



現時中國大陸的基礎教育情況是怎樣的呢？

What is the current situation of foundation education in Mainland China?

中國自1986年開始實行義務教育法，所有適齡兒童都須接受小一至中三的教育，家長有責任送子女入學，學費全免，只需繳交書雜費，在校寄宿生還需繳付寄宿費。但因應地區不同，書雜費由幾十元到幾百元不等。一般來說，在城市，失學率是很低的，但在一些貧困山區來說，收入僅足溫飽，子女讀書困難，失學情況是很普遍的。中國政府自2006年起逐步擴大農村地區免雜費、免書費和補貼寄宿生的生活費（簡稱「兩免一補」）。貧困地區兒童失學問題有望逐漸緩和。然而貧困地區危房校舍和師資，仍是大難題。

In 1986, China put into effect the Law of Compulsory Education for all school-children to receive 9 years of education. Parents are required to send their children to school. Although they are not required to pay tuition fee, they have to cough up for books and miscellaneous fee. Boarding students are also liable to pay a boarding fee. Such expense varies widely from region to region and can amount up to a few hundred RMB a year. In cities, the percentage of school dropouts is relatively low. In remote or poverty-stricken areas, however, dropout rate is much higher as the people there often struggle to earn enough for food and cloth; many families have little money left to send their kids to school.

Commencing in 2006, the Chinese Government gradually expanded the circumference of rural regions eligible for exemption from books and miscellaneous fee. Boarding students are provided with living subsidies. ("Two exemptions and one subsidy") Hopefully, problems created by the inability of children living in impoverished regions to afford school could gradually be eased even though problems concerning the qualification of teachers and quality of school buildings remain serious in impoverished regions.

你們有考慮過辦教育是政府的責任嗎？

Is it not that solving the education problem a responsibility for the Chinese Government?

中國由於人口多，發展教育面對很大困難。也許我們可以這樣看，香港已經是一個非常繁榮的社會吧？想像一下明天早上，所有慈善團體舉辦的學校、醫院、社區中心等都沒有了，香港的社會服務足夠嗎？連香港這樣高度發展的社會都需要慈善團體的支持，更遑論中國這個發展中國家了。

Perhaps we should look at the issue this way. Will the Hong Kong Government be able to provide sufficient resources to replace all the schools, hospitals and community services currently run by charitable organizations? Even in a prosperous society such as Hong Kong, there is still a need for charitable services, let alone in China - a developing country. The Chinese Government places education high in their agenda. But with an ever-increasing population, China faces many difficulties in her development. We should do every thing we can to help.



個人都知道要徹底改善中國教育的難處，為甚麼你們仍會搞『苗圃行動』？

It is well known that improving the education system in China is a daunting task. Why still run Sowers Action?

面對著一大堆困難、不滿意等，很多人會選擇妥協，甚至逃避，或者漠視，讓這一代人應該解決的難題，推到下一代去。但人莫不需要理想去激揚生命。知難行更難，對於中國教育，雖然我們不能在一、二十年完成，我們仍堅信必有有心人，一燈燃亮萬燈，將這個信念延續下去。這樣「苗圃行動」就代表一種生命，一種敢於面對困難的生命。

Many, who do not have the courage to stare at such insurmountable problem in the eye, would simply accept it as fate. Others even turn a blind eye and feel that it should be left to future generations. Sowers Action refuses to adopt these attitudes and prepares to take on the challenge. To quote Carlos Casteneda: "A man of knowledge lives by acting, not thinking about acting." It may take decades to realise our dreams, but we are convinced that our sparks of endurance and courage will ignite much larger beacons from many others who share the same dreams. The name Sowers Action stands for such spirit.

苗圃行動通過甚麼方法去完成促進中國基礎教育的目標呢？

How does Sowers Action achieve the aim of promoting foundation education in China?

我們盡力籌集善款，用於三方面：

- 一、讓所有適齡兒童都能入學，在完成九年義務教育的基礎上，進一步提升人口素質。
- 二、改善辦學條件，包括設施和建校。
- 三、改善教師質素。

同時我們希望以我們的實際行動和成果，感召更多有心、有能力的人參與這項有意義的工作。

We do our utmost to raise funds with which we wish to:

- I. further improve the people's quality by first enabling all school-age children to complete 9 years of foundation education;
- II. improve conditions for schooling, including facilities and school buildings;
- III. enhance teachers' qualifications.

