

# morning tears newsletter

Volume 6, No 1, January 2011

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## Editorial

Dearest Morning Tears Friends,

All the Morning Tears children and the fast-growing international network of Morning Tears volunteers would like to wish you a fantastic Year of the Rabbit!

For Morning Tears, this year is set to be one of growth, expansion and enthusiasm! It will be needed, because the fight we are involved in is a huge one. Worldwide, the prison population continues rising. At the same time, social benefits are being cut because of the financial crisis. This leaves more children of incarcerated parents with unsatisfied material needs.

Morning Tears is reconfiguring its organizational structure to fight the war. All of our donor countries have now one representative in what has come to be called the Morning Tears Alliance. The Morning Tears Alliance will be making all the major strategic decisions and will safeguard its reputation and growth.

At the same time, we are going deeper. We are engaging universities to stimulate and facilitate research about children whose parents are in prison. This research base will determine our future childcare practices and policies.

Morning Tears is still an organization whose workers are 99 percent volunteers. It is the energy of these volunteers that makes it possible to rebuild these kids' lives and to really — bit-by-bit — put the pain of children of incarcerated parents on international agendas. We invite you to stay involved or to become involved. Only together can we do it!

Koen Sevenants,  
Morning Tears General Director  
[koen.sevenants@morningtears.org](mailto:koen.sevenants@morningtears.org)



# Morning Tears News

## **Morning Tears Italy is registered!**

The Italian branch of Morning Tears was born in Macerata on Friday January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011. The decision to make Macerata our headquarters was made with the ambition of capitalizing on the longstanding relationship this province in the Marche Region boasts with China. The beginning of the relationship between China and Macerata dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and was established by the pioneer Matteo Ricci (1552-1610). The relationship has continued growing stronger over time, especially in the realms of economic and culture.

Morning Tears Italy's principle objective is to develop a structured fundraising program to finance the existing Coming Home Project in China. Morning Tears Italy will devote itself to promoting the importance of our work, and the funds procured will be used to help more children. Morning Tears Italy was also established to develop activity in Italy in cooperation with other organizations that work with the same reference group. It will engage in some important activities in June and July: We have already founded some initiatives to awaken public opinion to the problem we are working on at the Macerata University Department of Philosophy and Human Science as well as in the Rome University La Sapienza Department of Oriental Studies. Our long-term goal is to help the Italian branch grow until it's ready to undertake on its own humanitarian programs in concert with Morning Tears International.

Morning Tears Italy's board comprises:

Libertà Matteo Carmelo – Administrative Director

Battoni Alessandro – Treasurer

Rasimelli Linn – Secretary

Di Fabio Fiorinda – Counsellor

Nolasco Michela – Counsellor

For more information: [matteo.liberta@gmail.com](mailto:matteo.liberta@gmail.com).

## **Morning Tears France**

We are very happy to announce the birth of another Morning Tears committee: Morning Tears France is now up and running!

Thanks to the involvement of its chairman, Virginie Lujan-Hilbert ([virginieilh@gmail.com](mailto:virginieilh@gmail.com)), this new committee is starting its fundraising and information dissemination campaigns.

The main goal of Morning Tears France will be to create awareness about the situation of children of convicts and children who have suffered deep emotional traumas in China. Through events, conferences and other activities, Morning Tears France will communicate with the public about our projects in China — the Coming Home Project, reunification programs, caregiver trainings, etc.

This awareness campaign will target not only private donors but also private and public institutions and companies. It will allow the committee to raise funds for Morning Tears programs in China.

Please contact us for more information!



## Morning Tears gets involved in Tanzania

There are about 1,700 people in the prison of Arusha. The size of the women’s department is unknown but we do know that it’s not small. Many of the incarcerated women have children. Some give birth in prison. The child can stay with mother.

