

Amity Newsletter

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Disaster Relief

Amity's Relief Efforts and
Challenges Ahead

A Sichuan Village
Will Be Rebuilt

Snowstorm Relief:
What Has Been Done



Residents of a refugee camp in Mianzhu City line up for their evening meal. Some fled food shortage in their villages.

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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.

Relief Efforts and Challenges Ahead

by Theresa Carino

It is now over 100 days since the worst earthquake in a century devastated parts of Sichuan on May 12, 2008. For quake survivors, it is only the beginning of a painfully long journey of healing and recovery for which they will need our continuing empathy and support.

Relief operations

Amity Foundation staff were among the first to arrive in Chengdu hours after the quake struck on May 12. The Nanjing Headquarters' rapid response and commitment of at least 5 million RMB enabled thousands to be helped when and where it was most needed. Teams of 6 to 8 Amity staff and volunteers from Nanjing (including Hong Kong) were sent to quake sites to help local partners in direct distribution of relief goods.

To date, Amity's relief operations have benefited over 120,000 people in the worst-hit counties of Beichuan, Wenchuan, Pengzhou, Dujiangyan, Mianzhu and Shifang. Donations of 24 million RMB (US\$ 3.5 million) have been received and Amity has already disbursed 6.5 million RMB (US\$ 920,000) in relief goods including thousands of polyurethane sheets (for shelters), rice, cooking oil, drinking water, noodles, baby food, quilts and diapers. In the distribution of goods, Amity ensured the needs of the most disadvantaged, including the handicapped and the elderly, were met. It took care that badly affected rural areas were not overlooked in relief operations. Notably, in many rural areas, village infrastructure, including roads and water systems had sustained severe damage. More than 90% of the homes had been destroyed and people were living on subsistence.

Amity sent a team of 7 social work professors and psychologists from Nanjing, to provide counseling and assess the social psychological needs of quake victims. The team interviewed 1,300 people, visiting over 70 tents and helped counsel groups of children, widows, the injured and the handicapped in tent settlements. They observed that many well meaning but poorly trained volunteers tried to give comfort and offered counseling which often led to tremendous confusion among quake survivors as they were given conflicting advice. Adults seemed the least psychologically equipped to deal with the disaster as guilt feelings were strong. More than 5,000 children died in the quake and it will take a long time for their surviving parents to overcome their grief. In Mianzhu, it was estimated that more than 30,000 had been injured and would be needing assistance. Looking ahead, quake survivors living in tents or temporary homes over the next two to three years will be meeting great social and psychological challenges. There is a desperate need to have more trained psychologists to help those traumatized. Amity is drafting plans to support the training of locally based counselors.

Rehabilitation work

Amity began the first phase of its earthquake rehabilitation work in July, helping schools, the church in Mianzhu and the village of Woyun, 20 minutes from Guanji City. We helped to equip 6 schools in Mianzhu for the resumption of classes. Classes are being held in temporary school buildings that are almost bare of basic equipment. Amity has provided printers, copiers, computers and drinking water dispensers, essential in serving students' needs. We will help to build a temporary school laboratory in Guangji School, serving over 1,500 students. The kindergarten in Jiulong School which lost 110 teachers and students will be re-equipped with an activity room and educational toys. Library sets are being prepared for distribution to schools.

Church in Mianzhu

Amity will help construct a temporary building for Mianzhu Church which was irreparably damaged during the quake. The number of worshippers has doubled since the quake. Many new worshippers have been flocking to the evening services held in tents, in the church grounds. The original congregation numbered 500 but the temporary building will be big enough to hold 1,000 worshippers. There are plans to construct a social service center beside the church to provide health and other services to quake victims. Amity will work in tandem with the church to provide these services.

