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Editorial

Shattered dreams

When 6 year old Ting Ting entered Children Village she told us her deepest wish. She wanted to be with her mother again. Her parents were drug traffickers. Her father was executed; her mother was sent to prison for 10 years and with good behavior she could be out after 8 years. After a difficult adaptation period Ting Ting turned into one of those kids that - just by hearing them laugh and giggle - can change your whole mood for the happier. Her eyes were like twinkling stars, always looking for something new, funny and mostly naughty things to do. But Ting Ting was very persistent in her dream. Living with her mother was present in every drawing she made. She could fantasize for hours with a profound smile on her face about how life would be when her mother would be back... such are the innocent ways of childhood.

Of course Ting Ting is not the only one. Most of the children in the Morning Tears community have the same wish. But family reunions are complex. After many years of separation mother and child are not the same people anymore. Times of great hardship in prison transform a person while at the same time the child grows up and develops a character uninfluenced by parents. The problems that were existing in the family before incarceration have not

been dealt with and are mostly intact at the time of release. Also, almost all former inmates have huge financial problems which makes taking care of their children nigh impossible. Moreover, soon after the mother has come back the children start to have loyalty conflicts. Naturally, the children get attached to the people they lived with at Morning Tears; their new family. When the mother comes back, they face the pain of separation once again. Finally, both mother and child idealized one another and their future life together enormously. Our real world can never live up to these hopes and expectations.

Ting Ting is now 15 years old. Last year her mother was released. She came and picked up Ting Ting. It took 4 months for her dream to be shattered. The mother brought Ting Ting back to us. It hadn't worked out. In those few months living with her mother Ting Ting made a quantum leap into adulthood. When her mother left she took the twinkling in Ting Ting's eyes with her. She simply stole them. She also shattered her innocence.

We prepare children as well as we are able, but family reunions almost never work out.

Koen Sevenants,

on behalf of the children and Morning Tears

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News

- The Association of Spanish Adoptive (AFAC) families inaugurated on October 20 the Child Assistance Center in Henan. AFAC and its 2000 associated families in Spain financed the construction of the center. The center will become operational in February 2009.
- Al Jazeera broadcasted a documentary about the program that Morning Tears finances in San Yuan (Shaanxi Province). The documentary can be seen at: english.aljazeera.net/news/asia-pacific/2008/10/200810674027221246html
- 12 new children arrived during the Olympic Games in Children Village Xi'an. The smallest one is a 2 year old boy. His name is 'Sadamo'. His hometown is in the province neighboring Pakistan.
- Morning Tears will receive € 1 for every visitor who goes to see the movie 'The Children of Huang-Shi'.
- Children in Sint-Martens-Latem and Deurle (Belgium) made a walk for Morning Tears. Their parents and friends sponsored the walk. They collected more than € 11,000.

Our Project Officer in Beijing

I am Tom, the project officer for Morning Tears' office in Beijing. I am so happy and proud to be a member of this great team and working so closely with children who truly need our help.

I have been working for charities for many years and every time when I see our children in the Children Village, and recall what happened in the past years, however, I am always feeling gratified by what we have been achieved for them. Even though we cannot bring them all they want, at least we are trying our best to comfort them. Especially, when I see those children who are so distressed by leaving their family and loved parents while just coming to our village, I would like to give them all I can give. In the meantime, even though I also fully understood there is something that we cannot give, anyhow, we need to do our best to make them feel warm from bottom of our hearts.

Currently, we are also proud that we are changing the conditions for children of convicts. Children of Xi'an Children Village enjoyed last month's October Festival holiday in Pingyao of Shan'xi Province. Children of Sanyuan Children's Village have newly painted rooms, with new windows and doors replaced, so that they will not have to suffer the cold next winter. Children of convicts in Chengdu have the opportunity to have surgery for their sicknesses and hurts. In addition, we are constructing a new building for the children of convicts in Henan province, so they will have new family, friends, school, life style, and so on. Moreover, we are doing our best protecting, educating, and developing children to their full potential.

