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- ◇ Ren Ying: "My life is devoted here"



- ◇ Fang Jun: "Let technology serve the sector"
- ◇ Liu Li: "Help others and heal yourself"
- ◇ Tian Meimei: "There is a long way to go for the specialization of social work"



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Philip Wickeri

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ON THE COVER:

Dai Yue, an Amity staff from the Orphan Fostering Team, is giving a special lesson to students of Nanjing Changjiang Road Primary School on charity.





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Social organizations to engage in “common prosperity”

In recent years, the Chinese government has made great efforts to promote the role of third distribution and the development of philanthropy undertakings.

In my opinion, the concept of common prosperity or third distribution is a proposition for the whole society. The growth and development of Amity over the past 40 years follows the national policy and the real needs of the society.

Amity's status as an integrated foundation is closely related to the era. Amity was founded in 1985, a time when China's Reform and Opening-up was at an early stage. The whole Chinese society was fraught with complex problems and a great need for social organizations. That's why Amity carried out projects in a number of fields including education, rural poverty alleviation, health care, social welfare, emergency and disaster relief, establishing dedicated teams for each of these fields. Since then, Amity has grown into a foundation with diversified scope of services.

Following the country's major policies gives our work a clear direction for development and makes our work more effective and influential. At the same time, meeting the real needs of society is the basis of social organizations. We must pay close attention to the real needs of society at the beginning of our project planning. This requires foundations to be professional, accurately identifying social needs and making adequate research.

Ling Chunxiang

General Secretary
The Amity Foundation



As time goes by, social needs become more updated, detailed, complex and diversified. During the project designing stage, it is a challenge to the professionalism of social organizations to find the starting point and make innovations. In addition, the design of projects should reflect the concern for people. Whole-person care includes not only material needs, but also spiritual needs.

For Amity, to work under the subject of "common prosperity" and "third distribution", it is necessary to start from the following two aspects.

Firstly, take an active part and responsibility. Although social organizations are small and

weak, the challenge provides us with an opportunity for development. Secondly, charity foundations like Amity should take the initiative to join the great collaboration of social welfare. Philanthropy is not just a matter for social organizations. It involves everyone. How social organizations coordinate with other social forces to build a community and achieve greater goals is what we should focus on.

Finally, enhance capabilities and push the sector to play a more positive social role and influence. Nowadays, companies and the public are paying more attention to this sector, which will bring more resources and support in the future. How can we better

serve this passion? How can we design projects that can better meet the needs of the society? How can we mobilize partners to jointly render efficient, transparent and participatory projects, bring more people and companies to participate in third distribution, and achieve better social influence? These are the questions that society and the era have tasked us with addressing.

World Social Work Day, initiated by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), is celebrated on the third Tuesday of March each year. Its celebration aims to highlight the achievements of social work, to raise the visibility of social services for the future of societies, and to defend social justice and human rights. The theme for 2022 is Co-Building a New Eco-Social World: Leaving No One Behind.

For this special day, Amity interviewed six colleagues to share their insights, gains and reflects. Salute to all that work for philanthropy!

World Social Work Day



DAI YUE

"LOVE ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH"



CUI YAZHOU

"DISASTER RELIEF SHOULD BE PEOPLE-ORIENTED"



REN YING

"MY LIFE IS DEVOTED HERE"



FANG JUN

"LET TECHNOLOGY SERVE THE SECTOR"



LIU LI

"HELP OTHERS AND HEAL YOURSELF"



TIAN MEIMEI

"THERE IS A LONG WAY TO GO FOR THE SPECIALIZATION OF SOCIAL WORK"

Dai Yue: “Love alone is not enough”

"I talked to that lady from Amity a lot that afternoon. She asked me many questions about my family, study, mental state, etc. She helped resolve my uncertainties, and set me a goal for Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics. She showed me that there were better paths to take. I'm very grateful to her. I hope that I will become a person as excellent as she is in the future." A teenager who had been sponsored by Amity Orphan Fostering Program for nine years wrote in a letter to Amity. "I want to say 'thank you' to everyone who has helped me. You guys made me realize that, as a high school student, I have dreams to pursue, I have a long way to go in my life, and there are all kinds of possibilities on this journey. Thank you for the care and support you have given me, making me stronger and braver to go on."

Dai Yue was "that lady from Amity" mentioned in the letter.

Had she not seen the letter, she wouldn't have believed that a simple conversation with the boy could have such an influence on his life. She was overjoyed when she learned that the teenager had been admitted to a top university in 2020.

It was Dai Yue's second business trip right after she joined Amity in 2019. She had gone to Wuchuan Gelao and Miao Ethnic Minority Autonomous County in Guizhou Province to visit the 330 children under the Amity Orphan

Fostering Program. "He was a shy boy. I chatted with him for about half an hour and shared my experience in high school. By talking about setting small goals, I might have helped ease some of his uncertainties," recalled Dai Yue. "I don't expect to change the lives of many people, but if I am able to help even one child, any little change means a great deal to me."

Dai Yue, who graduated with a major in accounting, joined the Amity Foundation at the age of



► In 2019, Dai Yue visited a child assisted by the program in Fengning Man Ethnic Autonomous County, Hebei Province



► A kid under the program in Huayuan County, Hunan Province (Photo by Dai Yue, 2019)

24 because of her interest in volunteer service. She has been working as a project officer of the Amity Orphan Fostering Program for three years.

"During my university years, I volunteered in hospitals, care centers, street libraries, and training institutions. I also went to Yunnan Province to work as a volunteer teacher. I attended the Youth Volunteer Association of my university and later became the chairperson of the association. After graduation, I made up my mind to join Amity."

The Amity Orphan Fostering Program started in 2002. It supports orphans in rural areas to obtain continuous quality education through sponsorship and promotes their all-round development

through training, care and spiritual exchanges.

