

# Supporting Women's Economic Empowerment through Entrepreneurship

A case study of the “Empowering Migrant Women as  
Entrepreneurs in China Project”

(October 2019, second edition)

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# Summary

## Background

The steady growth of women's entrepreneurship in China is a driving force behind the country's urbanization, rural revitalization, supply-side reform, and sustainable economic and social development. Women's entrepreneurship activities can reduce gender inequality in the workplace and promote inclusive economic growth across the country. China's government, enterprises, and social organizations have supported women's entrepreneurship through various policies, funds, and technologies.

From 2013 to 2019, in the interest of supporting women's entrepreneurship in China now and for the future, The Asia Foundation launched the "Empowering Migrant Women as Entrepreneurs in China Project." The Asia Foundation introduced this Project in Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Chongqing, where it served a total of 680 women. The following paper provides a case study of this Project, where it discusses the Project's origin, mode, deliverables, success, and sustainability. This paper constructed its case study by collating the Project's deliverable documents, visiting stakeholders, and summarizing Project experiences.

This analysis demonstrates how the Empowering Migrant Women as Entrepreneurs in China Project can be used as a reference point for other entrepreneurship-promotion projects that target vulnerable groups, such as women in rural areas. This paper will hopefully encourage other organizations to advance support systems for women's entrepreneurship.

## Project overview

From 2013 to 2019, the Empowering Migrant Women as Entrepreneurs in China Project took place in three phases in Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Chongqing. The Project received financial sponsorship and technical support from the GSRD Foundation, GE Foundation, and The Asia Foundation. The Project's implementing agencies included four local partners: the social organizations Shanghai Charity Education and Training Center (SCETC), Shanghai CNST Institute of Continuing Education (CNST), Kunshan Zhuoyue Consultancy Centre for Public Welfare Organizations (Zhuoyue), and Chongqing Society of Women Talents (CSWT).

In its first two phases, the Project targeted women entrepreneurs who lived locally but did not have a “HuKou,” that is, a locally registered permanent residence. In its third phase, the Project targeted women entrepreneurs in rural areas, especially those who had returned to their hometowns to start businesses and other women with entrepreneurial aspirations or start-up businesses. The Project aimed to help women develop entrepreneurship plans, master entrepreneurial skills, and expand interpersonal networks.

The Project focused on women entrepreneurs with lower than average education levels compared with other Chinese women entrepreneurs. Most of the trainees had only completed junior high school or secondary specialized school. To meet the needs of trainees with less education, the Project compiled a textbook for a 64-hour entrepreneurship course and provided entrepreneurship skills training and various post-training value-added services.

Throughout all three phases, the Project provided services to 680 women entrepreneurs. As per the Project's requirements, each trainee completed a business plan before their training session ended so that they could practically apply their new entrepreneurship knowledge. Of the first phase's trainees, 11 percent began their own businesses after completing the training, and 26 percent were prepared to start their own businesses. After the second phase, 16 percent of trainees began their own businesses, and 39 percent were prepared to start up their own businesses. After the third phase, out of the trainees who had not entered the Project with their own businesses, 16 percent started their own businesses after the training and another 16 percent were prepared to start their own businesses.

Throughout the Project's operation, the implementing agencies were able to improve their internal governance structures, enhance their project management capabilities, and enrich their resource networks. These changes helped the implementing agencies provide quality services for vulnerable women entrepreneurs after the Project's completion and helped guarantee that the Project could have a sustainable impact.

### **Key Project Lessons**

- 1. An entrepreneurship project for vulnerable groups, such as women, should**

**aim to enhance trainees' self-efficacy and empowerment.** Entrepreneurship is an effective means to help women grow in self-efficacy, promote initiative, and create stronger bonds between women and society.

2. **Local implementing agencies should play a leading role in conducting demand research to identify women entrepreneurs' needs and in carrying out projects.** Different regions have different needs, and implementing agencies vary in resources and capabilities. Localized implementing agencies, however, can provide necessary local context for local women's entrepreneurial needs and, therefore, provide appropriate services.
3. **Link self-generated resources with resources from diversified sources.** Women's entrepreneurship has varied demands, such as for office space, staff, funding, or guidance, and it is important to introduce resources from diversified sources to meet these demands. The Project helped women entrepreneurs link self-generated resources with resources provided by social organizations, governments, and enterprises. This broad support helped form a positive environment for women's entrepreneurship.
4. **Accumulate project experience and promote regional communication.** The Project worked toward sharing its experience and lessons at the international level in order to increase the impact of the Project's scope and attract the attention of additional organizations interested in promoting women's entrepreneurship. The Project also hoped to promote observation visits and communication between the different regions where the Project occurred in order to more rapidly respond to insights from Project experience.

#### **Project Development Recommendations:**

1. Involve projects in community operations, such as developing a women's entrepreneurship community, encouraging training for community leaders, and promoting an interpersonal network for women during training.
2. Build a team of trainers and mentors. Provide quality training for trainers and encourage academic exchange between them. Additionally, look for people with practical entrepreneurship experience who can serve as mentors. Also, increase the

mentors' sense of mission and belonging so that they feel connected to the project's cause.

3. Create a project brand by focusing on a demand-oriented project mode of entrepreneurial skills training and various post-training value-added services. By establishing a recognizable (branded) core value, the project will attract resources from governments, social organizations, and enterprises, and expand the project's scale and influence.
4. Create an ecosystem that is suited to local women's entrepreneurship. An ecosystem should encompass three dimensions: policies, laws, and rules; stakeholders; and international collaboration.

## **I. Case Study Background**

Expanding women's economic opportunities and enabling women to actively partake in economic activities promotes their economic development and social status; it also contributes to the development of families, communities, and a nation's society. Furthermore, supporting women's entrepreneurship reduces gender inequality in the workplace and promotes inclusive economic growth.

