teaching sites taught hardware programming classes simultaneously. Our graphical programming class combined with the popular control board or Micro:bit allows students not only to understand the concept of sensors, but also to build up their confidence through hands-on programming. All our new courses were warmly welcomed by students, parents and community leaders.





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 Project.

At the end of 2022, 13 children from Tianhua Village in Shanghai suburbs and 12 students from Chiheng Foundation participated in our I Care project. The ophthalmologists from Shanghai Ai'Er Eye Hospital ran eye tests for them and provided nine eyeglasses for those who are short-sighted. Ophthalmologists also 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 the importance of wearing glasses.

Our Volunteer Stories

Giving back in Luyi, Henan

After finishing my Chinese studies in Italy, my passion and my strong interest for China brought me first to Beijing in 2012 and then to Shanghai in 2014 where, thanks to a scholarship from the Chinese government, I did my master's degree in Journalism and Communication.



I came across the volunteering opportunity at Stepping Stones on Volunteer World, and so I decided to contact them. I've been travelling a lot in China in the past eight years, including rural areas, and when I was assigned to the school in Luyi of Henan Province, I already had an idea of what the environment might look like.

The school lies silent between brick houses and green wheat fields. A white statue of Mao with a red scarf around his neck greeted me every time I crossed the school threshold. The weather in Luyi is super dry, so there was a lot of dust around, but the landscape was still very beautiful.

There were so many children and they were all sweet and polite. They were curious about my life, my family, and the place where I grew up. The first day, I noticed the chilblains that most of the kids had on their hands, so I decided to buy a moisture cream for them. Some children's hygiene was poor, and I know many of them live with their grandparents. I guess old people cannot pay too much attention to the kids.

My daily routine started at 7am. After a shower, I had breakfast in my room, a banana and a coffee. I'm used to drinking coffee every morning, so I decided to bring my coffee machine with me. The principal of the school came to pick me up at 8.40 every day, then we went straight to the school.

Every day I had four classes, 9.00 to 11.00 in the morning and then from 2.00 to 4.00 in the afternoon. I mainly taught Grade Three, Four, Five and Six. In the first week, I also taught Grades Seven and Eight.

In my spare time I used to play with the kids. We played football or some other outdoor activities. That was the most beautiful moment of the day. Children in the school don't do a lot of physical activities. They spend 10-15 minutes of their day for morning exercises. Furthermore, they don't have much equipment to use during their P.E. classes, except for some jump ropes and basketballs/footballs.

I was surprised when the kids told me they had never watched a football match. Some of them knew how to play, others were standing in front of the goalposts waiting for the ball. Afterwards in class, I taught them some new vocabularies such as goalkeeper, team, score etc. We had a wonderful time!

Sometimes in the afternoon we went out and walked to the river. It was a little bit far away, so I first asked the teachers for permission. Every time we went for a walk, I took my analogical camera with me and let the kids shoot around. Probably they have never seen that type of camera, so they were super excited to take pictures with it. I remember a girl from Grade Six, very shy and silent, always sitting alone in class. When I gave my camera to her, she said "No, I cannot" so I replied, "How do you know you cannot do it if you didn't even try?". She tried and after taking the picture she smiled at me. From that moment something changed, she started interacting with other kids and even talking to me. It felt like she started believing in herself, and that was the most satisfying thing for me.





I had lunch and supper in the canteen with the teachers and students. The food was pretty good. I remember the most delicious meal I had was potato, tofu and chicken soup, served with steamed bread. Often students asked me to join them, and every time I did, they were full of joy.

I can speak Chinese, so I conversed a lot with the local teachers during the breaks. Once, two male teachers asked me about what was going on in Europe and about the war in Ukraine.

Children were looking for me all the time. During the break they used to come downstairs and ask me if we had class together and what they were going to learn.

During the first week, it was quite challenging, especially with Grades Seven and Eight. Older kids are always somewhat cautious about themselves, and at the beginning, they were shy to answer any questions. When I asked them to introduce themselves in the first class we had, they would lower their heads and keep quiet.

Some of them already had the basic English foundations, however, the biggest problem was that they could not fully express themselves. Something I came across while teaching, was that they could read the words but when asked a question, they were confused. I think it's something related to the methods used in Chinese schools.

