

**Daofeng He, Honoree of the International Leadership Foundation's
"Outstanding Leadership Service Award"**

Once a farmer and a rural teacher in the remote and mountainous Yunnan, China, Daofeng He was one of the first college and postgraduate students in the region after China reinstated its national college entrance exams in 1977. He obtained his master's degree in economics at Fudan University, and in 1984, Mr. He joined the prestigious Research Center for Rural Development (RCRD) of the State Council. There, he participated in the research and drafting of China's earliest rural reform policies which upheld the liberation of the individual and the restoration of private ownership. Following the shake-up in 1989, he left the public sector and entered the business world. In 1994, he established the Human Resources Development Center of Western China to collaborate with the World Bank on poverty alleviation by increasing labor mobility. The project successfully reskilled 600,000 workers from 61 impoverished western counties and resettled them in eastern China, achieving the first-ever cross-provincial employment of labor force from impoverished western China. He also initiated a World Bank pilot project to help rural women overcome poverty through micro-financing.

In 1999, China's accession to the WTO and its promise to transition to a complete market economy rekindled Mr. He's passion for reform and also gave him the opportunity to lead the transformation of the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation (CFPA), a government-organized non-governmental organization (GONGO), to bring it in line with international standards. Through the signing of China's first public-private agreement, he became a volunteer of CFPA and made a commitment to its performance target in exchange for permission to carry out a reform experiment by separating CFPA from the government both in terms of personnel and finance. After nearly two decades of hard work, he managed to turn CFPA into China's foremost INGO, growing its annual direct fundraising amount from \$2.5 million to nearly \$100 million. He also took the poverty alleviation project to a dozen countries in Africa and Southeast Asia. The CFPA Microfinance Program that he initiated, which subsequently evolved into a separate social enterprise called CD Finance, has made \$2 billion worth of small loans to almost 500,000 women in China annually. For twenty years, he has served as a transnational strategic partner and board member in Mercy Corps, one of the top 10 international humanitarian organizations in the United States. In 2014, he won the Olga Alexeeva Memorial Prize—which awards only one individual globally every year—for his outstanding leadership.

Since 2016, Mr. He has sold all of his businesses, resigned from his social positions as the executive president of CFPA, the chairman of both CD Finance and the China Foundation Center, and relocated to Maryland for research and writing. Together with his wife Angela Yang Cui, he founded the Daofeng & Angela Foundation, a family charity foundation, to stay active in the international public welfare sphere in countries such as United States, China, and Africa among others, and to keep on propelling human liberation and social reform by funding public interest organizations and young industry leaders who share common interests.

He believes that through seeking out interactions and tracing the source of love and compassion amongst strangers and through building new public space and nurturing the public spirit, we can make our world a better place and make our public life more worthwhile.

This is Daofeng He.