

Amity Outlook

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**New hope for
the village**

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ON THE COVER:

The "Amity Ecological and Cultural Village" rural development project in Gongbo Village of Cangyuan County fostered cultural activities as Wa ethnic singing and dancing. This was a start for Gongbo Village's transformation and brought important development opportunities for the village.



Empower rural communities

On February 21, the Chinese government released the report “Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on Comprehensively Promoting Rural Revitalization and Accelerating Agricultural and Rural Modernization”. In the report, the government emphasized rural development as a top priority. The report declared rural revitalization as a major task for the whole country and urged to use all forces of the society to accelerate the modernization of agriculture and rural regions, and to eventually provide a better living standard for the rural population.

Standing at a starting point of a new era, how can social organizations make a good start on the road of promoting rural revitalization? Recently, a reporter from the CPPCC Daily interviewed Ling Chunxiang, General Secretary of the Amity Foundation, and asked her to summarize and share the experiences of Amity on its exploration of village revitalization based on Amity’s 30-year rural community development practice.

Interview with General Secretary Ling Chunxiang:

Q: *Most farmers have flocked into cities, leaving the elderly, women and children behind, resulting in a “hollowing” countryside. How do social organizations promote rural revitalization under this population outflow?*

A: In the past two to three decades, rural populations migrated from the countryside to the cities for work and go back home during festivals. They do it back and forth, like migratory birds. The main reason is that the local economic development is so slow and the growing material and cultural needs of farmers can hardly be met.

In many regions of western China, not only in rural areas but also in many county-level towns, the population keeps decreasing. The impact of this outflow on rural revitalization should not be underestimated. To solve this problem, we need to address the root cause. What can social organizations do?

In early days of Amity, we provided assistance in impoverished areas. In the recent 10 years, we have explored innovative ways for the development of rural communities, such as the protection of traditional culture, establishment of agricultural cooperatives in ethnic minority areas, and the promotion of rural tourism.

In the context of rural population outflow, Amity started to train village leaders. These leaders then guide the local people to develop rural production and renovate their villages, which has a positive role in promoting rural revitalization. The capacity of the leaders has been continuously improved through trainings, which included support to set up agricultural cooperatives, visiting developed areas for exchanges, and linking them with additional external resources.

In addition to training the leaders, there must be a sustainable industry to support and eventually achieve the revitalization of rural areas. However, the real value of some agricultural products of rural areas are not reflected in the markets, hence it is difficult to support local development. In this case, we need to foster an innovative and entrepreneurial mindset of local farmers and to focus on localized agricultural and sideline products, native products, and handicrafts that are aligned with the local conditions.

During the process, social organizations leveraging on their advantages to connect resources and expertise, social organizations act as mediators and bridges connecting rural with urban residents, agricultural technical talents with ordinary farmers. They help to cultivate local experts and field professionals and provide guidance in agricultural technology, product marketing, and financial services.

At the same time, with the support of government policies, the infrastructure such as local transportation, telecommunication, and the internet has been greatly improved. By linking resources, social organizations can help to develop specific industries as tourism, enhancing manufacturing processes to create better products, etc. This helps to attract knowledgeable, well-educated, and skilled young professionals to come back to the countryside to promote rural revitalization.

Q: *There are many left-behind women in rural areas. How do social organizations mobilize women in the countryside to contribute their strength and wisdom in rural revitalization?*

A: An old Chinese proverb says “Women hold up half the sky”. Social organizations raise awareness and demonstrate the importance of women in reforming, developing, and revitalizing rural areas. We must not only put women as the main focus of support but also build up their capacity to strengthen their skills and self-reliance.

“Knowledge can change destiny” also applies to rural women. In the past few years, the Amity village doctor training program promoted gender equality and worked with women, giving them more opportunities to learn, practice, and assisted them in establishing their own clinics. Amity’s education and scholarship program also support girls. Capacity development for women benefits not only themselves but also their children and the whole family.

For other programs that do not target women specifically, we also require women’s participation and want them to express their opinions in our research and project assessment. In many ways, we encourage women to participate in the whole process, including project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Thereby we are enhancing both their awareness and capacity.

We believe that empowerment should be the first step of revitalization. Empowering women in the countryside is easier said than done, but it shows the importance of promoting gender equality and such programs in the local communities.

For example, at the initial convening meeting of our microfinance project, female beneficiaries didn’t speak up and kept their heads down. But after a few years in the project, they became talkative and open to communicate with us. We saw they were changing their attitude.

