Water

Discrimination in Villages without Water

Rainwater Harvesting Technology from Amity

Water Access Improves Life of Cave Dwellers
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The Amity Foundation is an independent Chinese voluntary organisation. It was created in 1985 on the initiative of Chinese Christians. It has worked to promote education, social services, health, and rural development in the underdeveloped areas of China.

Amity's work is grounded in the belief that all human beings share the same dignity. Abiding by the principle of mutual respect in faith, Amity builds friendship with both Christians and non-Christians in China and abroad. In this way, Amity contributes to China’s social development and openness to the outside world. It makes Christian involvement and participation in meeting the needs of society more widely known to the Chinese people and serves as a channel for people-to-people contact and the ecumenical sharing of resources. Helping to develop civil society in China is one of the key aims of its work.

The Amity Foundation has about 40 full-time staffers at its Nanjing headquarters. Hundreds of volunteers work with Amity all over China. The foundation receives funds from partners abroad as well as in Hong Kong and mainland China.

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In 1996, Amity brought rainwater harvesting technology to farmers living on the parched Loess Plateau of southern Gansu Province. It had a huge impact on the lives of farmers. Today, several million local people use this technique as a means to survive even severe droughts, says a local Amity partner.

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The Water Challenge

by Oliver Engelen

On a long train ride from the south-west to the north-east of China in 2005, I found myself sitting opposite a little girl with extremely thick glasses - the kind normally worn by old, nearly blind people. She was traveling with her father to the central city of Xi’an for her once-in-a-year visit to an oculist. The father told us that his daughter’s eyesight had been ruined because she grew up drinking heavily polluted water. And her case, I learned not much later, was far from unique. Having lived in a northern province for some time, I had been well aware that China wasn’t a place where water is available in abundance. Yet this was the first time I realized that access to safe drinking water is a really big problem here. When children - tens of thousands of children - are half blind before they enter primary school, something is very, very wrong. Visually impaired children, deformed babies, the population of whole villages dying from mysterious forms of cancer; wells running dry, huge areas of arable land lost year by year to the advancing deserts, cities enshrouded in sandstorms, blackened rivers without any fish, lakes overgrown with slimy algae, jellyfish of monstrous size populating the coastal waters: These are all signs of a large-scale natural disaster happening right in front of our eyes.

Water needs a price tag ...
We all need water to live, just as we need air. Both are similar in another respect, too: They are prone to being polluted so badly they are no longer safe. Making sure they are kept, or made, clean can be a major challenge. Yet while air surrounds us, with water things are different. Water, just like air, is a public good - but clean water is not. Most freshwater, as we find it in nature, is not suitable for drinking; moreover, modern industry and agriculture pollute it. Water must be processed before people can safely use it: This is costly. Also, water doesn’t tend to be where we need it. In most places where people live it isn’t available all year round just by itself. It must be delivered. Nobody can live without it, so water is undoubtedly a public need. Providing people with clean water is a service which needs to be paid for. Most problems associated with lack of access to clean water have to do with the fact that the price of water doesn’t reflect this.

China is a case in point. The country is classified as one of 13 water-scarce countries by the
United Nations. Per capita water consumption in China is only one quarter of the global average. The northern part of the country, where about 40% of the population live and where some 60% of its crops are grown, gets only a fifth as much rain as the rest of the country. Groundwater tables have been falling for decades and in some regions, there is simply no groundwater left. Last winter there was so little rainfall in parts of northern China that people couldn’t even get sufficient drinking water from local wells - it had to be shipped in by water truck. Crops in the fields could not be irrigated at all so there was no harvest. At present rates of water consumption, the groundwater all over northern China will be exhausted in the next decade. In rural areas, more than one in three Chinese are without access to safe drinking water. A quarter of surface water sources are disqualified as drinking water sources, according to official figures, and long stretches of China’s rivers are polluted so severely that water can’t even be used for irrigation.