In her first year with Amity, Dai Yue embarked on eight business trips, visiting orphans in Guizhou, Hunan and Jiangxi provinces under the program. She encountered many lovely kids and their moving stories touched her heart. After three years of work, she has come to know the program very well and understands that social work is not easy at all.

"Professional knowledge on social work is very important. Amity employees come from a variety of majors, which helps us to understand social work from different aspects. When dealing with children, you need to have basic knowledge of child psychology. You need to know what can and cannot be talked about when trying to acquire information on the situation, because some children can be particularly sensitive. To protect and respect children requires both professional knowledge of social workers and basic psychology and pedagogy knowledge. We all need to keep learning."

A lot of work can be involved within the short span of each

business trip. During a visit to the beneficiaries, Amity staff need to check information, confirm receipt of funding, and understand their needs and difficulties. Before communicating with children in the project areas, especially those in remote areas, Dai Yue always reads their family background and learns about their interests and hobbies through school head teacher to win the children's trust.

"When I was a volunteer, I was focused on simply providing services to a single party, hoping to realize my personal value, rather than view things from the perspective of the entire

project. Now as a project officer, I must consider many aspects. It is not only a job; It enables me to serve more people, especially the children under the projects; it allows sponsors to realize their personal value from the project; it enables partners to complete their job while making valuable contribution to the public. We are more of a bridge connecting sponsors and children."

After three years of work, Dai Yue has become calmer and more objective. At first, she wanted to do as much as she could all at once. Over time, she found that her abilities and resources were too limited to help everyone. Now, she

understands that she must approach her work step by step in order to be the most effective.

"Our work may sound glamorous, but in fact it can be tedious, with many details to consider at every turn. We work like salespeople, except what we 'sell' are these projects. Communication is very important to let more people know about Amity's projects. You can't just work without publicity, because we are striving for more resources to help the children, and only in this way can the projects get better and better."

Dai Yue also realized that unlike companies that focus on efficiency and outcomes, social work slower-paced, and its results or effects are rarely observable in a short period of time. Only through prolonged monitoring and operation can we observe the changes we've made to the children's lives.

"What are the true needs of the children? This is not something we can come up with on our own. You need to ask them personally. Only then can we provide them with genuine, effective help."



► A kid under the program in Fengning Man Ethnic Autonomous County, Hebei Province (Photo by Dai Yue, 2019)

Every visit to a project area informs Dai Yue of the true needs of the children. She knows clearly what problems she has to solve and areas her work should focus on. For example, how can she improve the project after receiving feedback from the kids and the donors? Can schools in the project area incorporate some of Amity's activities? How can she channel more resources for the kids after learning what they have in common?

Sometimes, when parts of her work see little improvement, Dai Yue would feel helpless and start to question herself. She understands, however, that to educate and improve oneself becomes especially important at times like these.

Last year, Amity provided teams who work on children-related projects with an exchange opportunity to travel to and learn from peers in Shanghai. Dai Yue was among the visiting group. She visited eight organizations within three days, learning how to deal with hitting bottlenecks, empower herself, assess and innovate her projects, so as to incorporate the experience of others into her own knowledge.

"The process of learning is also a process of inner strengthening. In my first year at Amity, I didn't understand the what our sponsors needed. Now, I see things from different angles. As social workers, we need many skills in addition to having a loving heart. In my opinion, the primary job of a social worker is to communicate and to complete your projects with ingenuity, so that all parties involved have a good experience."

In addition to discussing with experienced colleagues when facing problems, Dai Yue often talks with other teams who have projects in areas



► Dai Yue gave special lessons to kids in big cities on what charity is and what Amity Orphan Fostering Program is



neighbouring her own. "When I take donors to visit my project, I will also talk about surrounding projects, such as Schools Building Project, Water Cellars Project, Rural Clinics Project, etc., so that donors will have a more comprehensive understanding of Amity's work for future collaboration." Dai Yue's growth over the past 2 years greatly impressed one of Amity's partners in Hunan partner.

Dai Yue admires Amity's Disaster Management Team, who are passionate about working on the front line, such as disaster relief or pandemic control. "You know what, I was so impressed by the team that I dreamt that I was helping them stack masks in Covid-19 stricken areas, hahaha!" joked Dai Yue. "Indeed, if Amity staff are not busy, it means Chinese people are living a safe, abundant and perfect life."

Nowadays, many anticipate that robots will replace a lot of jobs in the future, but Dai Yue believes that robots can never replace social work. "Humans are the most complex creatures. Social workers must be sensitive, and more importantly, have integrity. A human touch is necessary to represent the style of the project and the style of the team. Over-focusing on a project may limit creativity. That's why communication with sponsors and partners and understanding their different ideas are very important to the successful implementation of projects. After all, social work is the work of people, and it is the core principle of social work to put people first."

As an sensitive and positive girl, Dai Yue can capture the bright and optimistic side of children when visiting her projects. She is often moved by children who are in difficult situations but bravely

face them too. She often records moments and stories and publishes them on one of Amity's WeChat pages for donors and volunteers "Friends of Amity" to share with those who care about these children. "While stories of sorrow, hardship and misery felt by the orphans are touching, I don't wish to use these negative stories in fundraising. Examples of positive changes in the children, for example, becoming more extroverted, improving in academic performance, learning new skills, can better illustrate to donors the meaning of our projects."

Some donors who have supported the project for over 10 years told Dai Yue that they have seen a lot of positive feedback during their visits, which is the reason why they keep donating. "The coverage of a project depends on long-term accumulation, but the depth and precision in a certain field requires professionalism. We don't make donors donate for the sake of donation; rather, it is important to let them know the real reason for donation and the objective of the project. When the donors form a deeper understanding of our project, including its design and target group, the project can last for longer."

