

morning tears newsletter

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Editorial

The dilemma of helping children in prison

The mission of morning tears is to help children whose parents are in prison. In several countries, children can stay with their mothers in prison up to a certain age. Under certain conditions this is very good. Last year, morning tears recommended to the UN Committee for the Rights of the Child in a special meeting in Geneva that that “babies and children stay with their mothers in prison until they are school-aged. Arrangements should also be made so that children have access to the outside world as it must be recognized that the child is not a prisoner and should be able to have maximum access to the community”. The Committee of the Rights of the Child agreed with this recommendation, but in many developing countries children stay with their mother or father in prison far beyond the age that they should be starting primary school. This is the case in the Philippines, Uganda, Ecuador, Cambodia and many other countries. Helping these children is not straightforward. A heavy dilemma steps in.

On one hand, morning tears recognizes the importance of the love and link between the mother and a child. The child needs the mother, and the mother needs the child. The mother does not want to let the child go, and the child does not want to go. But often, the conditions for the child’s development are totally substandard in prison. There’s no access to schools, and there are physical dangers, a lack of hygiene and too low quality and little access food. What should a child protection agency like morning tears do in these cases? Remove the child against the will of the child and mother? Or respect the child and mother, and provide assistance in a pragmatic way, knowing that the child is in danger and does not have development opportunities?

There is no absolute right or wrong. But in many situations, morning tears has to take a stance. This is how we deal with it. We first of all obey the law of the country in which we work. If there are laws that stipulate how to handle this situation, then we act accordingly. We also try to convince the mother and the child that morning tears assures frequent contact between mother and child, and we ensure that custody stays with the parent. We explain the advantages of the child being outside. But, sometimes, none of this works. The dilemma remains unresolved. We fight for children, but how can we do this against the will of children and parents? This is not a happy question. It is interwoven with pain, fear and an understandable lack of trust.

We welcome your opinion.

Koen Sevenants

Founder of morning tears

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News

Shanghai: Charities Working Together

It is wonderful to see that different charities can work together and thereby help one another. Morning tears' Shanghai branch has been fortunate to receive the support of two other charities - A Pleine Mains and MiFan Mama - allowing us to ship clothes, toys, books, blankets and more to our projects in Zhengzhou and Xian along with "boxes of love".

Each "box of love" contains candy and a little toy for each child, which they will receive during the Chinese New Year. Chinese New Year is China's equivalent of Christmas or other big celebrations in other places around the world. It means a lot to the children to receive these gifts, as it is a very rare and special thing for them. We are grateful to these two organizations for their wonderful support.

Morning tears in Cambodia

Emergency intervention in Cambodia/Pailin Prison – Follow-up

In the last newsletter we wrote about the horrific situation that we found in Cambodia's Pailin prison close to the Thai border. We visited Cambodia on a mission to see how morning tears could help children of imprisoned parents there.

Since that time, we have been able to give support to these deprived children in the prison, which was built in a former theatre. Martina Cannetta, along with her team, delivered food (rice, canned fish, milk, powder and soup) and cleaning products (soap, shampoo, toothpaste and tooth brushes) twice a month to all the children and will continue to do so.

The visiting social workers had the chance to learn more about the children and mothers in prison and their family situations outside, and the schoolchildren can now go to school.

We are starting to build a play area on a balcony in the prison's first floor for the children between three and six years old. This should be finished in March and will give the children the chance to play everyday, get some fresh air and hopefully forget their situation for a few hours and be happy laughing children - closely watched by their mothers, who will be able to see them from the ground floor.

But this will only be the first step in our support of the children of imprisoned parents in Cambodia. The situation in Pailin prison has become even more tense recently, because more and more inmates are being brought there to wait for trial. Help is urgently needed and during the upcoming months morning tears hopes to start a long-term project to reintegrate these children into their communities, by providing placements in either kinship care, foster care or home-like living situations in small homes as well as providing psychological support.

Although much work is yet needed to give these neglected children in Cambodia hope for a better future, morning tears is very dedicated to helping them live a better life - outside prison! We are planning to provide assistance to the other prisons in the border region. Please help us help them!

For more information please contact uschi.germer@morningtears.org.cn.