... even where water levels are high

The situation is somewhat different in the south, which gets a lot more rainfall than the north. Yet even here, tens of millions of people have no access to safe drinking water. Poor-quality or nonexistent sanitation systems are to blame. Hardly any wastewater from households, agriculture and industry is treated. Sewage seeps into the freshwater supply. Fertilizers are washed into the lakes and rivers. Much of China’s industry is concentrated in the south of the country. None the less, the sheer amount of water available in the south has given rise to grand schemes like the “south-north water diversion project”, which proposes to channel water over thousands of miles from the southern river basins to the parched northern plains. The technical feasibility of this project, which dates back to the Maoist 1960s, is increasingly being questioned by Chinese experts. Moreover, it has become clear that the social, economic and environmental costs of such a scheme would be huge. Most importantly, though, the amount of water in the southern river basins like the Yangtze is likely to drop sharply as a result of climate change in the greater Himalaya region. Whether southern China will have any water to spare 20 or 30 years from now is very much open to question.

Given this scarcity, you would expect the price of water to be high, reflecting the relative value of this resource, and you would expect all sorts of measures to be taken in order to save water, recycle used water and protect the water supply. In reality, however, widespread pollution, little processing of sewage water and inadequate sanitation are complemented by wastage on a huge scale. At about onetenth of the price in countries like Germany - where water is far less scarce - water is very cheap in China. In fact, it is heavily subsidized by the state and by loss-making water utilities.

To be sure, most Chinese people are a lot poorer than people in the so-called “developed countries”, so water has to be a lot cheaper. But even taking this into account, water is still extremely cheap: What the average Chinese family pays for water as a percentage of its income is less than a third of the international average. At the same time, tremendous amounts of water are lost due to inefficient use in agriculture; Chinese industry needs 5 to 10 times more water to produce something than industry in countries where water is far less scarce. Cities can afford to water their parks and sports stadiums in the middle of summer while in neighboring villages the wells run dry - and while ordinary people are asked to “save every drop”. From the way China uses water, you would think it has it in abundance.

Clean water access first

At the same time, access to water is clearly a key factor for economic development and wealth. This is why Amity in its water-related work has concentrated on providing access and will continue to do so. While the big questions of climate change, environmental protection, fair distribution, conservation and sustainable use of water in China urgently need to be addressed by both the state and non-governmental organizations, it is by no means less important that people all over the country have easy access to as much water as they need. Productivity tends to grow strongly once access to water is ensured - for the simple reason that people needn’t waste their precious time fetching water anymore and can engage in more productive activities instead. In many regions of China, water projects are an essential element of poverty relief. It goes without saying that water needs to be clean and safe to use; this can be guaranteed only if comprehensive modern sanitation systems are installed. Chances are that the focus of water projects in China will shift to this area soon.
New Water Sources

Water-Poor Villages Face Discrimination

by Theresa Carino

In March and May this year, Theresa Carino undertook a household survey of 7 villages in Guizhou and Guangxi Provinces where the Amity Foundation and CANGO (Chinese Association of NGOs) had carried out drinking water projects with the support of EED (a German, church-related development organization). The aim was to assess the impact of the six projects and their sustainability. The survey involved 135 households in 3 counties and one district. Below, she shares some of her observations.

“What was the greatest impact of having a water system and piped water in your homes?” I casually popped the question as our research team sat down to lunch with residents in remote Fuliu Village in Southern Guangxi. “Removing the stigma of being tagged a ‘black village’,” was the village school master’s swift and sharp retort. “Blacks -- that’s what they used to call us,” he stressed, his voice rising with emotion, “our young men could not find brides because women from other places were unwilling to marry into a village where we spent more than 5 hours a day fetching water.” There was no mistaking the close link between the lack of safe drinking water, poverty and stigma in China’s countryside.