Rebuilding communities

Woyun Village with a population of 2,500 will be the site of Amity's integrated rehabilitation efforts. More than 90% of the homes in Woyun collapsed or became uninhabitable without major repair. Amity plans to help rebuild homes for Woyun's 935 households. Most villagers are living in temporary shacks constructed from salvaged materials and tarpaulin. Their greatest need at the moment is to rebuild their homes, which they hope can withstand the strong aftershocks and tremors that continue to plague the area.

In many areas, the physical devastation is still very visible as the government tries to clear the rubble and the debris. The internal wounds of people are less visible but just as much in need of healing. The reconstruction of homes and infrastructure will go a long way in providing a sense of security and a base from which quake survivors can begin to rebuild their shattered lives. Your help is most needed.

Reconstruction

Evidence of



A ravaged community in Sichuan will be rebuilt

by Beate Engelen

On a hot day in mid-July one of several teams from Amity was back in Sichuan. Two months had passed since the day when the earthquake struck during the sleepy early-afternoon hours of May 12th. The event lasted no longer than two minutes but it was so strong that it killed around 70,000 people and made 1.5 million homeless. On that day in May,

of an Earthquake



Amity staff had arrived at the scene only hours after the disaster to start emergency relief operations. Now, staff members were back to prepare for post-disaster rehabilitation work. I had joined the team to find out how farmers in Sichuan were coping with the situation and what kind of rehabilitation work they thought would make most sense.

With the organization's long experience in community-based development work, Amity wanted to work with a poor rural community somewhere near Mianzhu, one of the hardest hit areas. Here reconstruction help was indeed urgently needed. Fortunately,

an official from the local government of Mianzhu agreed to show us the way to a village called Woyun.

We drove for some time alongside green fields, shady banks with trees and the odd ruined farmhouse here and there until we finally arrived at a place that must have been a village in the past. What spread before our eyes was not much more than piles of bricks, broken furniture, tumbled walls and ruins whose empty windows looked like hollow eyes. People were sitting in the shade of their roughly built sheds and tents amid the debris. In a word, this place was the epitome of destruction. We had unmistakably arrived at

Gong Sheng talking with with Liu Yingquan (in a blue shirt), a 72-year-old villagers who is sitting with his friends in the rubble of his former home.



Above left: Mr. Liu's wife in front of their makeshift home
Below left: a refugee camp
Right: the rubble of the village committee house of Woyun

the disaster zone.

When my colleague Huang Qingrui and I flew into Chengdu on 17 July I speculated what it would be like to enter a disaster zone. I had asked myself where exactly a disaster zone started. By which signs or landmarks would I be able to tell that we had arrived at the scene of a 8.0-magnitude earthquake? Of course, Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan, a mere 110 km from the epicenter, had suffered some damage. But to my untrained eye, Chengdu had not changed a bit since my last visit half a year ago. There was a blood donation station next to our hotel but it was closed each time I walked past. Apparently two months after the quake, immediate rescue efforts, which had included blood donations, had already come to a halt in Chengdu.

On our way to Mianzhu the next day, signs of a recent natural disaster became more visible. Cracks appeared in the concrete road surface not long after we had left Chengdu and there were damaged houses here and there. As we approached Mianzhu, more and more red banners laced the road, urging people to unite and not complain about their

fate. Then, in the outskirts of Mianzhu, blue army tents appeared at the roadside, pointing the way to the rescue camps ahead: rows of white tents and barracks stretching as far as the eye could see. In May, the first residents of these camps had been city folk from Mianzhu who had been forced to leave their dangerously damaged flats. But later the camps filled with people who were fleeing the hinterland because they had run out of food or were in danger of being killed by landslides.

Destruction in the countryside

But the refugee camps were not what we were looking for that day. We headed for the countryside where, experts say, people suffered much more in the aftermath of the earthquake than victims in the cities because country folk got much less attention. Standing amid the ruins of Woyun, I could easily believe that this was true.

Strolling along the main road we met two friendly old men chatting in the shade of a tall tree. Bricks from the rubble of the house behind them served them as stools. One of the old men wore boxer

shorts, flip-flops and a blue shirt reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution. This was Liu Yingquan, a 72-year-old farmer with a big smile on his face. The two men offered us little plastic seats so we could join in their talk under the tree.