To mobilize left-behind women requires not only the implementation of “hardware” projects, but also to provide “software”, such as knowledge about health, legal knowledge, technical training, and professional skills as product design and sales, e-commerce operation, etc. Those are very important to improve women’s capacity in all aspects. By promoting women’s personal growth, self-development, and women’s organizations, we enable them to actively participate in public affairs of rural communities, thereby facilitating the overall revitalization of the countryside.



Ling Chunxiang

General Secretary
The Amity Foundation

Running towards rural revitalization

Qiu Zhonghui



On February 25, President Xi Jinping declared that, at this prominent 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party, China has accomplished the mission of eliminating absolute poverty and made a historical milestone with the joint effort of all people in China.

As a social organization born in the early age of the Reform and Opening-up, the Amity Foundation follows the pace of the nation's development strategy. Since its inception Amity consistently explores and endeavors new anti-poverty strategies.

In 1985, Amity started its action on poverty alleviation.

In 1993, the third meeting of the second board of directors of Amity decided to shift its emphasis of poverty relief work to western China. Since then, the remote areas in mid-west China have become the Amity's main location for poverty alleviation.

In 2013, in response to the call of the central government, Amity adopted the ideology of “targeted poverty alleviation” as its work guidance.

In 2015, the decision of the CPC Central Committee on Fighting against Poverty was released. Amity focused on following the national strategy by enhancing economic development and put efforts in training people and talents.

The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party proposed a “strategy of rural revitalization”. Then Amity started to think about the transformation from poverty alleviation to rural revitalization. In 2018 and 2019, Amity convened two innovation summits themed rural revitalization, in an aim to establish a platform for the discussion and exchange of different sectors of the society and to plan for the strategy of rural revitalization together.

Under the policy framework of targeted poverty alleviation,

before project implementation, Amity carries out “participatory investigation” by engaging local villagers to understand their needs, and then investigates the economic and social conditions and collects the baseline data. With the support of the local civil affairs authorities, Amity carries out investigations on low-income families in counties such as Wa Ethnic Minority Autonomous County in Yunnan Province, Long’an County and Lingyun County in Guangxi Province. By doing so, we understand the scale of the low-income families, origin of income, cost and expense, sources of poverty, obstacles in getting out of poverty and development plans. Amity takes into account of the specific local conditions such as resources, industrial foundation and talent structure, fully considering the poverty alleviation strategy and measures of the local government, and worked out the cooperation, coverage and method in a way directly involving the village teams. Then the working team together, based on the project funds and local conditions,

formed flexible and tailored plans on village-level industry support and talent training.

The “Industry Support + Talent Training” method adopted by Amity for targeted poverty alleviation specifies a way combining aligned industry development among villages and differentiated rural household development. On the one hand, for individual families, Amity works to inspire their motivation for change based on their own poverty level, usable resources, development ability and intentions, so as to help them play their advantages and allocate social resources effectively. In this process, identical measures were avoided. Rather, Amity used specific plans tailored for each family to support them with their own production or operation. The differentiation enabled complementation and demand-supply relation among village families, which lowered the possibility of unhealthy competitions. On the other hand, at village level, Amity encouraged unified industries with individual families as participants. With the

joint efforts from both villages and individual families, the village industry would be developed and later integrated into the industries of county level. In this way Amity projects will achieve better results and be more efficient.

For example, Cangyuan County of Yunnan Province made an all-round development plan on Cangyuan International Resort Area. Covered by the area, Paliang Village has good potential to develop rural tourism. In this context, Amity decided to support Paliang's village tourism based on family tourism services. Amity helped and supported low-income families in various business and projects, funded them to build breeding bases and vegetable greenhouses, train them on traditional skills including Wa ethnic minority costumes making, cuisine cooking, handcraft making, tourism services and management of hotel and homestay. By incorporating families into the rural tourism industry, Amity achieved an united development of the households and the villages.

Amity believes that poverty is on the surface while many factors may play their roles behind. Factors like lack in knowledge and skills, health risks, poor information exchange and lack in spiritual life all have their influences on poverty reduction directly and indirectly. Only a balanced growth on economic, social, cultural, educational, healthcare and psychological conditions could rule out poverty from the root and facilitate a healthy development of the countryside. As a result, the programs of Amity introduce a concept of "integrated development", to focus on the exploration of the potentials and the enhancement of the abilities of the whole rural communities.