In Fuliu, as in many parts of rural China, the search for safe, accessible drinking water had taken several decades. Men, women and children used to take part in daily expeditions over hilly terrain to fetch drinking water from unreliable surface or underground sources. Despite the enormous effort and the amount of time spent, water quality was extremely poor. In neighbouring Lengnian Village, the old water source had been an open pond filled with stagnant, greenish and turbid rain water. In Xiao Guimao (in mid-western Guizhou Province), the desperation for water had led villagers to draw water seeping from a disused coal mine. Tainted by minerals, the water would sometimes turn red and even the oxen would refuse to drink the contaminated water. Mottled teeth among residents was a sign of excessive fluorine in the water. In downstream areas, villagers who drank water from shallow wells and polluted rivers suffered frequently from gastro-intestinal ailments.

Water vital to health and harmony
The plight of these farmers highlights the fact that close to 300 million villagers in China have no access to safe drinking water. In Guizhou there are 11.5 million people and in Guangxi another 10 million whose drinking water is unsafe. The six projects that were completed in the last three years have enabled hundreds of villagers to draw clean water either from deep, underground rivers or mountain springs. Their impact on villagers’ health has been dramatic. Farmers reported a sharp decline in gastro-intestinal diseases after the completion of the water projects, especially in downstream villages. Safe water accessible 24 hours a day has also meant better hygiene and sanitation for everyone.

Women seem to have benefited most from these water projects since they were the ones who had borne the brunt of fetching water and managing scarce water supplies for the household. In all villages, the women
were extremely grateful to be freed from the back-breaking, time-consuming chore. They now could spend more time in economically productive activities. Su Ling, an energetic young woman from Xiao Gumao, proudly confessed that she now had 16 pigs compared to just two before the water project.

Women readily admitted that the competition for drinking water had been a source of frequent conflicts. Fights often erupted among villagers waiting in long queues for water. Domestic quarrels would break out over who should fetch water after a long day’s work in the fields. The arrival of piped water had brought an end to these conflicts.

Rise in living standards
With running water, farmers can now concentrate on raising their incomes and standards of living. Most noticeable during our field visits was the number of new homes under construction. In Ting Nian Village, 28 new homes had been built in the last six months, 30 in Xiao Gumao and 13 in Na Me Village, a Yao minority village. We were told that having running water had reduced the cost of construction considerably. Clay and stone homes were being demolished in favour of brick and concrete ones.

Most villagers invest time saved from fetching water into more cultivation and animal rearing. Some seek more lucrative jobs in towns and cities. They say that having running water puts them more at ease about leaving their children with elderly parents. This, of course, has contributed to the new social problem of “left-behind” children in rural areas.

Despite these emerging problems, having piped water in their homes has become a source of pride for farmers. They now want cleaner surroundings and are beginning to raise issues concerning water run-off, pollution and garbage disposal.

Sustainable water conservation
Indeed, the arrival of piped water has been a boon for all and nothing short of a miracle for those who have spent much of their adult life fetching water. Farmers want to conserve precious water and show concern about the
sustainability of the water systems in which they have invested cash, labour and time. The participatory approach advocated by both CANGO and Amity and had evinced a strong sense of ownership and responsibility among villagers. In most villages, farmers’ cash contributions to construction costs ranged from CNY150 (US$21) to CNY500 (US$73) per household, on top of Amity’s contributions and government counterpart funding. Every household had also provided labor time in the construction process.

Villagers now have to pay a water fee to sustain the operation and maintenance of the completed systems. In downstream villages, where underground water has to be pumped up, and filtration equipment is needed to ensure the water is clean and safe, fees charged range from CNY2.00 to CNY2.50 per ton depending on operational costs. To make it affordable, fees are being kept as low as possible but this means that very little is left for preventive maintenance. Paying for water is something new for China’s farmers and many households try to keep consumption levels low to avoid paying more. In fact, in many cases, household water consumption is now lower than before the project, with farmers often harvesting rain water for laundry and cleaning purposes.

