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Editorial

Yang Meng is crying. She is 10 years old. Her mother left 15 months ago when she fled to avoid execution or a long prison sentence for the murder of Yang Meng's father. Nobody knows where her mother is. The last time Yang Meng saw her was when the woman dropped her at Children Village in Xi'an.

Morning Tears is using a range of measures and techniques to help Yang Meng to cope with her trauma, and training the caregivers in Children Village is one of them.

As part of the approach, only children up to the age of seven are allowed to wrap their experience in myths and comforting stories. When the children are older, the caregivers need to help them to realize and understand what really happened.

In the outside world, this confrontation with reality would be radical and hard. In Children Village this process goes step by step and it should be completed before the child reaches adolescence.

But even in Children Village, pain is an unavoidable element of the process.

Messages to comfort a child cannot come in the form of vague platitudes like, 'it's over now', and 'it is all OK now'.

Instead, we can only comfort the children by letting them know we understand the pain. We can only tell them that as time goes by the pain will take up a smaller part in their lives, but it will never leave.

Today, in my arms, Yang Meng cries.

Every tear leaving her shivering body is a self-protecting myth which she is letting go from her life. I gently repeat that she is not alone. We are here with her.

More and more organizations are requesting Morning Tears to provide training in working with traumatized children. We develop different training packages and we gratefully accept every invitation to provide training. Only together can we rebuild a world for children who have lost their own world.

Koen Sevenants,

on behalf of the children, their caregivers and the Morning Tears team

New in Children Village

- A cute 9 year old boy came to Children Village in June.
- Morning Tears took all the older girls to choose bras and underwear for themselves.
- The children celebrated Children's Day on June 1st.
- Morning tears held a fundraising barbeque at the Belgium Embassy on June 10th.
- All the children spent a perfect day at Oceanarium on June 24th. This was the first time in their lives any of the children had ever seen sea animals.
- There was a BBQ in Children Village on June 25th; this is the first time most of the children have ever had a BBQ.
- Children Village completely finished the construction work of the boiler room and heating system that was donated by the Province of Antwerpen. Now all the children will have a warm place to live in winter.

Barbeque & Fancy Fair at Belgium Embassy in Beijing

On Saturday, June 10th, Morning Tears organized a Barbeque & Fancy Fair at the Belgian Embassy in Beijing.

It was a great family day with a variety of fun and games. Our 350 guests enjoyed a good barbeque meal with sweet pancakes / Belgian waffles as dessert, and there were a variety of refreshing Belgian beers from which to choose.

Twelve children from Children Village showed their acrobatic skills in a dance performance, and other children's artistic talents were on display in an art show where their paintings were sold. We also had an auction of works by the artists who had assisted the children with their creations.

At the top of the bill was a musical performance by a group led by our very own Belgian Ambassador singing and playing the harmonica!

The Morning Tears fundraiser was a tremendous success. The 80.000 RMB that was raised will go a long way toward improving the quality of life of many children.

Because it was so successful, we happily turn the BBQ & Fancy Fair into an annual event!



Upcoming events

- Children Village will have dancing, singing, art, basketball, football, Gongfu and English activities during the summer holidays in July and August. Morning Tears will hire professional teachers to teach the children and also will sign contracts with the teachers to guarantee the quality of the teaching. All the children will spend a happy summer holiday.
- All the children and teachers in Children Village will receive 7 types of vaccinations in July and August to assure their health, thanks to a donation from Morning Tears.
- Children Village plans to finish the bounding wall to ensure a safer living environment for the children.
- Officials from the Province of Antwerpen are coming to China, they will visit Children Village in July.
- Children Village will have first-aid training during the summer holiday, if the financing for this has been found.
- There will be 6 children from the village will go to high school in September.

The story of Wang Ping

Wang Ping was 8 when she entered Children Village.

The woman that accompanied her explained that the murder of the little girl's mother and execution of the girl's father had turned the once confident and bright Wang Ping into an introverted and fearful child.

After the execution, she was *cared for* by her aunt for about eight months. Afterwards, when Wang Ping entered Children Village, she had bruises all over her body and was 6 kg underweight. The aunt had administered a harsh regime, to ensure that Wang Ping would not become a criminal like her father.

Now, two years later, her weight is back to normal and the bruises on her skin are all healed. For the wounds in her heart it will take more time.