What we have done might be only a part of our children's needs and not always enough for them, therefore, we would like to invite all of you to join us to improve our work. Let's together dedicate ourselves and achieve this thankful heart.



Morning Tears' Strategy

In the last newsletter we explained that Morning Tears uses research-based minimum standards for child care and protection. In our standards we differentiate seven quality areas, namely: planning for care; protective care; personal care; health, environment and safety, caregivers; management and administration.

In this newsletter we will discuss the second quality area: protective care. For our protective care we use four standards:

Standard 1: Child care programs have a child protection policy

- *All programs have a written policy on dealing with child protection, which reflects the national law and the minimum standards set by the UNCRC (United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child) and which provides guidance and procedures for staff and caregivers who discover or suspect a child has been or is being abused or neglected. The policy recognizes that abuse can be physical, sexual, or emotional and can be perpetrated by caregivers, other adults and children.*
- *Staff and caregivers should know how to respond timely and appropriately.*
- *The children need to be made aware of their rights, and that both staff and the children are protected as soon as an incident or suspicion is reported.*

Basis: Article 19 UNCRC: children shall be protected from all forms of maltreatment perpetrated by parents or other persons responsible for their care, and appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims should be established.

Why is this important?

- Programs have a moral and professional responsibility to work with children in a way that uncovers abuse and to report it to the appropriate authorities.
- They also have the responsibility to provide support for the child.

Standard 2: Staff and caregivers demonstrate good child protection practice

- *Caregivers are knowledgeable about and sensitive to signs which can indicate that abuse is taking place.*
- *Arrangements are made to reduce the likelihood of isolation for individual caregivers working with children, especially in situations where children may be undressed. Caregivers have ways of taking breaks or finding relief at times of high stress.*
- *All significant events relating to the protection of children accommodated in the home are reported to the appropriate authorities in a timely and sensitive manner.* U

Basis: Article 19, UNCRC: children shall be protected from all forms of maltreatment perpetrated by parents or other people responsible for their care and appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and treatment of victims should be established.

Why is this important?

- Caregivers of orphaned and vulnerable children have a particular potential through their relationship with children to uncover abuse and to support the child.
- Caregivers must be able to understand how some problem behaviour of children may in fact be linked to experiences of abuse.

Standard 3: Staff supervise children at all times

- *Caregivers shall directly supervise infants, toddlers, and preschool children, and particularly children with disabilities, by sight or hearing at all times, even when the children are in sleeping areas.*
- *Caregivers shall know the whereabouts of the children in their care at all times.* UBasis: Good childcare practice U

Why is this important?

- Close supervision ensures the physical safety of the children.
- Smaller children and/or children with disabilities may need the reassurance of an adult being nearby

Standard 4: Child care programs have appropriate policies in case of emergency

- *The childcare setting shall have and post emergency plans and procedures appropriate for the program, addressing potential disasters such as fire, hurricane, volcano, flood, blizzard, tornado, etc.*
- *Telephones or another identified and acceptable means of communication shall be available to facilitate contact with emergency services.*
- *The child care setting shall have a minimum of two unobstructed exits leading to safe, open areas.*
- *Emergency evacuation procedures shall be in place and posted prominently within the child care setting to evacuate children as a first priority in the event of a fire or other emergency.*
- *Approved, properly maintained, multi-purpose fire extinguishers, appropriate for the size of the home, shall be readily available, and caregivers shall be trained on their operation. An appropriately stocked first aid kit shall be present and easily accessible to caregivers at all times, including during field trips and while transporting children.* Basis: Good childcare and management practice

Why is this important?

- Proper emergency plans ensure the safety of children in care and of staff.

About Basic Needs of Children

Author : Ingrid Cafmeyer

This article has been removed at the request of the author.

Mirjam Lambooj

My name is Mirjam Lambooj from the Netherlands, I'm married to Ronald and we have two children: Merijn, born in the Netherlands in 2001 and Yan, born in Guangdong, China in 2003. We adopted Yan when she was 16 months old.

