

One Step at a Time

一步·一足印



本年度為苗圃二十周年慶典，是既驚且喜的一年，喜的是在一眾前輩的努力下，奠下穩固的基礎；在憧憬着新的一頁之時，我們亦懷着戰兢的心情，昂然迎向未來的挑戰。

1992年，苗圃從南部踏上助學路，一步一步地走；二十年後的今天，我們已遠征大西北，走遍16個省、242個縣，學生資助人數達28萬人次，培訓老師逾2.3萬人次，成績令人鼓舞。我們明白，苗圃今天擁有的得來不易，未來的發展也將挑戰重重。因此，我們希望在此立冠之年，承先啟後，為下一個二十年理出新方向。

今年其中一個大計為回訪2007年以前資助的學校，以總結過去二十年的成績。是次回訪的學校遍佈13個省份，有早期集中地廣東、湖南，還有長期資助縣的雲南、貴州、四川及甘肅等，還有一次性的，因活動「行路上北京」、「助學長征」及「茶馬古道」而建的學校。回訪共派出了28個工作組，超過50名義工投入參與。此行不但讓我們加深了解學校的使用情況，以及各地的最新發展和需要，更不時遇到一些動人的小插曲。

我們看見，一位受資助的學生，今天已經大學畢業，寧棄高薪厚職，回到河南的母校執起教鞭，為下一代的教育出力；也有學生當上了湖南省保靖縣團委書記，為黎民百姓服務。印象更深的是，時隔逾十載，湖南當地的一些村民對義工當年攀山涉水，親身到校考察的記憶，竟依然歷歷在目。如此種種，不但讓我們感動非常，也產生更大動力，鞭策我們繼續為促進中國教育發展的理念而打拼。

Sowers Action is celebrating our 20th anniversary this year, and it is a year of significance for us. Looking back, we are grateful for the solid foundation laid by our predecessors; looking forward, we are cautiously optimistic about the future, and will try our best to rise to the coming challenges.

In 1992, Sowers Action kick-started our education assistance journey from the southern part of China, and has been on our way ever since. 20 years later, we have been to 16 provinces and 242 counties, reaching as far as the great Northwest. 280,000 students have been aided and 23,000 teachers trained. We understand that this is no mean achievement, and further progress will not be easy, either. At the age of twenty, it is the right time for us to reflect on and learn from our past, so as to set out a new direction for the next two decades.

To sum up our progress so far, one of our key tasks this year is to revisit the schools we assisted before 2007. Located in 13 different provinces, some of the schools have been subsidized back in the early days, such as those in Guangdong and Hunan, while schools in Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan and Gansu were our long-term beneficiary. Some were built by one-off fundraising events such as "Walk to Beijing", "Long March for Education" and "Ancient Tea Horse Route Expedition". To better understand the latest development of the areas and whether the schools and facilities were being fully utilized, we assigned more than 50 volunteers in 28 groups to carry out a thorough investigation. During our visits, we were often touched by little episodes here and there.

For example, a university graduate, who received our assistance before, gave up more profitable prospects and became a teacher for his mother school in Hunan. Another student chose to contribute to his people by serving the local government in the same province. We are particularly impressed that many villagers still manage to recall our visits more than a decade ago. Deeply moved, we are now even more determined to continue our mission: helping to promote the development of China's education.



今年4月1日，我們正式為成立二十周年誌慶拉開序幕。慶祝活動方面，我們力求在現有基礎上增添新意。例如，我們的「單車助學行」，今年就首次登陸台灣。深受歡迎的「挑戰12小時」，今年亦推陳出新，首次與中國青基會合作，移師北京，共同舉辦「北京挑戰8小時」，以探討在內地主辦活動的可行性。

此外，我們希望為香港的教育也盡一點力，開始參與由獅子會港澳青少年輔導基金有限公司舉行的「學生課後輔導計劃」，派出義工協助推動項目，並與協辦單位香港專業教育學院(IVE)合作，招募和推薦傑出表現的導師。來年我們計劃更進一步，開始資助深水埗區學校的課後輔導服務。