The Amity Foundation emphasizes on that the core of the implementation of the programs is the development of human beings. Based on the ideology of the people as the core element, Amity tries to fully utilize village resources, digging in the potential of every villagers, promoting the development of the entire village from multiple

aspects such as the village management, culture promotion and mutual care. Amity enhances their ability of coping with difficulties and challenges of different kinds. Amity also plays its role to promote continually self-management and self development after the implementation of the program.

In Amity's opinion, villagers are the main body of local development, as well as the direct beneficiaries of the projects. Only their own participation in the decision-making and managing process in project planning, implementation, monitoring and assessment would improve their self-development abilities. While motivating the villagers themselves, Amity strived to integrate resources from the entire society under the guidance of the government to inspire social energy and innovation. When everything is coordinated, we are able to make contributions to poverty alleviation.

As many of Amity projects are carried out in the west where many ethnic minority groups live,

Amity pays special attention to the respect and preservation of local culture and tradition during project implementation. Amity acknowledges the value of local knowledge, and aims to rebuild the confidence of the culture. At the same time, Amity explores the potential of traditional culture in modern life and promotes multi-ethnics synergies and harmonious development.

Until now, the Amity Foundation has implemented various poverty alleviation and development programs in 521 counties across 31 provinces and autonomous regions nationwide, covering aspects including ecological environmental management, production and livelihood

facilities construction, industrial development, healthcare services and education, traditional culture, and exchanges and trainings. Total funds raised add up to approximately RMB3.7 billion. Tens of millions of people have benefited from the programs directly and over 200 million indirectly.

Today, on this turning point linking poverty alleviation and rural revitalization, Amity looks back on its path: from east of China to the west of China and to the overseas, from participatory poverty alleviation to integrated development and to targeted poverty alleviation and rural revitalization. Amity staff has kept in mind over

these decades that “establishing aspiration before alleviating poverty and boosting moral before revitalizing the village” is Amity’s philosophy and experience. “People-oriented” was carved into Amity’s project implementation. Amity believes that the improvement of physical health, minds and concepts, education background and technical skills allow “better selves” to form better families, better communities, better villages, and a better society.

Following the steps of the whole country, the Amity Foundation will keep running on the way towards rural revitalization.

As members of the Amity family, many of us have links with Cangyuan, a county in Yunnan Province. Around year 2000, the Amity Foundation started our cooperation with Cangyuan Wa Autonomous County, Lincang City, Yunnan Province, on a series of projects including integrated community development, education, and medical care.

Over the past 20 years, Amity provided more than RMB 33.36 million for our Cangyuan project area. Generations of Amity staff have left their sweat and footprints on this beautiful land, to build it and to develop it.

In 2018, the "Amity Ecological and Cultural Village" rural development project landed in Gongbo Village of Cangyuan. Under the two themes of targeted poverty alleviation and rural revitalization, the project focuses on ecological agriculture, ecological communities, community capacity building, community development funds, exchanges and visits, and urban-rural interactions.

Today we will take you closer to the development of Gongbo Village, to feel the energy injected by projects into rural development.



New hope for the village

"**T**here can be miracles, when you believe." Zhao Guoxiang, the 46-year-old village head of Gongbo Village, told us with tears in his eyes.

Gongbo Village, with Wa ethnic minority group as its residents, is a small village lying in the remote mountainous area of Yunnan Province. Today, in this remote village, you can see clean cement roads, flowers alongside residents' houses, tourists dancing and singing with villagers in their special organized events and kids running and laughing everywhere.



"I have a dream"

Back in 2010, Zhao Guoxiang heard about the Cangyuan County Amity Rural Development Association (the "Amity Association") while participating in a cultural performance in the county. "Others told me that this association supports traditional culture development such as ethnic minority singing and dancing, and they also implement many rural development projects. I myself like singing and dancing very much, and I believe my village needs supports like these. So I went to talk to Amity staff and invited them to visit Gongbo Village for assessment."

The talk since then has connected Amity with the beautiful village.

After the Amity projects were implemented in Gongbo Village, Zhao Guoxiang found that the "most popular" project was folk music and dance trainings and performances. "I think because the Wa people like singing and dancing, everyone is very excited whenever there is such a project."

This inspired Zhao Guoxiang. He encouraged villagers who like singing and dancing to join the Amity Association. They started themselves organizing a variety of activities. Then out of all those members, leaders

were cultivated for public life of the village. Later under the efforts of the members and the life leaders, village facilities were transformed, science knowledge were taught to the villagers, and different kinds of skills were learnt by the villagers...