About one year ago I found a video of Morning Tears on youtube.com which caught my attention. One thing led to another and now I am the volunteer coordinator for Morning Tears in the Netherlands. At the moment we have 9 active volunteers and a board has just been formed. We have plenty of ideas to promote Morning Tears in the Netherlands and are eager to help to rebuild the world for the Morning Tears children. I thank all who care for our children wherever they may be.



Feedback

This is the fourth issue of the third 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.org.

If you want to get our previous newsletters, visit our website at www.morningtears.org. You can download them from the site.

The Story of Meng Meng

Meng Meng is a seven-year old boy. Being only 1.1 meters and a meager 17 kilograms he seems fragile for his age. His eyes are playful, yet determined and emit a history that undoubtedly could not have been easy. His dad committed a robbery when Meng Meng was only 20 days old and was incarcerated for 10 years. His mom divorced Meng Meng's dad soon after that and disappeared from the scene. She left him with his 69-year old, illiterate grandmother who owns a tiny piece of land that supplies the two of them with an annual income of 660 RMB (€ 66). They are considered extremely poor, by any standards. The government gives them an allowance of 33 RMB (€ 3.3) per month but since Meng Meng's grandmother lacks any kind of education, business understanding or simple foresight, the money just doesn't seem to last. It doesn't buy them fertilizer for the crops, nor running water or electricity. There is no money for toys or clothes. Grandma often skips meals so that she has money to buy a small portion of meat for Meng Meng.

Meng Meng grows up without a father or mother, without the joys any seven-year old deserves and should be entitled to; and most importantly without school. He did go to kindergarten but the money has since run out; especially since the infamous Sichuan earthquake earlier this year destroyed grandma's shabby little house. They had no choice but to leave their already harsh and difficult existence and they now live in a refugee camp, without money or immediate hope for a better future.

Eating, playing, learning are all huge issues in Meng Meng's life and not just because he has so little of them. Meng Meng suffers from enteritis, an excruciatingly painful abdominal disease that makes it almost impossible for Meng Meng to sit, squat, run around, or play. Seeking medical help that might relieve the pain is just no option.

And yet, despite all the hardships Meng Meng has to endure, he understands what needs to be done. He sweeps the floor; he helps grandma cook and fix the holes in their clothes; he walks great distances to get water and patiently stands in line for food in the camp. He makes the bed in the morning and gets dressed by himself. He seldom nags or complains; and all the neighbors love him and admire him for that. But where is the seven-year old boy in Meng Meng? Where is the joy children get from playing outside, from teasing their teachers, from learning and failing, from the occasional candy, from a motherly hug and kiss, from a bedtime story at night? Can he afford to dream and hope to see his dad again when released from prison? Or will he, just like his mother leave him behind? Can he afford to hope for some form of charity that will allow him to go to school? Can he afford to hope that his grandmother will live long enough to take care of him?

He sweeps the floor and as he smiles you can see the playfulness of a seven-year old boy.

Katleen Mentens



Children from San Yuan on excursion in Ankang (Shaanxi) during the national holiday week (October 1st)

News Briefs

Concern for children living in prisons

Five children are living with their mothers in jails in the State of Victoria, Australia. Three children, aged from infant to pre-school age, are locked up with women at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre in special units and two at Tarrengower. Most were born in prison. A Corrections spokeswoman said the children's welfare was monitored daily and international studies had "shown the importance and value of keeping young children under the care of their mothers in custody". "The mother and child program at Victoria's prisons provides the opportunity for bonding between the mother and child and also gives the mother an opportunity to commit to rehabilitation," the spokeswoman said. "It has been running successfully in Victorian prisons for more than 20 years and the primary concern is always with the best interest of the child." Children are also able to stay in jail with their mothers for between eight and 24 hours with a Family Ties Permit. Psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg said an American study had shown that children who spend time in custody while growing up are more likely to commit crime but no link had been established by Australian research. He said children needed their mothers but should not spend more than three years in a prison. "There are a range of psychological problems that can come from a feeling of abandonment and you have got to weigh that up on the one hand with potential psychological problems that may accompany growing up behind bars," he said.