Most of the kids are raised by their grandparents while being away from their parents. This could bring about some challenges to the children because their grandparents are from a different generation and have a different mindset.

My trip was not long, but I think it was meaningful for me, as well as the kids. The children don't have many opportunities to explore what's outside their country, so it's good for them to be exposed to different cultures and languages and know more about the outside world. I think schools around the world should educate their students about diversity. Only in this way people can embrace and accept the differences between people instead of considering themselves better just because of their nationality or skin colour.

This trip meant a lot to me. I spent eight wonderful years in China, and it will be hard for me to leave the country. People nowadays are too focused on receiving and sometimes forget to give. Unfortunately, this is not our fault. The problem lies in the whole society. Urban life is built on our consumption and endless desires. After helping these kids, I felt a relief, though I spent a short amount of time there. I do believe that giving a hand to others, even just for one minute, can make a huge difference.

Volunteer Spotlight

We're Sophia Xin and Julia Fang from Concordia International School of Shanghai! We've been volunteering at Stepping Stones for around two years now, and it has been an extremely eye-opening and rewarding experience for both of us.

Sophia Xin says...

1. From Volunteer to Service Initiative Founder
I first discovered Stepping Stones in 2020 when volunteering for the Home Classroom Program in the Fall Semester. The students' passion and charisma quickly inspired me to start a service initiative at Concordia with my volunteering partner Julia in order to give opportunities to international students to serve their community in a productive and rewarding way.

2. The Concordia Team
Ever since the Spring of 2021, the Concordia team has worked with Stepping Stones to coordinate and teach online classes for Home Classroom Program. Now, we are proud to have 21 current members involved in our initiative, and we're so excited to see the program continue even after we graduate.



3. Memorable Moment
Isaac Luo, who will be taking over the Concordia Stepping Stones initiative together with Joe Liang next year, had one particularly memorable experience teaching the kids:

"A memorable moment I had with the kids was on April 15th. We were on Level Four Lesson 18 and were set to watch a short clip from Harry Potter that day. I still remember how excited the students were when we mentioned it in class the week before. Then the time finally came - It was April 15th, Harry Potter class day! I went into the classroom seven minutes before class started to set up the presentation as usual, however, this time two excited students were already in the classroom waiting for me. I greeted them and we proceeded to talk about Harry Potter for the next few minutes until the teacher and other students showed up. I was so



happy to see how excited the students were to learn and the class turned out great! We had the students read out loud and translate the dialogue, which was challenging, however, really fun and rewarding. A few of them even tried to mimic the English accents Harry and Ron had!”



Julia Fang says...

1. An Inspiring Experience

Seeing the children learn and grow in the classroom and engage with the class material, even through a screen, is really inspiring. We are so grateful to be a part of a program that fosters a passion for education, even in times of turmoil such as the pandemic, and pushes past the boundaries of unfortunate situations to give young students access to quality resources.

2. Full-circle and Unforgettable

Growing up in a community where education is so often emphasised, we have come to learn the importance of having kind and encouraging teachers that inspire us to continue pursuing our passions. Knowing this, being able to become that mentor figure and provide the education we value so highly for these students is like a full-circle moment for us.

Sophia Xin & Julia Fang say...

We're excited to see what the future holds for the Concordia Stepping Stones team and where this passion for mentoring younger students will take them. As for us, we will remember our enlightening experience at Stepping Stones and take that joy of learning with us to college and beyond. The impact that we have made as volunteers and student leaders is something we will never forget.

Fundraising

After a short pause in the spring, we were able to hold and participate in some events, sharings, and activities in the second half of the year. At the end of the year, we had to say farewell to Shanghai Soong Ching Ling Foundation (SSCLF), who have been a long-term supporter of Stepping Stones, and began to look for new funding to continue to support our programs. We were fortunate to find new donors to help sustain the operation of our organisation for a while. At the same time, we also began to reflect on the sustainability of Stepping Stones and plan to make more efforts in diversifying our fundraising in the future.

