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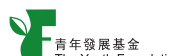
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Helping China's Rural Poor

Harvest Their Dreams...



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China is now synonymous with growth and prosperity. Cities such as Shanghai and Beijing boast infrastructures that rival any city in the world. Dramatic images of glimmering skyscrapers towering above streets booming with commerce highlight China's seemingly unstoppable growth. China's currency reserves and trade policies shape global markets. The academic prowess of China's children is widely acclaimed.

However, in the rural interior, far from the eastern seaboard, millions of people still live in extreme poverty. Here, sturdy mules replace luxury cars, and humble villages replace towering skyscrapers. Two thirds of China's young people are growing up in these poor, rural areas. As they grow up and move to the cities, they can either help propel the country's growth or dampen its dynamism. It is possible that failing to educate and train poor rural children will jeopardize China's growth and transformation into a modern, knowledge-based economy.



Behind China's glittering cities lies a world of persistent poverty.

This is where REAP comes in.

The Rural Education Action Project (REAP) is an impact evaluation organization that aims to inform sound education, health and nutrition policy in China. REAP is a collaboration of the Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy (CCAP) at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing, the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University, the Northwest Socioeconomic Development Research Center at Northwest University in Xi'an, and many others. REAP's goal is to help students from vulnerable communities in China enhance their human capital and overcome obstacles to education so that they can escape poverty and better contribute to China's developing economy. REAP's research focuses on three key areas:

• **Health, Nutrition & Education**

When children are sick or undernourished, their schoolwork suffers. REAP aims to reduce illness and undernutrition among children so that they can reach their full academic potential.

• **Technology & Human Capital**

REAP is exploring the use of technology to improve schooling and health outcomes, both by providing children with extra help inside and outside of school, and by educating parents in remote, hard-to-penetrate areas.

• **Keeping Kids in School**

Rural schools can be both low quality and expensive, giving children and their parents little incentive to attend. REAP aims to identify and solve the most serious cost and quality problems associated with rural schooling, so that rural children can have access to an affordable, quality education.



Children in poor, rural areas lack access to a quality education, putting them at a distinct disadvantage compared to their rich, urban counterparts.

What distinguishes REAP's approach?

There are thousands of government entities, private organizations, and research institutions around the world that are dedicated to solving problems for vulnerable populations. Often they are awash with money and good intentions, yet the problems they are committed to solving persist. REAP believes this is partly because very few organizations are able to convincingly answer a fundamental question about their efforts: **do they work?**

REAP asks this question about all of our projects. We believe that in order to reliably measure success and effectively channel ideas and investments, a quantitative, experimental (or quasi-experimental) design is essential. These types of rigorous program evaluations are known in the academic world as "impact evaluations."





Impact Evaluation: The Basics

Experimental impact evaluations are different from traditional, qualitative monitoring and evaluation techniques in one key respect: they make use of a control group to serve as a basis of comparison. In this sense, they resemble traditional pharmaceutical trials or experiments that were once only done in the laboratory. Here we outline the basic steps involved in all of our impact evaluation projects:

Step 1: A sample group is chosen—say, 100 poor schools.

Step 2: We conduct a survey of all schools in the sample in order to establish a baseline level of information about them.

Step 3: We divide the sample into two statistically identical halves. Each school is assigned to either an intervention group (e.g., 50 schools) or a control group (50 schools).

Step 4: The intervention is implemented in one half of the schools (the intervention group) and not in the other (the control group). For example, 50 schools receive computer labs and educational software, while 50 schools do not.

Step 5: At the end of the project, our impact evaluation team comes in again to administer another survey, identical to that given during the baseline.

Step 6: The impact evaluation begins! We use the data from the baseline and endline surveys to measure the size of any changes in the treatment schools and compare them to the changes in the control schools.

- If the schools in the intervention group experience more of a change than the schools in the control group, we know that the intervention had an impact, and we can show exactly what that impact was.
- If the intervention and control groups still look identical at the end of the project, we know that the intervention did not have any measurable impact.

Where does REAP work?

REAP works exclusively in China, focusing our efforts on poor areas most in need of assistance. These areas are mostly located in China's rural hinterlands, but also include hardscrabble migrant communities on the outskirts of major cities. To date, REAP has conducted projects in 13 provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions. Please see our Project Map for more details.



How does REAP work?

To understand the barriers keeping the rural poor from reaching their full potential, and also learn what can be done to overcome these barriers, REAP works in two ways:

- 1) REAP designs and implements new projects, and then evaluates them.
- 2) REAP partners with government agencies, NGOs, foundations, and corporate social responsibility groups who are trying to implement their own projects:
 - REAP advises on project design.
 - The implementation organization carries out the project.
 - REAP evaluates the project.

Policy relevance is a core tenet of REAP's work.

All of the projects that we evaluate are designed to be scalable and policy relevant. Our projects take advantage of existing infrastructures and attempt to simulate what an actual government program or policy might look like, thus ensuring that—if successful—it can be more easily scaled up.