The rubble around us turned out to be the remains of Mr. Liu's own house. He had built it thirteen years ago when his son wanted to make a good match. The son did marry the woman of his choice but all of Mr. Liu's investments had been lost on May 12.

When the ground started shaking, Mr. Liu was out on the main dirt path in front of his house drying mustard seeds. At first he had the impression that there was something wrong with him so he knelt down in order to steady himself. But reality soon dawned on him: "When the buildings around me started collapsing I realized that it was not my health!" The strongest earthquake ever measured in the area was about to destroy his hometown. 24 villagers died that day.

Tang Zhengxi, a pretty 13-year-old girl who listened in on our talk, had been in her classroom on the second

floor of her school when the walls started shaking. Unlike most of the other children, Tang Zhengxi did not run for the exit but - following an instinct - hid in the corner of a room. She had made the right choice. The part of the building where she had hidden did not collapse. She survived physically unharmed, but she was obviously suffering from her traumatic experience. During our chat she started crying. Fears still haunted her, especially at night, she said. Nevertheless, Zhengxi had been lucky. Two students and one teacher died that day in her school and many more were injured. According to official government statistics, in the whole county 7 schools with 391 classrooms were destroyed by the earthquake.

In Woyun, over 90% of the homes had collapsed, and even those structures which were not completely destroyed will have to be demolished because it is no longer safe to stay in them. The destruction in this flattened village seemed much greater than in the city of Mianzhu. I blamed this in part on the fact that village houses usually consist of brick walls and wood-framed roofs, which is cheaper than concrete.

Need for quake-proof homes

Poor quality building work does not come as a surprise. Farmers in Woyun had never been in a position to build earthquake-proof homes, not just because they do not earn enough money. The area has not seen any serious earthquakes in the last 100 years and until recently, the area around Mianzhu was considered a “moderate” seismic risk

zone, according to the Chinese Building Code. Opinions on this have probably changed after May 12th.

In the blue distance behind us, we saw the Longmen Mountain Range rise steeply out of the plains, indicating that we were close to the fault line. This is the area where the Tibetan Plateau collides with the Sichuan Basin, or - explained in broader terms - where the Indian subcontinent pushes into Eurasia. The tension between the two plates had built up so much that the ground moved up to three meters in the earthquake zone.

Around the time we visited Woyun, recurring aftershocks kept people in a state of nervous disquiet and watchfulness. Mr. Liu and other villagers, who were gathering during our talk, said they had trouble sleeping through the night, waking at intervals and listening for possible signs of an imminent tremor. We could see beds which had been hauled out of the houses for people to get a better night’s sleep. Villagers also worried about burglars taking advantage of the fact that possessions could not be easily protected in the temporary houses and tents.

Lack of funds

Mr. Liu and his wife had just finished building their makeshift home from the recycled wooden planks of their shattered house. They had hired a young man who was able to put up the structure but the quality was not very high. In winter, wind and rain will blow through the gaps between the planks. For now, however, he and his wife are happy to have a fixed shelter at all. 10% of the village population were still living in tents at the time of our visit. Others had built temporary shacks.

People of Woyun said that rebuilding their homes was their highest priority, preferably before winter starts. The prospects of achieving this goal are doubtful, however, if people are left to their own devices. The government has promised to give between 16,000 and 22,000 RMB to each family but homes are much more expensive than that. A common house costs around 70,000 RMB in this area, sometimes even more. How would people be able to raise so much money?

How to make money

Traditionally, farmers in Woyun grow corn, wheat, rice and rapeseed - all of them low-value crops. Even though this kind of work is tough, farming is mainly done by women, who do it by hand because hardly any agricultural machinery is available to them. After the earthquake, the future of Sichuan farmers looks grim: 1.15 million of them had lost their means of production, the vice-governor of Sichuan said during a press conference in early July. Almost all of the livestock has perished in the earthquake and when harvest begins, there will be no place to store the crops. Storage rooms, too, were destroyed or heavily damaged in the earthquake.