At the same time, we hope that our down-to-earth approach and results will inspire those with warm-hearts and capabilities to participate in this great course.



我們都擔心挪用捐款、貪污等問題，你們怎樣處理善款呢？

We all have our doubt about misappropriation or embezzlement of donations, or even corruption in China. How do you safeguard benevolent donations?

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| <p>a) 我們強調「實地考察、直接資助、長期跟進」。為確保善款用到切實有需要的地方，沒有工作組到過了解過當地的實際情況，我們是不會考慮資助的。</p> | <p>a) We emphasise our principle of “on-site evaluation, direct subsidy and long term follow-up”. To ensure that money goes to the areas in genuine need, we will not consider any project without knowledge of the true local situation through on-the-spot investigations carried out by our working groups.</p> |
| <p>b) 項目資助透過協議書形式進行，清楚列明捐款數額用途，驗收規格等，確保工程按協議內容完成。協議由教育局、縣政府、學校、青基會及苗圃等簽署，由眾多單位同時監察。</p> | <p>b) When a project is given approval, an agreement will establish precisely the amount of funding, its use and conditions of acceptance. This agreement will be signed by Sowers Action, the beneficiary, the local education department, the county government and Provincial Youth Development Foundation. All signatory parties will jointly supervise the project to ensure its completion in accord with the agreement.</p> |
| <p>c) 一般情況是苗圃只資助部份工程款項，餘款由當地籌集，增加本地鄉民的參與及監察的積極性。苗圃百份之五十的捐款需在工程驗收滿意後支付。</p> | <p>c) Usually Sowers Action will finance only part of any individual project. The remainder will have to be raised by the local officials. We believe that this will encourage local villagers' involvement and supervision in the project. Half of the Sowers Action donation will be provided to the village on signing of the agreement. The balance will be transferred only after the project has satisfactorily passed our acceptance inspection.</p> |
| <p>d) 苗圃歡迎捐款者參加苗圃的國內服務工作組，直接參與完成整個資助過程。</p> | <p>d) Sowers Action encourages donors to join our working groups whilst they are visiting beneficiary villages to help monitoring progress of projects.</p> |



助學捐款會不會大部份用作苗圃的行政經費呢？這方面的支出是不是很龐大？賬目清楚嗎？

Will the donations received for education assistance be used to finance the administrative expenses of Sowers Action? Are such administrative expenses substantial? Are Sowers Action's accounts in good order?

- a) 苗圃收到的助學捐款只能用於國內資助，不能扣除任何數目作為苗圃的行政經費。至於本會的行政經費，來源包括會員會費，指定行政費捐款，利息收入及行政費籌募活動等。一般捐款，如沒有指明用途，皆作為助學捐款。
- (a) All donations received by Sowers Action are bound by our constitution and can only be used to aid mainland foundation education projects, unless donors specify otherwise. Sowers Action's administrative expenses are covered by income from membership fees, bank interest and specific fund raising campaigns. Under no circumstances will it be drawn from the benevolent donations.
- b) 由於本會以義工主導，盡力減少行政費用。大部份的活動都以自籌經費，平衡預算的辦法完成。工作組到國內服務的旅差費亦需由參加的組員自付；但因會務需要而參加工作組的職員、地區幹事、義務董事及因有特殊任務，由苗圃董事局邀請參加的人士，可申請交通及住宿費津貼，每個工作組可申請的金額及人數皆有限。
- (b) Sowers Action's operations are principally led by volunteers, administrative expenditure can therefore be kept to a minimum. The majority of our promotional and fund-raising campaigns are self-financing and managed by budget-balancing. Even the traveling expenses of volunteers participating in China services working groups are paid for by the volunteers themselves. However, Sowers Action's employees, regional executives, honorary directors who need to participate in and persons having special missions or invited by the Board of Directors to participate in any China services working groups may apply for transportation and room and board allowances pursuant to the limit applicable to each working group on the amount of money available and number of persons eligible for application.
- c) 苗圃的賬目是完全公開的，會員及捐款者可隨時查閱。每年由德勤·關黃陳方會計師行(Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu)審核。
- (c) The accounts of Sowers Action are completely open and are available for examination by our members and donors at any time. Our books are audited annually by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, Certified Public Accountants.



要資助中國基礎教育，不是把善款匯到國內就行嗎？

為甚麼你們要這樣千里迢迢，攀山涉水的親自去做服務呢？

In assisting China's foundation education development, is it not simpler just to remit donations directly to China?