During eighteen months Wang Ping's memories echoed in her nightmares. Going to sleep meant she was preparing to relive the unthinkable.

Understandably, she resisted the bedtime ritual. She cried and reacted aggressively to anyone - children and caregivers alike - who gently tried to push her to go to sleep.

Most evenings she could be found sitting exhausted on the floor next to the bed of an elder girl. During the night, every night, this scene would be repeated at least once.

During daytime Wang Ping appeared to be a normal child. Maybe she had an absent look in her eyes and she was not very energetic, but overall one could not guess the terror with which she was struggling to cope.

Wang Ping's favorite game with children was a role-play in which one child would be punished and the other one would punish. The caregivers intervened and redirected the game whenever possible.

After one and a half years the gentle conversational techniques, combined with ensuring her security and holding on to daily routines, began to show progress.

Wang Ping started to talk. She started to make up stories and to draw. Her interaction with others became more varied and she started to accept Gao Li - one of her room mates - as her best friend.

Today, Wang Ping is doing much better. She likes visits and hugs; she likes playing football and singing. She can play around with Gao Li for hours at a time. At school, she is mostly doing well, but she still regularly comes back to the village with scorecard reports which are way below her level.

The frequency of her nightmares is reduced, but every nightmare is followed by some days introvert behavior.

For severe psychological traumas like the one suffered by Wang Ping there is no miracle cure. Daily time and gentle support will help her to cope with the pain.

Through it all, we will be there with her, we will be there for her.

Feedback

This is the third issue of our quarterly newsletter. Your feedback will help us to improve. Also, we will be happy to include your contributions or announcements. We look forward to hearing from you. Please mail to: info@morningtears.com.

If you want to receive our previous newsletters, just send us an email.

Morning Tears Strategy for Children Village (part 2)

In the previous newsletter we explained that our strategy for Children Village consists of realizing 8 objectives. These objectives are:

- To raise awareness about the situation of the children and the care they need.
- To provide a safe and suitable living environment for the children.
- To ensure that basic needs for the children cared are met.
- To provide psychological support for the children to overcome their trauma(s).
- To prepare the children for and assist with integration into society and developing life skills.
- To provide education so the children can become responsible citizens.
- To build up care management capacity in Children Village.
- To enhance chances for successful family reunification.

Here we will briefly explain the first objective.

Raising awareness is necessary if we want to eliminate, or even reduce the discrimination and biases these children face.

All too often, children of convicted criminals are considered to be criminals themselves. It is common for them to be not welcomed in their home community anymore. In Europe as well as in the US, mothers prefer that their children do not play with those 'little bandits'.

If people would only get to really know the children in Children Village, then everything would be different.

To meet the goal of *raising awareness*:

- We seek continuous media coverage in China.
- We organize activities in Children Village in which members of the 'outside world' can participate.
- We have set up a Chinese website.
- We have set up an international website.
- We produced an informational video for distribution outside China.
- We are distributing a quarterly newsletter outside China.
- We will publish a book in China to tell the children's stories.
- We will train volunteers in effective methods of raising awareness.

One of the biggest challenges we face is that the people we need to reach the *most* are the people who are *least* interested in receiving our materials and our message.

People who are open to changing their ideas about children of imprisoned parents are interested in our materials. However, people whose biases are more strongly rooted are the hardest to get to; they are the ones least likely to look at our materials and listen to our message.

Any responses or requests for information can be sent to info@morningtears.com.

Relevant actuality in China

China joins the UN Human Rights Council

In May, China was elected member of the newly founded Human Rights Council of the UN. This in spite of the opposition of some countries like the United States, who was very critical of the human rights situation under the Communist regime.

After being elected, officials in Beijing promised to 'fulfill its duties' in the council and assured everyone that being member of the Council will certainly help improve the situation of basic freedoms in the country.

"We support this council and we have made positive contributions to its creation," said Liu Jianchao, spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He added that, from now on, China will keep, "its promise with the promotion of human rights and basic freedoms, encouraging dialogue and cooperation between different civilizations, cultures and religions."

Some human rights activists reminded the government in Beijing that it should, "quit the words and start acting to stop the continuous violations of human rights."

Source: Spanish news agency EFE

China's Supreme court to hire lawyers, teachers for death penalty reviews

China's highest court is working on a plan to take in lawyers and law school teachers as senior judges as it prepares to reassume its authority to review death penalty cases.

