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Editorial

Ruins

Belgium has slightly more than 10 million people. Imagine that 90% of them were sent to prison. Can you even picture this many prisoners?

The image of such a huge mass of prisoners is not a fantasy. Today, there are more than 9 million people in prisons around the world.

Imprisonment always implies a separation from family; it is part of the punishment. Consequently, there are nearly an equal number of families impacted by forced separation.

Since most of the prisoners are fathers or mothers, the prisoner is not the only one subjected to this punishment; their children also suffer. They suffer a lot!

It gets worse. We know that when a mother goes to prison only one father in five will take on the care of the children.

In the other four cases, the kids are brought up by other relatives or they enter the cycle of foster care. Most of these children will have their foster care placement changed at least twice while their parent(s) are in prison.

Most children of convicts not only suffer a separation from their parent(s). Their entire nuclear family is taken away from them and torn apart.

It gets even worse. In developing countries, there often are no foster care systems and the pressure of poverty makes it hard for other relatives to accept another mouth to feed.

Such children become inhabitants of the street – their world has vanished; there are not even ruins left behind.

Children of convicts are scattered all around the world. They are not organized as a special interest group. They can't fight for their own rights and dignity.

We will never be able to hear them jointly screaming out the suffering and injustice they have to bear. But we can imagine it. We know it is real.

That's why Morning Tears exists. That's why Morning Tears has to exist.

Koen,
on behalf of the children and Morning Tears.
koen.sevenants@morningtears.com

News from Children Village

- 3 new girls came to Children Village in January: the youngest is 3 years old, and the others were 8 and 10 year old sisters. There are now 77 youngsters living in Children Village.
- All the children had 4 days of winter camp in Beijing, where they got to go to the Science Museum, the National Zoo, the Planetarium, Happy Valley (an amusement park), and the Great Wall. They also played some group games together, and Morning Tears provided training to the caregivers.
- 25 children and 3 caregivers went to Beijing to celebrate the Chinese New Year, while the other children were brought home by relatives for the holiday.
- 1 new caregiver joined the Children Village team in January, 2007.
- 5 children went to visit the Spanish Ambassador and presented him with a gift.
- 2 journalists came from Belgium to visit Children Village, and made a special report on the village.

Morning Tears Searches for Contacts for Programs in Russia

The Russian Federation has a total prison population of 763,054, which makes it the country with the 3rd highest number of prisoners (the USA is 1st, and China is 2nd). Russia has the 2nd highest rate of imprisonment in the world: for every 100,000 people, 532 of them are in prison.

Russia also has the 3rd highest number of women in prison of all the countries in the world (55,000). There is also a significant level of poverty in Russia and its social institutions are weak.

These factors combine to cause us a great deal of concern. It is very likely that children of convicts face a very difficult situation in Russia.

As a result, Morning Tears is interested to begin programs in Russia. We are looking for contacts within Russia and for people who know Russia well. We hope they can help us to answer a number of questions.

If you think you can help, or if you know someone that might be able to help us help the children in Russia, please contact us at info@morningtears.com.



Did You Know That...

... in the USA, half of the parents who are in prison are never visited by their children. Research has shown that this is mainly because prison policies make such visits difficult and unpleasant.

...that many prisons make a commission on the calls made by prisoners. In a typical year, New York State alone makes a profit of \$21 million in commissions on prisoners' collect phone calls. In China, as well, high commissions are being charged.

... children not only suffer at the time of their parents' arrest (confusion and panic), during the trial (anxiety), at sentencing (helplessness), and initial incarceration (abandonment and resentment), but also right before and after the release of the parent. The children have to cope with a lot of ambivalence; the problems within the family have not been dealt with; both the child and the parent changed during the period of imprisonment; and the children also became attached to other people, from whom they now have to separate.

Keeping Children Safe

Any organization which works with children must do everything possible to protect those children from abuse. Abuse can come from outsiders, as well as insiders (staff members, other children, etc.).

