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Newsletter

Volume 1, No 4

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Editorial

Solid Ground

Lina is dressing herself up in her self-made plastic jewels. It will be the third time that we will take her to visit her mother, and she wants to look her best.

Nine years old, Lina is a tiny little girl. It has now been a little more than a year since the beatings came to an end. She and Huan Xu, her brother, were subjected to weekly rituals of severe physical abuse by their father, and when their mother tried to intervene and protect them, she was crushed in the attempt.

But on that particular day, the cruelty he was inflicting on the children was unusually cruel. In the face of the attacks, the mother's rage knew no bounds: she killed her husband to protect her children. The first of her sixteen years of imprisonment has just been completed.

In Lina's daily life, she somehow manages to suppress memories of her life before entering Children's Village. Situations designed to help her confront reality are met with a sea of tears and waves of fear.

The first two times when we took Lina to visit her mother, she came back devastated. The prison staff had informally allowed Lina and her mother to hug for a moment, and the girl was allowed to sit on her mama's lap for a short while.

The tears she shed were a mix of emotions: bliss, pain, and confusion. On the surface, these visits seemed to cause a setback in Lina's emotional healing process.

But we at Morning Tears made a choice. We have learned that we cannot rebuild the worlds of children by denying reality.

Emotional healing based on negating facts is like walking on thin ice. The inevitable day when the child discovered the truth, the ice would break under the weight of the deception. Being suddenly immersed in the ice water would be enough to destroy their world a second time.

By bringing Lina to visit her mother, we can help guide her to solid ground. She will learn to incorporate her past into her life story, and she will gradually become more resilient. That resilience will allow her to face troubling moments in her life and the biases of society.

Lina is dressed and ready to go now.

"Let's go now, your mother is waiting for you," our driver warmly calls out to her.

Lina smiles and gets in the car.

Koen Sevenants,
on behalf of the children, their care-givers and
the Morning Tears team

News From Children Village

- All children took part in Arts, Dancing, Singing, Basketball, Football and English classes during the summer holiday, and they were supported in this by Morning Tears.
- 21 new children came into Children's Village in July and August - 16 boys and 5 girls. The youngest one is only 4 years of age, and the oldest is 13.
- After graduating from Junior Middle School, 3 boys and 3 girls from the village are attending a technical Senior Middle School to learn trade skills so they can get jobs when they graduate
- 6 children moved back home with their parents or other relatives during July and August.
- Four boys and one girl, all 18 year-olds, moved out of Children's Village and found work in Xi'an, Guangdong and Jiangsu in August.
- Morning tears designed a special program - City Tour - to teach the children life skills. Twelve children around 14 years-old took part. All of them were very excited by the activity and are really looking forward to the next time the program is put on.
- Children who's parents are in prisons outside of Shaanxi province had a chance to visit their parents during the summer holiday. Some of them haven't seen each other for almost three years.

Did You Know That...

...you can download previous newsletters of Morning Tears on our internet site: www.morningtears.com ?

...the Morning Tears website is now also available in Spanish?

...Morning Tears is searching for volunteers to assist in administration and translations (English/Dutch/Spanish/French) in Europe

...Belgian business delegation met some of our kids in Xi'an. The kids received many toys, and Morning Tears got promises for financial assistance.



Upcoming Events

- Construction of bounding walls around Children's Village was completed in September, and it will supply a safer living environment for all the children.
- All the kids and teachers in Children's Village will receive their second vaccination in September and October to ensure their continued good health, with support coming from Morning Tears.
- One child, Baubau, has a serious eye problem; she will have it examined in Beijing, with support also coming from Morning Tears.
- Children's Village has plans to build a roadway on the property inside the bounding wall, but this is not yet funded.

The Story of Ding Dang

Ding Dang is 8 years old. She was sent to children village by a policeman two years ago. Ding Dang wore very little clothes and carried a very poor bag with all her own stuffs. When the teacher asked something about her family and herself, Ding Dang looked in the ground and said nothing.

Ding Dang always had a very strong character, quite like a boy, and she never cries. Ding Dang doesn't like school. When it's school time, and all the other kids are preparing for school after breakfast, Ding Dang lies on the ground and nobody can make her stand up. The caregivers often have to let her stay in Children Village. Ding Dang seldom plays with the other kids. As matter of fact, Ding Dang was never an attractive or cute kid.