Women's entrepreneurship is an important economic and social phenomenon in contemporary China's reform and development; its growth is an important driving force behind China's new urbanization, supply-side reform, and sustainable economic and social development. In recent years, the Chinese government has provided entrepreneurship training and financial support for women in order to promote women's entrepreneurship activities and employment, and to encourage the nation's rural revitalization. Social organizations also promote women's entrepreneurship by integrating government and business sector resources in order to reach multiple groups of women.

The Asia Foundation is a non-profit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia; empowering women is one of The Asia Foundation's five overarching goals. In China, The Asia Foundation has long focused on the social and economic development of rural women and women migrating from rural areas to cities. Through a series of projects, The Asia Foundation ensures that these women's development opportunities equal those of men and of other urban women who have registered permanent addresses in cities, especially megacities.

From 2013 to 2019, The Asia Foundation launched the Empowering Migrant Women as Entrepreneurs in China Project. The Asia Foundation helped local implementing agencies support the Project's three phases in Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Chongqing, which eventually served a total of 680 women. The Project adopted a mode of a 64-hour course that included entrepreneurship skills training and various post-training value-added services which focused on the sustainability of entrepreneurship skills.

In addition to providing direct services, The Asia Foundation has improved the

sustainability and impact of women's **entrepreneurship-assistance systems** through pilot projects. For example, in the second phase of the Project, the implementing agency, Kunshan Zhuoyue Consultancy Centre for Public Welfare Organizations, integrated the Project's activities into the framework of local employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. Zhuoyue also combined the Project's efforts with the work of a local women's entrepreneurship incubation center in order to encourage future women's entrepreneurship success in the community.

## **II. Origin of the Project**

The Asia Foundation has long been concerned about the social development of vulnerable women. In the late 1990s, The Asia Foundation began supporting a series of social and protection projects to benefit women in regions that receive inflows of migrant workers, including the Pearl River Delta and the Yangtze River Delta. These projects specifically provide pre-job and skills training, education on labor and health, and scholarships to women migrant workers to help them pursue education.

As China's economy developed, labor costs increased and many Chinese factories gradually relocated to South and Southeast Asian countries. Many of the first generation of migrant workers who had moved from rural areas to work in factories left their slowly disappearing factory jobs to settle in cities where they hoped to find further job opportunities through entrepreneurship. In 2007, The Asia Foundation supported the Beijing Fuping School's "Social Innovation Fund Pilot Project" to meet the entrepreneurial needs of migrant workers through loans and basic skills training. The Pilot Project discovered that many migrant workers were encumbered by multiple difficulties, including low funds, a lack of entrepreneurial skills, poor management capability, and a lack of interpersonal networks and policy support.

From 2009 to 2010, The Asia Foundation supported the Fuping School's "Migrant Workers Entrepreneurship Research Project" to increase understanding of migrant workers' entrepreneurship needs. Fuping School researchers in Beijing, Chengdu, and Guangdong – three regions with varying industrial structures, worker backgrounds, and work experience for migrant workers – conducted surveys on the entrepreneurship needs of migrant workers. The surveys revealed that administrative barriers made it



especially important for migrant workers who did not have locally registered permanent residences (“HoKou”) to obtain support from local governments, including funds, entrepreneurship training, and relevant policies. Entrepreneurs also lacked social capital due to narrow interpersonal support networks. Additionally, women migrant workers received limited social support from the government because of gender prejudices, largely due to an unconscious bias against women’s entrepreneurship.

From 2010 to 2014, in cooperation with the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation (CFPA), The Asia Foundation established a small credit fund that provided small loans to women entrepreneurs migrating to Beijing. The loans were supplemented by regular counseling that was primarily provided by loan officers. Therefore, the counseling mainly aimed at simply ensuring that loans were repaid rather than enhancing the women’s overall financial knowledge. The loan program, therefore, failed to develop into an entrepreneurship-promoting system because, although the CFPA provided funds for migrant workers, their other needs, especially entrepreneurship training, were not satisfied.

Multiple types of credit institutions began to emerge during this time giving even entrepreneurs without locally registered permanent residences access to an increasing number of credit channels.

Therefore, in the interest of filling the gap for needed entrepreneurial skills and resources, The Asia Foundation shifted its focus to entrepreneurship education and services suited for migrant women and other women entrepreneurs who lacked social capital. It launched the Empowering Migrant Women as Entrepreneurs in China Project in 2013. The Asia Foundation also experimented with the idea of combining women’s entrepreneurship training with various post-training follow-up services in order to create a support system for future women’s entrepreneurship.

### **III. Empowering Migrant Women as Entrepreneurs in China Project**

The first phase of the Empowering Migrant Women as Entrepreneurs in China Project occurred in Shanghai, implemented by the Shanghai Charity Education and

Training Center (SCETC) ; the second phase took place in Shanghai and in Kunshan, in the Jiangsu Province, carried out by the SCETC and the Kunshan Zhuoyue Consultancy Centre for Public Welfare Organizations (Zhuoyue); and the third phase occurred in Chongqing, implemented by the Chongqing Society of Women Talents (CSWT). The Project's mode gradually evolved from only offering **entrepreneurship training** supplemented by simple group counseling into **entrepreneurial skills training and various post-training value-added services**. The Project also cooperated with local stakeholders in order to offer a support system for women entrepreneurs.