Out of Zhao Guoxiang's expectation, the Wa ethnic singing and dancing not only was a start for Gongbo Village's change, but also brought important development opportunities for the village.

In 2015, a group of photographers came from the county to Gongbo Village for the sightseeing. "Well, that was a nice story!" said Zhao Guoxiang with excitement. "Amity Association led our Gongbo Art Team to attend a dancing competition in the county. Unfortunately we didn't win any prize. However, our Wa ethnic costumes and folk dances impressed the Photographers Association of the county. Soon later, more than 50 photographers came and stayed here for two days to take pictures. We had never received so many guests before!"





With the implementation of Amity projects, Zhao Guoxiang trained art team members their traditional culture, and focuses their performance on Wa ethnic farming culture, and registered the village on social media... Starting around 2017, Gongbo Village welcomed some individual tourists and small tour groups nearby.

Under the organization of Zhao Guoxiang and the members of the Amity Association, the villagers enthusiastically demonstrated their traditional farming to the guests and invited the visitors to experience traditional farming activities and Wa ethnic minority artistic performances.

Crop farming dominates Gongbo Village for centuries. But due to geographical conditions, the level of crop farming there is low and lacks characteristics. "So I came up with an idea: why not we develop tourism in the village with the characteristics of our Wa ethnic farming culture?"

"Absolutely Amity projects played an important role! Routine trainings for the art team, education of our traditional culture, exchanges with other villages... we feel so confident in our own culture!" Zhao Guoxiang told us. Deep impression was left on the tourists, who told others about their experience, which in turn attracted new tourists.

After that, this group of photographers visit Gongbo Village several times. Zhao Guoxiang realized that the traditional farming and folk customs and singing and dancing that Gongbo villagers do every day are actually the most unique and attractive thing of the village!



Nevertheless, Zhao Guoxiang considered it not enough. "My generation can't keep up with the fast-developing era. We need a group of smart young people with knowledge and insights to join us, so that more people will learn about our Gongbo Village..."

Target of "HeyBoy"



"HeyBoy", a Wa ethnic young man born in 1992, is a key member of Amity projects and also a "video influencer".

"My first video was made in 2009 with an old mobile phone. It's fun for me to record life in this way." Later, HeyBoy's film making skills improved with a new smart phone. In 2015, HeyBoy first watched a video sent by his friend from a social media platform, and he was attracted. HeyBoy quickly registered an account named "HeyBoy".

"I first published a photo of my village. To my surprise, I got 3,000 followers!" HeyBoy was encouraged. He then started to learn video editing by himself. May 2017 marked a milestone for HeyBoy. The number of his followers reached 10,000 and his account had more than 200,000 clicks. "People in our village started calling me 'net

celebrity', haha!" said HeyBoy excitedly. "The other day, a girl I didn't know recognized me at the Cangyuan Airport. She was one of my followers!"

HeyBoy never regarded video shooting as anything other than a hobby, until one day, a business man from Guangdong contacted him and placed an order. The man ran a restaurant and wanted to use the Wa ethnic brocade in HeyBoy's video as the decoration in his restaurant. "My biggest gain from that deal was not making a profit of nearly RMB 5,000, but seeing the possibility of making money from my videos."

"I was thinking that why not we post videos of our village on social media, so as to attract tourists?" said HeyBoy, who saw a new possibility for the village. This idea coincides with Zhao Guoxiang's expectation – to use new channels and new technologies to spread the rural customs and ethnic culture to the Internet.

As a result, the spring sowing and autumn harvest, the

traditional Wa ethnic cuisine and homestays, and the cultural activities organized by Amity in the village have all been made into videos and promoted on social media and video platforms by HeyBoy. "You see, before the spring sowing event, I made a preview on the platform!" HeyBoy was proud.



Today, more than 800 videos under HeyBoy's account have brought HeyBoy nearly 30,000 followers. In his and Zhao Guoxiang's opinion, behind this are the "infinite unknowns and possibilities".

In order to improve his video making skill, HeyBoy often discusses and exchanges ideas with other creators of ethnic cultural videos. He made his own plan: "Next, I want to form a team with members more skillful. I also want a partner to appear in the video together with me. I think we will be more popular."

Speaking of this year's goals, HeyBoy couldn't hide his excitement: "I want my followers to reach 100,000 this year! Haha!"

New look of the village

In 2018, "rural revitalization" was kicked off across the country. Zhao Guoxiang was delighted: "The policies are so good and the government is investing so much. All walks of life are paying more attention to our rural development. I feel that Gongbo Village is on the right path to develop tourism!"