Source: www.theage.com.au/national/concern-for-children-living-in-prisons-20081003-4tbp.html

Kids with prison moms need help

Many mothers in the US who experience childbirth are coached through labor in a hospital maternity ward with supportive doctors and nurses. Their husbands may capture the birth with a video camera. After the baby's bawling first breaths, mother and child bond in a joyous embrace. Childbirth is not so joyous for the growing number of women who give birth behind bars. It is a time of humiliation, sadness and separation. Before, during, and after delivery, prison mothers are commonly shackled. No one is there to take those first baby pictures. And the infant may be whisked away by a social worker to be given to a family member to raise, or if they are less fortunate, the child goes to foster care. The mother returns to an eight foot by 12 foot prison cell to grieve. The bond between mother and child is broken at the moment of delivery. There are about 1.2 million parents incarcerated in federal, state prisons or local jails in the United States. The number of mothers in prison grew 88 percent from 1991 to 2002. While relatively few women who are incarcerated give birth behind bars, about two-thirds of female inmates are mothers of minor children. Most women are in prison for non-violent offenses, many of them drug related. Almost 60 percent of mothers in state prisons lived with their children at the time they entered prison. With few procedures or policies that require or facilitate maintaining relationships between mothers and their children, the criminal justice system often breaks families apart. The majority of incarcerated parents reside more than 100 miles from their homes. While in prison, many mothers only rarely see their children and are not involved in decisions about their welfare nor do they get any help with parenting. Some lose track of their children altogether. Almost 80 percent of the children with a mother in prison live with a grandparent or other relative who generally receives little public support. About 10 percent of children with incarcerated mothers are in foster care, and in some cases they have entered care before the parent was locked up. But foster care can result in a parent losing the rights to their children permanently because federal law requires, with limited exceptions, that a state file a petition to terminate parental rights when a child has been in foster care for 15 out of 22 months. The timetable is especially problematic given that the average time a mother in state prison is expected to serve is 49 months.

Children can be deeply traumatized by the incarceration of their mothers. They may feel abandoned or blame themselves for their parent being taken away. Even young children may feel the stigma and shame of having a parent behind bars. Studies have documented that children of incarcerated parents are prone to emotional and behavioral difficulties, poor academic performance, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse and are more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system themselves. The majority of the 1.5 million children of incarcerated parents are Black or Latino.

Source: www.citizen-times.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=200881008067

Israeli intention to restrict prison visits to video conferencing draws ire

The Israeli administration made public its intention to transfer familial visits between Palestinian families and political prisoners to a video conferencing system. Hundreds of complaints have already been levied against the Israeli prison authorities for other humiliating practices during visits, including lengthy waits, invasive searches, the thick barrier between the imprisoned and visitor, and the infrequency of visits. Of particular concern is the effect on children who will only see their parent via video. The most afflicted will be the 1.6 million citizens of the Gaza Strip who are currently held under Israeli siege. This new system will allow the Israeli administration to excuse its own breach of international norms with the reasoning that if there is a method for visits that does not require freedom of movement, there is an out of any complaint levied by the Red Cross.

Source: english.pnn.ps/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3671&Itemid=1



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New!

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.



Financial Barometer

- The annual budget for all programs together in 2007 was about € 51,000. The budget for 2008 will be about € 264,000. The main reason for the increase are the construction works that are currently taking place for the 'coming home' program in Henan. In 2009 there will be less construction but the 'coming home' program will be operational. We estimate at this stage that the budget for 2009 will be around € 132,000.
- The overhead costs in 2007 were about 16%. The larger part of these overhead costs were costs related to meeting in order to prepare the program in Henan. We estimate that for 2008 we will close the year with an overhead cost of about 14%.
- The annual accounts for Morning Tears Spain are now available on our internet site. The annual accounts of Morning Tears Belgium will soon be added.
- Morning Tears Holland has now an independent bank account!