A few days ago, Dai Yue received a "performance report" in the form of a painting from a child under her project. It was the best picture he had drawn this semester - a rose. Next to the flower was written: "If you feel tired in class, let me give you a rose." Seeing the picture left Dai Yue in a good mood for the entire day. She wrote in a recent post:

"How lucky I was to meet a group of angels who made my ordinary days sparkle! 'If you feel tired in class, let me give you a rose.' When the days feel hard, let me give you a cup of cola. When happiness seems hard to grasp, let me keep you safe!"

This, in Dai Yue's mind, is the meaning of social work. "My life is worth it!"

For 20 years, the Amity Orphan Fostering Program has raised a total of RMB 360 million for more than 46,000 orphans in 17 provinces and autonomous regions across the country since its inception. Currently, the program covers more than 380 counties in Yunnan, Jiangsu, Guizhou, Guangdong, Sichuan, Hunan, Henan, Liaoning, Chongqing, Ningxia and other provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities. In 2016, the program was awarded Top Ten Service Projects of Jiangsu Social Organizations. In 2017, it was awarded the Charity Project of the Year by the Action League. In 2018, it was awarded the Most Influential Charity Project Award by Jiangsu Charity Award.

Cui Yazhou: "Disaster relief should be people-oriented"

Cui Yazhou, originally a trainer, never expected that his life would be changed at the age of 30 due to a rescue operation after a major earthquake.

After the Yushu earthquake on April 14, 2010, Yazhou, who had left a company and joined Amity as a member of the NGO Development Team for one year, participated in the disaster relief response together with other colleagues. He was in the first team sent by Amity to Yushu.

Yushu is located on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, where natural conditions are harsh. Going to Yushu requires high physical ability. As a big and athletic man who loves outdoor sports, Yazhou was one of the first people considered for the team.

"I remember it was April 17. I got a call right after my wedding and set off for Yushu the next day." For 10 days, Yazhou stayed in Yushu. "I had traveled to many

places before," said Yazhou. "But the earthquake made me see a different world. One could never imagine the impression that a natural disaster gives you..."

The most unforgettable experience for Yazhou was that he and his colleagues followed a truck all the way from Xining for 36 hours, to transport supplies including rice, flour and oil. "The journey on that road was very dangerous. We experienced dangerous weather conditions such as black sandstorm, heavy rain, snow, and heavy fog. We couldn't even see the road in the fog - all that we could see was a small area in front of us and the snow everywhere. It was the worst weather I'd ever seen. The landscape was completely different from the central and eastern regions. Moreover, it was a challenge to pass through the Bayan Har Mountain plateau, which is more than 4,800 meters above sea level."

Bodies could be seen along

the way, in the wake of the 7.1 magnitude earthquake. Even the Tibetan mastiffs raised by the locals lost their previous ferocity after their owners died in the earthquake. These scenes deeply shocked Yazhou and made him understand the importance of disaster relief work.

"The most important thing in disaster relief is to find out the real needs of the victims, and then make a timely response. When you can go to the affected area, you must talk to the victims, visit local partners and communicate with the local government to get well-informed. After any disaster, many needs are sure to arise. It is critical to appropriately choose the needs to respond to and to correctly manage the relief funds."

The Yushu earthquake was not long after the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008. The public supported the relief efforts enthusiastically. Large amounts of rice, flour and oil were

► Cui Yazhou in Yushu, Qinghai Province, in 2010



donated to the affected area. When Yazhou first arrived in Yushu, he heard a story that one day two villagers scrambled for a bottle of drinking water, yet the next day bottles of drinking water were piled up on the ground. This was an example of how the needs of the people could change in the blink of an eye.

"In another case, we learned that the herdsmen received food supplies such as rice, noodles, cooking oil and instant noodles. But their eating habits were different. The herdsmen like to eat yak meat with wide vermicelli. Therefore we had to adjust accordingly."

"We tried vermicelli first. Although a truckload of vermicelli was not heavy, it piled up high. Under the local weather, the freight cost to transport a truckload of vermicelli from the nearest city Xining took about half of the vermicelli cost at that time. The production cost of vermicelli was also high. These were things we needed to explain and communicate to the funders."

After the vermicelli arrived, local herdsmen came to help unload the truck. One day, the truck arrived early in the morning, but the local herdsmen came all the same, bringing large fabric and bags from their homes to connect to the back of the truck, so that the vermicelli could slide down from the truck without breaking. "They were very careful," said Yazhou.

Talking about the needs of the herdsmen in the affected area, Yazhou told us another story. The night they reached Yushu, they arrived at a village of Nangqian County after a 38 hour drive. After unloading a truckload of rice and flour together with local government staff, they went into the tent to complete the handover procedures with the local government and checked the list of herdsmen who received the supplies. "Then we heard noises outside," said Yazhou. "We went out and saw that the herdsmen and the driver were arguing because the herdsmen wanted to take away the rain-proof tarpaulin covering the truck. Why? It was about minus 20 degrees centigrade outside. After the houses collapsed after the earthquake, there were not enough tents. Some herdsmen wanted to use the tarpaulin to make tents to keep warm. After learning the reason, we bought the tarpaulin and made a record proved by the local government, herdsmen, and the driver. We then handed over the tarpaulin to the government officials to be distributed to the herdsmen."

The Yushu experience left a deep impression on Yazhou, who grew up in a wealthier area in eastern

Jiangsu Province. "Those scenes and experiences often come into my mind. I realized that the work that I do means a lot in my life. It is more meaningful and memorable than making money or travelling. When I grow old, I will be proud to recall these precious moments."

Yazhou stayed with the NGO Development Team for another five years. He then joined the Disaster Management Team. This time came the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic broke out. Amity mobilised all its staff in response. "Because of the restrictions, I worked from home. I was responsible for procurement. I worked until 2 or 3 in the morning, slept for a couple of hours and then got up at 5 or 6 am. I kept working in this way for over a month, from the Chinese New Year's Eve to the beginning of March."