There was a high level of user satisfaction with the water systems and most respondents in the household surveys indicated a willingness to pay more if necessary. So far, all households, (except for the very poor who receive government subsidies) are able to pay their water fees even if there are delays in doing so. Fee collectors complain that they have to visit some homes several times in order to collect. Others grumble that their stipend is highly inadequate for the time-consuming job. One village had to share the same technician and fee collector from another village because no one wanted the job.

For long-term sustainability, effective water management systems will be vital. Management systems vary from village to village but in those we visited, each had a village water committee that had members elected from among household representatives.

There is a growing demand for accountability and transparency. Water fee collectors either issued receipts or had record books for meter readings and payments. Annual financial reports are posted on public notice boards and in one village, quarterly financial reports are made available. Major decisions about water pricing, repairs and maintenance are usually made at public gatherings where most households are represented.

Farmers have been articulate about their concerns and women, especially, want to make sure that issues such as water pressure, even distribution and financial viability are addressed. “We want to make sure we will always have running water!” declared the head of the local women’s development committee in Xiao Gumao.
The terraced hills of Anding are coated in lush green patches; tiny wheat fields pile up layer by layer as far as the eye can see. At first glance one cannot make out that the wheat sprouts, swaying in the winds of early June, may soon shrivel under the scorching summer sun. This place in southern Gansu Province is part of the vast Loess Plateau and one of the driest places in China - only the deserts of Xinjiang have less water. Here, the yellow river runs far to the north and the bone-dry yellow earth holds no groundwater. There are no wells near the fields and no irrigation ditches have been carved out of the hardened soil. It soon becomes clear that crops, animals and the people of the hills all rely on rain and dew for moisture.

At 380 mm, annual rainfall in Anding lingers just above the minimum amount needed for growing crops without artificial irrigation. Even when it rains, little water can be absorbed by the solid soil. Most of it quickly runs off unobstructedly through the deep gullies and ravines which cut through the terraced hills. People in the area have become austere when it comes to water consumption. They use only one fifth of the amount of water used by people in other parts of China. Though the irrigated area has increased over the years, most people in the hills have no access to irrigation water, and even their access to drinking water is not reliable. The consequences are obvious: Lack of water is considered the number one factor responsible for severe poverty in Anding.

Unreliable rainfall
What makes survival in the terraced hills more difficult than in most other places is the unreliable timing of rainfall. For farmers to be able to harvest wheat and corn at the end of the season, it is not enough that sufficient precipitation occurs overall during a year. Rain needs to fall at the right time to water the sprouting crops and regularly provide farmers with drinking water for themselves and their animals. But in spring, when the plants need water most, precipitation tends to be scant, only to become more frequent in late summer when crops don’t need so much any more and the water only contributes to the galloping erosion of the hills.

In the past, years of droughts or uneven rainfall meant hardship, hunger and even death. For farmers of the arid hills, water insecurity runs back far into historical times. Local records note 634 droughts over a period of 1400 years, with the frequency of dry spells getting higher in recent years. Almost every other year, people faced severe water scarcity, which caused agricultural productivity to drop sharply.

A wake-up call
So it was until 1996. The year before had seen one of the harshest droughts in sixty years. Around three million people on the Loess Plateau of Gansu and two million animals were left without water. Authorities needed to act. It was during this time that effective technologies were finally implemented to collect and store rainwater.

The Gansu Research Institute for Water Conservancy had already experimented with rainwater harvesting methods as early as 1988 but funds
had never been granted to extend the project beyond the scientific testing grounds. The drought of 1995 gave the authorities a sufficiently strong incentive to go looking for the necessary funds and get serious about the “121 Rainwater Catchment Project”. Approached by the provincial Water Engineering Department, Amity - among other organizations - agreed to join the project, which eventually became a breakthrough in dryland farming and won international fame.

