

# Mainland



# Brief

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Mainland Service Desk

Caritas-Hong Kong

*From the Editor:*

Here comes the debut issue of **Mainland Brief**!

**Mainland Brief** is a newsletter bridges Mainland Service Desk of Caritas-HK and the public. It is a quarterly, bringing you the latest updates of our Mainland services, including project reports and outstanding cases. We hope to provide you with a better understanding of our Mainland services, and most of all, a more comprehensive picture of the needs of the poor people in the Mainland.

## “The Bridge of Unity” in Limengwan Village, Hebei Province

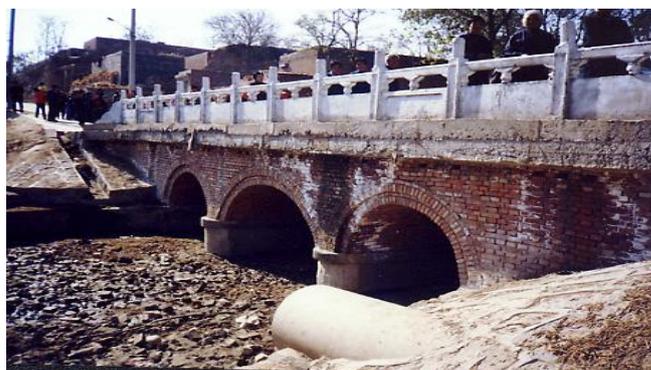
Situated at a low-lying mountain valley in the hilly land southwest of Yongnian county, Limengwan village has a population of 1076 and most of the villagers are farmers. Poor soil condition produces only small amount of harvests and even no harvest at all in case of drought seasons. The annual per-capita income of the villagers is less than RMB 500, insufficient food and clothing as a result.

The poor economy of Limengwan village owes much to its geographic condition. It is located at a low-lying valley along the perpendicular cliff side and the only entrance to the village is a rugged road on a bumpy steep slope (length: some 300 m; gradient: 41 degrees), which is dusty in sunshine and muddy in rain. During rainy seasons, the road is usually blocked by water. During autumn harvest, villagers have to carry heavy farming products on shoulders in and out of the village. The daily activities and economic growth of the village are adversely affected.



In order to solve the above problem, the Limengwan village committee decided to build a bridge (5 m height and 6 m width) connecting the main road to the village. The proposed expenditure of the bridge project is RMB 80,060. They sent a letter for assistance to Caritas-Hong Kong at the beginning of 2002.

Upon receiving the funding request of Limengwan village, Mainland Service Desk asked our project partner in Hebei province to investigate this case. They paid a field trip there and confirmed that the situation in the application letter was true. After much discussion through correspondence, Mainland Service Desk made clear to the applicants the criterion of Caritas-Hong Kong that the village committee, the villagers, and the local government should make joint effort with Caritas-Hong Kong in this bridge construction project.



Eventually, they raised a total sum of RMB 5,000 among the villagers, the Catholics in Yongnian county donated RMB 10,000, the local government donated RMB 10,000 and a rich Catholic working in Handan city donated RMB 5,000. A total sum of RMB30,000 was raised among the local people. Besides, the villagers also made their contribution by manual labour. With the help of a kind Hong Kong donor, Mainland Service Desk raised HK50,000 for this project. The construction work started at the end of 2002 and finished in May 2003. The economy of Limengwan village is greatly improved. In order to memorize the contribution of the generous donors and the cooperation among different parties, people named the bridge in Limengwan village as “The Bridge of Unity”.

## Tap Water from a Sandy Village in Shanxi Province

In January 2003, we received an application for well construction from Daniangou village, Shanxi province. With a population of more than 300, Daniangou village is located in Yangqu county. Most of the villagers earn a living by farming. Bad harvest resulted from continual drought forced the villagers to support their living by selling their own poultry. Average annual income per head is about RMB 600.



There is no well or stream providing water for domestic purpose in the village. Villagers have to purchase drinking water from Qinglong village a few miles away or to get water from the shallow stream outside the village.