Although he worked at home, he was touched by many of the stories from the frontline. An officer of the Health Commission of a county in Hubei Province contacted Amity through a partner. They seriously lacked supplies. The officer was very busy at the frontline during

daytime and could only be reached at night. "He updated me every day about the frontline situation," said Yazhou. "One day at 11pm, when he was giving me updates, the middle-aged man suddenly cried. I was shocked. He told me that an elderly man had visited his relatives during the Chinese New Year holidays without knowing that he was infected, resulting in infecting his relatives and children. The old man felt guilty and eventually committed suicide."

Yazhou then told us other stories. As Hubei lacked Covid-19 supplies, doctors there had to wear raincoats and motorcycle helmets for protection. Factories producing supplies in other provinces were on holidays as it was Chinese New Year. "I called a supplier explaining the situation and urgency. Upon hearing about the raincoats and motorcycle helmets, the company owner went back to his factory, and, at the factory gate, he started to call his workers one by one to come back to the factory to work overtime, even if it was 11pm at night, because the last step in the process to produce a face shield was manual." Yazhou recalled with tears in his eyes.

"There was a fabric supplier in Anhui Province, whose factory was shut down due to the Covid-19 control. We showed them on-site reports of the frontline and thank-you letters from the frontline hospitals to Amity for the donated supplies to prove the importance of fabrics to the hospital. The factory owner thought for a while. Then that night he climbed over the wall into his factory together with workers, quietly moved the equipment and raw materials from the factory to his own living room, and produced the supplies 'secretly' at his ownhome."

The protective face shields produced by a supplier in the city of Dongguan in Guangdong Province were of high quality. However, the manager, warehouse administrator and main technical staff were all relatives from the city of Xiantao in Hubei Province. The whole family had gone back to Xiantao for the Chinese New Year holidays and had to stay at home due to lock-down restrictions of Hubei Province. "It was difficult," said Yazhou. "I talked to the management at Amity and asked them to send a letter explaining the importance of medical supplies while asking

hospital's medical equipment department to send a letter explaining the need for high quality face shields. Upon receipt of the letters, Xiantao Covid-19 Prevention and Control Center issued a special pass for the family, allowing them to drive back to Dongguan Province."

"As long as you are professional, and what you do is need-oriented, you will be understood and supported."

"Of course," said Yazhou. "There are good people, and there are bad ones." There were people disseminating false information. There were people working as volunteers to help receive masks at hospitals who became sold them for their own profit. There were also factory owners who entered contracts with many buyers and after receiving down payments, only to breach the contracts and ask for price bidding from the buyers.

"We tried our best to select stable and well-established suppliers and quickly set up a qualification review team who would sort out the medical qualifications, medical device certificates, and registration information on the Food and Drug Administration website to

avoid being deceived."

Looking for and purchasing supplies, arranging transportation and transshipment, and preparing for distribution... Prolonged lack of sleep put a lot of pressure on Yazhou and his colleagues. Once a batch of supplies destined for four hospitals with clear allocation instructions, was detained by the doctors at



the first hospital. "We sympathized with them, but we had to calm down and persuade them that the other hospitals also needed the supplies urgently."

"Frankly, things looked dark at times, but we still encouraged each other. Every time I ended a phone call with a local partner or a hospital doctor, I would say: 'Let's stay together, we'll get through this.' Despite working from home, interacting with people in this way was a special experience."

Looking back at his experience in disaster relief over the years, Cui Yazhou believes that: "Keep in mind your initial intention. Let's do our best to promote the progress of social welfare and society. Sometimes, we may feel powerless in front of big disasters like the Henan and Shanxi floods, or during the pandemic where many regions lacked protective supplies, endangering many medical staff and volunteers. Our power is limited and funds raised cannot always not cover everyone. Just try to do as much as we can."




Cui Yazhou (with mask) is unloading vermicelli with herdsmen in Yushu, Qinghai Province, in 2010 ◀

"Efficiency and cooperation are necessary during the pandemic," explained Yazhou. "We always respond in a timely manner to meet real needs without any discrimination. Pay more attention to vulnerable groups. Communicate with beneficiaries, listen to their feedback, and adjust our actions. My team's efficiency comes from the principle of cooperation. There is no buck-passing and we always work together. Disaster relief is complicated work. You often encounter all kinds of problems. Discuss and share with the team on how to distinguish the authenticity of information."

Yazhou talked about dealing with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), that is, trauma arises from constantly facing disasters. While he did not feel it during his emergency response work, depression would later strike him unexpectedly, bringing back the emotions he felt at the scene. "Don't worry, it isn't beyond my control. My team always backs me up. We team members trust each other. We share similar values, and our personalities go well with each other. My team always helps me out of depression. That's why the team can cooperate efficiently."

"An important factor for me to come back to Amity," he said, "was that Amity enriches my life experience and takes me to a completely different world. You will see human nature during disasters."



The program started in 1987. Over the past 30 years, Amity has adhered to the working principles of people first, sustainable development, gender equality, and respect for local culture, to meet the basic needs of people, to establish and improve community development, cooperation and sharing mechanisms, and to promote the sustainable development of community economy, society, culture and ecological environment. Further, under the guidance of international Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response, Amity has been devoted to carrying out disaster prevention, disaster reduction, emergency relief and post-disaster reconstruction work based on the needs of people, with a focus on enhancing the resilience of the affected communities. Today, our projects span over 20 provinces and regions such as Guizhou, Yunnan, Shaanxi, Guangxi, Hunan, Sichuan, Inner Mongolia, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, Shanxi, Jiangsu and Fujian, and overseas countries including North Korea, Kenya, the Philippines, Nepal, Ecuador, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Myanmar and Madagascar, with more than 10 million people benefiting from the program.

