

Mainland Brief



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Mainland Service Desk
Caritas-Hong Kong

From the Editor

Since the earthquake hit Sichuan Province more than a year ago, Caritas-Hong Kong has taken on 41 relief projects. 21 of these have already been completed, while 20 are still in progress. The amount that has already been spent, or committed, exceeds HK\$ 35,000,000. Last December, we briefly introduced these relief and reconstruction projects. In this issue, we'll continue to share with you a few other projects we have adopted.

September is, not only, the beginning of a new school year, but also the high season for receiving tuition subsidy applications. One appeal of a Hunan student is particularly heart wrenching, and we hope it will draw your attention.

Post Catastrophe Water Project Solved Problem for Thousands



Water project monument was erected in Tongkou town showing the care from Caritas-Hong Kong.

While the 5.12 earthquake's epic-centre is at Wenchuan County, the region that was hit the hardest is the neighboring county of Beichuan. Tongkou is a town at the centre of Beichuan. The waterworks that supported its eleven villages were seriously damaged as a result of the quake. About 2,000 households completely lost their supply from the system, and had to fetch water from mountain streams.

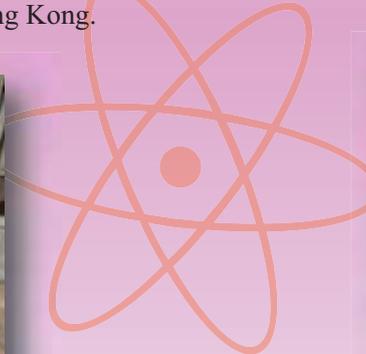
It would have cost 1,440,000 Yuan to fix this problem for the 11 villages, which is an astronomical figure for the local government. Then, in September, 2008, the 9.24 Sichuan flood exacerbated the situation. Now it was estimated that it would cost 2,222,000 Yuan to fix the system. This was too much for the local government to handle, at a time when the Sichuan government had its hands full helping out with all the urgent needs in the province. At the recommendation of the local Church, the government of Tongkou wrote to Caritas-HK for help.

Caritas-HK agreed to provide 2,000,000 HK dollars for the project so the villagers would have adequate drinking water supply as soon as possible. We also invited Zhong Hua Construction Foundation Ltd. to take the role as engineering consultant for, and to oversee the progress of the project. The local government would raise the balance to complete the project.

This project was completed on December 30th, 2008. It solved the problem for the 11 villages: 5,891 villagers (1,912 households), 3,790 heads of animals now have drinking water, and irrigation for 920 Mu of farmland. The villagers express their heartfelt appreciation for the selfless assistance from people of Hong Kong.



Water supply is now available to local villagers..



Monument listing out the cause and effect of the water project.



The Rebirth of Four Village Clinics After the Earthquake



Caritas Clinic in Longquan village



Caritas Clinic in Tongqiao village



Caritas Clinic in Qiaolou village

Hundreds of village clinics in Sichuan were reduced to ruins as a result of the earthquake. Doctors had to rely on village houses that were still standing, or tents, to continue their work. Noticing this, Caritas-HK provided funds last October for the re-building of four village clinics in Anxian County. These clinics were in Xincun, Qiaolou, Tongqiao, and Longquan villages. Almost seven thousand villagers benefited from this program.

All four clinics are of the same design. All of them can withstand quakes up to Level 8 on the Richter scale. The funding for the construction of each clinic was about HK\$ 300,000. Caritas-HK also retained a retired engineer from Chongqing as an independent supervisor for the building of all four clinics. Wanzhou Catholic Social Services Center in Chongqing also took an active role in watching over the project to make sure there was quality work in the construction of the clinics.

Besides Hong Kong, Caritas organizations from Japan, Italy, and Canada also contributed to the funding of the project. To appreciate the support from Caritas, the villagers and medical professionals named the buildings "Caritas Clinics".



Caritas Clinic in Xinchun village



Temporary clinic provided service in a tent after the quake.