In 2004, a small group of dedicated people started to offer some assistance to these children. Now, the children do not have to stay in prison all the time. Instead, they stay in a small center outside. This enables them to visit their mothers very often while at the same time learning more about “real life” – that is, life outside of prison.



morning tears (2011)

The center has grown, and the little school that was inside the center has also started to accept kids from neighboring communities and villages.



morning tears (2011)

Now, the school has more than 100 children. Morning Tears discovered this great project, and we are happy to offer technical and financial support. It is our first step onto African soil. We know there is a lot of work to do there. A vital aspect of starting the project is finding reliable partners. Morning Tears is delighted to also now work in Tanzania!



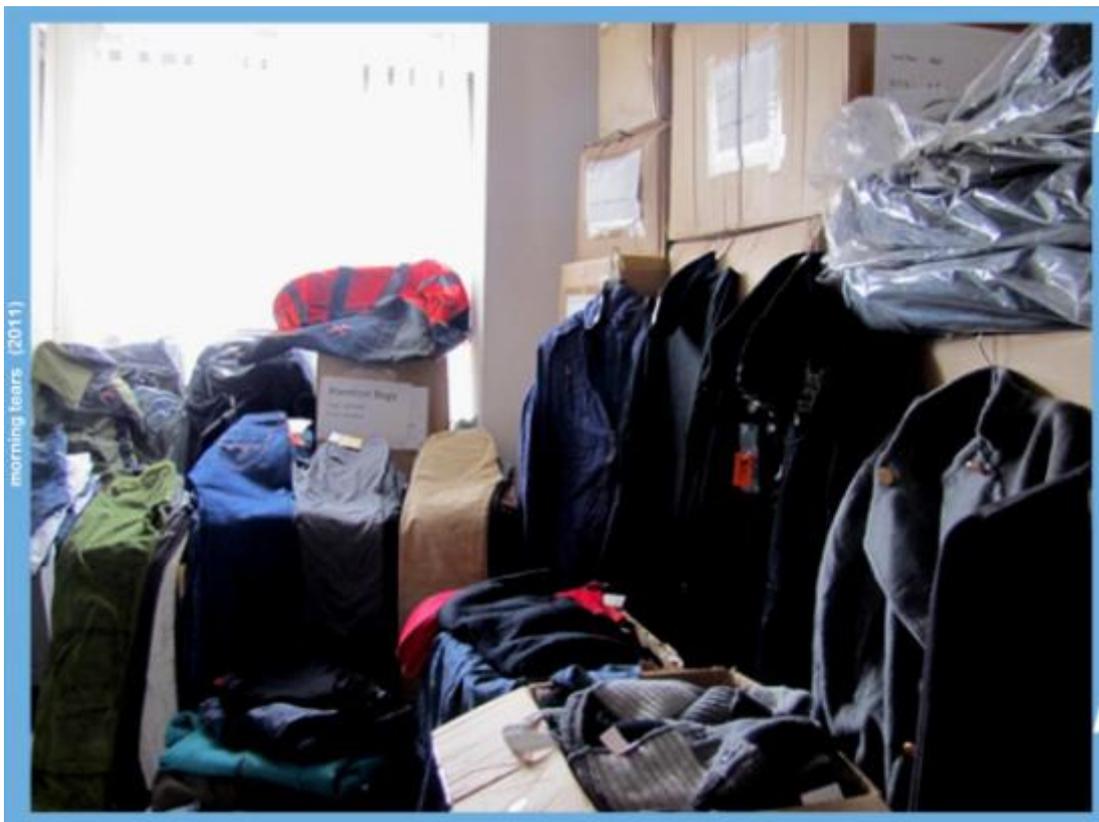
morning tears (2011)



## MT Shanghai Sale

We have received a huge donation of new fashion clothes from the CO China Office. In addition, we were given about 2,000 Xtention bags for biking, hiking, backpacking, traveling, etc, from Norwegian ITP.

The clothes and bags were first sorted and shipped in many boxes to our children's home. Afterwards, we organized a sale in our new Shanghai office. The sale, which also included some items donated by Nordic Lighthouse, enabled us to raise almost 9,000 RMB.