Ren Ying: “My youth is devoted to Amity”

Ren Ying is a person who exudes warmth. In 2008, when this special education major first came to Amity Home of Blessings, she thought that she was going to deal with special children in special schools, and that this is the place for her to practice teaching, classroom management, lesson plan and other skills she learned from the special education system.

She soon found out it was totally different. Amity Home of Blessings is a professional non-profit organization serving people with learning difficulties. However, instead of kids aged 6-15 as she had anticipated, the students there are over 16.

Amity Home of Blessings is a service organization established in early 2002 by Amity Foundation staff, social workers, and parents of special groups with reference to similar organizations at home and

► In March 2017, Ren Ying was teaching students of Amity Home of Blessings to make paper flowers



abroad. The organization aims to provide people with intellectual disabilities with training on self-care ability, community adaptation and vocational training.

"I didn't meet such a special group of adults until I graduated from the university," said Ren Ying. "They have adult-like appearances, but child-like minds. This requires us to be mindful of their mental development and use suitable language to communicate with them. It is also necessary to adapt ourselves to respect their mental age and appearance, respect reality so we know can provide the appropriate services to them."

At the time of its inception, Amity Home of Blessings only aimed to provide the group with a place and a home, so that they could communicate with each other. "Later we found that this was far from enough. Although society needs to accept and accommodate them, they themselves need to work to be included in the society and keep in touch with new things. They can't learn all sorts of things, albeit at a slower pace. Things one might think they can't do, they may have already have

subtly learnt through their lives."

The students at Amity Home of Blessings range from 16 to 42 years old. Therefore, Amity focuses more on teaching life sciences to encompass the wide age range.

"Our classes include painting, handicraft, language expression, etc.," said Ren Ying. "But more importantly, we practice interpersonal communication in the courses. We hope that our students will become polite and lovely people who know social rules and integrate well into society."

"Every student is different," said Ren Ying. "Some may find it difficult to learn certain skills, such as logical thinking and mathematical concepts, but are fine in other cognitive or social adaptations. Some may make people feel uncomfortable in interpersonal communication due to inappropriate social cues or language. For instance, there is a young man who is a fast learner. He sings confidently but out of tune. He walks quickly but recklessly."

Students come to school in the morning and go back home in the evening. Some can memorise bus

lines, go out independently, and remember routes to and from places they wish to visit. Some students who like to hang out know how to take the bus to parks in the city. Some students are willing to express their concerns and love to their teachers.

"Their innocence can help you forget all your worries. Every day, I prepare notebooks, pens, and books for them and read them stories. Although they face many challenges, they are loved by their parents. We try our best to meet the needs of the parents and students."

Ren Ying believes that teachers at the Home must treat their work as a service, and not just a job. "First of all, be accepting of your client. Sometimes, a student may suddenly hug you. Please do not overreact, because that's the norm, it's their way of expressing from the heart." Secondly, a teacher must be patient. Sometimes, a student may ask the same question repeatedly, because he/she had forgotten that he/she had asked it before.

The Amity Home of Blessings has three locales in Nanjing. The main site is in a small hutong, downtown of Nanjing. There are

► In February 2016, Ren Ying was leading volunteers of Nanjing Jinling Middle School to work on paper quilling



► In April 2021, Ren Ying was making dumplings with the clients in Shanshuiyuan Home for the Challenged

Students of Amity Home of Blessings are also involved in simple manual tasks, such as stamping, sealing, and addressing the mail of Amity magazines. Some graduates who have relevant skills can work at Pizza Hut for three to ten years, while some work at Amity Bakery under Amity Home of Blessings. Sometimes, graduates who were recommended to work return to Amity Home of Blessings because they cannot adapt to the rules at their workplace. Students are paid according to their capability and participation, up to RMB 1,000 per month.

"In the past, wages were paid in cash, but now they are transferred to the bank accounts. Some students do not have the ability to manage money, and some save the cash in a piggy bank. Some use Alipay and WeChat to buy things and shop online."

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, students would go to supermarkets, parks, community squares, gymnasiums, museums, etc. almost every week. "The surrounding residents know us very well, and will dance with us when we go to the square. At the Xigang branch of Amity Home of Blessings, there are often caring people who often

leave food at the gate at night, including steamed vegetable buns and packaged cookies."

Seven years after joining Amity Home of Blessings, Ren Ying was concerned her future as the Home lacked business and new ideas, with no suitable opportunity for expansion. "At the time, I questioned whether I was willing to do this job for the rest of my life."

It was her first job after all. Ren Ying hesitated. She wanted development, hoped that both she and the students could make breakthroughs, and that more professional services could be introduced. Then, the team started cooperating with some partners in Taiwan who introduced concept of individualized service from Taiwan at the International Amity Seminar on Autism. It was a partnership that Ren Ying greatly appreciated.

"At that time, we only had the intelligence scale to assess our clients, which was far from enough. After all, they are in their adulthood, and we had to provide them with a lot more than education. We needed more suitable scales and tools, so as to provide individualized education and support."

Individualized service includes individualized education plan, family support and social support. It involves an assessment system based on different aspects and concepts, such as the needs of the clients, their abilities, performance, and support required.

"I prefer to do this kind of professional work. At the time, there was a lot of manpower. We introduced these concept into the work of Amity Home of Blessings and have kept them until now. But now we have less manpower, so we may not be able to cover these areas as comprehensively as before. Thankfully, however, the idea has taken root in the industry and we continue serve our clients to the best of our abilities."

In 2016, Amity Home of Blessings learned from Taiwan partners how to better provide services for the elderly and the mentally challenged. Now, in accordance with the requirements of the government, it focuses on auxiliary employment knowledge, social interaction, skill training, cultural and recreational activities, etc., to enrich the lives of the clients and provide the opportunities and resources that they should enjoy.