資助事務方面，我們重整雲南辦事處的職員架構，遷往新辦公地點，此變革為團隊帶來新動力。我們亦在年初於雲南省臨滄設點，希望從整個地區考慮資助方向。除了建校、學生資助外，我們的焦點師資培訓在五大範疇打好基礎，包括英語、心理健康、特殊教育、學前教育及通識。過去一年，在義工團隊的帶領及支援下，我們共培訓了近11,000人次老師，更與雲南省教育廳簽下合作備忘錄，肯定了苗圃的工作。

此外，我們將宣傳及編輯部合併為傳訊部，集中資源加強苗圃的宣傳策略，透過不同渠道，加深社會各界對我們的理解，從而建立更鮮明的「助學」形象。配合網絡時代，來年我們會加強拓展網上宣傳，推出電子通訊、善用電郵和社交網頁及開發手機應用程式等，實行以多元化的方式宣傳我們「多元助學」的理念。

展望未來，我們充滿希望，但也明白不能漠視當前的困難。隨著內地經濟急速發展，有部份人「富起來」，影響港人對國家的觀感，間接令捐款減少。事實上，扣除已簽約而未撥出的善款，現時的助學款只剩下900多萬，相對一年約四千多萬的資助額，我們的儲備不足應付一年的預算。加上競爭激烈，活動參加人數減少，平均籌款額下降。為確保持續發展，苗圃實在不能因循守舊，我們已密鑼緊鼓策劃新的籌款策略。

Our celebration got underway officially on 1 April, and we strive to bring in new ideas to make our activities more diversified and interesting. For instance, our "Cycling for Education" was held in Taiwan for the first time. We have also collaborated with China Youth Development Foundation to stage a Beijing version of the highly popular "Challenging 12 Hours" — "Challenging 8 Hours", with an aim to explore the feasibility of organizing events in Mainland.

In addition to our works in Mainland China, we also try to contribute to Hong Kong's education by participating in the After-school Tutoring Scheme organized by the Hong Kong and Macao Lions Beacon for Youth Foundation Ltd. Our volunteers helped to promote the scheme, and we also partnered with the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education for recruitment and reference of outstanding tutors. In the coming year, we aim to collaborate further by offering direct services to schools in Sham Shui Po.

For subsidizing affairs, we have restructured and relocated our Yunnan office, a change that helps to re-energize our workforce. Earlier this year, we set a pivot in Lincang of Yunnan Province with a view to arrange assistance on a regional level. Besides school building and student subsidies, we are also focusing on teacher training in five major areas, namely English skills, mental health, special education, early childhood education and liberal studies. Thanks to the efforts of our volunteers, nearly 11,000 teachers completed the trainings last year. We have signed a memorandum of understanding with the Yunnan Provincial Department of Education as recognition of our work.

To better build up our profile as an education assistance group, we decided to concentrate our resources by combining Publication and Promotion Department into Communications Department, so that our publicity can have a wider appeal to the society. Keeping in step with the digital age, we will enhance our online promotion through different channels, including e-newsletters, email notices, social networks and mobile applications, thus highlighting our idea of "multipurpose educational aid".

We are looking forward with hope, but cannot turn a blind eye to the difficulties we are facing. The Chinese economy has been growing rapidly, and some people succeed in getting rich. This alters Hong Kong people's perception of the Mainland and, in an indirect way, they are donating less than before. In fact, after deducting appropriated funding, our reserve amounts only to around \$9 million, far from enough to cover our annual budget of \$40 million. Owing to fierce competition, our fundraising ability is hampered as our activities are having lower participation. To make our development sustainable, we have to be innovative and are already devising new ways to raise fund.



苗圃今天的成果，全憑過去二十年來，無數義工和捐助者的默默貢獻。迎向第二十一個年頭，我們不敢怠慢，無論籌款策略、資助事務和宣傳推廣均銳意求進，真正做到承先啟後。在一眾義工攜手合作及共同努力下，我們深盼苗圃繼續茁壯成長，在神州大地上，結出更多豐碩的果子。

署理總幹事
許彬彬

Our accomplishment today stems from the accumulated efforts of every volunteers and donors throughout the past two decades. Heading into the 21st year, we aspire to further improve our fundraising strategy, education assistance and promotion campaigns. With concerted efforts, we sincerely hope that the seeds we sowed will continue to sprout, blossom and bear fruit throughout our country.

Acting Chief Executive Officer
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