Those families who send their younger members to work in the cities are able to earn some extra income. However, since almost all of the farmers have only an elementary school education, the greater part of the migrant workers from Woyun can only do odd jobs - if they find any at all. Job hunting was not easy even before the earthquake: now it has become a real problem. 600,000 migrant workers lost



Tang Zhengxi survived in a collapsing school.



Above: Villagers of Woyun joined us to share their experiences on May 12. Most of them had lost their homes that day.

their jobs as a result of the disaster, according to official figures. Mianzhu has already held two big job fairs where companies from Jiangsu Province, Mianzhu's government-assigned partner, offer jobs to skilled laborers and migrant workers. But demand for jobs exceeds supply.

When we asked him how he planned to raise enough money to rebuild his house, Mr. Liu said that he would go on with farm work. His son and daughter-in-law live in Chengdu as migrant workers. Yet they have only been able to save very little money. Regarding the remaining funds needed, Mr. Liu said, he would just wait and hope for the best.


During our talk more and more villagers walked up to listen and comment. They all had their individual memories of the earthquake to tell. One man recalled that the earth shook sideways and up and down at the same time. At that moment, he recalled, he just wanted to survive. Luckily, 12 May was an unusually cool day so people were still out in the fields during the hot early afternoon

hours. Had it been hotter that day, the number of casualties would have been even higher.

Villagers in Woyun will start harvesting their crops in a few weeks from now. A little later the weather will turn colder and Woyun will get the rain and icy winds which are common around here. Over 900 houses need to be rebuilt to provide every family with a new home. Amity - advised by members of the Hong Kong Institute of Architects and the Hong Kong Institute of Planners - has decided to take on this task, but the construction of new homes will require special attention. Life in the disaster zone is dangerous not only because of landslides, aftershocks or the "quake lakes" - unstable bodies of water created during the earthquake by blocked rivers.

Geologists expect more big earthquakes to happen. "Similar earthquakes are to be expected rather more often than normal in the near future, since all the other faults in the region are now under tension as a result of the [May 12] earthquake," Domenico Giardini, a professor of Seismology and Geodynamics at ETH in Zurich wrote in a recent report. It is therefore crucial to seismically upgrade every single farmhouse which is rebuilt in the area.

Helping people in Woyun restore their community is sure to be a big challenge for Amity in the coming months, maybe years. There are not only the earthquake-safe homes which need to be built. Amity also plans to introduce environmentally friendly biogas systems and other devices that will improve the infrastructure of the village. Villagers will be involved in every stage of the decision-making, implementing and monitoring process of the project. To make sure the implementation is efficient and transparent, Amity has opened an office in the village. Experienced staff from Nanjing will take turns working here in order to spur change in the lives of people like Mr. Liu and Tang Zhengxi.

Meeting Mr. Liu and some of the other villagers has left a deep impression on me. These people have lost almost everything, they live in the middle of a disaster zone and face a highly uncertain future. Still, they seem resolved to pick up their lives again. I wonder if the cracks in the road, the refugee camps, the ruins of Woyun and all the other signs of disaster will still be visible when I visit again. I am sure many of them will be gone. 



Two old women try to cool down in front of their prefabricated home in Sichuan. Both fled from their village in the mountains because of possible landslides after the earthquake. Nobody knows how long they have to stay in the refugee camp.