The "Amity Home for the Challenged Program" currently has presence across townships (streets) in Jiangsu Province. There are more than 130 organizations like the Amity Home of Blessings in Nanjing alone, and social acceptance for people with disabilities keeps improving. But people with mental disabilities remain on the fringes of this group.

Ren Ying believes that it is necessary to provide professional and targeted services to people with mental disabilities. However, the current government policy has led to a large amount of government subsidies flowing to younger people with intellectual disabilities. As the age of the target group increases, subsidy funds decrease, making it difficult to secure sustainable professional support services. She hopes that government policies will be adjusted.

"We can only do collective services to ensure the safety of students every day. It is very difficult to help a client solve individual problems through in-depth case studies." She hopes that more steady volunteers will participate in providing more targeted and personalized services.

► In April 2019, Ren Ying was teaching the clients and donor company staff to do flower arrangement together

"Although people with mental disabilities may not be able to keep up with you, they are willing to follow in your steps whenever they are given a chance. For people with disabilities, they lack the opportunities to go out and enjoy playing with friends."

Some students have been with the Amity Home of Blessings since 2007, unable to find job opportunities. They may stay in the Home of Blessings for the rest of their lives.

Some of their parents have expressed their worries about the livelihoods of their children after their death. Ren Ying believes that this raises concerns involving issues such as funds, policies, laws and regulations, and requires a lot of intervention and protection. Some institutions have tried to develop trust fund services, but without government participation such services lack credibility, making it hard to amass public support.

Looking back on her days in Amity Home of Blessings, 36-year-old Ren Ying sighed: "My life has been devoted to this place." She wishes for larger classrooms, multi-functional rooms, therapists or other professional teachers who they would be able to provide more personalized services according to the needs of students and improve their quality of life. Moreover, as a social organization, Amity Home of Blessings must undergo a deeper level of professionalism in the future. "We should be able concentrate on providing services without worrying about the source of funds all day; let the professionals do their jobs."

Through institutional capacity building, parental support, and institutional infrastructure improvement, Amity Home of Blessings strives to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities in the working age group, enhance the confidence and ability of their families on acceptance and life, promote the development of childcare, rehabilitation and special education, and support the clients to carry out vocational training to promote the development of the whole society.

Fang Jun: “Let technology serve the sector”



► Fang Jun

At the Amity Foundation, there is a team who knows the fundraising mechanism of online fundraising platforms very well. It is called Amity Way Fundraising Team. Established in 2016, the team was named by Qiu Zhonghui, Chair of the Board of Amity.

The team aims to help grass-roots organizations promote social service for everyone through Internet technology and promote the development of the entire sector.

Fang Jun, who majored in computer science, joined Amity in 2011 to explore domestic resources. As the leader of the team, Fang Jun has a deep understanding in the changes of fundraising methods for social organizations.

“In the past, Amity’s fundraising and project implementation were separated and carried out by different teams. Many social organizations were similar in this regard. When raising funds or doing joint fundraising, traditional organizational

structure cannot respond quickly, as the fundraising channels were limited. If the funding chain is disrupted, procedural obstacles arise. Therefore, the diversification of financing channels will make social organizations more resilient.” Fang Jun said.

Today, Amity has a professional team to work on online fundraising. The team maintains good communication with various platforms, capital and donors and can get more resources for good projects. When a partner seeks help from Amity, Amity provides all-round services from online fundraising, project execution, and project conclusion. This not only improves the communication of information and quality of experience for the partners. Now, more and more Amity project teams are joining the joint fundraising appeals.

Fang Jun believes that ways of thinking decide the difference

► Fang Jun (first from right) and Amity Way Fundraising Team



between traditional project methods and online fundraising project methods. In the past, traditional project officers focused on how to do the project well, how to implement the project and improve efficiency. "After becoming a resources and channels team, we focus on procuring more resources for projects during the assessment phase, through communication and coordination, including how to cooperate with our Communication and Advocacy Team to increase public awareness for Amity's principles and meaningful projects. Factors such as project implementation can be negotiated and managed in subsequent communication with our partners."

Amity's Internet philanthropy started early in 2007. At first, Amity could only raise less than one hundred thousand RMB a year. In Fang Jun's opinion, however, it was important to have a head start. Amity Orphan Fostering Program, for example, was launched on the online fundraising platform in 2008. In 2011, it raised RMB 10 million. In 2013, it raised RMB 20 million. Now, total funds raised for the program have exceeded RMB 300 million, representing Amity's most well-funded project on the internet.

"This is an amazing program," said Fang Jun. Many old donors have deep feelings for it and have been supporting it, which further encourages new donors to join."



Since the first "99 Giving Day" launched by Tencent in 2015, Amity has been an active player. 2021 was the seventh "99 Giving Day" participated by Amity. As the rules change every year, it is necessary for a team like Amity Way Fundraising Team to study and digest these rules, interpret and share information in a simple way to other teams and partners. At the same time, Amity Way helps partners raise their voices on various platforms and mobilize their own communities to support the projects. In this way many partners have grown together with Amity, and their cooperation has become more and more tacit. To date, Amity maintains 300 to 500 partners.

"In the past, we directly faced the donors and beneficiaries. Now during the process of Internet philanthropy, we face partners more. This is a new connection in our fundraising strategy. Through this entry point, we channel resources and implement projects. It is a change in the way we work. If you complete everything by yourself, projects can be very expensive and efficient. Upon cooperating with partners, who take on

the duties of implementation and expansion, Amity can have more opportunities to expand projects."

Fang Jun believes that joint fundraising is much more than just helping partners to raise funds. More important is the aspect of developing the NGO industry, wherein Amity helps build the capacity for social organizations to raise funds. With support from Amity, these partners can expand their projects and resources. In Fang Jun's opinion, Amity has another responsibility: to unite our partners in pooling resources and carrying out implementation for Amity's flagship projects. Brand co-creation in addition to joint fundraising will make projects more attractive and credible, thus retaining donors and benefactors.