In September, we participated in Tencent's 99 Donation Day. With the help of our partners and efforts to promote the event, we raised a total of CNY 52,221.92. We are very happy to use public fundraising activities to let more people understand the educational difficulties of migrant and left-behind children, while also getting to connect with more new friends. In addition to special fundraising activities, we continue to carry out regular public fundraising on the Lianquan and Global Giving platforms. By the end of the year, 44 people had joined the monthly donation plan, donating to Stepping Stones' programs monthly. In total, we received 518 public donations on the Lianquan website, totaling CNY 131,186.66.

Among these 518 donations, we witnessed many stories. Many people become a "little stone" of our program in their own unique way and with their own strength. Among them are high school students who raised funds for us by tutoring their lower grade classmates; a student who used to be a Stepping Stones' student and now chose to join monthly donations and support more children like her; people who donated in the name of their friends, making donations as gifts; and new friends who trusted and supported us upon first knowing and meeting us. In order to better provide feedback on program progress, maintain transparency and openness to our donors, we have expanded our monthly email reports to our WeChat official account posts. Donors and friends can now easily find the latest progress of our programs, and see photos of children and classes.

We sincerely thank SSCLF for the trust and support over the past decade, allowing us to provide high-quality education to disadvantaged children in Shanghai and other areas of China. We appreciate everyone who has come and gone, all the ups and downs, opportunities and challenges of 2022, as well as the support of all individual donors, foundations, and businesses for us, allowing us to continue to provide high-quality education services for more children.

Corporate Events

We continue to work with corporate volunteers to explore ways to give back to the community. As a bridge between companies and communities, Stepping Stones provides volunteers with sharings and trainings to help them understand the issues relating to education inequality, and advocate for disadvantaged children and youth in China. Corporate volunteers from different fields also contribute by using their unique skillsets.

This year, employees from companies such as Texas Instruments, and Mintel participated in volunteer activities, including outdoor activity, career awareness, digital literacy courses, School Videolink classes, and Shanghai English teaching.

Ambra Liu: "At first, I thought the kids weren't going to be willing to participate in the activities because of the heat, but they actually immersed themselves very quickly, and I happily joined in on the event due to everyone's enthusiasm. It was good that the event was planned in an orderly manner so the kids could be engaged better. Although everyone's English level was different, we all played each game to the best of our ability, at the same time encouraging the children and helping them learn new things. At the end, we could still feel the passion in the kids' and parents' goodbyes, and that this was an extremely fulfilling morning for them."



Scan QR code to become our monthly donor.

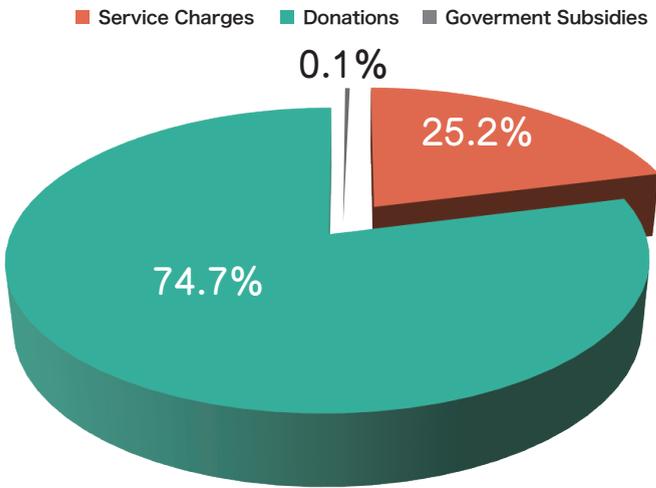
Finance

In 2022, Stepping Stones' revenue was CNY2,013,648.78, and expenses were CNY2,602,110.47, making a net loss of CNY588,461.69.

The opening balance was CNY1,071,804.57 and the closing balance was CNY474,316.32.