Help for Schools

“Toys, we need more toys for the kids!”

by Huang Qingrui
translated by Terence Chu



It would be impossible to find Jiulong School had its gates not survived the earthquake. Almost completely leveled when the killer quake hit Sichuan on May 12th, only a few classrooms standing in the midst of rubble are all that is left of the school. Ms. Li Hongliang, the principal, met us in the tents near the school as the headmaster was still in hospital. Ms. Li started crying when she recalled what had happened to teachers and students: “A hundred and ten students and staff died in the earthquake, the school is now in rubble, and all the data files of the staff and students have been lost. We cannot even find all the names of those who died in the earthquake! In the few days after the quake, we divided the remaining staff and teachers into 10 groups and set out for nearby villages to find out if there were any missing children who had attended our school. Some parents whose children had died burst into tears. In their grief and bitterness, some of them said, ‘Why didn’t you die in place of my kid?’ When I heard that, I felt as if someone was strangling my heart ... I wish I could have died in place of those kids!”

Jiulong School includes a primary school, a village school and a kindergarten, with slightly more than 900 students and staff. Jiulong Town, where the school is located, lies along the Longmen Mountains. When the earthquake tore through the mountain range it destroyed Jiulong’s infrastructure, badly damaging the town and the school. Little relief aid is reaching the town since it is located in a remote area and its roads have been destroyed.

According to Ms. Li, staff at the school have been so busy trying to locate and identify the dead that they have not had time to plead for aid. “A few days ago we were looking for a teacher who had been transferred to another hospital. All we could do was to send two colleagues to scour nearby hospitals and aid stations to try our luck. Once our colleagues arrived at their destination they would start yelling the teacher’s name, hoping he or some of his friends or relatives would hear it. After going through several spots



Remains of the Jiulong School

we finally tracked him down ... This is how we find our surviving colleagues who got lost in the chaos.”

Besides locating survivors, there are other problems school staff have to worry about. The temporary classrooms are about to be finished and children will be ready to return to school, but Ms. Li points out that the school still lacks educational equipment. “The only thing I can do now is to ask volunteers for more help, or I can try to contact some organizations or personnel to provide us with educational equipment. If not, we will not be able to conduct classes even if we have temporary classrooms.”

Ms. Li’s effort is finally being rewarded as she has received several computers and some equipment for outdoor activities. She still lacks equipment, though, for the staff and toys for the kindergarten kids. “We have around 240 kids in our kindergarten, when they return to school they will attend lessons in the temporary classrooms. However, many kids were traumatized by the earthquake, and they refuse to come to school. Some of our colleagues are now working with the kids to help them get over their fears.”

Ms. Li is confident that the children will return to school, but she still worries that they will not have enough toys for the kindergarten kids: “If their parents agree to let them return to school, I want to give them a good educational environment, an environment which gives them joy and helps eliminate some of the bad memories of the earthquake.”

Christianity and Rural Development

by Beate Engelen

The dry, wind-beaten plains of Inner Mongolia are no common tourist destination. It took some courage on the side of this year's Easter Tour participants to join the trip to one of the lesser known provinces of China. For most group members from nine different countries, this was their first trip to China, even though there were a few "old China hands" too, like Ed Hobart, Catherine Coleman and May Chung, who had served as teachers in China before.

The differences in climate we experienced during these ten days were almost as great as those in the living standards of people we met. There was warm spring weather in Beijing and snow in Inner Mongolia; we saw imposing places like the Great Wall, the Bird's Nest and the Forbidden City, but we also visited farmers living in mud huts, who have to toil to make a living. When we arrived in April, Beijing was just receiving the finishing touches to make it a national showcase for the Olympic Games. On the plains of Inner Mongolia a few days later, we found ourselves in the backyard of a country struggling hard with modernization and with a long way to go before it will become a more equal society.

The tour had two main themes: Christianity and environmentally friendly rural development. It was a memorable experience to meet with scientists and with representatives of different

religious institutions to discuss freedom of religion, the current registration laws for churches, theological education and the reasons why more women than men are active in the church. It was no less meaningful to worship with believers in churches in Beijing and Hohhot, the capital of Inner Mongolia. James Shum and Blute Thaw had brought some church music from America and Burma, which we practiced to sing on the bus and, later, "performed" in the sanctuary of a church in front of an enthusiastic congregation. Local churches in Inner Mongolia, we could easily see, had become much more willing and better equipped to accept their social responsibility than in the past. Since the government started not long ago to encourage churches to play a more active role in maintaining social stability, congregations have begun to reach out to needy people beyond the circle of believers. They have, for example, set up homes for the elderly, conducted AIDS-awareness programs and held literacy courses. Many such activities are still in a pioneering stage but they have already shown some results. During a chat with the residents of a church-run

nursing home in Baotou, a former coal miner even told us that he was much happier than he had been before he moved here.

