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## Editorial

### Prejudices

The lady shopkeeper noticed something was different about him when he gave her the money for the chocolate bar. Maybe it was his clothes, or maybe it was his tentative manner that caught her attention, but she was determined to find out what was different about him.

"Are you an orphan?" she began. "Are you abandoned? Where are your parents?"

As the interrogation continued, Huan Xi's happy smile was replaced by a look of fear and confusion. Buying the chocolate bar was part of his 10<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration. Now he looked down at the shop floor in silence; he waited until the ordeal was over.

Huan Xi arrived in Children Village four years ago. Like every boy his age, he is very active and energetic. If he feels he is in a secure environment, he runs, jumps and screams playfully.

By his 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, he had reached an advanced stage of healing from the traumatic experience of having his parents executed for trafficking drugs. However, he was not yet up to facing the harsh questions and deep bias of the people outside Children Village.

Huan Xi's painful and totally unexpected interrogation at the hands of the shopkeeper happened last month and took place in China. In some ways, it is a scene that is repeated regularly in communities around the world – yes, even in Europe. Many parents instruct their children to

not play with this child or that because, "They come from a bad family".

On the surface, it is understandable. Children whose parents are in prison have a six-times higher chance of ending up in prison themselves at some point in their lives. But is this solely because of their parents? Isn't it also because society does not give them a reasonable chance?

Do we surround them with the love and emotionally comforting attitude all children need, or do we pre-judge them as well? Do we nurture them and help build up a positive self-image, or do we continuously and consistently give them the message that they are 'bad' too?

The remainder of Huan Xi's birthday was spent giving him reassuring hugs and telling him what a great kid he is. For the rest of his years with us in Children Village, we will work with him to increase his resilience.

But helping children cope with the biases and stereotypes of the world is not enough! Society itself also has to change. 'Society' is not just a word, used in newspapers and magazines to describe some abstract notion.

'Society' is you and me. We have to start with changing the biases and judgmental attitudes within our selves first.

Koen,  
on behalf of the children and Morning Tears.  
[koen.sevenants@morningtears.com](mailto:koen.sevenants@morningtears.com)

## News from Children Village

- Three new children came to Children Village in December: 3 ½ and 4 year old boys, and a 5 year old girl. This means that we now have 75 children living under our care.
- The children all celebrated the Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day together in the village.
- Six children went to Beijing to visit the Belgian Ambassador and present him with a gift.
- Construction of the bounding wall around Children Village is complete.
- The public toilet for Children Village is finished and operational.
- The road in front of the children's dormitory is done.
- The heating system has been working since November 15, keeping the children warm.
- Two journalists from Belgium visited Children Village Xi'an in January



## Happy New Year! The Year of the Pig Arrives!

February 18, 2007 marks the beginning of the Year of the Pig. This is known as a year that brings good luck.

If you are born in 1947, 1950, 1971, 1983, or 1985 you are – don't take it badly, now – a Pig and this year will be very important to you. In Chinese astrology, Pigs have an excellent reputation as being soft, good-hearted people who enjoy the gastronomical aspects of life.

In Children Village Xi'an, we have 9 small and one large Pig; you can see them in the picture below. We are already beginning preparations for the start of the Year of the Pig – Happy Year of the Pig everyone!



### Upcoming Events

- Gao Hongli (Bau Bau) will be sent to a special school for blind children.
- The Children will all go to Winter Camp during the Spring Festival holiday (Feb. 2007).
- There will be First-Aid Training for the caregivers and the older children in February.



## Morning Tears is Moving on

Eight years ago, Morning Tears started its activities in Xi'an, China. We started to help children; we met their basic needs. Gradually we expanded the number of children we worked with. We increased the range and improved the quality of services we provided.

After four years of doing this work, we began to receive more and more requests to provide training to other organizations that focus on children. We happily accepted every invitation.

Three years ago, we started to push the Chinese government to take responsibility for the children of their convicts. Today, the government has included this as one of its priorities in its new 'five year plan'; it made the commitment to provide assistance to children whose parents are in prison or have been executed.