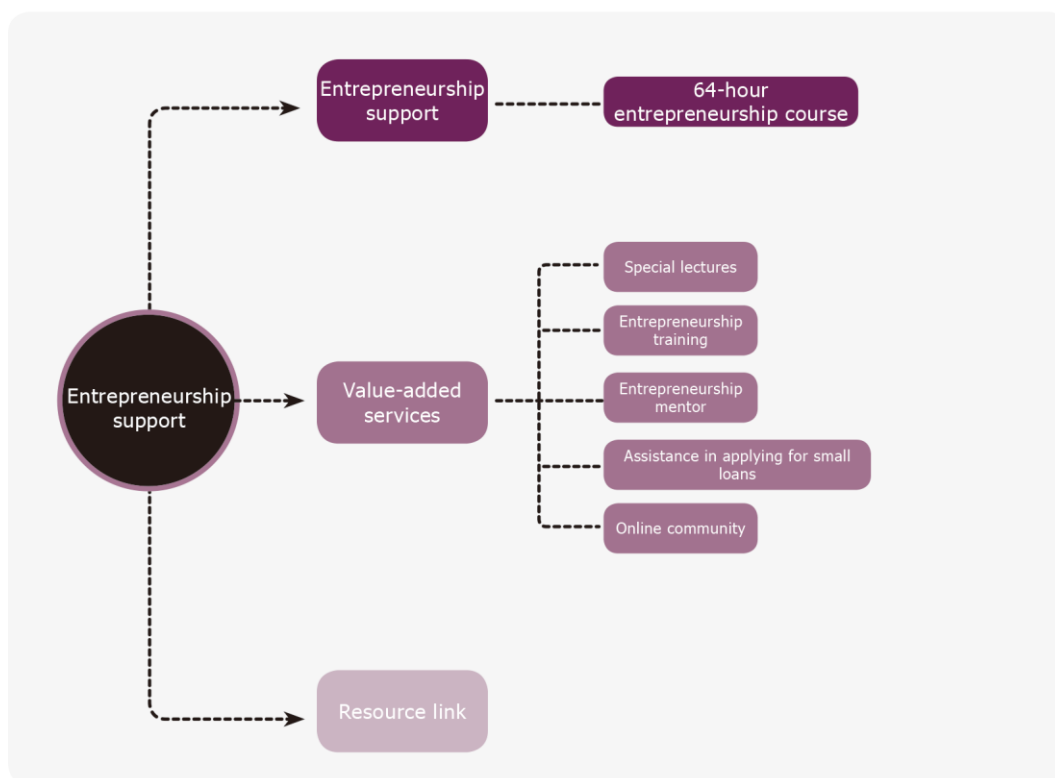
### 3.1 Overview of beneficiaries

The Project's first and second phases targeted women entrepreneurs who lived locally but did not have a locally registered permanent residence. The third phase targeted rural women, especially women who had returned to their hometowns from factories or cities, including those who had entrepreneurial aspirations or start-up businesses. Project beneficiaries had the following profile:

- **Educational background:** Trainees who had completed junior high school or secondary specialized school accounted for approximately 44 percent of participants; trainees who had completed university or junior college accounted for 37 percent; and trainees who had completed senior high school accounted for 19 percent of total participants. In the first phase of the Project, trainees who had completed junior high school accounted for a larger percentage of participants. Trainees in the second and third phase of the Project generally had higher levels of education, with approximately 70 percent who had completed senior high school, university, or junior college.
- **Age:** The average age of the trainees was 38 years old; the trainees in the second phase in Kunshan were younger, with an average age of 33 years old.
- **Residence time in the region where the Project was conducted:** The average residence time was 8.7 years.
- **Marital status:** Approximately 87 percent of trainees were married.

### 3.2 Project Mode

The Project's focus evolved from entrepreneurship training supplemented by simple group counseling to a **training and various post-training value-added services**. The Asia Foundation also cooperated with local stakeholders to build a support system for future women's entrepreneurship activities.



**Chart 1 Project Mode**

创业支持	Entrepreneurship support
创业培训	Entrepreneurship training
64 课时创业课程	64-hour entrepreneurship course
增值服务	Value-added services
专题讲座	Special lectures
创业实训	Entrepreneurship training
创业导师	Entrepreneurship mentor
协助申请小额贷款	Assistance in applying for small loans
在线社群	Online community
资源链接	Resource link

### 3.2.1 Entrepreneurship training (required module)

Entrepreneurship training included a 64-hour course on comprehensive and basic

entrepreneurial skills. Training sessions lasted eight days and involved small classes with about 30 people per class.

During the Project's first phase, experts at the SCETC simplified a training course from the Network For Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) that had previously been used for entrepreneurship education. The SCETC modified the training to fit the needs of the average education level of migrant women involved in the Project, the business fields women expected to be engaged in, and the length of time trainees could devote to training. The experts reduced the original 20 sessions to 15 sessions. The training course involved self-analysis and assessment of entrepreneurial potential, select entrepreneurship projects, basic knowledge and skills of starting and managing a business, especially financial management of micro and small businesses, covering cash flow and break-even points. Trainees also acquired knowledge about mapping out business plans. In the third phase, the Project revised the course material in accordance with policy changes for finance regulations and provided sessions on e-commerce in order to serve Chongqing's industrial characteristics.

The training is participation-centered, engaging trainees through discussions, role-playing activities, hands-on practice, site visits, and by inviting elite entrepreneurs to share their experience. Through these efforts, trainers helped trainees master both the real and practical skills needed for business operation.

### **3.2.2 Post-training value-added services (Services provided in light of project-beneficiary needs)**

After the training ended, the Project provided post-training value-added services for trainees who had begun or began their own businesses or had specific entrepreneurial plans. The service modules were adjusted according to the needs of trainees and included the following:

**Special lectures:** Lectures explored business skills not covered by the training course, including opening online stores, promotional skills, policy interpretation,

entrepreneurship based on the Chinese government's "Internet Plus" initiative,<sup>1</sup> credit information, and information about transitional business-operating venues that were eligible for government subsidies.