We were also eager to learn how farmers and herdsmen in Inner Mongolia may be able to survive without damaging the environment. Several group members had brought copies of "Wolf Totem" with them, a recently published novel about the lives of Inner Mongolian herdsmen and their struggle against wolves. Although we did not encounter any wolves we still caught a glimpse of the harsh environment of Inner Mongolia described in the book - including a sandstorm which almost prevented us from returning to Beijing on schedule.

In Wulate Middle Banner, a remote county in the vast grasslands, we were welcomed according to the Mongolian tradition: blue scarves were put around our necks and a cup of liquor was served to each of us. We were introduced to local farmers and found out about the sheep-raising, crop-growing and irrigation methods they use in this semi-arid climate.

It was impressive to visit a peasant cooperative which is run in a democratic way - something seldom seen in China: the "Potato Association". In the past, farmers were unable to get fair prices for their potatoes because a middleman, who arranges all the business transactions between the farmers and the factory, kept prices of potatoes very low.





He negotiated with farmers individually, which made sure that farmers in effect outbid each other. The situation changed when the farmers, encouraged by Amity, decided to form the “Potato Association”, whose leader is elected by the members. Acting together, the farmers have a much stronger position

in price negotiations. This project has given the farmers a chance to open up to the outside world, too. “Our visit here is really something special,” says Zhou Lit-ing, who is responsible for Amity’s projects in Inner Mongolia. “Not long ago, these farmers were too shy to speak even with me, a fellow Chinese - and now, they can receive foreigners as guests.” She was right! In spite of language problems much intercultural exchange took place. Not all communication depends on language anyway: when a group performed a traditional Chinese dance for our group, many of us were happy to accept the invitation to join in and dance with the farmers, cheered on by bystanders. Probably

more than anybody else, Benedict Kyei enjoyed this little treat: he had started to suffer from dance deprivation, he explained, after a few days of being away from Ghana, his home country.

Those ten days in Beijing and Inner Mongolia have given us an impression of how diverse life is in today’s China. “The Worship with the people and the ‘close-up’ moments with churches, seminaries and Bible schools was extremely insightful and a joyful experience,” said Carl Anderson, a pastor from California at the end of the trip. Others like Barbara Kelly from Canada found that “the time in Inner Mongolia, the up-close farming experience and the festive gathering of local people” meant a lot to them. We enjoyed staying in good hotels and sometimes dining at courtyard-sized tables: but this also made us aware that we were part of China’s contrasting worlds. In contrast to the farmers we had just visited, we were unmistakably counted with the rich and privileged. 🍵

Snowstorm Relief

What Has Been Done

Amity has put a lot of resources into helping victims of this year’s devastating snowstorm, which hit large parts of China around the Lunar New Year Festival and severely affected some 60 million people. So far we have supported as many as 50,000 people in their efforts to overcome the effects of the 14 January snowstorm.

We have earmarked 4,226,400 RMB (US\$ 617,786) for relief and reconstruction in the four provinces of Hunan, Guangxi, Yunnan and Guizhou. To help victims overcome the worst immediate effects, we distributed about 71 tons of rice, 10,860 padded quilts and 5000 sets of warm underwear to the most vulnerable families. Further assistance was provided to people who needed support to rebuild their homes, recover their livelihoods and repair drinking water facilities and irrigation systems. The sheer size of the geographical area affected and the fact that supply lines were interrupted for a long period made Amity’s emergency response a



particularly daunting task. Most beneficiaries of our snowstorm-related work live in mountainous areas at levels of around 800 meters above sea level. Many of them have endured severe damage and even complete destruction to their homes, crops and livestock.