Morning Tears is implementing strict international standards for child protection. These standards include taking the following (and other) actions: educating children to recognize inappropriate behaviour and encouraging them to speak out; training staff to recognize abuse, and getting them to blow the whistle on abusers, bringing procedures and guidelines into place to deal with abusive situations;

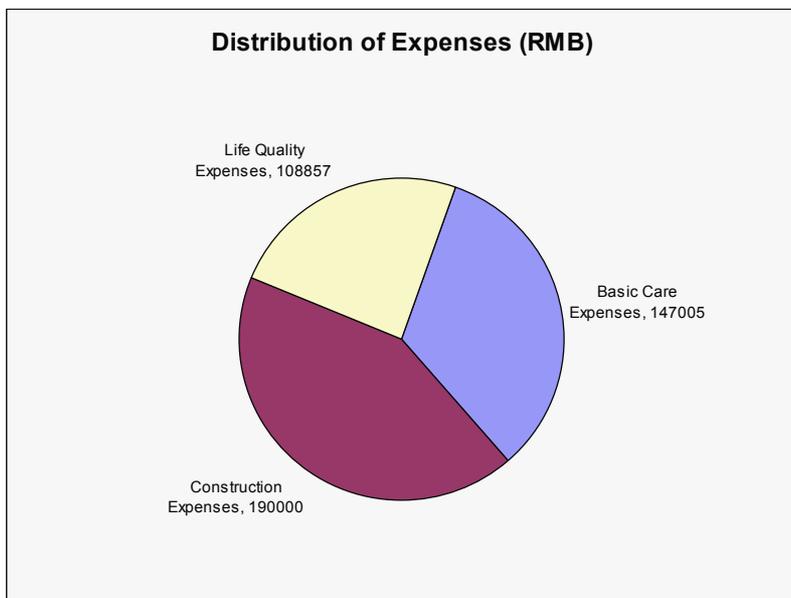
In our work, we use the toolkit "Keeping Children Safe". We encourage other organizations to do the same. Using the toolkit not only protects the children. It also protects the organization and its reputation.

For more information, go to www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk.

Financial Barometer

As promised in our previous newsletter and in the framework of our commitment to financial transparency we start with providing our detailed cost, expense and income structure.

Morning Tears supports a number of projects (see www.morningtears.org). Our main project so far is the support for Children Village Xi'an. In this issue we present the budget breakdown of contributions of Morning Tears to Children Village Xi'an in 2006.



Our total financial contribution to Children Village Xi'an in 2006 mounted to 476,727 RMB, which is €44,516. This amount is divided in (a) basic care expenses, (b) life quality expenses and (c) construction expenses.

(a) Basic care expenses:

Morning Tears financed the complete basic care expenses of Children Village for the first 3 quarters of 2006. The intention was that the fourth quarter would be carried by local contributions and identified by the local management (except for the costs of the coal). It is not clear at this stage if this objective was reached since a number of the promised local transactions have not yet been completed. The expire date for these transactions is June 2007. Morning Tears will fill up possible financial gaps. At the same time we will build the capacity of the local management for fund raising. Aside from

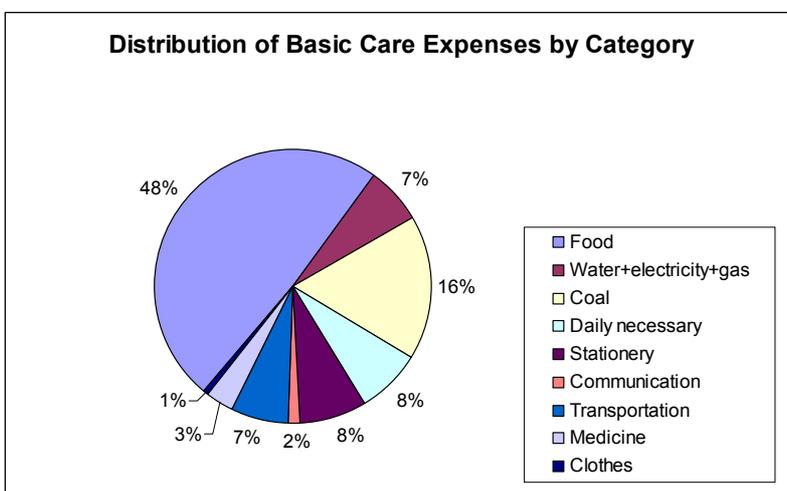
these possible costs of the fourth quarter, Morning Tears spend money for basic care in following way

A detailed overview of expenses per category per month can be obtained by writing an e-mail to koen.sevenants@morningtears.com

(b) Life quality expenses

108,857 RMB (€10,361) was spend on life quality costs.