A candidate list of lawyers and law teachers who have decades-long experience in criminal lawsuits has been sent to the Supreme People's Court (SPC) by provincial judicial organs, Xiong Xuanguo, vice-president of the SPC, said. Those with strong political qualifications and a sense of responsibility will be chosen as judges on death penalty reviews, he said, without specifying any possible figure.

The SPC had been responsible for reviewing death penalty cases until 1983 when the authority was handed down to provincial courts as part of a crackdown on crime. However, the practice of provincial courts both considering death sentence appeals and conducting the final review has long been criticized as leading to miscarriages of justice, prompting the SPC to announce plans to reassume its judicial authority last year.

A timetable for the reform is still unavailable, as local courts need time to readjust and the SPC has to increase its pool of judges to meet the rising workload, analysts say. Over 30 judges from higher and intermediary People's Courts have been chosen for the first batch to go to Beijing. Having received three months of training, they will have to go through a probationary year before officially assuming office.

"Taking back the power of death penalty review is the final safeguard (against miscarriages of justice). We'll ensure the sentence is appropriate and follow the principle of strictly controlling the passing down of the death penalty," said Xiong.

In cases where the prosecution and defence do not have conflicting opinions, the SPC will likely give the final verdict based on files of the first two hearings by local courts. For cases in dispute, judges may question the defendant and hear the prosecution arguments, but details on the possibility of open trials remain to be discussed.

Source: People's Daily

Appeal trials to be filmed and open to the public

China was scheduled to start opening its appeal trials to the public if there was a chance of death penalty being handed down, starting July 1. Also, the Supreme Court foresees that all these trials will be filmed, to avoid abuses of power which are impossible to prove afterwards. These are two of the measures adopted by the Chinese judiciary in its drive to reduce the number of death penalties handed down every year, which could be up to 3.900, according to figures of Amnesty International.

Source: People's Daily

China will ensure compulsory education for all migrant children

The Chinese government promised to ensure access by all children to primary education. The education minister, Zhou Ji, recognized that 6.4 million children of migrant workers have not had access to education in recent years due to their change of residence from the countryside to the cities. Some 22 million other children were unable to move with their parents precisely because of the lack of educational opportunities. When the Ministry's proposal is accepted, all children will be able to attend school in the cities where their parents work. At the same time, Zhou acknowledged that about 10 percent of all Chinese rural children do not go to school. "When the kids are separated from their parents we see new problems arise, as the children do not have adequate supervision". China has nine years of compulsory education, but it is not free, and the cost is another problem, especially for peasants whose income is very limited.

Source: South China Morning Post



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Morning Tears rebuilds the world for children who have lost their own world.

Morning Tears rebuilds the world for children who have suffered or are suffering heavy emotional pain.

We focus particularly on:

- Children whose parents are in prison;
- Children whose parents have been sentenced to death;
- Children who have been abused or neglected;
- Orphans;
- Children who haven't been registered at birth, and thus have no rights;
- Street children.

Morning Tears has been operating since 1999 on an informal basis without legal structure. However, in March 2005 Morning Tears became a formal non-profit organization registered under Belgian Law. Currently, Morning Tears has offices in Belgium and China.

Morning Tears is run entirely by volunteers. These volunteers are mostly professionals from the social sector or development aid workers, although we also have journalists and engineers in our group.

The running costs of Morning Tears are kept very low, so that donations can go almost entirely to the children in need.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

WWW.MORNINGTEARS.ORG

We are doing both well and not well

We are doing well

For the first time, we do not have to be worried about having to close down Children Village in the coming months.

We found some more people who are willing to sponsor a child, and the barbeque we organized in the Belgian Embassy did give the financial returns we hoped for.

Also, the Belgian Province of Limburg committed to finance a bounding wall around Children Village. Moreover, there are some prospects of donations from private companies and organizations.

Within the next month, Morning Tears will also have completed its registration in Spain. This is expected to generate a good return on investment.

We are not doing well

We still lack the financial means for some thing that the children would really appreciate: a library and reading room. Also our request for some computers has failed.

More significantly, the problem of the terrible water quality in Children Village is still very acute.

But most disturbing still is the reality that we are coming to realize: the number of children that need our support by far exceeds our expectations.

We still have a lot of work to do.