Morning Tears Training Project in the National Training Centre

Last year, morning tears began to successfully collaborate with the National Training Centre, under direct supervision of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, in order to develop training materials and training plans for people working with street children in state-run Child Protection Centres. This training project was divided into two main missions: the first was to build a Training Curriculum intended to assist staff members working in Child Protection Centres in their daily work. The second part of the project was for morning tears to provide training in materials creation for the instructors at the National Training Centre.

Using a training needs survey, interviews were conducted at the Zhengzhou Child Protection Centre, which is the official model project for care and assistance for at-risk children, including street children, in China. Following this, the Director of the National Training Centre and the General Director of morning tears approved the Training Curriculum proposal. Currently, Psychology and Child Education experts are working on writing the content for the Training Curriculum modules. Moreover, in order to make these modules available for everyone, morning tears has decided to create an e-learning version of the modules that will be available in the future. Finally, a Training Guidebook has been written for the National Training Centre's educators to be used as a general guideline and manual: they will be taught how to use it during a training session designed by a morning tears training specialist at the beginning of 2012.

Presentation of Morning Tears at the New French Embassy

On December 8, 2011, thanks to the French organization Pékin Accueil, morning tears was invited to Beijing's new French Embassy. Morning tears, along with two other NGOs, presented during a "Café des Associations". After a welcome speech, the French Ambassador visited our information booth and we were delighted to explain to her our vision and the steps we have taken towards achieving it. The same was later done in a conference room full of French expats. We seized the opportunity to thank them all for their interest and generous donations.





Morning tears' strategy

Guidelines for the use of photographic and video images of morning tears children

Morning tears is committed to providing a safe environment for children and young adults. Essential to this commitment is to insure that all necessary steps are taken to protect morning tears children from inappropriate use of their images in media publications, electronic postings or elsewhere.

In order to help and protect children from abuse and breeches of privacy, morning tears has developed the following guidelines in line with our child protection policy and minimum standards.

In recent years, the use of images of children and young adults has become a matter of particular concern. The advancement of electronic media has further complicated this issue. The guidelines below were not established with the intention to control the media, but rather function to provide morning tears children with the protection their parents cannot offer them. Children and young adults cannot give consent to the use of their images without assistance from a parent or caregiver. Therefore, we ask that morning tears staff are allowed to approve all images prior to their use.

Key area

- The publishing of photographic and/or recorded images

Guiding Principles

- The children's dignity must be respected in all circumstances.
- We believe in the equality of all people.
- We accept the need to promote fairness, truthfulness and justice.
- We strive to conform to the highest standards in relation to human rights and protection of vulnerable people.
- Avoid photos of children's full face from the front as these photos can be misused as passport photos.
- In an effort to keep the anonymity of the children, the child's name and address cannot accompany a photo of the child. In some cases morning tears may choose to provide an alias.
- A more general concern is to avoid stereotypical images: the intention of morning tears is not to display the children as victims but rather to portray a constructive and truthful image.
- Along the same lines, the aim of morning tears is to portray reality, and not to make children more vulnerable than they are nor to alter or change the photos in a way that radically changes the true image or message.
- Pictures and videos must be taken or filmed while in the presence of morning tears staff.
- Pictures and videos must include several children, instead of focusing on one child.

We also refer to "Child Rights and the Media" – Guidelines for Journalists and Media Professionals – International Federation of Journalists, with the support of the European Commission, especially for the following rules:

- "Children have a right to privacy, and that [this] right should only be overridden where it is in a child's own interests or in the public interest, and when permission has been given."
- "A journalist who interviews a child should be sure that the child understands that what he or she writes will be published or broadcast. Clearly the child should consent to this process, and depending on the age of the child, so should a responsible adult. The interview should never normally take place without another adult being present. [...] Older children can speak for themselves, but there is a danger that even young people in their teens may be misled or make a snap decision they later regret. Journalists should consider whether even older teenagers properly understand how material is to be used and whether they can give informed consent. Indeed the older the child, the more necessary it is to explain the use of material fully and let them make a decision. With younger children, permission must always be sought from a responsible adult, and even if the journalist believes that a relevant adult has made a poor decision or one designed to protect their own interests, the decision should be respected, except where there is a clear and strong public interest to do otherwise."