Why does Sowers Action feel it necessary to send working groups to China?

為了表達對中國失學兒童的關心，我們都認為單是捐款是不足夠的。

發展教育不是三數年間的事，需要有一個長遠不間斷的發展計劃，方能從根本改善這個問題，但是捐錢而不參與，很多時候給人一種誤導，以為一次捐款等同問題已經解決了，其實問題還是延續下去。

我們帶去的除了是一些善款外，我們還為他們帶來一點關心和支助，要知道在貧瘠山區當教師是不容易的，有時精神支持比物質支持還來得重要。

The improvement of education conditions in China will not be accomplished in a matter of years. Radical changes require continuous development programs and persistent efforts.

Sowers Action feels so strongly for those less fortunate Chinese children and we know that simply giving out money would not help. Furthermore, many donors could mistakenly believe that money alone will solve the problems. In fact the problems are miles from over. Contribution without involvement is not sufficient. As a Chinese Proverb says: "Give a man a fish to eat and feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and feed him for life."

What Sowers Action gives those children is more than just donations; we show them our concern and care. Teaching in the poor and remote areas is a truly formidable task. Spiritual support is often as important as, if not more than, material help.

你們會在探訪中即時進行資助嗎？

Will you offer immediate financial aid during your visits?

不會。所有資助項目都必須經過董事局批核。因為我們除了考慮到資助的需要外，還要考慮我們資助和跟進的能力。

No. All proposed aid projects must be examined and approved by the Board of Directors. We consider, on top of the needs of a prospective beneficiary, our resources and our ability to provide long term follow-up.



國內有像苗圃一樣的助學機構嗎？你們有和他們合作嗎？

Are there other organizations like Sowers Action in China? Have you ever co-operated with them?

有。國內的中國青少年發展基金會屬下的「希望工程」目標與苗圃行動都是一樣，希望每一個適齡兒童都能入學完成基礎教育。苗圃行動是香港的慈善團體，希望工程是國內的單位，大家目標相同，但在日常會務，籌款或落實資助過程都有不同的處理辦法。

希望工程和教育局很多時為苗圃行動提供資料，協助苗圃的工作組安排探訪和實地考察，並派代表在資助協議書上簽名，以負起部份跟進監察的工作，同時亦可避免有資源重疊的情況。

1997年苗圃行動和中國青少年發展基金會合辦「行路上北京」籌款活動，共籌得港幣二千萬元，用於廣東、湖南、湖北、河南及河北沿途五省。

2004-05年苗圃行動和中國青少年發展基金會再次合作，舉辦「助學長征」步行籌款活動，共籌得港幣三千萬元，用於江西、廣東、湖南、廣西、貴州、雲南、四川、甘肅、寧夏、陝西等十省區共101個縣市。

Yes. The most well known one is probably Hope Project which operates under The China Youth Development Foundation. Sowers Action is a charity organization in Hong Kong and Hope Project is an entity in Mainland China. Although we have very similar aims, we use different methodologies in our daily activities, fund raising programmes and project implementation procedures.

Hope Project and local education departments often provide information for Sowers Action, co-ordinate travel arrangements for our working groups and assist our on-the-spot investigations. They also appoint their representatives to sign agreements on financial aids and undertake follow-up supervisions. We all therefore achieve economy by not overlapping our resources.

In 1997, Sowers Action and China Youth Development Foundation jointly organized a highly publicised and successful fund raising campaign "Walk to Beijing" from which a total of HK\$20 million was raised for education development projects in Guangdong, Hunan, Hubei, Henan and Hebei provinces.

In 2004-05, Sowers Action and China Youth Development Foundation co-operated again to organize the fund-raising walkathon "Long March for Education" from which a total of HK\$30 million was raised for education development projects in a total of 101 county towns dispersed in the 10 provinces of Jiangxi, Guangdong, Hunan, Guangxi, Guizhou, Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu, Ningxia and Shaanxi.



你常提到的工作組，他們有甚麼具體任務？

You often mention the Sowers Action working groups. What do they do?