**Practical entrepreneurship training:** The Project provided internship opportunities at various enterprises to trainees who were ready to begin their own businesses but lacked industry experience so that trainees could gain an understanding of business operation.

**Entrepreneurship counseling:** The Project provided targeted guidance to trainees who were willing to begin their own businesses after the training was over or who faced specific problems in business operation. Mentors visited trainees regularly and provided them with telephone or online consultations in order to help them start businesses and/or improve business operations and administration.

**Assist in applying for small loans:** The Asia Foundation cooperated with an internet financial platform to provide small loans of up to RMB 100,000 (USD 14,300) for each trainee. Through prior arrangement with the Project, the internet financial platform provided favorable interest rates for trainees. The Project also arranged for mentors to assess whether the trainees' business projects were suitable for loans and helped trainees with loan application materials.

**Online communities:** The Project established online communities through the social-media applications QQ or Wechat at the beginning of each class, and trainees were added to an alumni group after their training ended. This online community helped the class adviser manage the class more effectively. It also provided a platform for trainees to communicate with each other. Trainers and mentors could share business information in the community and rapidly respond to questions and problems. These

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<sup>1</sup> "Internet Plus" refers to using the internet and other information technology in conventional industries. It is an incomplete equation where various internet technologies (mobile internet, cloud networking, Big Data or Internet of Things) can be added to other fields, fostering new industries and business development in China. For more information, see <http://english.www.gov.cn/2016special/internetplus/>

communities have also provided a flexible space for follow-up services.

### **3.2.3 Resource link**

The Project helped trainees access other entrepreneurship resources, including local entrepreneurship incubators and entrepreneurship competitions. The Project also supported markets for product promotion, exchanged ideas on customized financial services, enhanced interpersonal connections through an online community, and increased sales channels. Project implementing agencies differed from each other in terms of their resources and networks, and trainees had varied needs, so the Project made sure to diversify its resources. The Project mainly focused on providing information to help entrepreneurs understand various resources so that entrepreneurs could eventually learn to seek and utilize resources by themselves.

## **3.3 Project Deliverables**

### **3.3.1 Empower entrepreneurial women migrant workers and help them start their own businesses**

The Project tracked the training's impact on trainees' entrepreneurship and personal development through several modes, including a baseline survey at the beginning of each course, a follow-up end-line survey at the end of each course, along with one-on-one post-training interviews with representative trainees before the end of the Project. By doing this, Project was able to understand its impact on trainees' entrepreneurship, personal lives, and families.

Comparison of baseline and end-line surveys reveals that the Project largely helped trainees' entrepreneurial experience. **For those trainees who did not begin their own businesses prior to the Project**, data from the first phase of the Project shows that 11 percent of trainees began enterprises in the retail industry (online/offline) and service industry after the Project; and 26 percent of trainees were in the process of beginning their own businesses by selecting sites, leasing shops, applying for loans, and looking for partners after the Project ended. Data after the second phase revealed that 16 percent of trainees started their own businesses after the Project ended and 39 percent of trainees were in the process of beginning their own businesses. Out of the **trainees who had begun their own businesses prior to the Project**, after the Project's first

phase, 73 percent of the enterprises survived through the Project, but turnover did not increase. During the Project's second phase, 78 percent of the enterprises survived, and 65 percent of the enterprises' revenues increased with an average monthly growth of RMB 6,500 (USD 942) in Kunshan. After the Project's third phase, 74 percent of the trainees who had established start-ups before the Project reported revenue growth after the Project ended. The Project's impact extended outward when rural women entrepreneurs, after receiving training, created employment opportunities for other women in their villages when they established family enterprises.

The growth indicated by the above data reflects the success of the Project's improved mode. However, compared with trainees involved in the Project's first phase, the second-phase trainees in Kunshan (58 percent of all second-phase trainees) were younger and better educated. Higher levels of education may have played a role in the success of second-phase trainees because their prior knowledge increased their capacity for beginning their own businesses.

The Project supported the entrepreneurship of vulnerable groups and also focused on helping trainees begin their own businesses. Beyond entrepreneurship concerns, The Asia Foundation hoped to truly empower women through expanding trainees' personal connections and promoting their personal development.

The end-line surveys included questions about expanding interpersonal networks, the right to speak in the family, economic statuses, and decision-making rights. Although trainees generally acknowledged that the Project enabled them to start their own businesses, the survey results revealed no significant improvement in other indicators. This result may be due to the Project's short duration, particularly the short time between the Project's end and the final assessment. Allowing more time to elapse before assessing a Project may lead to an improvement in these indicators, but in any case, future project designs should aim to improve on these concerns.

Additionally, because the end-line surveys were based purely on quantitative questions, they were not able to accurately measure certain indicators. Therefore, Project staff visited representative trainees at different entrepreneurship stages before the Project ended in order to learn about the Project's impact on trainees. The following section details the experience of Zhao Li, a trainee who participated in the fifth training

session at Kunshan. The Asia Foundation visited Zhao Li after the Project ended in Kunshan, Jiangsu Province in August 2017.

Trainee's story: Zhao Li

In 2016, Zhao Li purchased a website design and online marketing company from her former manager. She did not know how to begin her business, however, because she had limited business operating experience. After learning about the Empowering Migrant Women as Entrepreneurs in China Project through the internet, she registered to become a trainee in the fifth training session in Kunshan in 2017. Her favorite training sessions were financial management and market research. She used questionnaires to learn about her customer's needs and adjust her service orientation. Her short-term plans for her company included providing diversified services and more technical support, such as hardware maintenance, for her current customers in order to improve customer satisfaction. Zhao explained that, although these changes were time-consuming, they were worthwhile because owning a company was her long-term dream. The training course also helped her establish relationships with other women entrepreneurs.