For Morning Tears, it is time to move on to the next phase of our work; in January 2007, Morning Tears will sign an agreement with the Ministry of Civil Affairs. We will become the official advisor to that ministry in the development of a plan to help China's 100,000 street children and 600,000 children-of-convicts.

We will be engaged in drafting government legislation as well as writing standard operating procedures for police officers, social workers, and others who come into contact with traumatized children. We will develop training programmes and train-the-trainers so that these most vulnerable of all children can start to live their lives in dignity.

For more information about our work on a national level, email us at [info@morningtears.com](mailto:info@morningtears.com)



## Call for Volunteer Researchers

Morning Tears seeks to improve the situation of children of convicts throughout the world. We intend to start up activities in other countries and work to convince governments to take responsibility for these children. A first step in our expansion is to determine exactly what the situation is for children of convicts. Therefore, Morning Tears is searching for volunteer researchers to help us compile this information.

Each volunteer will have responsibility for one country or region. The research will be largely carried through the internet and by contacting local and international agencies via e-mail. Researchers can work from their home and they will receive some guidance from Morning Tears. The researchers are requested to compile an overview of their findings. The volunteer researchers should expect that this will take up about 3 hours of their time every week for about five months.

If you are interested in participating in this project, email us at [info@morningtears.com](mailto:info@morningtears.com)

## The Story of Hei Dou

Hei Dou, a 10 year old boy, was found by a Children Village teacher 5 years ago in a small village in the northern part of Shaanxi province. When the teacher found Hei Dou, she was totally shocked by what she saw: the child was herding a group of sheep, he was wearing almost nothing even though the weather was very cold, and his tiny body was covered with bruises.

Hei Dou came to Children Village with the teacher, and for the whole of his first year here he would wake up in the night screaming and crying. He was constantly getting a low fever for no apparent reason, and he would wet the bed nearly every night, even though he was already 5 years old. All of the teachers in Children Village were very concerned about this fragile little boy.

Before he came to the village, Hei Dou had lived through unimaginable horror and hardship. His father had abused Hei Dou, his older sister, and mother for years, and had lived a life of drunkenness and gambling. His mother supported the family alone, and she bore a heavy burden as she tried to protect her children.

She knew she could not afford to put up with the father's actions any longer when he came home drunk one day and told her that he had sold their 5 year old daughter to pay off gambling debts. Hei Dou was only 3 ½ then, and his mother killed his father with a hammer that night. She will be in prison for 23 years for the killing.

After the family tragedy happened, the villagers of Hei Dou's hometown had a meeting to discuss the situation. They decided as a village to raise these two unfortunate children, agreeing to give 300 RMB every month to whichever family took them in and cared for them. The head of the village took Hei Dou's sister into his home, and Hei Dou was taken home by a low-status, dim-witted member of the village.

The man who took Hei Dou treated the little boy very badly; the only reason he took the child at all was to get the money. Though he was still not yet 4 years old, he was required to herd the sheep, clean the house every day, and carry water to the home from a long way away. Every time the man got angry, or sometimes just out of spite, he would beat Hei Dou with a stick or whatever he had in his hand at the time.

In prison, meanwhile, Hei Dou's mother missed her children so desperately that she continually begged the police to bring her children to visit her. Finally, the police contacted the director of Children Village, and the director sent a teacher to the family's hometown to find the children. That is how the teacher came to find Hei Dou in the fields, wearing almost no clothing, and with bruises all about his tiny body.

When Hei Dou came to Children Village, the teacher had to send the poor child to the hospital twice a month for nearly an entire year to heal the wounds his tiny body had suffered. He even needed to go to Beijing at one point for special treatment.

Hei Dou had suffered so much in his short life, first at the hands of his father, and then at the hands of his village appointed 'caregiver'. It is unimaginable for most of us that this can happen to someone, especially someone so young and so innocent.

When he arrived at Children Village, Hei Dou could not even speak a complete sentence. The only attention the man in his village paid to Hei Dou was to beat the boy or to order him about; the man never talked with the child. Consequently, Hei Dou was afraid any time he saw a stranger, and kept to himself in silence for almost half a year before he even tried to communicate with the other children or with the teachers.