Assisting Children of Wenchuan to Emerge from the Quake's Shadow

Shuimo Primary School is in Wenchuan, the epicenter of the Sichuan quake. It became a 'hazardous' building after the quake. Fortunately, its 570 pupils were spared from injuries, and only two of the 47 teachers were hurt. Still, when they eventually returned to classes in make-shift classrooms, some students and teachers showed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.



The school's return to normalcy after the quake depends much on the kids' ability to emerge out of the shadows of the calamity, which in turn has significant impacts on their development, and how well their teachers and parents can live normal lives again. As early as September, 2008, Qi Chuang Social Work Development Association in Guangzhou, an indigenous NGO, deployed social workers to the school to help. They developed a strategy that began by focusing on the development of the students, then through the students to influence the community in a positive way. The social workers organized group activities for the students, teachers, and parents; they provided consultation and follow-up on special cases. Their services were warmly embraced by everyone in the school.



This worthwhile service provided by Qi Chuang, would have come to an abrupt stop several months after its inception, for lack of funding, had it not been for Caritas-HK's involvement. Starting in February of 2009, Caritas-HK and Caritas Japan jointly provide funding, for two years, so that Qi Chuang can continue with the project at Shuimo Primary School.



Social work office in the makeshift shelter.

The new building for Shuimo Primary School is nearing completion, and Qi Chuang will carry on with the program at the new premise. Our hope is for the students to benefit from the program, and to positively influence their teachers, parents, and the community to emerge from the 'shadows' created by the 5.12 earthquake.



Social worker conducts workshop for the teachers.



Qi Chuang social workers and teachers work closely together.



Qi Chuang social workers pay regular home visit to the community nearby.



Students still smile happily with the care of teachers and social workers.

A voice from afar...



Dear Aunties and Uncles of Caritas-HK,

I am Yang Qian, a 13 years old of Miao ethnicity, and a 3rd year student at Zhijiang Junior High School. My grandfather, Yang She, is 79 years old. He is a retired worker from a bean curd store and lives on a meager pension he receives monthly. He is plagued by various sicknesses, and is much dependant on medication. My grandmother, Wu Jiuying, is 72 years old, a housewife. She is also in poor health, suffering from multiple diseases: heart, osteoporosis, bladder stones, and bronchitis. She is heavily dependant on medication. My father, Yang Feng, is an invalid. He has frequent spells of epilepsy, which makes it impossible for him to take on any work. He too, is medication dependant. My mother, Qiu Juzhen, divorced my father because of his health conditions when I was 2 years old. My grandparents brought me up, and the whole family of four survived on my grandfather's small pension. I have not worn new clothes for years - whatever I wear are leftovers from others.

I am supposed to be going to senior high school this September, but the tuition of more than a thousand yuan per term will make this an impossibility. I love to study. My grandmother pleaded with Fr. Gao for help. Many poor students asked Fr. Gao for help every year, but he is not able to help each and everyone by himself. He encouraged me to write to you. Please help me!

I wish you, aunties and uncles in Christ, all the best,

Yang Qian

03/06/2009



The Mainland Service Desk of Caritas-HK provides assistance to nearly 1,000 needy students on the Mainland to continue with their studies each year. It costs about HK\$ 2,500 a year to support one student in senior high school. For a junior high school student, the allowance is about HK\$700. For a primary student, the allowance is about HK\$ 500 a year. There are many of them awaiting our helping hands.

We need your generous support!

You can send us a crossed cheque made payable to "Caritas-Hong Kong" with "Education Allowance for Poor Mainland Students" marked on the back, together with the contact information. Please mail to: Mainland Service Desk, Room 505, Caritas House, 2, Caine Road, Hong Kong.

Official receipt will be issued by Caritas-Hong Kong for tax-exemption purpose. For enquiry, please call 35892259 / 35892500. You can also email to mainland@caritas.org.hk for more information. Thank you.