### **3.3.2 Foster local social organizations and ensure project sustainability**

As a grant-making foundation, The Asia Foundation hoped that the Project would not only benefit its target groups but would also support local implementing partners who shared similar missions, enhance their organizational governance capabilities, and provide entrepreneurial support for vulnerable women in the interest of project sustainability.

At the project-design stage, The Asia Foundation worked closely with its local partners to analyze their past experience and study the results of related projects, including research findings and international case studies. The Asia Foundation believed it was important to assist partners by enhancing their organizational capacities, from governance to project management. The Asia Foundation's partners agreed that The Asia Foundation's efforts helped them look at their organizations from a new perspective.

Through project collaboration, the Shanghai Charity Education and Training Center improved its entrepreneurship education system and enhanced its project management capability. The SCETC's advantages included comprehensive project-management and



assessment archives. The SCETC became a top-rated 5A<sup>2</sup> nongovernmental organization, which enhanced its credibility and consolidated its ability to conduct larger projects. While involved in the Project, the SCETC established and strengthened partnerships with various stakeholders in its local community, including with the Community Employment Guidance Office, vocational schools, local social organizations, and local chapters of the All-China Women's Federation. These partnerships helped expand the SCETC's service channels in its community.

While collaborating with the Project, Zhuoyue established its own trainer databank for entrepreneurship training courses. Zhuoyue continued to conduct variously-themed women's entrepreneurship training sessions after the Project ended. The entrepreneurship training project became a part of Zhuoyue's resource system, providing it with more opportunities to promote the private sector, involve itself in community service projects, and enrich public welfare projects.

Wang Junchao, the executive deputy director of Zhuoyue, addressed Zhuoyue's extended success when he explained, "As we are engaged in this entrepreneurship project, we are entirely different from all other social organizations in Kunshan in terms of resources and networks."

While collaborating with the Project, the Chongqing Society of Women Talents (CSWT) improved their internal project management and execution capabilities. The Research Society also developed an international vision for women's economic empowerment and activated its own resources and networks. These improvements further enabled the CSWT's ability to attract elite businesswomen and effectively encourage women in new entrepreneurship roles.

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<sup>2</sup> The 5A rating system applies to Chinese social organizations that align with the Social Organization Performance Evaluation & Management Regulation, which was issued by the Ministry of Civil Affairs. The rating system has five categories; 5A is the highest level.

## **IV. Project Lessons**

### **4.1 Entrepreneurship projects should aim to enhance women entrepreneurs' self-efficacy and empowerment**

The purpose of entrepreneurship projects, especially projects for vulnerable groups, such as women, should not be limited to entrepreneurial success defined as the growth of business revenue. Entrepreneurship is also a means to help women strengthen self-efficacy, initiative, and relationships with their communities.

Zhu Yaoqing, an entrepreneurship mentor from the Project, explains how to increase women's self-efficacy: "The first thing to do is to change the mindset of targeted women entrepreneurs"

Many female trainees feel that their societal and familial statuses have declined because of low income and a lack of personal connections, but these women also feel that they lack the ability or motivation to gain these resources. The Project targets women who are not recognized in their careers and have a limited sense of self-efficacy. From the very beginning of the training course, the Project helped women cultivate a sense of self-worth and empowerment. Mentors explained how to nurture family and partner relationships, and used themselves as personal examples in order to encourage trainees' self-efficacy.

Women's independence is just as important as their entrepreneurial success. In order to encourage women's empowerment, the Project emphasized self-reliance by preventing trainees from relying excessively on implementing agencies. Additionally, the Project should have more heavily discouraged trainees' reliance on mentors for post-training guidance.

Wang Junchao, the executive deputy director of Zhuoyue, explains, "It is necessary to hold ourselves slightly aloof. At the beginning, we can be closer to them, but we need to retreat later, and even just stay far behind to watch them doing these things."

### **4.2 Local organizations play a leading role in project implementation**

The Project asked that its implementing agencies conduct **thorough investigations** in order to establish an understanding of local situations before carrying out the Project. The Project wanted to understand the population structure of targeted women, including

where women congregated in communities, characteristics of the industries they engaged in, and relevant entrepreneurship policies. The Project waited until these research results were available before selecting the proper channels for enrolling trainees, training venues, and courses.

It was also necessary to analyze the barriers faced by migrant women when they attempt to begin their own businesses in the context of local market conditions, so that the Project could provide appropriate services. For example, when the Project operated in Shanghai, it did not focus on how to find governmental policies for entrepreneurs because preferential policies in Shanghai do not benefit micro and small businesses owned by those who are not registered in permanent Shanghai residences. In comparison, Kunshan's government policies offered more support to migrants for businesses, so the training project in Kunshan shared more information about policies. Additionally, the Project in Chongqing stressed helping rural women market ecological-farming businesses.

The Project allowed implementing agencies to play a leading role in designing demand research and formulating implementation strategies. Regions have varying needs, and implementing agencies differ from each other in their resources and capabilities. Partners in Shanghai maintained close relations with local communities, neighborhood committees, vocational schools, and employment-guidance offices. Partners could easily access migrant women who wanted to start their own businesses and investigate start-up possibilities. In Jiangsu and Chongqing, implementing agencies worked with local chapters of the All-China Women's Federation to analyze local populations.

In order to provide systematic services for female entrepreneurs, **social organizations must understand local social and economic situations, gain access to resources, and establish a strong sense of mission.** The most important criterion for selecting a sponsor/purchaser for services is the organization's sense of mission and understanding of the unique role a partner can play in a project.