"But our village also has bottleneck: we still lack development on village environment, service quality, economic development, and education of the villagers..." frowned Zhao Guoxiang. "Fortunately, Amity's rural development project was implemented here that year. It is called 'Amity Ecological and Cultural Village' project."

With the project and with the strong support of the local government, libraries, activity rooms, farmhouses, and homestays were constructed or renovated one after another; the ecological agriculture demonstration fields were opened up; more than 60 toilets were renovated, and the trash classification cans were placed for

each family... "The villagers no longer litter. Everyone knows that a clean and beautiful village is our cozy home and a nice place to stay for the tourists." Said Tian Kaimei, the village doctor. She believed this was the result of 17 trainings on waste sorting and recycling for the villagers.

The villagers become busy as trainings on planting and breeding, vocational skills, traditional musical instruments, and ethnic handicrafts making have been carried out one after another. With the trainings, villagers may develop new ways to increase their income. Chen Yere, a young housewife, chose pickle making training. "Our trainer was so professional! The trainees formed a WeChat group to exchange ideas. I am trying hard to improve my skills, so that later I may sell pickles to the visitors from afar!"



Chen Yere was not the only one to expect a better life. Bao Nimie, a 54-year-old villager, has been a beneficiary of Amity's microfinance program for three consecutive years. "I was hesitant at first, after all, I had never get a loan before. But at that time I really felt I needed this opportunity. So I decided to give it a try after discussion with my wife. We chose the highest credit, 5,000 yuan a year."



For the first loan, Bao Nimie chose to grow vegetables that was easier. "In the second year, I made more than 1,000 yuan profit from the vegetables-growing business." He then took another two loans for the second and third year to raise tilapia and pigs. His income increased quickly. The Bao family repaid the loan on time and made new loans, which makes the Bao family feel at ease. "I told Teacher Li that I plan to take a new loan to raise chickens and ducks. I come up with an idea that my daughter can sell my farm goods online!" Bao is full of expectations.

19 years with Amity

The "Teacher Li" mentioned by Bao Nimian is named Li Guoming, deputy director of the Amity Project Office in Cangyuan County. "I've been working in the Amity Project Office for 19 years – from young to old!" Li Guoming joked.

As an open-minded person with strong working motivation, Li Guoming has long been trusted by the villagers of Amity project areas. The strong woman has lived up to her trust. Over the years, she has learned to communicate

with farmers, do research, design projects, and learn all kinds of farming skills... As long as there is a demand for the Amity project, she would try her best to explore.

Last year, to encourage farmers in Longnai Village to try fig planting, Li Guoming first taught herself the skills of fig planting by watching online videos. She then bought a box of figs and introduced the fruit to the villagers, because before that, the villagers had never seen figs. After being approved by the villagers, Li Guoming invited a professional fig planter from Hunan to teach the villagers how to plant figs from a single seedling. "In the beginning, we knew nothing about fig planting, but after so many years, we believe in Teacher Li and Amity." said Zhao Nina, a fig planter.

Li Guoming believes that the key to rural revitalization lies in industries and people, and what social organizations should focus is to unite people. In her opinion, projects of social organizations may be developed based on the cohesion in rural culture, so as to promote rural development. "Taking our Amity Association as an example. With more than 4,000 members, the association provide members with a platform to demonstrate their artistic talent on traditional culture, to sell featured agricultural products and to exchange experience with other villages. When the villagers get a sense of accomplishment and gain, more enthusiasm and cohesion comes. With the motivation, development projects can realize the greatest value in the process of rural revitalization.



The findings of this project officer is similar to those of Wen Tiejun, a professor at Renmin University of China and an expert on agricultural issues. Wen Tiejun believes that the most important thing in rural revitalization is to mobilize the people. Only when you mobilize the farmers, and make them the beneficiaries, farmers will become the main participators.



"Dear friends, welcome to our beautiful Gongbo Village. In Wa language, Gongbo means the paradise of rare birds and exotic animals..." said Zhao Guoxiang, standing under the big banyan tree at the gate of the village, to the tourists. As always, he would talk about the history and culture of the village.



While talking, the man looks into the distance, as if he is looking into the future of the village.

Sunflower on a wheelchair

Teased by fate's cruel joke, Zhu Junlin met an uninvited life friend named poliomyelitis when she was only 4 years old. This disease, unfortunately, caused severe damage to her body. There were many difficulties she encountered during her life path – she has to sit on a wheelchair all the time; and during nearly half of her time, she relies on others and the door is closed for many jobs due to her limited mobility.

