

Mainland

Brief

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 Mainland Service Desk
 Caritas-Hong Kong

From the Editor

Christmas greetings to everyone!

We are grateful to our readers' response after our second newsletter was issued. Several generous donors helped Liang Yan-hua to receive operations of fracture union. On behalf of Liang, we would like to give our heartfelt thanks to these kind hearts. We will report her latest updates in the coming issues.

In this issue, we continue to introduce the Mainland services provided by different divisions of Caritas-Hong Kong; what's more, the elderly problem in the Mainland and our services for the aged people there. We hope to draw more attention and concern to their plights.

Fresh Water from a Dry Valley in Hebei

Huzhangzi village in Hebei is in a valley surrounded by mountains with steep slopes. About 400 people live in this three miles long valley. The county is the prime poverty region, and this village is the poorest in this deprived area. Inconvenient transportation, scarcity of farmland, and lack of water sources, have led to the fact that the villagers earn only as little as 267 yuan each person per year.

Due to the lack of water sources, villagers build their own storage for rain water, which is extremely unhygienic and affects their health. In times of bad luck when it does



Villagers once used this water container to fetch water 10 km away

not rain over a long period of time, the villagers cannot help but travel to Baiyang valley, 10 km away from their village, to fetch water. It costs them a whole day to do that. Villagers have no way to start any economic activities.

In 2002, the Water Resources Bureau of Qinglong county used the national poverty funding to drill a well, 150m deep, for the village. However, the villagers had to cover the costs of the water pipes. As villagers lived in a scattered way, 4,600 meter-long water pipes were needed to supply water to different parts in the valley. The budget of the water pipe project was 96,347 yuan. Although the villagers had tried their best to raise 7,005 yuan, not to mention the human labour they offered, which deducted another 4,000 yuan, it was still far from the target budget. The villagers were desperate in face of the unfinished well.

Upon receiving the funding request of the local villagers, Tangshan



Dr. Beyns tasted the sweet fresh water

diocese sought help from Caritas-Hong Kong. After the application was verified, Mainland Service Desk started to contact possible donors. Eventually, with the referral of Dr. Mary Beyns, big-hearted donors from Belgium supported the village with 42,210 yuan. In addition to the 51,000 yuan funding from the local government, the water pipes installation project was finally started in February this year, and finished on May 2. Dr. Beyns visited the village in late May and was warmly welcomed by the villagers. She even tasted the sweet fresh water from the well!

A Girl's life saved by Scholarship

Every year, Mainland Service Desk receives a large number of applications for scholarship. Yet, due to the limited donations and the high costs of tertiary education, we can only select a few

recipients annually, who are academically outstanding and among the most deprived. In the late 2002, we received a thank you letter from a subsidized student; his story is a surprise to us:

Dear honorable Person-in-charge of Caritas-Hong Kong,

How are you? Upon my receipt of the tuition fees from you, I could not express my gratitude in words. Anyhow, I would like to say thank you, a thousand thank you!

My mom was born in a Catholic family, and my dad was a Party member who was baptized also when he was dying in the hospital. I and my two siblings were baptized, too, but rarely read the Bibles. My mom was away from God because she spent most of the time to earn a living. Despite we are not devoted, you are still willing to offer us this big help. This makes me realize the love of God to us.

The poor financial situation of my family has made me the only one who can study at school. After the hard work in all these years, I was successfully admitted to the university but I could hardly afford the high tuition fee. Recommended by my teacher, I applied the scholarship of Caritas-Hong Kong. However, the application result was not released when the school term started, so my sister gathered some money for me by engaging with a foreman's son. This man is more than ten years older than my sister, and he is a serious epileptic who has seizures all the time. For this reason, although I started my school last month, I could not concentrate. I had been worrying about my sister. I could image her pain despite she did not say a word about this in front of me.

I felt so bad in the past month. I went back home during the National Day holiday and received your scholarship. What a good news from Heaven! Not only I am saved but also my sister, and my family as well. As a result, my sister broke the engagement with the foreman's son, and I can now concentrate on my study. I promise I will work even harder, and pay back the donors and the society in the future.

Farewell for now, and talk more next time. Wish you a good time!

Yours sincerely,
A student from Hebei Province
September 26, 2002

Caritas- Hong Kong offers help to the Mainland needy irrespective of sex, ethnicity, and religious beliefs. As long as they are in need, we try our best to give assistance. In consideration of the application of this student, we did not know the sacrifice his sister has made, not to mention the religious background of his family. The only reason for his scholarship is his outstanding academic achievement and the poor financial situation of his family. We did not realize until we received the above letter that his sister was willing to sacrifice herself for the sake of her brother's education.....

We feel grateful to the happy ending of this story. However, there are still many outstanding youth in poverty. Who could have the same luck of this student who can realize his dream of receiving tertiary education? Limited resources in terms of manpower and financial support make us reluctantly closing the door to a lot of scholarship applications. It is a heartbreaking fact that many of them have to give up study eventually. As a mediator, we could only try our best with limited resources. A lot of effort requires kind-hearted people to work together.

Development Programme for Kunming Children Welfare Workers

In collaboration with Kunming Children Welfare Home (KCWH), Caritas Rehabilitation Service had launched a staff development programme in Yunnan Province in 2003 and 2004. This programme included two sections. The first part is lectures and workshops in Kunming. The second part is the attachment training programme in Hong Kong.

Two 5-day lectures and workshops were implemented in Kunming in 2003 and 2004 respectively. The Caritas Training Team included 1 project coordinator, 2 physiotherapists and occupational therapists, 1 senior child care worker, 1 senior teacher and a principal from our rehabilitation service units and special schools. This programme was carried out during summer holidays. There are about 30 participants coming from Kunming, Chengdou and Chongqing. The majority of them were doctors and medical workers. Only a few of them are teachers. The contents of these workshops were mainly on early education programmes, paramedical service and teaching and curriculum for cerebral palsy children.