The Shanghai Charity Education and Training Center has experience in providing entrepreneurship education for vulnerable people. The members of the SCETC's core team received NFTE training and have nearly 20 years of entrepreneurship education

experience. While organizing entrepreneurship training for women, the SCETC gained an understanding of migrant people's unique needs; it was, therefore, able to design training activities for the Project that were suited to these needs. The SCETC has also provided multiple services to vulnerable people. For example, it offered free secondary specialized school education for children of migrant workers in Shanghai. As a local social organization in Kunshan, the Kunshan Zhuoyue Consultancy Centre for Public Welfare Organizations has maintained a long-term collaboration with the local chapter of the All-China Women's Federation and other government departments. Because Zhuoyue is familiar with local conditions, it could provide entrepreneurship-education projects with resources from local governments, mass organizations, and commercial organizations. The Chongqing Society of Women Talents gathered a number of high-caliber women with special expertise, enterprise-management experience, and connections with government departments; it was, therefore, able to rapidly foster a contingent of mentors who understood the significance of women's entrepreneurship and could devote themselves to women's entrepreneurship activities.

### 4.3 Link self-generated resources with diversified resources

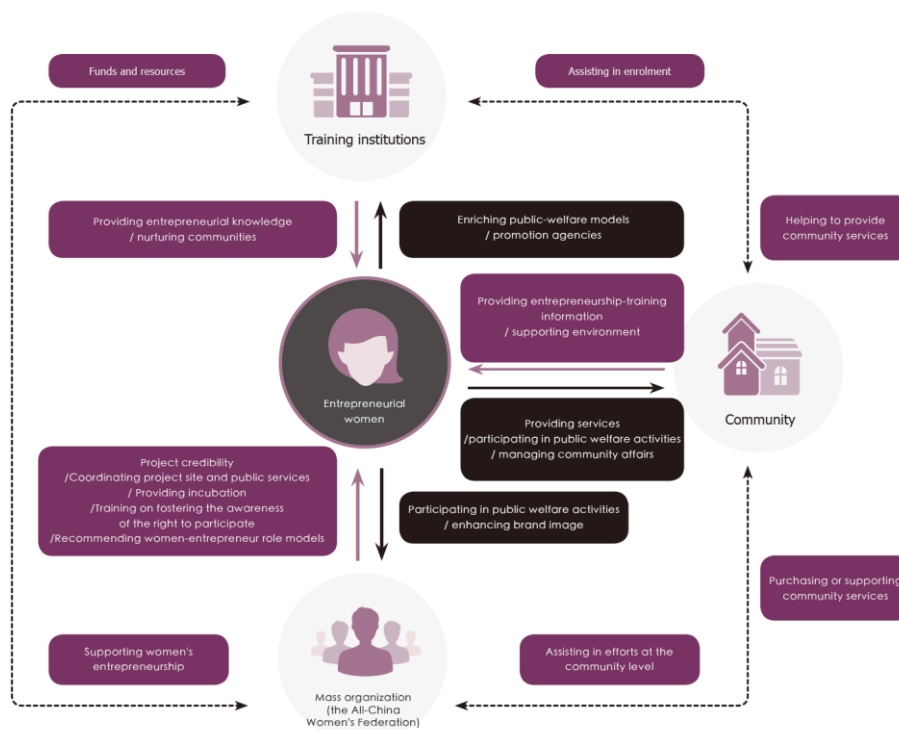


Chart 2 Stakeholder relationship diagram

图表 1 利益相关方关系图

Chart 2 Stakeholder relationship diagram

经费与资源	Funds and resources
培训机构	Training institutions
协助招生	Assisting in enrolment
提供创业知识/培育社群	Providing entrepreneurial knowledge/nurturing communities
丰富公益模式/推广机构	Enriching public-welfare models/promotion agencies
协助提供社区服务	Helping to provide community services
提供创业培训信息/提供支持环境	Providing entrepreneurship-training information/supporting environment
创业女性	Entrepreneurial women
提供服务/参与公益活动/管理社区事务	Providing services/participating in public welfare activities/managing community affairs
社区	Community
项目公信力/协调场地和公益服务/提供孵化/参与权利意识培训/引荐女性创业榜样	Project credibility/Coordinating project site and public services/Providing incubation/Training on fostering the awareness of the right to participate/Recommending women-entrepreneur role models
参与公益活动/提升品牌	Participating in public welfare activities/enhancing brand image
购买或支持社区服务	Purchasing or supporting community services
支持妇女创业工作	Supporting women's entrepreneurship
群团组织（妇联）	Mass organization (the All-China Women's Federation)
协助执行基层工作	Assisting in efforts at the community level

Women's entrepreneurship projects closely connect female entrepreneurs with training institutions, communities, women's federations, and other resources. This helps form a more extensive community for women entrepreneurs. In order to meet the needs of the **various demands women's entrepreneurship has generated, projects should introduce diversified resources for these demands.**

**Training institutions** provide entrepreneurial knowledge and guidance for women and help them form communities.

**Communities** provide training information and resources to female entrepreneurs to help them start their own businesses. In Shanghai, at the end of each course, the Secretary of the Jing'an Community would lead trainees in a review of the training course's materials; she even began her own business so she could share her experience

and provide moral support for female entrepreneurs.

In Kunshan, the Kunshan Zhuoyue Consultancy Centre for Public Welfare Organizations obtained support from **the local chapter of the All-China Women's Federation** while launching its training project. The involvement of the Women's Federation increased the training's credibility. For example, the training information issued by the local Women's Federation's WeChat account (WeChat is the most influential social media platform in China, a mix of western messaging apps, e.g. Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.) dispelled potential trainees' worries that the free training was not legitimate. In addition to playing a coordinating role, which involved securing training venues, service agencies, and other implementation aspects, the local Women's Federation emphasized the importance of women's rights, which ensured that the project did not just focus on economic benefits, but also helped increase women's self-efficacy. Trainees who had their own businesses prior to the Project had the opportunity to join an entrepreneurship incubator, founded by the local Women's Federation, where they could receive multiple comprehensive business services.