Regarding the exclusivity of some clauses often used in the sector, Fang Jun believes it is more important to educate the public about philanthropy than to make the projects exclusive. "Let's widen the scope of philanthropy and look for more channels together. There is no need to draw a clear boundary. We should think more about cooperation among organizations in the

sector. When we make the circle bigger and develop a better environment, we will be able to bring better growth for each organization involved. Better growth includes better project management, stabler project operation, better fundraising, management and risk control capabilities via the Internet, more reasonable staffing systems, and less negative information. This is NGO development."

There is a cognitive gap between professional social workers, ordinary donors and the public. Practitioners are willing to do development projects, which more focus on sustainable development. Since the public tends to remain skeptical of complex projects, the design of online projects usually stays simple and replicable with few difficult technical operations. However, this leads to serious project homogeneity.

"For example, helping communities to build capacity and providing employment training usually yields little quantitative results. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of employment training? By comparison, the public is more willing to donate lunches to children, which yields quick results and leaves people satisfied."

Increasing public awareness and educating donors are crucial to the development of Internet philanthropy in China. Online fundraising develops very quickly in China. Some people may be willing to donate at one moment but become donors the next second. Such speed of course brings pros and cons. In the past, one had to go to the post office or bank to transfer money. This gave one time to think about the project and showed one's confidence in making the decision to donate. Today, because it's so easy to donate online, many donors learn less about their target organizations and therefore feel less attached to their projects. Thus, should any negative situation occur, such a weak connection would be very easy to break. That's why negative news in the sector, no matter true or not, spreads fast.

"People are not always to blame," said Fang Jun. "Some think projects should not have any failures. When expectations are not met, it gives rise to negative emotions. Therefore, projects online usually have simple design, to minimize the possibility of being criticized."

People donating online usually give small amounts, with an average single donation amount

of around RMB 20-30. If the total amount required for the project is divided into the range that netizens can afford, the public will be willing to make donations. As such, simple designs introduce projects in a more understandable way, rather than professional project applications full of academic vocabulary and indicators that are common in the sector.

"Sometimes an introduction of a few hundred words is less resonant with donors than a single picture that shows what changes their donation could bring. Therefore, for development projects, we should change our thinking and let everyone feel that these projects can bring changes, so as to attract donors."

He hopes that communication online, donor involvement and raising public awareness will help the public understand the true efficiency of philanthropy. It is much more than simply providing a bag of rice, a bag of grain, or some money.

In terms of the relationship between technology and philanthropy, Fang Jun thinks that technology is a tool that is more about providing convenience for people to

make life better. Philanthropic ventures cannot rely solely on technology, but nevertheless must harness technology appropriately. Although many technology companies put forward the concepts of technology for good and business for good, technology itself cannot touch people. Philanthropy aims to solve social problems, and how to make better use of technology to serve philanthropy is an important aspect for us to focus on going forward. We will try our best to combine technology with philanthropy and extend from then on."

Technology can bring traffic. But how to retain the traffic and how to turn one-off donors into long-term donors depend on the service and strength of a social organization. These goals require time and energy. "In my opinion, this process is very important." Said Fang Jun.

"Internet technology brought changes to many industries, but it is impossible to replace them. Social work is very important to our sector. People-to-people connection isn't always made easier by technology. Sometimes, technology may even become a barrier. Our communication between beneficiaries has changed from face-to-face to phone and WeChat, and while it is becoming more convenient, you see that the connection is weakening. We must filtering out the negative information and retain positive information to better integrate philanthropy and Internet technology."

Today, when online fundraising has become the main channel for social organizations, Fang Jun and Amity teams feel a sense of crisis. "People now rely too much on online fundraising platforms, because the platform can bring traffic and bring immediate resources, but it is not helpful for the long-term development of an organization."

Fang Jun compares the traffic of online fundraising platforms to the ocean. He believes that only when Amity brings resources from the sea to its own lake, which means converting public domain traffic into private domain traffic, can Amity build its own community.

The Amity Way Fundraising Team was officially established in 2016. While serving the on-line philanthropy development of the Amity Foundation, the team is committed to assisting social organizations to carry out project fundraising and management through Internet, to create a healthy and dynamic philanthropic ecosystem for the public.

Liu Li: "Help others and heal yourself"

Liu Li looks quite different from her colleagues around her. She speaks quickly, as if there is always something urgent pushing her. She is the head of the Cooperation and Development Team which deals with cooperation with companies. Maybe that's why she speaks and works in a straight-forward way.

Before coming to Amity, Liu Li worked for Suning Group, one of the largest retailers in China, for almost two years. Although she performed well in sales even as a newcomer, she felt that charity work was what she wanted to do. After all, she majored in Public Affairs Administration which relates to NGO management during her undergraduate and graduate studies. She hoped to do something in this sector. She had her own reason too. "My mom had uremia at that time. I wanted to help others with similar difficulties to hers. That's also one of the reasons I joined Amity."

After joining Amity in 2009, Liu Li worked for the Amity Orphan Fostering Team for eight years. During that time, many occasions touched her deeply. When communicating with the kids, she tried her best to put herself in the shoes of the kids instead of "reopening their wounds".

During one visit to the project schools, Liu Li noticed a little girl crying. Liu Li spent some time talking to her and got to know her story. When the little girl was one and a half years old, her father was sent to reeducation through labor for drug addiction, and her mother left home soon after, leaving her to stay with her grandmother at her uncle's house. Five years later, when her father finally came home, she couldn't bring herself to call him "Dad". Unfortunately, the next day her dad took drugs again and passed away soon after. Instead of consoling the girl, grandmother blamed her for her father's death: "If you called him 'Dad' that time, he





Liu Li (middle) accompanied donors to visit Amity Orphan Fostering Program in Leye, Guangxi Province, in 2012 ◀

would not have gone out to take drugs and died. Moreover, if you were a boy, your father would not have taken drugs." Although this was totally biased, these words from her grandmother, who was her only living relative, was like a sword piercing into her heart.