The project targeted villagers in 6 arid counties with neither groundwater nor runoff, says Xie Ying, head of Amity’s record archive. Each participating family agreed to three changes in their immediate environment. First, the farmhouse roof and courtyard, commonly used for drying crops, were paved with cement to make a good rainwater collection surface. Likewise, two underground water cellars between 15 and 20 cubic meters in size were built to contain the water collected on the cement tile roof and in the courtyard (picture above left). And finally, one small garden plot near the farmhouse was created to be irrigated using water-saving methods. Farmers used this plot for growing cash crops and hence raising income levels.

Bringing water to millions
The project became hugely successful. At its inception, the project provided over 82,000 people and 40,000 livestock with reliable access to drinking water. Today, several million farmers rely on the technology Amity helped to introduce in the mid-nineties, says Qiu Jie, head of the Women’s Hospital in the provincial capital Lanzhou and an Amity partner for many years.

One of these farmers is 46-year-old Wei Yao from Lijabao in Anding. He is the proud owner of a rainwater catchment system. He keeps the surface of his farmyard painstakingly clean to make sure that – if it rains - water running into the underground cellars remains largely uncontaminated. However, it takes some time for the sediments to settle after rainwater is washed in and water also needs to be boiled before it is used for consumption.

At present, Mr. Wei’s two underground cellars of 15 cubic meters each are big enough to provide his family with drinking water for 8 to 10 months in a normal year. Only during a dry spell does he rent a small vehicle to buy water from a place 8 miles away. What he can buy for CNY 80 (US$ 11) provides him, his family and their livestock with drinking water for one month.

However, although water is more easily available now the rainwater catchment system has been installed, Wei Yao’s family saves water wherever and whenever they can. For them, taking a shower or washing clothes remains a luxury they seldom indulge in. Farmers in the hills of the Loess Plateau are still clearly underprivileged in comparison with city residents in the same area.

Inequalities in water consumption
The rural-urban divide, a current policy tenet which, in many areas of daily life, staunchly favors city dwellers over people in the countryside, is evident in the way water resources are allocated. In 2006, city folks in central Gansu Province were entitled to use an average of 80 liters of water per day whereas people in the countryside were expected to use no more than half this amount, according to a study by Lu Caizhen, a social scientist who has researched water use in Gansu. This disparity is justified by the assumption that urban residents take showers and use water toilets frequently whereas villagers don’t. But why don’t they? The reasoning doesn’t hold up when farmers are asked for their opinion – they feel it’s utterly unfair.

In the end, water scarcity will affect everybody in Gansu in one way or another. Around the district center of Anding, where groundwater is still available and residents enjoy running water from underground sources, the water table is dropping rapidly. One district official has estimated that, in no more than ten years’ time, water will have dried up completely. It is as yet unclear what will then happen to the people. Some residents have moved up north to Dunhuang near the ice-capped Qilian mountain range, where ground water is still available. But the city has already become wary of all the environmental refugees pouring in from the south. No more people from dried-up regions are accepted in.

Where will the Anding city dwellers turn for water now? Nobody knows. As long as rainfall remains stable in Anding, at least the farmers in the hills will survive for a while. The next decade will show if things will stay like this in spite of climate change.
Luo Xiaohong squats in her yard of rammed earth, handling a small patch of bright red chili laid out to dry. Her two small children, a boy and a girl, are dressed in clothes as red and bright as the chili in front of her. But this is where the colors stop. Everything else around is dusty, drab and tinged in a pale yellow. Luo Xiaohong's family lives in a cave, carved out of a high cliff of tightly compressed yellow earth, typical for eastern Gansu Province, and sealed with a mud wall at the front. This is where she has lived since her wedding 10 years ago, and this is where her two children were born.