But Ding Dang was always very docile when caregiver Liu was on duty. She gets up on time and goes to school. Ding Dang always spoke a lot when caregiver Liu was around, but teacher Liu understood almost nothing when Ding Dang talk to her. Ding Dang's talking was more like she was speaking to herself. Her sentences were like many different unrelated pictures put together. But caregiver Liu listened patiently.

Till one day -when caregiver Liu was holding Ding Dang in her arms while sitting on the step in front of the dormitory- Ding Dang started to talk again. Ding Dang touched caregiver Liu's hair gently. Then she suddenly started to cry. Caregiver Liu patted her back softly. She asked Ding Dang, "Does anything make you sad?". Ding Dang told a lot that day. She talked about her parents for the very first time. She said her mother was very afraid of her father. Papa was always drunk and was beating them without any reason. One day, Ding Dang played with her sister in the yard, when Ding Dang's mother came home after finishing the work in the field. Father was drinking alcohol. They suddenly quarreled and started to fight. Ding Dang didn't know what happened. Her sister and she were sent to her aunt's home, and she didn't see her mother any more from that day on... Someone told Ding Dang that her mother was caught by police and sent to prison later, but nobody told Ding Dang what happened with her father. Ding Dang told caregiver Liu that she misses her mother so much and she wants to know where her parents are.

Caregiver Liu realized that the moment has come to gently let Ding Dang know the reality. She held Ding Dang tightly and promised her she will know very soon. In the weeks that followed caregiver Liu explained that her mother has to stay for 23 years in prison for murdering her father. Caregiver Liu had to repeat it many days. But after a while, Ding Dang seemed to understand what happened. When Ding Dang seemed strong enough, caregiver Liu took her to the prison to visit her mother.

Since then, Ding Dang goes to see her mother every two months. Ding Dang likes to take pictures very much, and she draws on the back of the every photo. She hides all the photos under her pillow. She holds the pillow tightly when she sleeps. When you ask her if you can see those photos, Ding Dang will always shake her head. She will tell you those are all for her mother. She will go to visit mama with the photos. It's the gift for mum.

Ding Dang still has very strong character now. She still doesn't like school very much, she doesn't do homework on time. Teachers refer to her as "a big headache". But Ding Dang is very gentle when caregiver Liu is on duty.

Feedback

This is the fourth 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 get our previous newsletters, visit our website at www.morningtears.com, you can download them from the site..

Morning Tears Strategy for Children Village (part 3)

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

1. To raise awareness bout the situation of the children and the care they need;
2. To provide a safe and suitable living environment for the children;
3. To ensure that basic needs for the children are cared for;
4. To provide psychological support for children to overcome their trauma(s);
5. To prepare and assist the children for integration in society and to develop life skills;
6. To provide education to become responsible citizens;
7. To build up care management capacity in Children Village;
8. To enhance chances for successful family reunification.

In this newsletter we will explain briefly the second objective: building a safe and suitable living environment for children. This objective refers to the hardware in Children Village. For the construction and hardware work, we follow our own standards. These standards are a compilation of international best practices. If you are interested in receiving copy of our "Standards", please e-mail to: info@morningtears.com

The activities that we hope to finish before the end of 2008 are the following:

- To build a little road that connects the dorms and the restaurant. This is a priority. Currently we have dirt road. A lot of dirt and mud enters the restaurant and dorms. The budget needed is 110.000 RMB or € 11.000.
- To build 3 new dorms for 15 children each (1 every year). Currently we are hosting 60 children. Our target is 90 children. After the winter we will probably construct a new dorm. Budget needed is 80.000 RMB or € 8.000.
- To install two water purifiers, with the objective of increasing water quality. The water quality is bad. We are looking for companies who are willing to donate purifiers.
- To build a playground for younger children. The budget needed is 28.000 RMB or € 2.800.
- To optimize interior decoration and furniture for all dorms. It would be better if the dorms were more 'cozy': nice colors, nice chairs and personal lockers for all the kids. Budget needed is 16.000 RMB or 1.600 Euro.
- To build a medical room: 16.000 RMB or 1.600 Euro.
- To set up a children's library. Budget needed is 120.000 RMB or € 12.000.
- To set up heating and shower systems. This is done in the mean time. We thank the Belgian province of Antwerp for the €22.000 that made this possible.

Morning Tears Spain is Born!

