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In the freezing winter of the mountainous Yunnan province in China, many children brave their journey to school wearing hay-woven slippers. Some bring homemade blankets and huddle in cocoons to share warmth with classmates. The compact classrooms always exceeded their intended capacity, and classroom-turned-dormitories with cracked windows and beds made of chairs and desks often lodge children living hours away.

Through these glimpses into the lives of local children, I saw how education was a luxury for them, as schools lacked quality educational resources or even basic infrastructures. Propelled to address the issue, I established an NGO to mobilize public support and successfully fundraised 150 sets of bedding and heaters to improve living standards, increasing attendance to an average of 305/350 students.

Beyond the children's immediate physical needs, what concerned me more was how the limited resources shackled their imaginations of possible selves and the boundless opportunities the world holds for them. The artist-activist in me therefore fundraised for 800 art-supply kits and engaged the children in art learning, empowering them with a sense of creative agency and reminding them their potential to transcend their surroundings. I then exhibited their paintings in major cities in China and transformed them into necklaces and keychains for sale at an online store, not only sharing their stories with a larger audience but also sustaining the empowerment effort and generating positive results in the long run. I have dedicated more than 300 hours from March 2023 to today and will continue my work in the future.

My project embodies St. Vincent's mission of fair treatment, opportunity, and advancement for all as I aim to provide education opportunities and try my best to support the children regardless of their background.