The full version of these Guidelines are available on www.ifj.org/assets/docs/247/254/cf73bf7-c75e9fe.pdf.



International Day of Children of Convicts

In the last edition of the morning tears newsletter we announced the launch of the first International Day for Children of Convicts. Several morning tears committees across Europe organized events to raise awareness about the situation children of convicts are in, inform people about morning tears' principles and actions and remind the general public of the importance of the role of volunteers to our organization.

These events were a great success, and we hope this success will grow over the years.

Morning tears Italy: photo exposition



Morning tears Denmark: information booth





News from Coming Home-Project Henan

What happened during the last three months?

From October to December, we welcomed seven new children, the youngest being two and a half years old and the oldest being 10 years old, to our Coming Home Project, bringing the total number of children to 45.

We celebrated the National Day holiday and the Mid-Autumn Festival with all of the children. We took them to visit their parents in October, we organized birthday parties and we welcomed visitors from Holland in November.

The staff purchased new furniture for the new family units, had regular meetings every two weeks regarding both children's issues and administrative issues, continued our casework and completed children's files. We also worked on protection standards for assisting children of convicts and we made action plans and established a budget for the year to come.





Finances

Since its creation, morning tears strives to be as transparent and clear as possible about its financial situation. We want our donors and partners to continue to believe in morning tears just as we believe in the children we defend and protect. Because of this, morning tears' team strives to keep its overhead costs as low as possible. It is the only way to ensure that the donations the donors make are used directly in our projects. This is why morning tears is run mostly by volunteers.

In 2010, the morning tears alliance (an organization bringing together all the morning tears committees worldwide) reached this objective once again. In fact, the overhead costs for the morning tears alliance was only 12% of the global budget.

Of course, the economic crisis that we are confronted with has repercussions on our actions, but we keep on fighting to help more and more children in need, thanks to your amazing support.

On behalf of the children, thank you.

Relevant Actualities

NABATIEH, Lebanon

Two organizations launched a project Tuesday to support the families of prisoners in south Lebanon, the first of its kind in the country.

Read more: www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2011/Nov-30/155582-ngo-project-aims-to-help-prisoners-families.ashx#ixzz1jnJA9umU

(The Daily Star -Lebanon News: www.dailystar.com.lb)

Coimbatore, India : Welfare assistance to children of prisoners given

www.hindu.com/2011/05/19/stories/2011051963900600.htm

A new pilot project in Southern Germany

Last year a pilot project started in the Stuttgart region to help children of imprisoned parents. It will run for three years and is run by "Projekt Chance" e.V., funded by the Baden-Württemberg-Stiftung.

The program has been developed by Professor Wulf from the ministry of justice, and is a first in Germany, focusing especially on the children. So far there is no systematic governmental support system to help these special children cope with the trauma, the long separation or the reintegration of the inmate parent into the family. After the three-year period, the program will be evaluated by University Ulm's Juvenile Psychiatry, which is also providing special training for the project's 31 social workers. For more info read (only available in German): www.badische-zeitung.de/suedwest-1/wenn-die-eltern-hinter-gittern-sitzen--42312698.html



morning tears Belgium

BNP Paribas Fortis
 Account No: 001-4495454-65
 IBAN: BE 18001449545465
 BIC/SWIFT: GEBABEBB

morning tears Netherlands

ABN Amro
 Account No: 45.75.13.764
 Stichting Morning Tears Nederland
 IBAN: NL81ABNA0457513764
 BIC/SWIFT: ABNANL2A

morning tears Spain

La Caixa d'Estalvis i Pensions
 Account No: 2100.0233.99.0200332319
 IBAN: ES28 21000233990200332319
 BIC/SWIFT: CAIXAESBXXX

morning tears Denmark

Danske Bank
 Account No: 10490189 Reg. Nr. 1551
 IBAN: DK14 3000 0010 4901 89
 BIC/SWIFT: DABADKKK

morning tears in China

Bank of China, Beijing Xi Cui Lu Sub-Branch
 [中国银行北京西翠路支行]
 Account No: 4160-3000-1880-2623-90
 Beneficiary: Guo Zhi Hong (郭志弘)
 BIC/SWIFT: BKCHCNBJ110

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, The Netherlands, Denmark, France, Italy, the USA and China.

morning tears is run mainly 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.