In Chongqing, the district- or county-level chapter of the All-China Women's Federation was also the implementing agency. The All-China Women's Federation incorporated the Project into their performance assessment indicators. The Women's Federation increased publicity for the training by issuing documents and advertising the training on social media platforms. They also recommended mentors who had practical experience, gave guidance on business operation and policies in collaboration with mentors, helped start-ups access advertising resources, and helped female entrepreneurs in ecological farming engage new markets.

**Women entrepreneurs, themselves**, also offered abundant resources during the Project. Some community-based businesses operated by women provided services for communities and could be used for social organizations' community public-welfare projects. Trainees who benefited from training projects become community leaders and became involved in the administration of community affairs. These trainees endorsed the training, recommended training institutions to more people, and introduced resources to training institutions. The success of female entrepreneurs improved the reputation of the entrepreneurship incubator, which, in turn, helped the incubator attract more resources.

Boosting employment through entrepreneurship is an important aspect of China's **Human Resources and Social Security Administration** within which there is ample room for more collaboration with entrepreneurship training. The Human Resources and Social Security Administration can recommend teachers to serve as the Project's entrepreneurship mentors. Additionally, its personnel can serve as training lecturers and provide additional resources, such as interpreting policies; assisting employment; providing social security, retirement, unemployment insurance, and interest subsidies; establishing a municipal-level entrepreneurship incubator base; providing preferential taxation; and providing secured loans for business start-ups.

Trainee's story: Li Lihui

Born in Yunnan, Li Lihui traveled with her husband to settle in the Dazu District in Chongqing. She attempted to begin her own business multiple times without success. After her husband died in an accident, she remarried and did household chores to support her children's education. In 2018, she once again attempted to start her own business. She bought a piece of land in a vineyard but discovered that the market for grapes was saturated, and she was forced to grow corn in order to reduce losses. At the recommendation of her elder sister, Li Lihui planted dragon fruit, which was not available in the Dazu District. Li Lihui initially had limited knowledge about selling dragon fruit, and, after the local chapter of the All-China Women's Federation told her about the entrepreneurship assistance project, she immediately enrolled in the course to learn about marketing. Through the training, she established close relationships with her teachers and fellow students, gained access to various resources, and received support for her business. In the spirit of collaboration, she entrusted the sales and marketing of her dragon-fruit business to one of her fellow trainees. Through discussions with her entrepreneurship mentors and the local Women's Federation, Li Lihui gained a deeper understanding of relevant business policies and adjusted the development strategy of her dragon-fruit business. The local Women's Federation chapter also provided her with the opportunity to market her dragon fruit on television and recommended that she join the local chamber of commerce in order to expand interpersonal connections. Soon, in 2019, demand was greater than her supply of dragon fruit. Li Lihui employed four Yunnan villagers for her orchard. Her family supports her business, and, while Li Lihui is responsible for financial affairs and business expansion, her husband manages planting.

Her children accompany her on inspections and help handle the business's affairs. Li Lihui hopes to learn more about finance and management so that she can help more people benefit from ecological farming.

#### **4.4 Accumulate project experience and promote regional communication**

Experience accumulation and sharing is one of the key aspects of training projects.

At the international level, projects conducted under the Empowering Migrant Women as Entrepreneurs in China Project have been incorporated into a collection of cases written by the Asian Development Bank and The Asia Foundation, *Emerging Lessons on Women's Entrepreneurship in Asia and the Pacific*. These cases explain the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Asia and help increase awareness for women's entrepreneurship in the Asia-Pacific Region.

The Asia Foundation organized a tour of South Korea for Project staff from Chongqing implementing organizations. This tour allowed the local partners to exchange ideas with South Korean peers about women's entrepreneurship and relevant policies. Although the successful experience of one country cannot be directly replicated in another country, exchanging ideas can broaden opportunities and enable a deeper understanding of a project's advantages and disadvantages.

## **V. Recommendations**

There are several opportunities for organizations, such as government agencies, trade unions, Communist Youth Leagues, Women's Federations, and others, to offer, improve, and fund future entrepreneurship training for vulnerable groups.

### **5.1 Increase investment in trainers and mentors**

To meet the needs of those who want to start their own businesses, local trainers and mentors should be properly trained.

Training for trainers can be simple. All counties and regions should aim to engage trainers in entrepreneurship training. This Project has developed a complete set of textbooks that have been tested through multiple rounds of teaching. As long as trainers



receive simple training and undergo several rounds of teaching, they can successfully impart complex knowledge to students.

The establishment of an entrepreneurship mentor team can be a difficult task. Mentors should have successful entrepreneurship experience, know the step-by-step process of beginning their own business, be willing to share their experience with trainees, and be motivated to support their trainees.

Xu Benliang, a consultant from the SCETC and Director of the Shanghai Zhuoyue Public Welfare Organization Development Center, asserts that, "When selecting a trainer or mentor, first of all, we should see whether the candidate has a sense of mission."

It takes a significant amount of energy to maintain an entrepreneurship mentor team. It is necessary to support counseling for a mentor in order to enable effective work and provide her with a sense of achievement and belonging.

All trainers and mentors across China should form a national communication network so that they can learn from each other's strengths and improve upon weaknesses.

#### *Establish a team of trainers and mentors*

The Chongqing Society of Women Talents established a team of trainers and mentors through members' recommendations. Its team members came from institutes of higher learning, various organizations, and enterprises. Three of the team members held doctoral degrees, four held masters degrees, and eight were undergraduates. The team members included a university lecturer, certified public accountant, general manager, and the president of the local chapter of the All-China Women's Federation. When the Project occurred in Shanghai, experts interviewed candidates and held a two-day training session for selected candidates. The trainer-members decided what they would teach in light of their respective fields of knowledge. In the Dazu District in Chongqing, entrepreneurship mentors formed teams to provide diagnostic advice to trainees. Different mentors supplemented each other with special skill knowledge, which gave trainees access to expert opinions from various channels.