Prison visits	22 200
Summer Camp	39 545
Summer classed and therapy	17 859
Vaccinations	13 640
Music instruments	3600
Excursions	8230
Pedagogical tools	3783
TOTAL	108857



(c) Construction expenses

In 2006 Morning Tears invested 190,000 RMB in construction works in Children Village Xi'an. 105,000 RMB was paid for the second and final installment of the heating system and 85,000 RMB was paid for a wall around Children Village.

The Story of Wang Li

Though she is only 15, Wang Li has already lived in Children Village for 8 years.

Though she can not remember the day she and her younger brother were brought here by the police, everyday of the year they spent living on the street is etched clearly in her mind.

Wang Li's mother is serving a life sentence in Shaanxi Women's Prison for killing the girls' father. Although the killing was in reaction for a lifetime of terrible abuse, the people in the community could not accept the action.

Wang Li and her younger brother suddenly lost their home after their mother was arrested, and the entire village rejected the children. None in the village would allow their children to play with Wang Li or her brother, or even to talk with them. The two small children were even rejected by relatives who refused to let the children come close to their house.

With no one to look after them, and no food or clothes in their own home, the 7 year old Wang Li took charge, holding her 7 year old brother as they sat in the empty house for the whole night.

In the morning, they left their home and their village and became street children, struggling for food and a place to sleep every night. They ended up in Xi'an City, and were caught by the police one year later.

One day they were begging for watermelon from a lady, and the lady was obviously very frightened by the two dirty children. She screamed to drive them away, but Wang Li and her brother were desperately thirsty from being out in the strong mid-summer sun. They persisted and followed the lady for a long time, and finally the lady was so angry she called the police.

The police brought the youngsters to Children Village, but not because they knew the children's mother was in prison. The police brought Wang Li and her brother here because they knew it was a place that would accept children who do not have a home.

Children Village did accept them, and after four months Wang Li opened up a little. She told the one of the caregivers where they were from and their family situation. From that day, Wang Li and her brother found a new home, and people who really did want them.

In the beginning, Wang Li resisted being separated from her brother to sleep in two different rooms. She constantly woke up from nightmares, and if she could not immediately find her brother she would cry and scream loudly. She always crouched at the corner of her bed with her back against the wall; her tiny body was tightly curled up, even when sleeping.

Wang Li ate a lot all the time, but especially in the holidays when we prepare more food for the children. In fact, she often made herself sick from eating too much. Even now, 8 years later, Wang Li still eats more than a girl normally would.

We can not imagine what kind of life the 7 year old Wang Li was forced to endure in that year before she came to Children Village. We only know that we have spent nearly 8 years getting her to let herself believe that we won't abandon her and ask her to leave Children Village.

Wang Li is a quiet child, accepting things easily. She is not a smart child, but she is very warm hearted. She always helps the caregivers to take care of the younger children, and she is always working.

Quietly, almost secretly, she has grown up in our midst, and suddenly we find that she is a big girl now. Sometimes, it is easy to forget that Wang Li is still just a child. Now, she is more like a friend who always offers support to the teachers by doing things for the other children, and not so much a child who still needs help.

Wang Li and her brother, now 15 and 14, go to visit their mother. Watching them together, we can feel how thankful the mother is now. She is thankful that she has such a good daughter, one who takes good care of herself and her brother, and also gives hope to the mother in her future life.

It's a beautiful to see the family when they are all together on visiting day. Most of the time they sit together and talk gently, but they hold each other's hands tightly.