We are also interested in understanding why interventions succeed or fail. To this end, we employ regular monitoring throughout every project, and conduct semi-structured interviews during and at the conclusion of each project in an attempt to unpack the causal chain and see where failures occur, if at all.



Policy Impact

Once we know what works and what does not, we share our results with local, regional, and national policymakers across China, who can take steps to ensure successful strategies are picked up and implemented more broadly.

REAP's institutional relationship with the Chinese Academy of Sciences allows REAP the unique capacity to write policy briefs that can be directly channeled to China's top level decision-making bodies. Every year, REAP submits two to three of these policy briefs. Nearly every brief we have submitted has been accepted by the Policy Advice Desk of China's State Council, leading to policy responses by relevant government agencies, such as the Ministries of Education and Health.

In addition to the dialogue with national leaders, we advise provincial and county departments of education, health (including Centers for Disease Control & Prevention), and finance in six provinces. Though this network of government partnerships, REAP has successfully persuaded policymakers to scale up effective pilots, modify or stop ineffective ones, and answer difficult questions about the impact of policies, programs, and public investments.



In addition to reaching out to policymakers, what do we do with our results?

Besides targeting policymakers, REAP also functions as a research organization. Each year we publish an average of ten articles in peer-reviewed academic journals and present our work in academic conferences around the world. Publishing our results ensures that we are carrying out our work according to the highest quality standards of the field.

We also reach out to general audiences with the results of our work. We work hard to “strip the numbers” from our findings and relate them in reader-friendly avenues. To this end, we maintain a comprehensive website that contains summary descriptions of all of our projects and their findings. We also publish a *REAP Brief* series that documents each of our projects in an accessible format. We welcome you to explore our website, at reap.stanford.edu or www.reapchina.com.

“Can’t China solve its own problems?”

This is a question we often hear. Indeed, China's government has plenty of resources to tackle poverty and inequality throughout the country. However, like many governments, it often does not have proven ideas for effective social policy. Identifying effective measures to address these challenges is REAP's “value added.” China's growth in past decades has greatly reduced suffering and privation among the country's vast population, and the rest of the world has benefitted enormously from this growth as well. In today's global economy, where the fortunes of all countries are linked, all nations have much to gain from a growing China. Stanford University President John Hennessy put this succinctly when he said, “[Our] future is inextricably tied to the future of our community, our state, our nation and our world.” REAP embraces this creed wholeheartedly, and moves forward with the conviction that every child's future is valuable, no matter where he or she happens to live.





REAP by the numbers: What have we done so far?

Through our projects, we have touched the lives of millions of China's poorest and most needy children. Here are some of the ways in which China's children have gained from our work:

- REAP has tested 43,744 children for anemia.
- REAP has passed out over 1 million vitamins.
- REAP has arranged for 6000 students to participate in innovative computer assisted learning programs
- REAP has given over 2,200,000 US dollars of scholarship money to the poorest students in rural areas.



Although we are proud of these achievements, as an impact evaluation group we know these are only “inputs.” REAP is even more concerned with measuring the end results—or impact—of our efforts. Here, we share some of the exciting project outcomes we have contributed to:

- Approximately 3,000,000 children now eat a daily egg.
- Over 20,000,000 children now eat a healthier school lunch.
- Over 8,000 children have been prevented from dropping out of schools.
- In the first five years since REAP's launch in 2008 we submitted 11 official policy briefs to the top tiers of China's national government, and we continue to submit them at the rate of two to three per year.



Lunch for 20 Million

China's Rural School Nutritious Lunch Program serves as a prime example of how new and compelling results from the field can inspire decisive action. Informed by the research REAP conducted and presented to Chinese officials, plus similar efforts by other organizations, in 2011 the government launched a new policy formally committing **\$22.5 billion** in funding to improve the nutritional content of school meals over the next 10 years. This is the equivalent of doubling the current school meal subsidy, raising it from 2.5 yuan per student per day to 5 yuan per student per day. Conservative estimates put the number of children who will benefit from this policy at around 20 million. REAP is proud to have played a role in bringing these children the nourishment they need to meet their potential.



Many children who participate in our computer assisting learning projects have never touched a computer before.





A Tradition of Partnership

Collaborations lie at the heart of REAP's work. About a dozen researchers and program staff at Stanford University, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the Northwest Socioeconomic Development Research Center in Xi'an, China, comprise REAP's core team. We collaborate closely with such prestigious institutions as Peking University, Tsinghua University, Renmin University, and Sichuan University. Beyond this core set of partners, REAP actively pursues links to scores of outside entities, including other academic institutions, foundations, private companies and corporations, not-for-profit organizations, and government agencies.

We also work closely with students, both through our Stanford-based internship program and through a hands-on summer program sponsored by the Freeman Spogli Institute. Student volunteers and interns—from inside and outside of China—are an integral part of our research teams and have made substantial contributions to our work.

If you or your organization is interested in partnering with REAP, we would love to hear from you! We are always looking for new partnerships with industry, the not-for-profit community, and government. Please visit us online at reap.stanford.edu or www.reapchina.com for our detailed contact information.



Student interns are an integral part of our team.



Thank you!

For more information, please
visit our website:

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