Owing to the prolonged drought, water is not enough for people as well as animals, not to mention for irrigation. Due to poor harvest, the villagers are no longer able to buy water for consumption.



After consultation with the local government, the village committee has decided to drill a well in the village. The estimated budget for this project is \$152,000. The local government contributed \$70,000. A funding of \$30,000 was raised among villagers (\$100 per head). The local church donated \$12,000. A local priest thus submitted a funding request to Caritas-Hong Kong for the remaining balance of \$40,000.

After we verified this application, we have started to contact generous people for help. Big hearted donors from Hong Kong and Canada, each paying an amount of their will. Eventually, the donation sum up to become a major support for the villagers in Daniangou village. The well was finally put up in September last year, with pipes installed early this year. Now, the villagers are enjoying fresh drinking water from their own well. They sincerely express their gratitude to all the generous donors.

## The Taker also Gives

Mainland Service Desk has been supporting young people in the poor mountainous areas in the Mainland with tertiary study grant. In order to foster their sense of responsibility, we encourage them to contribute to the society after graduation. Starting from 2002, grantees of Caritas-Hong Kong Tertiary Study Grant and their referees have to agree on the following terms upon their signing of agreements. The terms include obligations to be fulfilled after their graduation:

1. To return to his homeland and engage in the profession he studies; duration of services is dependent on the duration of his study grant. If there is no such profession in the homeland (such as computer science), the following alternatives are offered:
2. After securing a job, the grantee has to support one primary student and one junior secondary student in his homeland, with an annual study grant of a maximum of

RMB\$400 and RMB\$600 respectively; duration of services is dependent on the duration of his study grant. (For example, a grantee of a four-year study grant has to support the students for another four years.) Caritas-Hong Kong retains the final decision on the list of subsidized students.

The effectiveness of this arrangement was in doubt in the wake of its implementation, but we insisted to carry on. To our surprise, last year we received a letter from Zhang Meiping, a grantee of a one-year study grant. With the help of Caritas-Hong Kong, she was able to finish her last year of university study. For this reason, she was willing to support one primary student and one junior secondary student in the mountain area of Hubei in the year 2004-5. We are pleased to see her keep her promise, and more importantly, she is willing to devote her love to those in needs, after receiving the love from the others. She has borne witness to the spirit of "Caritas"!

## The Billings Ovulation Method helps Couples in Mainland China

Starting from November 1992, social workers of Caritas Family Service have been traveling with Drs. John and Evelyn Billings to China for 20 times, visiting 13 provinces and uncountable cities. These visits were arranged by the Family Planning Committee of the provinces and cities. They would organise seminars and Teachers' Training Courses for the Family Planning personnel, who are mainly gynaecologists, mid-wives and nurses. In the past eleven years, we had taken the job of interpreter for Drs. Billings for 11 seminars, 74 presentations and 37 five-day teachers training courses. There are altogether 10,516 participants. As the Method has gone through vigorous scientific validation and clinical trials, the participants remarked that the Method would be very useful to solve the Family Planning issue of China.

Through interpretation, we learn the Ovulation Method and apply it in the training courses in Hong Kong. At the same time, we also learn many touching stories from the users and teachers in the Mainland. We would like to share some of them with you as follows:

We still remember what an experienced director of the department of Gynaecology and Obstetrics said with tears during a sharing meeting after attending the Teachers' Training Course first held in Wuhu Hospital of Anhui province in 1995:

"This method is a good news to the Chinese women. In my clinical work I have come across many middle-aged women who are suffering from long-term uterine bleeding as they are using intrauterine device frequently as a birth control method. The Billings Ovulation method may help them solve the problem of anaemia."

Another case was happened in 2001, Drs. Billings and we had a meeting with a group of parents and their babies in Nanjing Family Planning Committee Office. After using the Billings Ovulation Method, these couples were finally able to give birth to their own babies even though they were failed to do so in the past. They were very happy and satisfied with their babies holding in their arms. We are indeed very impressed and excited to have a chance to take part in this meaningful work.