工作組探訪時，一般會與鄉領導如黨委書記等見面，以了解全鄉的情況，例如經濟、人口、個人年均收入或此鄉的特殊困難和問題，但有關教育的，我們還會詢問縣的教育局長、鄉的教育辦公室主任和學校校長、老師等，接著我們會填寫一份內部的學校探訪報告和考慮推薦或不推薦一些資助項目。

工作組另一個任務是根據資助協議書驗收工程，取回支出款項收據及拍攝物資使用情況的相片。

Our working groups travel to prospective villages to meet the heads or elderlies to gather local information about populations, economies, average income, any various difficulties and so on. Our working groups also consult with officials of county education departments, school principals and teachers. They will then compile reports giving recommendations as to which projects Sowers Action shall sponsor.

Another important task of our working groups is to carry out acceptance inspections according to sponsorship agreements, to collect expenditure receipts and to take photographic records of completed projects.

聽說很多時候，由於種種原因例如材料漲價等，在國內搞建設是難以完工的，這就變了無底洞，這問題你們怎麼處理呢？

Reportedly, in Mainland China, there is often difficulty completing building construction works, due to rises in material costs and other financial factors. How does Sowers Action overcome such problems?

在未審批重建學校工程以前，苗圃一般需有關單位填妥本會問卷及提供圖則、用料等，本會才會加以考慮。審批時我們只批出一個資助上限，並要求對方就所有工程完工作一保證（包底）才考慮資助。

在特殊情況，如果理由充份合理，董事局也會考慮追加資助金額。

Prior to our approval of grant for a building project, our prospective beneficiary must complete our questionnaires, provide copies of all construction plans, blueprints and bills of materials. Based on these information, we will define an upper limit of sponsorship. Funds will only be approved when the beneficiary prepares to undertake completion of the building project within the limit. Unless under extreme exceptions and with good reasons, the Board of Directors will not consider any extension of the limit.



苗圃行動會宣揚香港人的思想或意識形態嗎？

Does Sowers Action promote Hong Kong peoples' ideas or ideology?

苗圃行動只是一個「助學」團體，並非教育、政治或宗教團體，不會宣揚任何一種意識形態，亦不會干涉受資助學校的教學內容。

鄉村有鄉村的文化和思想，如果以香港和中國的一些農村比較，這個差距就更明顯。所以我們並不以香港的文化為主而影響到他們本土的生活和思想。例如在考慮實物資助時，我們會想到送去的物品是否和當地風俗配合。例如送一批迷彩螢光的冬衣給學生，恐怕就不太配合農村生活了。無論在考察或資助時，“禮貌”都很重要。

雖然有一種資助者和受助者的關係，但我們仍是喜歡以一種較平等的態度共處。

No. Sowers Action is not an educational, political or religious organization. Our purpose is solely to provide aids for educational development. We do not promote any ideology, nor do we intervene in their teaching.

Between Hong Kong and Coastal China, there are significant differences between our perceptions of values. When compared with rural China such differences are even greater.

There are also many ethnic groups with vast different cultures. We have neither role nor right to impose our values to their lifestyles.

When providing material aids, respect for cultures and life styles receives particular attention. For example, clothing in vivid colours may not suit simple pastoral villagers. Courtesy is extremely important. Between the gives and the takes, we must treat each other as equal.



剛才解釋了苗圃的推行方法，但是背後的信念是甚麼呢？

You have described the activities of Sowers Action. But what are your beliefs behind your work?

我們認為要根本解決一個地方的困難，需從教育做起，讓他們能夠自力更生。所以我們的目標是以“助人自助”的發展策略為主。我們的口號是：治貧先治本，其基礎在教育。而這種發展計劃亦必須以尊重地方文化為主。另外，如果單就感性的層面看，幫助一個貧苦學生令他可以接受教育，是做一件好事，但如果看遠一點，這其實關切到整個民族的前途。

試想想中國如不能改善文盲情況，她怎樣於21世紀走上現代化的台階呢？所以我們相信中國的進步在於將人口包袱轉化為智力資源。

“Education - the permanent cure for poverty” is our motto. We strongly believe that the solution to the problems of the poor in deprived areas of China and for them to stand on their own feet, we should start with education. This is absolutely fundamental. Our strategy is to assist them to help themselves. Thus, our development programmes must be founded with the respect for local cultures.

We feel lifted when a child can resume school because of our efforts. But our ultimate concern is the future of the entire nation. If China cannot improve her level of literacy, there is little hope for her to step onto the stage of modernisation in the 21st century. We believe that China's future lies in the success of transforming the burden of such huge population into an immense intellectual resource.