But she never gives up on hope and never stop trying making her life more colorful – she is proud of her working class identity, and she used to run a street stalls and open a convenience store. Though there are supports along the way of her endeavor, she still felt that it is not easy for people with disabilities to be self-reliant and to feel the warmth and care of the society. So she made up her mind to start an organization to help more people with disabilities for better employment.

In the year of 2013, Zhu Junlin founded a home for people with disabilities called the "Sunflower". Just like the sunflowers always turn their faces towards the sun, Junlin wishes those who receive support in the home would never bow down to the difficulties. She also hopes that the home would be a place for people with disabilities in the community to maintain hope, because tomorrow will be a better day as sun shines on the flowers. By providing services such as rehabilitation service, skills training and discovering new opportunities, Sunflower has enabled many people with disabilities to find new meanings of life and restarts with passionate.

The years 2017 and 2018 witness the launch of two programs by Amity and Sunflower together on the Tencent Charity platform. The two programs, named "Heart and Wisdom Build Dreams" and "Training Leads to A Second Life" aim to offer people with disabilities life and occupational trainings. Apart from that, later, the two partners joined hands in setting up the first "Happy Naïve Car Wash" in Nanjing. In 2019, the car wash was officially opened and helped many people with mental disabilities to find a job and become independent.

According to them, the most important thing is they gain their pride by finding a place in the society, not to mention many of them gained their first salary from hard work. The programs received applause from the community of people with mental disabilities and every sector of the society. This success of the joining hands of Amity and the "Sunflower" shows that no matter how vulnerable the group of the minority might be, by leading them on a new path and teaching them skills with patience, the society will always have a place for them.

When Junlin was asked whether she would open another business to provide shelter for people with disabilities, she answered without any hesitation: "definitely!"



A woman's turnaround

"**Y**ou can always be more outstanding than you imagine", this is the life motto of Zhai Xiufang. Over a serious car accident in her childhood, a major family overturn in the youth, and a sad divorce in her middle age, Xiufang used to live a miserable life. Later, with the care and support of the society,

she overcame her struggles. The experience inspired her to found the Nanjing Jiangning District Xin Yuan Social Service Center ("Xin Yuan") to serve single mothers and other female groups in need.

"I hope," she said with confidence, "that I will be able to pass on the support and care to them".

"I am so happy to have met with

Amity," Xiufang said with a smile, "who certainly has empowered me on my journey of social service". Then she started telling her story with Amity.

Xiufang joined a series of Amity capacity building trainings including the Amity Her Program, in which she received all-round support. "From actual practice, to project management, and to platform operation, Amity enabled Xin Yuan to improve the capability of single mothers such as to start a business and employment support." said Xiufang proudly. With Xin Yuan's help, these single mothers are empowered to have a stable income, solve problems in life and the overcome difficulties that might happen in their mother-child relationship.





Her efforts have made a lot of difference in her own life and that of many other single mums like her.

In addition, Xiufang took the initiative to carry out projects together with Amity, where she and her team learnt from Amity's professional experience in project management and leverage on Amity's resources to encourage attention, engagement and support from the public to care for the welfare of women.

Zhai Xiufang's endeavor and persistence wins recognition from the society. In 2018, she was credited as the "2018 Outstanding Volunteer of in Nanjing", the "honored citizen of Jiangning District", and the "2018 Outstanding Social Worker". With all these honors, Xiufang stays humble: "for me, honor is a mirror which reminds me to work harder and stay professional. I hope my work will reflect the colors of our lives."

Mum of the kids in the mountains

Peng Liyan has been working as a partner of Amity for more than five years. She is responsible for implementing the Amity Orphan Fostering Program in Guzhang County, Hunan Province. Since the start of the research for the program five years ago, Liyan has been focusing on the kids under the program. She did everything full-heartedly like personal visits, application, information update, feedback collection, etc.

"I feel like I've got many more children... you just cannot stop thinking of them", Peng Liyan smiled. When some kids left Guzhang to Zhoufu for high school study, to collect their feedback information in time, Yanli invited her son to volunteer to collect the feedbacks.

Even though the heavy workload

already keeps her busy, she would try her best to visit the kids during holidays. "These kids have lost the love and care of their parents, I don't want them to feel lonely. And that is the reason I would love to do more by any chance. I would love to do so", said Liyan.