Now, Wang Li is studying in a technical school. She has a clear idea in her heart about her future life.

Wang Li wants to work with children in the future, because she believes she can do a lot to help children who have suffered from traumatic experiences. Because she is one of them, she can feel what these children feel; she can know what these children need.

She is still a girl of few words, but if you look into her eyes you can see the smile in her heart and the hope for the future in her soul.

kouwei@morningtears.com

Feedback

This is the second issue of the second volume 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 5)

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

These objectives are:

1. To raise awareness about 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 explain briefly the fourth objective: To provide psychological support for children to overcome their trauma(s).

These are the activities that we are currently undertaking to realize this objective:

1. We give the children a feeling of security by reassuring them that they are safe with us and that they will be taken care of.
2. We provide a daily routine (getting up every day at the same time, eating every day at the same time, etc). This gives structure to their lives and makes their lives predictable.
3. We coach caregivers in suitable interaction with children. This includes: conversation techniques, recognizing dangerous situations and depressions, avoiding retraumatization, strengthening resilience, etc.
4. We provide opportunities for expression through art: children are encouraged to dance, sing, make drawings and write. We provide materials and support staff to this end.
5. We provide opportunities for sport and movement, which have been shown to positively influence the healing of traumas.
6. We stimulate children to play. One of the keys for children with a trauma is restoring playfulness. Also, children under 12 years old express them mostly through play.
7. We provide opportunities for making choices. Children with traumas often have the feeling that nothing in life is under their control. Bad things happen to them. By letting them make choices over many little things (what clothes to wear, which household chores to carry out, etc) we try to re-instil in them the feeling that they can have some control over life.
8. We provide opportunities for lengthy conversations, in both one-on-one and in group situations.
9. We follow-up the children individually and discuss each of their situations in weekly all-staff meetings.

We also would like to do more. We would like to set up a small centre for the professional development of our staff and make more use of the wealth of resources that traditional Chinese medicine (tuina, acupuncture, etc.) has to offer towards emotional healing.

There is much to say about psychological support for the children. Less than one page in a newsletter is far from sufficient, but if you have any comments or suggestions, please send them to me at koen.sevenants@morningtears.com

News Items

China's top court sends doubtful cases back for retrial

China's Supreme People's Court has changed the way China will handle defective judgments in death penalty cases. Until now, the court used to change the death sentences it thought mistaken. But the new order will send cases back to provincial courts for retrial. "The new regulation will guarantee that death sentences are handed out with caution by ordering retrials, which will also improve the efficiency of Supreme People's Court death penalty reviews," said a court spokesman. The regulation took effect at the end of February.

Source: Xinhua News Agency - February 2007

Adopting in China: new rules that will affect many

For years, China has been a popular destination for couples who wanted to adopt internationally. Thousands of Chinese children -mostly girls- have been adopted by parents from all over the world, thanks to a quick, predictable and secure process regulated by the Chinese government. The new regulations, which will enter into force May 1, are sending tremors through adoption agencies and prospective parents. They prohibit adoption by people who are single, obese, have certain physical or psychological conditions, fail to earn enough money or are older than 50.

The China Center of Adoption Affairs said that the new regulations are necessary because it is unable to keep up with the demand of overseas families wanting to adopt the "limited number of Chinese babies." Rules regarding prospective parents' health, finance and marital status aim to provide the Chinese children "the best possible environment to grow in." But sceptics believe that the new adoption criteria may be more a result of national pride.

Source: General Media Services - February 2007

Death penalty gets a second global look

Louise Arbour, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, says she senses a global interest in revising the death penalty, triggered in part by the public execution of former Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein. "I sense that this year there is an opportunity to move towards abolition in some countries, moratorium in others and transparency in some which still surround the application of the death penalty with secrecy," Mrs. Arbour told reporters.

The official U.N. position is that it respects the domestic laws of member states. However, Mrs. Arbour thinks that all people have the right to life, a de facto repudiation of capital punishment. The U.N. special rapporteur for extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions, Philip Alston, notes: "Given that the loss of life is irreparable (...) the abolition of capital punishment is most desirable in order fully to respect the right to life (...) While there is a fundamental right to life, there is no such right to capital punishment."