Hei Dou has lived in Children Village for five years now. He is in grade 3 of primary school, and he smiles when he sees people who come to visit him. He plays with other children and, like most boys his age, sometimes he is a little bit naughty or doesn't finish his homework on time.

The thing that makes Hei Dou the happiest is when he can visit his mother every 3 months. From what little he has, he secretly saves some of his candies as a gift for beloved mama.

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## Feedback

This is the first 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](mailto:info@morningtears.com).

If you want to get our previous newsletters, visit our website at [www.morningtears.com](http://www.morningtears.com), You can download them from the site.

## Morning Tears Strategy for Children Village (part 4)

In previous newsletters we explained our strategy for Children Village consists of realizing the following 8 objectives:

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 of the children are met;
4. to provide psychological support for children to overcome their trauma(s);
5. to prepare and assist the children for re-integration into society and to develop life skills;
6. to provide an education for the children to enable them 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 third objective: "To ensure that basic needs of the children are met". In line with our plans, we are increasing the number of children living in Children Village from last year to 75.

We are undertaking the following activities for meeting the basic needs of the children:

1. to make medical care available to the children;
2. to give the children regular medical check-ups and annual flu immunizations;
3. to provide a balanced nutrition package for the children;
4. to outfit the children in suitable and seasonable clothing;
5. to ensure appropriate hygiene and sanitation standards are met.

The medical care that we currently provide is very basic; it is something we are working at improving. In February, we will have first-aid training for all staff and older children. We are also trying to identify and secure funding for an on-site medical room.

Currently, we ensure annual check-ups are carried out for each child, and by the time you read this, we will have finished a complete vaccination program for all the children.

Nutritionally, the caloric needs of the children are being met, but blood testing on 10 children showed that 3 have deficiencies which can be best addressed by increasing the meat component of their diets. We are adapting our menu accordingly and we are looking at providing added nutritional training for the cooks in Children Village.

The provisioning of clothes is going fine with very few problems; donations are going smoothly, and good use is made of the available items.

A challenge we still face, however, is related to hygiene. Because the water in Children Village seems to be contaminated with e-coli bacteria, we boil all the water we use. Nevertheless, we have to cope with frequent and recurring diarrhea among the children. For a longer term solution, we are actively searching for water cleaning equipment as a solution.

Unfortunately, about one third of the children in the village have Hepatitis B, so it is imperative that we take special measures to avoid spreading the infection to the other children.

If you can offer any assistance in finding a water cleaning solution, then send an email to [koen.sevenants@morningtears.com](mailto:koen.sevenants@morningtears.com)

## Morning Tears Charter Consultation

The activities of Morning Tears have been based on the common values and understandings of the people involved. Up till now, many of our beliefs and convictions have been implied and the understanding of these values has been assumed.

With the growing numbers of volunteers we recognize the need for documentation that more explicitly describes our mission, values, strategy and working methods.

Therefore, Morning Tears will formulate a "Mission Statement". As a supporter of Morning Tears, you can have your say in the statement. We will hold two consultation rounds before we finalize it: one in March, and one in April. If you want to be part of the group consultation process, then send an e-mail to [koen.sevenants@morningtears.com](mailto:koen.sevenants@morningtears.com) with 'charter consultation' in the heading.

## Relevant News Items

### China's top judge urges flexibility when imposing death penalty

China's Chief Justice is urging extreme caution when imposing the death penalty in the latest effort apparently aimed at curbing the country's frequent use of capital punishment. China, which carries out more court-ordered executions than all other nations combined, enacted legislation in October that requires approval from the Supreme People's Court, the country's highest, before putting anyone to death. "In cases where the judge has legal leeway to decide whether to order death, he should always choose not to do so," Xiao Yang, the court's president, said.