## Promotion of Lifelong Learning For Discharged Prisoners

The Caritas Adult & Higher Education Service organized a project on the promotion of lifelong learning for the discharged prisoners in Sichuan Province early this year. This project was to help the discharged prisoners through the training of administrators and teaching staff of the prison, which included one seminar for staff from legal & prison sections; one seminar for educational administrators and teachers and one training workshop. The project was meaningful and successful. The following are the feedback from the participants:

### 1. Feedback from a deputy director of Legal Department

"The seminar for legal and prison personnel is fruitful. It is the first one so far in Sichuan province that experts and participants value this learning opportunity very much. During the seminar, we discussed the system for proof evidence, the regulation of case operation, the legal charging points, the protection of suspected person, the training programs for prisoners and the assistance to discharged prisoners."

### 2. Feedback from an legal officer from a county

"This seminar is the first one in Sichuan. I have learned a lot from it. It does not only promote the exchange and cooperation among the legal staff from Hong Kong and

Sichuan, but also enhance the progress of the reform of legal system in Sichuan."

### 3. Feedback from a staff in the prison and legal unit

"The seminar has built up a good platform for the exchange of ideas. Both sides discussed the law problems, the operation procedures and actual practice. This is a good beginning for comments on certain special problems. We have learned a lot. Many queries in daily operation are answered. Some technical problems for some specific operation are solved."

### 4. Feedback from a discharged prisoner

"Through the training program, I have learned a lot. It makes me understand that one must learn to be self-respected, independent and strong. I have confidence to start a new life in the society."



## A Voice from afar...

### (a) Deserted but not alone

Most of the orphans in China are either girls or handicapped. Owing to insufficient resources, the orphanages in the mountainous areas are not able to provide the retarded children with proper treatment and care. For this reason, Mainland Service Desk set up "Foster Parent Programme" in 1997, to provide the deprived children in the mountainous areas with education, medical and living allowance. We also encourage the orphanages to ask reliable families to foster the deprived children in order to let them to have a better development.

The living, medical and educational expenses of an orphan are about HK\$3,000 per year. They are waiting for your big hands... The following are the introduction of two of the orphans:



Living in a Gansu orphanage, Fu Ruoshi, aged 12, is suffered from lower limbs paralysis and incontinence of feces and urine, but his brain still functions well. He is able to read and write. He is now taking a course equivalent to primary-three level. Although he has difficulty moving about, he is kind and polite and also willing to learn.

Living in a Hebei orphanage and is suffering from cerebral palsy, Ruo Yana is 12 years old. Although she cannot walk, she is kind and cares for everybody. She can sing and recite old poems. She likes talking and making friends with everybody.



### (b) Letter from the Mainland

Dear uncles and aunts of Caritas-Hong Kong,

My name is Zhang Weifang. I live with my family of 5 in a small village in Weinan, Shaanxi province. My two elder brothers are studying in high school, and I am in my junior secondary study. When I was in primary school, my mom was seriously ill. We spent most of our money to save her, which made us even poorer. Every time when school terms started, my father found it most difficult to pay for our tuition fees. The only thing he could do was to borrow money from the others. This year, my mom was sick again, and my father borrowed even more money in order to take her to hospital. The financial situation in my family is now unbearable.

My mom has lost her ability to work since recovery. My father has to shoulder everything for us. His hard work, however, is not enough to support the family needs. Being the youngest one, I could not help him in any way. If this situation goes on like that, we may have to give up our schooling. For this reason, the priest of my parish encourages me to write this letter to ask for your help. I promise to study hard to pay for what you have supported me.

Yours truly,  
Zhang Weifang  
4 April, 2004

**Donations are Welcome!** You can send us crossed cheque made payable to "Caritas-Hong Kong" with "For Mainland Service" marked on the back. Please send to: Mainland Service Desk, Room 505, Caritas House, 2 Caine Road, Hong Kong. Official receipt will be sent by Caritas-Hong Kong for tax-exemption. For enquiry, please call 25242071, ext. 259 or 500. Email address: [msd@netfront.net](mailto:msd@netfront.net)