For these kids, this respectful

woman with warm smile on her face is just like their mother. Even the shiest kid would, as long as seeing her, wave to her passionately, run towards her, hold her hands tight, and tell her stories of life and school.

"I was touched," she said, "that some kids who have grown up and are studying in other cities or working often send me their recent pictures and share their experience and honors. Some even call me 'Mama Liyan' in their letters. I thought they might not remember my words or hugs after growing up, but I was wrong. The greetings keep coming! I am so grateful that the kids like me and trust me..."



The special artist



Can you imagine this wonderful painting comes from an 84-year-old man with all ten fingers and the left leg amputated?

His name is Peng Haidi, and people around him often call him "Uncle Peng". Uncle Peng was diagnosed with leprosy when he was 17. At that time, medical conditions were limited, and Uncle Peng was therefore disabled and lost his working capability.

To cheer himself up, Uncle Peng began to practice drawing. Because of his broken fingers, he was unable to hold brush pens. He then made his own tools, which could tie the brush pen to his remaining finger parts. In this way could he practice day after day. As his painting skills improved, he was known by the residents of the island he lives on in Guangdong Province, and some people began to call him the "painter on the island".

The Amity Foundation then started cooperation with Guangdong Handa Rehabilitation and Welfare Association on a couple of projects for people recovering from leprosy. Uncle Peng then finds opportunities to participate in the exchange activities on calligraphy and painting. At the art auctions, Uncle Peng's works are very much welcomed. To everyone's surprise, Uncle Peng donated most of his proceeds from the charity sales and auctions to help people with leprosy recovery needs. Up to now, Uncle Peng has donated more than 30,000 yuan proceeds from charity sales.

In addition to the charity sale of paintings, Uncle Peng often does something within his capacity: delivering electric tricycles and washing machines to friends in difficulties; helping leprosy rehabilitators install prostheses; raising funds for operations for children with harelip...

Uncle Peng rarely mentions his own kindness; instead, he often talks about the support he has received: "Thank you for helping me with prosthetics and eye surgery, and for helping me promote my paintings..." In his opinion, "passing on the love" is the best reward for this the love and help he receives.



A charity person with single leg



T Uncle Liang's full name is Liang Kangrun, and he is a patient recovered from leprosy.

Although in his sixties, he is still energetic with quick responses. Back to the days when he had his leg amputated in order to avoid the worsening of ulcers, his world was dark without power. "I loved keeping myself busy every day. However, I suddenly lost a leg after amputation, and it was difficult even to go to the toilet,



let alone thinking about my future life." Uncle Liang recalled.

2018 marks Uncle Liang's turning point. This year, Uncle Liang was fitted with a prosthesis. How delighted he was! After regaining "freedom of action", Uncle Liang began to pay attention to various charity projects for leprosy patients. "My old days told me that there are a lot of people like me experiencing great difficulties. They need help."

In September 2020, Uncle Liang participated in a project jointly launched by the Amity Foundation and the Guangdong Handa Rehabilitation and Welfare Association. He and the team traveled for more than ten days to visit six villages. In

the villages, they helped the elderly with disabilities who had suffered from leprosy to make or repair prostheses, distributed special protective shoes, cared for ulcers and wounds, distribute daily necessities... Uncle Liang was familiar with the local dialect, so he communicated with the villagers smoothly. The villagers trust him too. These helped a lot to improve the work efficiency.

From a patient to a charity person, Uncle Liang put on a prosthesis, turned around confidently, and started a warm new journey.

Amity preparing for Charity Calligraphy and Painting Institute

On March 5, the Amity Foundation invited 29 well-known calligraphers and painters, as well as corporate partners and media to visit Amity and to give suggestions for the preparation of the Amity Charity Calligraphy and Painting Institute. Qiu Zhonghui, Chair of the Board of Amity, Gu Chuanyong, Vice Chair of the Board, Ling Chunxiang, General Secretary, and He Wen, Associate General Secretary attended the meeting.

In addition to the “charity + sports” model explored by Amity over the recent years, now Amity

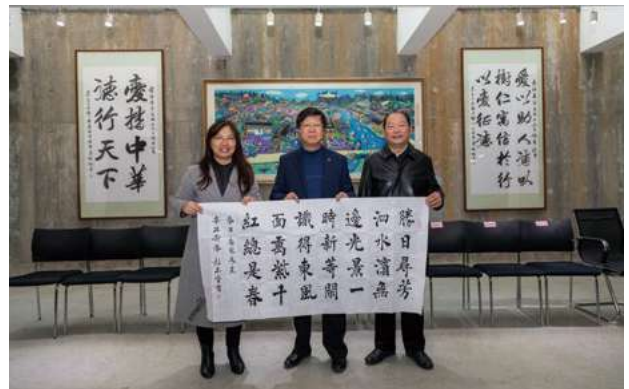
is trying to explore new cross-sector cooperation as “charity + art” model.