Source: Xinhua News Agency

### China's poverty line is too low

China's poverty line of a net income of 680 yuan (85 U.S. dollars) per capita per year is too low for subsistence. "The 23.65 million below the Chinese poverty line are actually people struggling in abject poverty and even food, clothing and shelter are a problem for them," said Wu Zhong, an official in charge of International Cooperation and Poverty Reduction with the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development. But China's poor actually totals 120 million to 130 million, using the internationally-accepted one U.S. dollar per day guideline, he added. The incredible economic boom of China has failed to reach some of the population. China's economy surged by 10.9 percent in the first half of 2006, the fastest rise in a decade. Officially, China had 23.65 million people living below the poverty line at the end of 2005.

Source: Xinhua

### INDONESIA : Tsunami impoverished parents forced to give up children

Parents impoverished by the 2004 tsunami are still being forced to put their children into orphanages because they cannot afford to care for them, according to the British charity "Save the Children". Thousands of children in the Indonesian province of Aceh have been institutionalised, even though more than 85 per cent have at least one living parent and 42 per cent have both parents alive. Save the Children cautioned that it had found disturbing evidence that some of the 17 orphanages set up after the Boxing Day disaster had been "recruiting" children to get extra aid money.

The plight of tsunami victims in Aceh province, where 170,000 died, is echoed in an Oxfam report into re-housing. A third of the 128,000 houses needed have been built as part of a \$10 billion (£5 billion) programme that has made the province the largest building project in the developing world. Even so, more than 70,000 poor families are still languishing in cramped wooden "barracks" that were intended to house them for only a few months while they waited for new land and homes.

Source: BBC

### USA : A record 7 million people in jail in the US: growing number of mothers

A record 7 million people - or one in every 32 American adults - were behind bars, on probation or on parole by the end of last year, according to the Justice Department. Of those, 2.2 million were in prison or jail, an increase of 2.7 percent over the previous year, according to a report released Wednesday. More than 4.1 million people were on probation and 784,208 were on parole at the end of 2005. Prison releases are increasing, but admissions are increasing more. Men still far outnumber women in prisons and jails, but the female population is growing faster. Over the past year, the female population in state or federal prison increased 2.6 percent while the number of male inmates rose 1.9 percent. By year's end, 7 percent of all inmates were women. The gender figures do not include inmates in local jails.

"Today's figures fail to capture incarceration's impact on the thousands of children left behind by mothers in prison," Marc Mauer, executive director of the Sentencing Project said. "Misguided policies that create harsher sentences for non-violent drug offences are disproportionately responsible for the increasing rates of women in prisons and jails."

Source: AP

## The Morning Tears Newsletter in Dutch

There are at least 21 million Dutch speaking people in the world. This is just one of the reasons why we have started providing a Dutch language version of our newsletter.

Yes, we know we will never reach all the members of the Dutch speaking community, but we are very happy for every individual who takes an interest in the work we are doing.

If you prefer to read the newsletter in a language other than the one you are reading now, let us know by sending an email to [pierre.schavey@morningtears.com](mailto:pierre.schavey@morningtears.com). Currently we publish in English, Spanish and Dutch.



### morning tears Belgium

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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](http://WWW.MORNINGTEARS.ORG)

## Financial Barometer

On the one hand, the core activity of Morning Tears is working directly for and with the children living in Children Village Xi'an. All the administration and fundraising is done by volunteers, which means that overhead costs are nearly non-existent. As a result, of the money donated to Morning Tears, practically all of it is used directly for the children. We are proud of this, and want to maintain this way of doing things.

On the other hand, Morning Tears will – if the funding can be found – start providing advice and training for the Chinese authorities. The amount of work to be done in this area is such that relying on volunteers will not get the job done. Morning Tears will have to hire some staff to meet these goals.

However, Morning Tears will not use donations from individuals to pay salaries or large overhead costs. We are committed to use the gifts of individuals for the direct benefit of the children only.

The co-operative activities with the Chinese authorities will be financed exclusively through foundations and government organizations, funds specifically available for this type of work.

Your personal sponsorship donations will be used exclusively to rebuild the worlds of the children with whom we are intimately involved: the kids who live in Children Village Xi'an.

In our next newsletter we will provide an overview of all income and expenses of Morning Tears for 2006.