Many poor people in Dowan, a village with 366 households perched on the upper levels of the Loess Plateau in Ningxian County, still occupy such caves. The cliffs in the neighborhood are dotted with them. Recently, more and more people have moved out of the caves into houses and Luo Xiaohong has not given up hope that one day she will also move out, but severe poverty has so far cut her off from any of the modest material improvements some other villagers have enjoyed in recent years. As for now, she lives in this cave filled with one big bed, a few shelves for kitchen gear and several massive earthen jars. The chilies she is drying in the yard do not earn her an income. What she plants will go to the family pantry, not to the market. Even though her husband earns some cash as a migrant worker, the remittances he is able to send back home have always been small. Every now and then he manages to buy some wooden planks or part of a fence. These are now stacked in front of the cave, waiting to be used as building material at some unknown point in the future.

“Maybe some time, we can use this to build a house,” says Luo Xiaohong. A house made of mud and woven osier stakes. Life means hardship for her and many other people on the flat hill-tops of Eastern Gansu. Much of this has to do with the lack of water.

Drinking Water Systems in Eastern Gansu

Water Against Inequality

by Beate Engelen

Restoring decaying water systems on the Loess Plateau in eastern Gansu Province not only helps farmers get easier access to drinking water. It also reduces social inequalities between the water-rich valley dwellers and the farmers on the parched planes. In Ningxian County, Amity has shown that it can work.
Poverty for hill-top dwellers

In Ningxian County of eastern Gansu Province, it is easy to tell the economic well-being of a family when you know where they live. Up on the planes, even the wealthiest families can serve meat at the table only twice a month. Owners of a cave home like Luo Xiaohong eat meat once a year during Spring Festival. Valley dwellers, by contrast, are much better off - for one main reason: access to water. Down in the valleys, where ground water rests near the surface, exploitation of the resource is cheaper and easier than up on the flat hill-tops. On the elevated planes of this extensive tableland, sinking a well deep enough to hit water is expensive and troublesome. If you happen to be born here, chances are high that you are dirt-poor.

On the hill-tops annual harvests solely depend on rainfall. Water in the deep wells pumped up from a depth of around 200 meters is not enough for farmers in Dowan to irrigate their eggplant and chili fields. But rainfalls are unreliable in Ningxian County. “Sometimes, we get rain twice a month, sometimes it doesn’t rain for months on end,” says Luo Zhanhu, the local village doctor. Besides all the worries about their harvest, people in Dowan are only able to wash their clothes or take a shower when there is rain. Luo Xiaohong’s family cannot take a bath during the winter months. Only in summer do they shower every other month. At least drinking water should be enough for people and animals because of the deep wells. But some communities do not even have deep wells.

Deteriorating infrastructure

In Dowan, Luo Xiaohong’s home village, there was none until recently. The people in Dowan had lost their village well to the forces of slow decay. Shabbily built decades ago and with no-one there to pay for maintenance, the walls of the well had eventually collapsed. The reason behind this decay and lack of initiative among villagers is rooted in the political and economic changes during the early years of Deng Xiaoping’s rule. In China, many parts of the rural infrastructure deteriorated after the end of the rural communes in the early 1980s. People welcomed the economic freedom that came with the waning influence and control of the central government at that time. What went unnoticed at first, however, was the creeping deterioration of the infrastructure that came with it. As the government pulled out, funds for maintaining older structures of the water systems dried up as well. Local cash sources, which could have built the village a new well, have always been meager on the high planes. A village like Dowan is certainly too poor today to pay for a village well.

After the well collapsed in Dowan, drinking water had to be fetched from wells in other communities. People had to walk for up to four hours to fetch water in the early morning hours. One of the young farmers from Dowan still remembers his dreadful walks before dawn through solitary woods and down the precipices to the valley floor to fetch water from the well of another village. He had to arrive at the site early if he wanted any water at all. People had to wait in line, Luo Xiaohong remembers, and if the well ran out of water, quarrels or fights broke out.

Restoring access

To help villagers in Dowan get access to water locally, Amity agreed to rebuild the well, 200 meters deep, and erect a water tower to store water and ensure the necessary water pressure for a water system to run smoothly. Building this water system and providing villagers with running water in their homes was the responsibility of the local government, according to the arrangement.