The guests and Amity discussed about the work plan, procedures and time table for establishing Amity Charity Calligraphy and Painting Institute. Three artists donated their paintings and calligraphy works to the Amity Foundation.

General Secretary Ling Chunxiang shared with the guests Amity's work philosophy, services, development and achievements, especially the action to fight COVID-19 in 2020.

“Taking the establishment of this institute as a chance, I would like to invite you, my dear friends in the art field, to join our Amity platform. Let's bring positive energies and powers to the society together!”

“We feel home with Amity,” the calligraphers and painters said with emotions. The attendees agreed that the meaning for establishing such an institute is far beyond calligraphy and paintings themselves. It will serve as a bridge for artists to do charity and to show their willingness to contribute to the society.



Amity Living Water Campaign Townhall

◆ Amity advocates for water and sanitation through virtual Townhall



On Monday, February 22, the first Amity Foundation Living Water Townhall under the theme “Water and Human Needs” took place virtually. The Townhall brought students, donor agencies and beneficiary villagers together to provide authentic learning experiences

for participants while allowing overseas partners to articulate their plight. About 220 supporters, more than half being middle-school students from S. K.H. Tsang Shiu Tim Secondary School in Hong Kong, attended the event.

Amity’s overseas partners, Transform Nepal and the Toungoo Diocese of Myanmar shared on-line videos providing insights of the local situation of water deprived communities. AFHK responded to the needs and supported the construction of water facilities

for those communities in the past two years. During the Townhall Meeting the audience with many students not only got a better understanding of the local situation in Nepal and Myanmar, but were also invited to exchange with AFHK's overseas partners and discuss with overseas guests directly.

"According to your experience and observation, what are the biggest obstacles that hinder the launching of water projects in these places by the local governments or NGOs?" asked one student representative. Mr. Rabindras Das, Director of Transform Nepal explained: "In Nepal the local government is very weak in terms of capacity. They are trying their best to reach out to the people, but they are lacking in resources. That is why they ask NGOs to

play a part in the development effort. They also see NGOs like Transform Nepal as a partner to mobilize the community. As we work with the community, we see the needs are there and we make the community participate. We make a plan with them, approach supporting partners like AFHK and also approach the government of Nepal to clear other issues. So in the end it's always a team effort."

Additional interesting questions were asked by student participants during the exchange out of curiosity for the very complex humanitarian issues in developing countries. The audience was in particular impressed to witness the hardships that villagers are experiencing to access clean water for daily use in Myanmar. The video was shot by Rev.

Matthew Khu Tay and volunteers of the Diocese of Myanmar in present very difficult local circumstances due to the pandemic. Looking ahead, AFHK is planning to arrange a few more virtual Townhall Meetings, that will broaden the horizons of a variety of audiences, and in particular young people are most likely to benefit from this form of authentic experiential learning.

The virtual AFHK Townhall Meetings are part of Amity's Living Water Campaign that has since 2010 been advocating for tangible actions to provide clean water and sanitation for marginalized communities. Every year in spring AFHK invites people to join the Walk for Living Water to raise funds for these communities.

◆ Amity's WLW 2021 kicks off with second virtual townhall



The second Amity Foundation's Living Water Townhall took place on March 22. The virtual conference also kickstarted Amity's Walk for Living Water 2021. Every spring on the U.N. World Water Day, Amity invites people to join the Walk for Living Water to raise funds for water deprived communities in China and overseas as well as raise awareness about the human issues due to water insecurity.

In Amity's second townhall implementing partners from Sri Lanka and the Philippines shared about their daily challenges and how water projects changes lives of the marginalized people. About 60 people joined this townhall, including students from Fanling Kau Yan College, whose enthusiasm on the SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation was commendable.

Anthony Tong, Executive Director of Amity HK elaborated

on educational benefits of such events: "This new format of outreaching allowing students to take charge in organizing experimental learning is the best means to engage young people, to broaden their horizon and to have them 'buy in' on such environmental initiatives."

Supporters have until 22nd April to design their own routing, plan their own schedule and conduct their unique walks to make a difference in the world.

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