## **5.2 Increase investment in community networks and provide role models**

One of the Project's goals was to create a network of support for women entrepreneurs. A community network provides a platform for experience and knowledge sharing, which helps inspire members and avoid entrepreneurship pitfalls. Additionally, a community network provides women entrepreneurs with a platform that is sensitive to gender perspectives and entrepreneurship problems specific to women, including how to balance work and family life. The community can also help women mentally prepare for starting their own businesses.

A cohesive community, however, will not naturally develop out of a classroom; development such a community requires targeted effort. Projects should encourage trainees to organize offline activities after class in addition to encouraging online communication. It is necessary to establish a diverse set of community operation methods so trainees with various needs, including differing locations, can benefit from different levels of communication. While operating an online community, projects should foster leaders in the network who can drive the development of other trainees.

### **5.3 Create a project brand**

The Project's main goal was to meet the needs of women entrepreneurs in the context of local conditions. In addition to core training sessions, the Project provided various value-added services in order to reduce gender inequality in entrepreneurship activities.

The demand-oriented project mode of **entrepreneurship training and various post-training value-added services** formed a project brand with female empowerment at the core of the Project. Having a project brand attracted resources from governments, local communities, and enterprises, and expanded the Project's scale and influence, which, in turn, benefited more women and promoted economic growth, social prosperity, and the China's social and economic development, as a whole.

### **5.4 Create an ecosystem suited for local women's entrepreneurship and promote sustainable development**

Projects should create an ecosystem suited for local women to begin their own businesses. This ecosystem should involve three dimensions: policies, laws and regulations; stakeholders; and international collaboration. Projects should establish

communication mechanisms with relevant government agencies in order to collect and analyze data related to women's entrepreneurship, so that projects can provide direction for policymaking. Additionally, projects should focus on collaboration with stakeholders, such as government agencies, the private sector, academic institutions, social organizations, and the media in order to integrate relevant resources. International communication and knowledge-sharing are also important aspects of a women's entrepreneurship ecosystem because international collaboration provides outside experiences and innovation opportunities for women's entrepreneurship activities.

Jiang Zhen, a training mentor, maintains:

“Women's career development, role positioning, entrepreneurship challenges, energy, resources, and interpersonal communication constitute an entire system. The failure of some entrepreneurship projects can be due to problems within the ecosystem. If we can consolidate follow-up support, these women can go further and longer in creating their own businesses.”

## **Acknowledgements**

We sincerely appreciate the Shanghai Charity Education and Training Center, Kunshan Zhuoyue Consultancy Centre for Public Welfare Organizations, and Chongqing Society of Women Talents for their energetic support during the writing of this report.

Our thanks also go to the following experts and colleagues for their feedback:

(Chinese names are arranged alphabetically according to surnames)

Chen Tingting, Chen Qiong, Hao Shanli, Jin Shihua, Lü Pu, Wang Junchao, Wu Yaqiong, Xu Benliang, Zou Xiaoping, and Christine Harris-Van Keuren

We give our thanks to the following trainers, students, and staff members of the Empowering Migrant Women as Entrepreneurs in China Project for their observations:

Zhu Wenjie, Chen Cong, Jiang Yanjun, Zhu Yaoqing, Jiang Huizhen, Zheng Churong, Zhang Xiaohong, Fang Ximei, Zhang Yan, Liang Hui, Wang Jingxia, Zou Xiaoping, Cen Yuanyang, Zhu Zhu, Jiang Zhen, Wang Yanhua, Luo Yanting, Shen Ling, Liu Min, Li Lihui, Jin San, Xu Can

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## **The Asia Foundation**

Founded in 1954, The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international philanthropic development organization for public welfare. Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works through a network of offices in 18 Asian countries and in Washington, DC. In 1979, The Asia Foundation launched projects in the People's Republic of China (P.R.C). It is one of first nongovernmental organizations to operate in the P.R.C. after the P.R.C. and the United States (U.S.) established a diplomatic relationship. On June 30, 2017, The Asia Foundation in the U.S. Beijing Representative Office was formally established. The Beijing Municipal Bureau of Public Security issued The Asia Foundation a certificate of registration as an office of an overseas nongovernmental organization. With the Chinese People's Association of Friendship with Foreign Countries as its competent business authority, The Asia Foundation Beijing Representative Office conducts activities across China. Promoting women development and gender equality is one of The Asia Foundation's focuses in China. The Asia Foundation specifically focuses on women's economic development, the cultivation of anti-domestic violence nongovernmental organizations, and fostering gender-friendly work environments.

## **China Global Philanthropy Institute**

The China Global Philanthropy Institute (CGPI) was founded by five Chinese and American philanthropists: Bill Gates, Ray Dalio, Niu Gensheng, He Qiaonyu, and Ye Qingjun. The Institute receives funds from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Beijing Dalio Public Welfare Foundation, Lao Niu Foundation, Beijing Qiaonyu Foundation, and Zhejiang Dunhe Foundation.

The CGPI was founded in order to cultivate an education system for exemplary philanthropists and executive philanthropists. It is committed to building a knowledge system that supports philanthropy in China and the world, creating a professional think tank for philanthropy development, and promoting a new philanthropic knowledge system. By elevating innovation and professional and public participation in philanthropy, the CGPI contributes to the development of philanthropy in China and the world.

Ma Weihua, the former President of the China Merchants Bank, is the institute's first chairman of the board. Wang Zhenyao, professor of the Beijing Normal University, is the dean of the China Global Philanthropy Institute.