Around the world, 88 nations and territories have explicitly outlawed the death penalty, while 69 permit capital punishment for crimes of varying degrees of severity from rape to treason. The European Union has shelved capital punishment, while the United States, Iran, Iraq, China and South Korea are among those that impose it.

Source: Washington Times - March 2007

Africa Alters Efforts To Save Orphans

Millions of children in southern Africa have lost parents to war, AIDS, and hunger. Until now, if they were lucky, they could spend their entire childhood in an orphanage. But in recent years, faced with an overwhelming number of orphans, governments and aid organizations have shifted their response away from orphanages and toward a system they call "community-based care." This means that rather than giving a child a place to live, aid groups try to support them in their own villages — paying for school fees, for instance, or helping adoptive families with food aid. Organizations such as UNICEF say this is healthier and more culturally appropriate than moving children into institutions.

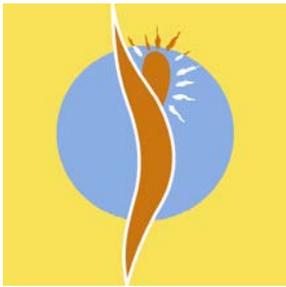
"Everything revolves around the community," says Thierry Delvigne-Jean, UNICEF's spokesman in Mozambique. "If we are to succeed in dealing with this increasing number of orphans, it's really at the community level that it's going to happen. But it will have challenges. We're talking about huge numbers." At least 12 million children in Africa have lost one or more parents to AIDS, and many more to war and hunger.

Source: The Christian Science Monitor. February 2007

Critics Say Prisoner Transfers Punish Children and Families

A California Superior Court judge is blocking Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's plan to solve the state's severe prison overcrowding by transferring inmates out of state. Two labour unions that represent correctional officers and other prison employees had sued to block the transfers that would send thousands of prisoners to other provinces because of the overcrowded and dangerous jails.

"What about the inmate's families? What will become of their children?" asks Malisa Oliver of Rialto. Many children of prisoners grew up in foster care with grandparents and other relatives, bouncing among an array of temporary caretakers. She tells the



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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.



News Items (cont'd)

story of her 7 year old nephew, Danen, whose father is now being transferred. Two years ago Danen began visiting his father every other week said Oliver. "He was like a kid going to see the Easter Bunny. He would get all cleaned up, take his homework and they'd work through math problems. His grades not only got better, he looked forward to going to class."

Oliver says Danen is visibly depressed and angry. "Transferring inmates who have adolescent children is physically and emotionally hard on their families, who already have a difficult time visiting them in local prisons," said Oliver. Across the country, an estimated 1.5 million children have a parent behind bars, an increase of more than half a million since 1991, according to the Federal Bureau of Justice Statistics. The result is what Linda Carson - a former inmate and daughter of an inmate calls "the largest separation of families since slavery."

Carson, who runs the prison support organization Kids of Prison Parents, says the social cost of jailing small-time criminals like James W., and of relegating their children to the juvenile justice and social welfare bureaucracies, goes well beyond the crisis of overcrowding. "The children of prisoners are "at risk" for just about everything a child can be at risk for: truancy, gang involvement, drug use and sexual abuse. Inmates end up punishing their children and other family members for the sake of their own safety."

Researchers believe that over 10 million kids have experienced the incarceration of a parent at some point in their lives. Many like Danen continue to feel the repercussions of that loss. "These children are made virtual orphans by the drug war and other "tough on crime" measures that have sent the prison population skyrocketing to record levels," says Carson.

"For children of non-violent drug offenders in particular, the experience of losing a parent can be morally and emotionally corrosive. They end up losing respect for 'authority' that, in their eyes, has shown their parents so little in the way of justice." Carson says family bonds are being severed by design. "Moving inmates thousands of miles from their children and families, who are in most cases their only support, is pouring salt in an open wound."