## Donation of pins at Odense EXPO Pavilion

On Wednesday October 20<sup>th</sup> Morning Tears was invited to the Odense Pavilion at the World EXPO site and received a donation of 10,000 special H.C. Andersen EXPO pins. The idea donation came about because of the extraordinary popularity of these pins, which sometimes sold on Taobao (China's eBay) for up to 600 yuan.

The people at the Odense Pavilion felt the need to do something about this. But even though they began giving them away with higher frequency, it still seemed to be an issue. This led to the idea they would donate 10,000 pins to Morning Tears on the condition they wouldn't be used for commercial purposes and could be given away on social occasions.



# Morning Tears' strategy

In the previous newsletters, we explained that Morning Tears uses research-based minimum standards for childcare and protection. We differentiate seven quality areas in the standards. These are: planning for care; protective care; personal care; health, environment and safety; caregivers; management and administration. Here, we will discuss the sixth quality area – caregivers. For this quality area, we have four standards. The first two are outlined below.

## **Standard 6.1: Recruitment and selection procedures ensure quality childcare and protection**

*Clear written policies and procedures on recruitment exist and are followed*

- *Basic checks are made to establish some assessment of applicants' character, such as references from former employers and checking of records with local magistrates.*
- *A probationary period should exist for all new caregivers.*
- *Employment procedures must include in their objectives the removal of staff who are unsuitable to work with children because of attitude and lack of experience, and those who would pose any danger to children.*
- *The same procedures apply to volunteers and trainees.*
- *New caregivers are well introduced and briefed on the home's child protection policies and procedures, and there is a mechanism in place to monitor compliance.*

### **Why is this important?**

- The essential ingredient for quality childcare is quality caregivers. Presentation, attitudes and values are key characteristics of quality caregivers.
- The vulnerability of many children and their dependence on caregivers is such that very particular caution should always be taken in caregiver selection.
- Comprehensive recruitment and selection procedures serve as a useful child-protection mechanism.

## **Standard 6.2: Staff and caregivers have regular supervision and support**

*Formal supervision sessions and informal support initiatives are made available to caregivers at regular intervals.*

- *Supervision considers the practice and development of the caregivers, and caregivers receive frequent feedback on the work they have undertaken.*
- *What is discussed, and agreed upon, during these sessions is recorded, and records are kept and reviewed.*
- *Caregivers feel they are valued and are able to speak with managers and colleagues about their abilities and skills, as well as about areas where they feel uncertain and require support.*

### **Why is this important?**

- Caring for other people's children, especially those with complex needs, can be stressful and tiring. It is important that caregivers feel supported and valued.
- Formal and frequent supervision, and support sessions, form the basis of good communication, effective workload management, the delegation of tasks, the evaluation of performance and target-setting actions.
- The nature of work with children suggests the upholding of certain values and principles related to equity, rights and support for others. Consequently, it is important the same principles and values apply to, and among, the adults. They are demonstrated in the way the caregivers are managed, work together, and support and care for each other. Through this, caregivers also act as role models for the children.

In the next issue, we'll discuss the final two standards of the quality area of caregivers.



## "Morning Tears Italy meets Rome"

*"In the big ocean of life  
 One can reach the source  
 Let its waves shape you  
 Or sink to the bottom.  
 But within us lies a power  
 That if converted into energy  
 With an explosion of colors  
 Makes you float into your values  
 Following your wake beyond boundaries  
 Of this reality  
 It's the love of life ... freedom."*