Apart from lectures, demonstrations on assessment, the use of rehabilitation aids, treatment, etc. were presented to the participants. They were also given an opportunity to practice in every aspect during the lectures. Different approaches on treatment and the caring of cerebral palsy children had been introduced in the workshop. With their basic knowledge in theories and daily working experience in KCWH, they followed the course of presentation satisfactorily. However, they tended to use the medical model



Visit to foster care family in village



Demonstration and practice in class

in the training programmes. Besides, the children are usually trained within KCWH. It is obvious that they are lack of other essential elements such as education, personal growth and development, social learning, meaningful recreational activities, personal relationship between trainers and children, etc. It is necessary for the staff of KCWH to improve the skills in treatment and training of disabled children.

The training team was impressed by the clean and tidy living environment provided for the children. The participants indicated in the evaluation questionnaire that they had acquired some basic skills and techniques in the workshop. They treasured the learning opportunities and found the training programme useful and fruitful.

In June 2004, a nine-day Attachment Training Programme in Hong Kong was organised for 5 staff from KCWH and 3 workers on the rehabilitation field from other cities. Owing to their working nature in the Mainland, the participants spent most of the time in our special schools for the severely mentally handicapped children. They worked together with the therapists, teacher and the principal who had conducted the training workshop in Kunming. They also had the opportunities to observe various programmes for the disabled children and youth of different ability levels. They treasured the opportunities to learn and share with our staff and parents in our rehabilitation service units and special schools. They found the visit very fruitful and stimulating.

The Foster Care Programme in Village Families

Kunming Children Welfare Home has been undertaking a leading role in providing comprehensive services to the orphans and deserted children with or without disabilities in the province. Their objective is promoting foster care and adoption programme in the ordinary families so as to integrate the disabled children in the community. This pioneer programme was quite successful in the area. Some 200 disabled children have already been living in 101 foster homes for over 2 years. KCWH provides guidance and training to the foster care families. Community-based services are rendered to those in need. A family resource centre is also set up in KCWH.

By the time when the on-site training programme was launching, the Caritas Training Team was invited to visit some foster care families in the villages. It took over an hour's drive to a village where there were about 30 children (with or without physical or mentally disability) who are being taken care of in some 20 foster care families. Some of the families were taking care of 2 to 3 children. Their houses were spacious, clean and tidy. The children were either staying in a single bedroom or living with the grandmothers of the families. They looked healthy and happy. Each foster care family got about RMB400 for one child for subsidies and labour fee. Rehabilitation workers from KCWH visit the family once in a while. In order to guarantee the children are being taken good care of, KCWH also provides training to the foster families. The family will be awarded with RMB10 for every training. We visited 6 families in 3 villages in one afternoon. Generally speaking, all the foster care children are in good shape and are living in a healthy environment. Their lives were much better than those living in the children institution. Our Mainland partner told us that there is a rehabilitation centre in one village, which provides training to the foster families in the remote areas.

The Foster Care Programme in the village families helps the growth and development of children with or without disabilities. Support and training to the foster care families is also adequate. Besides, a close monitoring system is functioned well in the village whereas frequent contacts are made with the families. It is a good model for the rehabilitation service provided for the deprived children in the Mainland.

Calls from the Mountains...

Aging population is one of the urgent problems in China, in particular, the aging in the poor mountainous areas. Lone elderly loses the ability to work in the worsening health situation. Most of them have no one to rely on. Some of them are even mentally or physically retarded, who need help from others. In order to improve the elderly service in the Mainland, Social Work Service Division of Caritas-Hong Kong renders training service for the staff of Old Folks Home in the remote areas. Besides, Mainland Service Desk receives a large number of applications for living allowances for the old and lonely people. In consideration of the different living standard

between cities and rural areas, we standardize the living and medical allowance for the elderly people to about 200 yuan per month. For now, we have been offering allowance to more than 70 elderly people in 9 provinces. In order to have their lives protected, we keep on looking for donors every year.

Owing to limited resources, we have reluctantly turned down a lot of applications. Recently, we have received a letter, penned for Auntie Liu (84 years old) from Hebei, which tells the situations of these abandoned old people. She is now waiting for help...

The Honorable members of Caritas-Hong Kong,

How are you?

I am an old, unmarried sick woman. I am living in an elderly nursery home which costs me 350 yuan per month. My pension is 220 yuan per month. It is getting insufficient to support my living expenses because of the inflation. My nursery home is privately run, in which about ten of the inmates are "low-insured elderly", just like me. People in the nursery home told us to leave if we could not afford the full payment. Poor me, I escaped to Wuhan before the Liberation, earned my very basic and simple living by sewing uniforms. Now I am 84 years old, my parents died early, and I have no contact with relatives. I am not married, therefore no successors. With no one to turn to, I asked for help from Sister Zuo whom I met in the migrant's camp. But as Sister Zuo is a missionary, she could not help me financially. I heard that Caritas-Hong Kong works for poor people, so I asked Sister Zuo to write this letter for me, asking for help.

I did think of committing suicide. Sister Zuo dissuaded me, for otherwise I would go to Hell, which brings me even worse situation. I listened to her, held my tears, and overcome it. Now, the obstacles are right in front of me, I could not but rely on your help.

Wish you well!

Sister Zuo on behalf of Liu Binqin
November 20, 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, together with your correspondence address and telephone number. Official receipt will be sent by Caritas-Hong Kong for tax-exemption. For enquiry, please call 35892259 or 35892500. Email address: mainland@caritas.org.hk