In its efforts to raise funds for relief and rehabilitation, Amity has been supported by Action by Churches Together (ACT), the Disaster Relief Fund of the Hong Kong government as well as

many other organizations and private donors. Our fundraising work culminated in a gala dinner on 20 April in Hong Kong, during which donations totaling HK\$ 642,659 were collected. Reconstruction work is expected to be finished by January 2009. By this time, we will have helped several hundred families to recover their pre-disaster income levels by reconstructing homes, animal pens, greenhouses and drinking water systems. 🍵




Hong Kong Architects and Planners Visit Sichuan

In order to bring Hong Kong expertise to bear on our rebuilding project in Sichuan, the Amity Hong Kong Office invited some representatives of the Hong Kong Institute of Architects and the Hong Kong Institute of Planners to visit Woyun Village from 6 to 8 September 2008.

Together, they spent their time discussing the challenges of how the Hong Kong group could provide assistance under the present circumstances. "We were warmly greeted by the village leaders, who have by now developed a most cordial relationship with Amity workers after months of living amongst them in cardboard houses, and working together in relief operation," says Anthony Tong from Amity's Hong Kong Office, who accompanied the group. The architects and planners listened to farmers' views, inspected and measured what was left of the fallen structures to form a clear picture of local building traditions. Of interest was also the temporary water delivery system which was rigged after 15

out of the 16 water towers had fallen during the quake. Especially conspicuous to the group was that farmers lacked funds. They were rendered broke after 95% of them lost their houses and prized possessions in the quake. Even with the government subsidy of 16,000 - 22,000 RMB, many of them could not afford to rebuild the homes to their former standards of living.

Since the Sichuan earthquake, Amity has been actively working with the Sichuan government in identifying villages which are in need of assistance in rebuilding their houses and infrastructures. After some initial fact-finding and on the recommendation of the Mianzhu government, Woyun Village has been identified as a needy site for assistance. "The hopeful sign is," says Anthony Tong, "that people are going about their way with some degree of optimism now that they know their plights have not gone unnoticed and help is on the way." 

Summer English Program

"No Picnic"


Forty-five volunteers from the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom took part in this year's Summer English Program (SEP). Between July 7th and August 4th volunteers spent four weeks of their summer vacation to join the 12 teaching teams which were assigned to seven provinces. The program is meant to be a cross-cultural dialogue which gives English-speaking volunteers a chance to work with rural primary and middle school Chinese teachers of English to develop their listening and speaking skills. The SEP includes an orientation program in Nanjing and a debriefing conference in Shanghai.

"Participation in the SEP is no holiday and no picnic," says Stephen Sidebotham from the UK, who taught this summer in Shandong Province, "it is hard work, but deeply rewarding and satisfying." The SEP is always much more than yet another training course in spoken English. As Claire Gibbs from the U.S. says: "The welcoming handshakes from our hosts, shared laughter over a meal, the wide-eyed curious looks from children, our teacher-students' eager smiles – the SEP was all of this, and more." 

The Strongs Leave for North Carolina

This summer, the Hong Kong office had to say goodbye to Kim and John Strong, who have worked there for more



than five years. Before coming to Hong Kong, Kim and John worked as Amity teachers in Nanjing where their son Ben was born. In Hong Kong, Kim supported the teachers program as an educational consultant. John was responsible for the annual report, the website and the Amity teachers' internal magazine "The Amity Echo". The Strongs now live in North Carolina (picture). They are greatly missed by everybody. 



New Responsibilities

Elisa Nousiainen, the editor of the Amity News Service (ANS), left the Amity Hong Kong Office at the end of 2007 to assume new responsibilities at the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Hong Kong. Fortunately, Elisa will continue to serve Amity as a board director. Theresa Carino is now in charge of editing the ANS. 