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

Revenue 2022



Revenue (CNY)	
Donations	1,504,763.50
Service Charges	507,556.58
Government Subsidies	1,328.70
TOTAL	2,013,648.78

Expenses (CNY)	
Operational Costs	2,493,150.34
Accommodation	5,150.00
Communications	3,801.35
Labour Costs	4,687.50
Meals	26,554.99
Medical Costs	3,802.00
Miscellaneous Costs	195.20
Office and Training Space	349,581.17
Office Equipment & Supplies	5,143.28
Professional Fees & Insurance	100,458.37
Salary & Bonus	1,613,909.81
Social Security & Housing Fund	325,628.40
Teaching Materials	29,902.67
Transport	24,335.60
Management Costs	108,126.69
Accommodation	775.00
Labour Costs	8,601.25
Meals	4,539.00
Office Supplies	13,871.57
Salary & Bonus	72,550.60
Tax & Others	451.32
Transport	1,962.33
Welfare	5,375.62
Fundraising Costs	833.44
TOTAL	2,602,110.47
NET GAIN	(588,461.69)

Donors

Thank you to everyone who donated to Stepping Stones in 2022. Every donation of whatever size is always appreciated.

Donor	Amount (CNY)
Donations received through Shanghai United Foundation	812,506.95
GlobalGiving Foundation, INC	175,531.54
Transparent Fish Fund (through Stepping Stones China Ltd)	174,816.75
Target (through Stepping Stones China Ltd)	70,673.03
Wellington College International Shanghai	68,360.00
Consulate General of Ireland in Shanghai	55,494.40
Ms Jili Liu & Mr Richard Yin	50,000.00
Ms Samantha Quercioli & Mr Christopher Torrens	25,000.00
Shanghai Charity Foundation	23,389.91
Homeslice Pizza	16,877.63
Ms Rita Jia	19,862.00
Other Donations	12,251.29
DONATIONS SUB-TOTAL	1,504,763.50

In addition, Shanghai United Foundation (SUF) received the following donations on behalf of Stepping Stones in 2022.

Donor	Amount (CNY)
Ms Binbin Yang	500,000.00
Anonymous	321,285.00
Texas Instruments	67,000.00
Homeslice Pizza	21,978.36
The Cheng Alexander Family	20,000.00
Mintel	20,000.00
Other Donations	77,804.95
SUF DONATIONS SUB-TOTAL	1,028,068.31

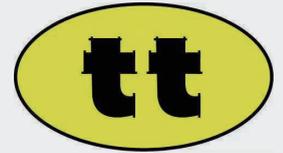
Thank you to the following program partners for their financial support.

Corporate Partner	Service Charge (CNY)
Tiny Tots Education Group	382,356.42
Anonymous	69,273.63
Shanghai American School	12,000.00
New York University Shanghai	11,200.00
Joyview Education	10,200.00
Yew Chung International School Shanghai	8,000.00
El Fuego Education	7,950.00
Other Service Charges	6,576.53
SERVICE CHARGES SUB-TOTAL	507,556.58

Donors



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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 programs.



ADDA Edulec for providing curriculum, equipment and volunteer training.



EEO for providing a professional integrated online teaching platform ClassIn.



Gengyuan Education and Teensgeeker for providing teaching resources.



Homeslice Pizza for generously providing refreshments for important meetings.



Mingdao for providing an office management solutions platform.



Nissewell for printing services.



O' Melvny & Myers LLP for professional legal services.



PricewaterhouseCoopers for curriculum design and teaching services.



Rödl & Partner for professional accounting services.



Shanghai DTD Academy for providing curriculum.



Shanghai Hurui Industries Co., Ltd. for providing storage space.

Non-Profit Partners

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



Looking Forward

After all we went through in 2022, we are sincerely hoping that 2023 will be the year that we put covid behind us and return to “normal” , even if we are not yet certain exactly what the new normal will look like.

Early indications are that schools in rural China are very keen to welcome our volunteers back after a long break, volunteers are keen to get back into the classrooms in Shanghai as well as further afield, and summer programs will run again. We expect a spike in our program numbers thanks to new efficiencies in our program and volunteer management processes and the re-opening of schools throughout China. We are eager to launch our new Social Emotional Learning program, funded by UPS, as we believe that this is ever more needed in our communities post-epidemic.

Fundraising continues to be a challenge, and this will be an important focus in the coming year. We plan to hold our bi-annual fundraiser at the end of the year – watch this space! – and hope that we will be able to resume social enterprise activities such as corporate volunteering events and rural volunteer tours, which formed a bigger part of our fundraising mix pre-covid.

We look forward with excitement to see what the new post-covid era will mean for our students, and whatever happens, we remain committed to making a difference to the education of thousands more children and youth in 2023!





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