Today, each of the 1650 villagers is entitled to use 20 liters per day from the well - a small amount compared with the national average (urban resident daily water consumption per capita was 211 liters, rural resident daily water consumption was 71 liters in 2007). In exchange, each family pays 10 yuan per month for the electric water pump and the salary of the man in charge of administering the pump, electricity and the water tower.

The amount of time Luo Xiaohong used to spend fetching water has been cut tremendously. Instead of walking up to four hours to the well of another community she now manages to do it in one. Now, she can spend more time on improving her situation. However, Luo Xiaohong’s worries are not yet over. A sewage system is not yet in place. Also, she and other people from the village have to haul big wheelbarrows with tin kegs fixed on top between the water tower and their homes.

Handling the water cart is sometimes too much for a woman like Luo Xiaohong who, most of the time,
needs to do the heavy farm work and take care of the children, all by herself. Her cave home at the cliff is connected to the upper plane by only one way, a steep and narrow hollow way barely wide enough for the water cart to be pushed through. When it rains the passage turns into a slide. When that happens, she is hardly able to keep the barrow from racing into the abyss.

Even though she now spends less of her time fetching water, she might be in store for a few more rough months with her water barrow. The village heads have promised to build the water system in the near future. Like everyone else in the village, Luo Xiaohong will help to dig the water ditches. The pipes are paid for by the government. A water system would allow her to fetch water from a tap right above her cave home. The tap is already in place but it is still running dry.

For now, at least the water supply seems stable and accessible - one big step toward restoring part of the collapsed infrastructure of Dowan Village. Hopefully, in the near future, prosperity from water-rich areas will start trickling downward to the farmers on the planes.

Social Enterprise

Mooncakes

Before Mid-Autumn Festival, when Chinese people eat and share mooncakes, the Amity Bakery launched a small campaign, inviting people online to donate mooncakes for the elderly and orphans. The campaign turned out to be a great success. Shortly after it was launched, the website appealing for donations received over 18,000 hits. Donors from China and elsewhere emptied their pockets to pay for several hundred boxes of mooncakes.

Two of the mentally challenged apprentices of the Bakery, Zhou Jian and Fu Ye, together with a few Amity volunteers personally delivered 100 boxes of mooncakes to orphans and the elderly in Jiangsu Province. Another 1000 boxes of mooncakes produced by the Bakery went to Sichuan. The apprentices, who all come from Amity’s Home of Blessings, had to work overtime for the timely delivery of the mooncakes. Besides sharing love, the campaign is part of a greater effort by the Amity Bakery to add more expertise to the bakers’ already high skills level. The bakery has recently started producing mooncakes under the guidance of Mr. Kwong (below), a Hong Kong-based master baker and volunteer for Amity. Making good mooncakes is no mean feat: It requires special skills as well as experience and great manual dexterity, all of which the bakers learned from Mr. Kwong. The Amity Bakery is Amity’s first social enterprise. It was founded to give developmentally disabled and slightly mentally disabled people a place where they can receive vocational training. So far, the Amity Bakery still depends on donations but it seeks to complement them more and more with income from entrepreneurial activities.

New Office Building Opened

A new office building for Amity has been officially opened and staffers have moved over from the old building, which will be completely restored over the next few months. When the Amity Foundation was set up almost 25 years ago, there were no more than 3 people – today, it has more than 50 full-time employees. Amity’s project work has moved over the years from the eastern coastal provinces to more than 200 places all over the country, while total funds have exceeded CNY 100 million, which are provided by 13 different international partner organizations. In order to respond to the challenges of such rapid organizational growth and in order to be able to expand its charitable work even further in the future, Amity started to build a new house next to the old office building in May 2007. The new office building provides a more comfortable and spacious work environment to Amity’s staffers. Many organisations at home and abroad helped to cover the expenses for the construction of the new office building as well as the restoration of the old one. The Amity Foundation would like to express its deep appreciation and gratitude for this generous support.