Morning Tears has completed the full registration of Morning Tears in Spain. That means that we have a now an operational bank account in Spain, Belgium and China. We have an enthusiast team of volunteers in Spain who are linked with Spanish people living in China. Consequently, we also publish this newsletter form now on in Spanish. Would you like to receive the Spanish version? Let us know at info@morningtears.com . Also, we are always searching for more volunteers and partners. Check out our contact and bank details at the last page of this newsletter!

Relevant Actuality in China

China has approved a law allowing only the country's top court to approve death sentences, state media reports.

The move follows a series of miscarriages of justice since lower courts were given the right to approve the death sentence in the 1980s. China's official state news agency, Xinhua, said it was believed to be the most important reform of capital punishment in more than two decades. The change in the law, approved by the country's top legislature, is due to come into effect on 1 January 2007, Xinhua reported. It means that all death penalty sentences given by lower courts must be reviewed and ratified by the Supreme Court. But it is unclear whether this will involve a full appeal hearing or, as it is at present in lower courts, simply a review of the paperwork from the initial trial. The Supreme Court had the responsibility for reviewing all death penalty cases until the early 1980s when provincial courts were given the authority to issue the death sentence. Early this year, death penalty cases began to be heard in public as China came under pressure at home and abroad over the rising number of miscarriages of justice.

Source: Xinhua

Family Violence

Family violence occurs in about 30 percent of China's 270 million households and about 90 percent of the abusers are male, according to a survey reported by a recent edition of the *China Consumer Journal*. The results of another survey conducted in Zhejiang, Hunan and Gansu provinces indicate that about 12.1 percent of husbands kick their wives when they have disputes, 9.7 percent beat them with some kind of instrument and 5.8 percent force them to have sex, said the paper. According to another report carried on Sina.com, one of China's leading websites, family violence stands as the primary reason females commit crimes. A survey conducted in a women's prison in Nantong City of Jiangsu Province shows that among the 513 prisoners who responded, some 237 confirmed violence existed in their families, and some 125 believed family violence directly led to their crimes, says the report.

Source: *China Consumer Journal*

Towards Partnership with the Ministry of Civil Affairs

Morning Tears has been warmly welcomed by the Chinese National Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) to become an official advisor for designing and implanting programs that focus on children with traumas. If all goes as planned, Morning Tears and the MCA will jointly set up 3 pilot centers in different parts of China. These centers will assist children of convicts and street children that have fled their homes because of abuse. Morning Tears will provide staff training to the centers and assist in the drafting of guidelines and procedures for relevant governmental departments involved in child protection. There is a commitment by the MCA to use the results of the project on national scale. The Memorandum of Understanding between the MCA and Morning Tears is expected to be signed in December. Next, we will have one year to find the necessary funds. This will be the second large project of Morning Tears in China – next to the care for children of convicts in Children Village.

Bad News

Xiao Gao had already eye problems when she arrived in Children Village 7 years ago. With glasses she was able to attend school. Lately, her eyes have been deteriorating. Specialists in Belgian and China confirmed what we feared for: in about six months she will be blind. We are searching for the suitable schools that are willing to include her. But schools are reluctant: she has some other medical complications as well, and she does not have papers. No papers, no rights. If you have an idea, please let us know.

Morning Tears on Dutch Television

Morning Tears and Children Village will be in the limelight in the television show "Eenvandaag" on the national Dutch Television during one day in the first week of December. "Eenvandaag" is a critical actuality show broadcasted at prime time. A Dutch film crew came two days to Children Village. All the Dutch members of the crew were about two meters high: the children were impressed. But the kindness of the team quickly transformed surprise into fun.



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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, Spain 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

Financial Barometer

We have several types of costs: the costs for daily living of the kids (food, clothes, medical care, school etc.), human resource costs of the people who work full-time in Children Village, hardware costs and cost for running and expanding Morning Tears.

The costs of daily living are covered by people that sponsor a child for 25 Euro a months. About one-third of our kids have sponsors now. The rest of the necessary money we get from the province of Antwerp. We are covered for 60 children till the end of 2007, but if we want to help more kids, then we will need to find more people who sponsor a child.

The total human resource cost in Children village is 11.740 Euro/year for 9 people. It includes regular training programs for the staff. This cost is very hard to cover. For this we organize little events in and out children village. We do not have any payment guarantees for the future.

The hardware costs are difficult to cover, but easy to control: if we find money, we can build. No money, no building. Gradually we are solving the hardware challenges.

Up till now we did not use any of our funds for running costs of Morning Tears. This will change. The growth of Morning Tears means more work with more people and also more costs. We hope that our sponsors will understand that a small overhead cost is inevitable.