

From the Editor



Despite the merciless onslaught of the coronavirus pandemic in the nation, there has been plenty of love displayed all around. While wreaking havoc in the land, it also brought out the best in the country where people have become united with one mind to fight against it. Our partners in the Mainland have been no exception: they volunteered to take the body temperature of travelers in public transportation terminals; provided comfort to people under stress in the neighbourhood; tutored and gave online classes to children, and online psychological consultation to people who needed such help. We would like to share with you some of the stories of their valiant fight against this pandemic.

Because of the pandemic's impact on the Mainland, NGOs' fund raising dynamics have been affected. Many donations have been diverted towards services that cater to needs which arose from the disease, thus reducing the amount received for other areas. One such service that has been negatively impacted is funding for the education of deprived girls living in mountainous regions in Shaanxi province, which we want to highlight for your attention.

Lanzhou • Online Classes Help Stem Pandemic Negative Impact



The Le-Kang office

To encourage and re-instill people's confidence which was lost during the pandemic, Caritas-HK assisted the Le-Kang Youth Services Center in Lanzhou, Gansu province to develop a range of online activities that involve experts from different fields. Some examples are: protection from the coronavirus; fire hazards prevention; doing exercise at home during lockdown; managing development for kids; education for eye protection for kids; and a 'Classroom on Air' programme was developed for studying from home.



Children learning from home during lockdown



During the pandemic, there was a shortage of personal protective equipment for people working on the frontline who were exposed to dangers of being infected. Le-Kang coordinated with the provincial authorities to distribute critical supplies like: instant noodles, protective gloves, disinfectants, hand lotion, thermal flasks, to name a few.

Le-Kang helps distribute critical supplies

Other activities included working in two communities, each with thousands of families, in shifts to patrol the neighborhood; to help take temperature for frontline workers; and to collect critical data for analysis. A 'Blue Sky' emergency team was formed to help spray disinfectant in critical areas within the communities, and calm folks who had developed severe anxiety and fear.



The online programmes helped the communities to keep in touch with their neighbours, and maintain their morale and the will to come out on top of this pandemic.



Huozhou - Volunteering to Help Travellers at Transportation Hubs



Staff of the **Catholic Tongde Hospital in Huozhou, Shanxi Province** got involved early on – since January 23, 2020 - to fight against the coronavirus. They took up posts at the train station and the long-distance bus terminal. They volunteered to take body temperatures for incoming travellers, record data, and keep track of them for further analysis, as well as to educate the travellers on the essentials of keeping safe from infection. Adequate protective gear was in short supply in the early days, and all the sisters wore plain white gowns and ordinary surgical masks to work on the frontline in sub-zero temperatures. It wasn't until later the government provided them with the protective gear that they were better able to guard themselves from being infected. The citizens of Huozhou recognize and deeply appreciate the sisters' contribution.



Sisters volunteering to take body temperature for travellers



Tongde's anti-pandemic team

Fushun - Online Psychological Consultation Service



Conducting online consultation

The corona pandemic that started towards the end of 2019 created much consternation among the population in the Mainland. Industries, factories, schools ... were closed, and many people were fearful of the unknown. To help address this phenomenon the **Cana Family Service Center in Liaoning province** decided to form a 6-person team, which consisted of 1 fulltime and 5 voluntary psychological counsellors, to provide free online consultation for people in need of help on a one-on-one basis. An online course on psychological wellbeing was also available. Moreover, the center collaborated with other NGOs to offer counselling services to elderlies in 52 local nursing homes.

More than 160 people benefited from the **consultation service**, and a few more cases are still under continuing care. Two of them recovered from the coronavirus disease but are still suffering from post-traumatic stress. One of them told her counsellor the fear she had developed at the height of the attack was still shadowing over her – she didn't think she was going to make it. She was filled with horror whenever that scene relapsed through her mind, and she would not dare to fall asleep. Another woman shared her experience of having recovered from the coronavirus attack, only to return home to find her husband still bogged down by the sickness, and the tremendous fear and sense of loss she felt. The counsellor would provide each of the patients with advice tailored to his or her special situation, and each consultation was followed up by an assistant to make sure of the efficacy of the treatment.



Online course on psychological wellbeing



The feedback to center by people who had used the online services has been positive. They love the service because the physical separation actually helped provide a sense of privacy which made it easier for them to express their feelings. The flexibility in arranging for consultation times was also a plus. The numerous requests for consultation at the height of the pandemic was also welcomed by the volunteers: it gave them lots of opportunities to serve people in need, through which they gained valuable experiences. One of the counsellors shared that through the counselling sessions, her concentration improved, and became a better listener. Another said she felt fortunate in being able to help others in a pandemic, and she felt a sense of accomplishment as she could overcome challenges and do productive work during the lockdown.

The **online course on psychological wellbeing** helped people to better understand themselves, and gave the attendees a forum to share their lives with others, which helped elevate their confidence. So far, the center has conducted 12 such classes with nearly 400 participants. Since the services were meant to help people from disadvantaged families, they were all free, so finance was quite a burden for the organiser. Still, that did not diminish the good sisters' enthusiasm.

Looking Forward to Your Support

- The funds raised for our mainland programmes have been significantly reduced during the pandemic. We earnestly appeal to you for your continuing support.





Call from Afur



- Xiaohua is 10 years old, a student in grade 3. Her father passed away years ago. Her mother remarried, living far away and has not been heard from. She was brought up by her grandparents. Grandfather died of heart disease. She and her 65-year-old grandmother now only have each other. Grandmother is suffering from many illnesses, still she has to toil in the field to grow food. Despite Xiaohua's small stature and being thin compared to other children her age, she has to help out in harvesting of crops, and in other heavy household chores.

- Shandandan was adopted when very young by her foster father who is himself mentally weak. The reason he adopted Shandandan was for her to take care of him in his old age. And that is what she is doing - taking care of her foster father. She is very capable and has taken on a lot of heavily burdened tasks despite her small and weak frame. Shandandan has never experienced a mother's tender loving care.



A beneficiary with her award certificates

There are many 'Xiaohua' and 'Dandan' in the mountainous regions of Shaanxi province for many unfortunate reasons. None the least is the deep rooted misogynistic tradition in rural areas, forcing many girls to take on heavy household chores while still very young. They don't get to attend schools; they are not properly fed or clothed; they are thin and weak; they age prematurely; and even their survival is in jeopardy. Technically they are not

orphans and therefore not eligible for social welfare.



The Shaanxi Renai Children's Aid Center started a programme in 2014 to assist these deprived girls. So far, they have supported over 300 such girls.



Helpless girls in mountainous regions in Shaanxi



The center has been able to raise funds in the past via online platform. The cost for supporting each girl is 2,600 RMB a year. Besides material support, these girls also receive psychological assistance through regular visits by social workers and volunteers. However, there has been a shrinkage of funds due to competition from government and other foundations who have the resources to carry out large scale promotions to raise funds for materials to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

In the coming semester in September this year, the center still falls short of 130,000 RMB (about HK\$146,067) for providing assistance for 50 such young girls. And they need your kind support!

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Looking forward to
your response

For enquiry, please call on 35892259 or 35892500, or leave your message at mainland@caritas.org.hk. To show your care, you may write a crossed cheque payable to "Caritas-Hong Kong" and send it to: Mainland Service Desk, Room 505, Block A, Caritas House, 2, Caine Road, Central, Hong Kong. Please write down your contact information on the back.