### **Zhu Xu**

Like a newborn, who opens his eyes for the first time, Morning Tears Italy, which is less than a week old, opens its doors to Roman life. It's a breath — the first breath — and it couldn't be more intense. On Monday, January 24, Morning Tears Italy took to the field and is cooperating with another Roman social work association: "A Roma Insieme" (Together in Rome). Since 1994, this organization has focused on working with women and children in prison. The organization's commitment has stimulated in Italy the debate on prison issues and the adoption of legislation that will provide alternative measures, aimed at achieving an important target: from now on, no child will ever spend his childhood in prison. The president of the organization, Leda Colombini, who has welcomed the three Morning Tears Italy representatives, is an extraordinary woman. She has magnetic eyes and a "scar" on her face that witnesses all the social battles fought, some of which have been won. Leda and her colleagues are especially active in Rome, where she has won the support of both municipality and the province. Support is the keyword here. As Leda points out, working in the social arena means to act concretely and without speaking in vain. Leda listened very carefully and wrote down on paper every word the three Morning Tears Italy representatives told her. Fiorinda di Fabio lead the meeting. She is the driving force behind the Morning Tears Italy project, because she cooperates with the same organization in China. While Fiorinda spoke about the birth and development of MT International and its situation in China, Leda listens and took careful notes. After a while, Fiorinda stopped and Leda began to talk in turn. Her stories are fascinating because they are about children and mothers, life and confinement, and resignation and hope. The room is full of pictures taken in prison of little children and their young mothers. These photographs are in black and white, like those of olden times. Leda points out the law that forces children (aged 3 or younger) of imprisoned women to live in jail is, "ancient". A Roma Insieme wants to move past this and overcome this outdated and unfair reality with the strength of the social network created by the organization. It managed to improve mothers' and children's conditions: Thanks to its work, children spend Saturdays outside the prison and can realize the beauty of life. The meeting between the two organizations has been very constructive. However, Morning Tears Italy needs to develop and expand. It can learn a great deal from an important and established association like A Roma Insieme. Building a physical bridge that spans hundred of kilometers to bridge China and Italy is impossible but about a metaphorical yet very real one made of linked human arms? Would you believe it? Leda says, "Absolutely". And so does Morning Tears Italy. Building the future means finding arms operated by proactive minds — minds that believe there isn't any difference between Italian and Chinese children, reliable minds that want to help a little creature enjoy a healthy life. The becomes less certain every day. Leda and her fellow workers are trying hard to give us a hopeful future. Morning Tears Italy promises to follow in Leda's footsteps and hopes to cooperate with her as soon, and as much, as possible. For now, it only wishes to put all its energies (as stated in the poem above) into this project, soaring in the sky, supported by the love of life — the very love that binds every single child on Earth, the love that children will give back to us when they will grow up and make this big world their own.

