



### **The REACH Program Overview**

China's education system focuses heavily on traditional subjects, preparing students for mandatory university entrance exams. However, this does not address everyday social and economic issues that students might encounter. It is also difficult to study for these university exams in rural areas where there are fewer resources and the student-teacher ratio is high. Students in these situations struggle with confidence in goal setting, decision-making and the kind of creativity that leads to empowered life choices.

The goal of the resiliency program is to reach these students in rural China who struggle with the pressures of education, employment and future challenges that seem overwhelming. This stress lies heavily on female students, and consensus is that this is a contributing factor to China's high suicide rates. Suicides among Chinese women are mostly between the ages of 15-34, and are three times higher in rural areas than urban. In addition to addressing women's needs, REACH has elected to begin adding male students to our programs and scholarships this year based on their need.

A major function of the REACH program is to find and train teacher advocates who want to cultivate meaningful relationships with their students. Student transformation then begins through monthly workshops, participatory learning and peer mentoring. Sessions cover self-evaluation, study skills, communication, and interpersonal skills, teamwork and cooperation, personal hygiene, resource management, and future planning. Many of the students who participate are CWFED scholarship students who receive aid for verified economic hardship.

It is the goal of REACH to give students the tools they need to be empowered as they move through life, rather than feeling overwhelmed or in despair. It is also our hope that the program will promote a sense of community among participants and those around them, building a future in which people in rural communities depend on each other and work together to solve local problems.