*Morning Tears Italy Staff*

*Written by Matteo Libertà. Translated in English by Valerio Cozzolino*



## What happened in the last three months (October to December)

- We had a birthday party for 16 children. Every kid received the gift they had dreamed of.
- We had party for Christmas and New Year. Children hang their New Year's wishes on the Christmas tree.
- Our children took the final term exam for this semester. Nearly every child won awards in the areas of academic study, sports, arts and making personal progress.
- Our children went to visit their parents in prisons after the winter holiday started. The prisons welcomed our kids warmly, and most of our children spent nice times with their parents and had meals with their parents.
- The staff started to make preparations for the Chinese New Year. This is a very traditional and important festival for Chinese people, and it is very family-oriented festival. The staff needs to do cleaning, buy new clothes for the children and prepare traditional food for the kids. Usually, we start to prepare for Chinese New Year on Dec 23<sup>rd</sup> (of the Chinese lunar calendar). We call it "Xiao Nian" (meaning "the small festival before the really one") and it also means the start of Chinese New Year. After Xiao Nian, we have certain thing to do every day. These include worshipping the Kitchen God on the 23<sup>rd</sup>; cleaning on the 24<sup>th</sup>; making tofu on the 25<sup>th</sup>; cooking food for the festival on the 26<sup>th</sup>; shopping on 27<sup>th</sup>; putting the new Spring Festival couplets on the gates on the 28<sup>th</sup>; buying drinks on the 29<sup>th</sup>; and making dumpling on the 30<sup>th</sup>. We also call the 30<sup>th</sup> "Chu Xi". It is the last day of the year on the lunar calendar. On the afternoon of this day, we need to clean again and make everywhere is spotless. We wear new clothes, make dumplings and prepare for ancestor worship. Usually, people don't sleep at all on the 30<sup>th</sup> (Chu Xi). The whole family stays together for a meal and light fireworks to auspiciously greet the New Year. And starting on the morning following Chu Xi, when Chinese New Year officially starts, people will spend the next 15 days visiting family and friends, gifts in hand.
- Usually, kids are the happiest people during the festival. They should receive new clothes and envelopes of money, and enjoy plenty time to play. Traditionally, nobody can tell them what to do during the festival, because the gods will be unhappy if adults scold the children.
- Mr Koen Sevenants came to have evaluation meeting with local partner for last years work
- Mr Koen Sevenants came to have meeting with local partner and staff of national training center for the minimum standard
- Mr Koen Sevenants met with the leader of Zhong Mu County to discuss establishing a bigger Coming Home Project. The governor promised to donate the land for free.
- Mr Koen Sevenants met with headmasters of local schools.
- We have continued the case and group work for children in the project.
- We have continued to hold regular meetings with all staff members every two weeks.
- We have continued to hold regular professional meetings to address children's issues with the entire staff every two weeks.
- We have continued to hold evaluation meetings to assess the whole year's work.



## Financial Barometer

Instead of giving you some dry financial information, we want to share some very interesting recent fundraising initiatives from which Morning Tears children have benefited.

- A new lady made a bet that she would be able to lose a lot of weight. If she won the bet, a friend will donate US\$3,000 to the charity of her choice. She achieved her goal, and she herself doubled the amount. In the end, the children also won — a lot.
- We have more new parents who decide to ask from their guests who come to their newborns' baptism or 'baby drink' to make a donation for the Morning Tears kids. This is so beautiful.
- Statically, there are fewer and fewer long term marriages. But some couples ask attendees of their anniversary parties to donate to Morning Tears instead of buying gifts. Another product of love.
- The same goes for birthdays, which is really great. Some people decide to use the opportunity to gather support for Morning Tears. A truly happy birthday, indeed, to, and for, them.
- Here is a good one: a woman received money after she was in a car accident. She believed the accident was her fault. So she donated the money to Morning Tears.
- And here's another good one: a family decided to give € 100 to Morning Tears at Christmas. They donated online and made a mistake. They wrote in one zero too many. They asked for € 900 back and, of course, we did send the money back. They then donated the € 900.

The world is often a nice place!





## Did you know that?

- About 1 million children across the EU are in alternative care. This is about 1% of the children who live in institutions or foster care.
- Traditional orphanages are still widely used in the EU, even though it is very well known and has been repeatedly demonstrated that foster care provides much better development opportunities for children.
- Most children in alternative care carry their psychosocial problems into adulthood.

## A story about Xiao Liu



There are various ways in which children are left behind. The 8-year-old girl Xiao Liu describes what happened to her ...

*My father and I we went to the park. This was a feast. We walked for a while, but this time we did not talk a lot. Maybe it was because of the cold. One moment my father gave me 10 yuan and told me that he would be right back. I was happy, because this would mean I could buy some fireworks and candies for New Year. But I waited and waited, and the sky*

*turned gray and then black. A guard came to say that everybody had to leave the park. I started to cry ...*

Xiao Liu's mother is in prison. Her father probably tried to take care of her but couldn't. We couldn't locate her dad. Xiao Lu is now under Morning Tears' wings. During the Chinese New Year, we took the girl to visit her mother. Bit-by-bit, she will start to play again ...





### **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 China**

Bank of China, Beijing Branch [中行北京分行]

No.8 Ya Bao Lu, Beijing, China [中北京雅路8]

Account No: 4160300-0188-026239-0

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, Russia, 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.