Through an hour of conversation, the girl slowly opened her heart to Liu Li, who was able to observe and guide her with her knowledge of psychology.

"I gave her a piece of paper and a pen and asked her to draw whatever she wanted. But she just used the pen to draw lines back and forth, and the scratches were deeply dented. You could see that her emotions were completely unresolved, which broke my heart. But when this top student in the class later told me: 'I feel very lucky to have talked to you for an hour today!' I realized that previously she did not have this kind of support in her daily life at all."

Although Liu Li did not major in psychology, she learnt psychological principles to better understand the children under the Amity Orphan Fostering Program. To her, this knowledge, was not only for the projects, but also for her personal growth.

The Amity Orphan Fostering Program emphasizes helping the children at home, because home is crucial to a person's growth. Even for the severely disabled individuals in the orphanage, Amity has a "Grandma Plan", aiming to give those orphans family-like care. Because of the words spoken to Liu Li by the girl, the Amity Orphan Fostering Program initiated a series of operations that focus on children's psychology. The girl's story was adapted for the stage by Liu Li's best friend and became a play of the Jiangsu Art Fund.

Liu Li talked about a phenomenon she often sees at the Orphan Fostering Program, which she calls "smiling depression". This is to describe a psychological defense that orphans often put up unconsciously. They would try to play a well-behaved and happy role expected by others, thinking that in this way they can receive better help. "But after talking, I can grasp their true feelings. I feel their loneliness and helplessness. I know they need hugs. This is the reason why I want to help them so much."

In her opinion, work in this sector is work about people and

emotions. She still remembers that after a visit to a school in the southwest of China, a child waited for her outside, holding a small rice dumpling in her hand and saying, "I like you so much! These are the snacks I brought from home this week. All for you!"

"She was thanking me in her own way. It was a small gift, but that was all she had. Interactions like this are the ultimate reward. I think every person who works in this sector must feel the same way, haha."

Despite this, Liu Li admitted that she had thoughts of leaving the sector many times during her eight years of working.

"One special aspect of my work is that we are often very close to issues of life and death, which brought a lot of psychological pressure. When researching the backgrounds of our children, I kept reading about how they lost their parents to illness or accidents. Sometimes, these stories make people question marriage - how can a mother run away from home and ignore her child when the father is dead? I got married in 2011. During the first three years, I often asked myself what marriage was."

► Liu Li (left) was visiting Amity Orphan Fostering Program in Leye, Guangxi Province, in 2012



After her son was born in 2014, Liu Li subconsciously bought him various insurances such as health and education. Two to three years later, she felt depressed. "I felt distant from this era, this society, and this city, and I felt hollowed out, which made me anxious and frustrated."

There were also factors such as income and economic pressure. But every time she had the idea of resignation, she would visit project areas and find that she was unable to extricate herself.

It always makes Liu Li's day when she sees the letters from orphans. "I was once asked why I spent eight years of my life staying with Amity, staying with the Amity Orphan Fostering Program. I think you can find my answer in this letter from this child who had been supported by our program for six years. To him, the warmth and love he felt from us are the best gift of life. He may not know it, but his letter was also the best gift he could've given us. In this way, love goes around to those who give and receive help."

"People think social work is to help others, but in my opinion, social work also helps heal oneself. It helps you to find strength and meaning in your life. When we not only give but also receive strength from our work, it becomes sustainable and mutually beneficial."

Apart from strength and meaning, Liu Li met her life companion through Amity's work. He is a graphic designer volunteering in Amity's events. They got married and built a happy family. Moreover, in 2018,

she rose to the position of the head of the Amity Cooperation and Development Team, which is responsible for establishing cooperation with companies to raise funds for Amity projects.

"I felt unsure at the beginning. Then I found that it is difficult to go from 0 to 1, but easy to go from 1 to infinity. No one cares so much about your mistakes, except yourself. Do your best, whether it is successful or not. The rest is up to God."

Liu Li believes that companies have their own demands for doing charity. Amity projects emphasize both the value of the project itself (i.e., social benefit) and the value that projects could bring to the donors. Recognition plays a vital role in the value of charity and follow-up cooperation. When the two values are realized, the realization of the brand values of Amity and the company is the icing on the cake.

Connections made during cooperation with companies helped Liu Li introduce corporate ideas into Amity projects. She transferred the human resource database system used by companies into standardized Excel

tables for use in the Amity Orphan Fostering Program. She incorporated corporate development training into orphan visits by organizing "Happy Camp" and subsequent summer camp activities. Through activities and interactions, the orphans, volunteers and donors got acquainted with each other. Later when donors were invited to visit the orphans as friends, further connections were established.

Orphans under Amity Orphan Fostering Program used to write "Thank-you Letters" talking about their life and studies. Now they make a personalized "Annual Report" every year, in which they are asked questions about the courses they best performed in, the things that need to be improved, the good friends they made during the year, and the achievements they were most proud of. These questions are carefully designed to help children think, learn, socialize, and to push them forward while giving them a sense of accomplishment from self-reflection.

Liu Li has learnt a lot during recent years working with the Cooperation and Development

Team. She has learned a lot of business models from companies updated her ideas for event design. She described the process as absorbing knowledge like a sponge. "We don't just learn from our experience in running child education projects. We expose ourselves to a wide range of fields so we can better see the trends in our industry."

In her view, as the world is developing, so must the third sector. There is market demand for charity, which is a kind of social benefit. She believes that companies, the government and social organizations are three circles that form a big system. In this system, companies act the fastest and the other two must keep up. Achieving a win-win situation for all three circles not only requires the social value of the project itself, but also value for the government and businesses.


At work, Liu Li has learned to leverage strengths when introducing resources to offline activities or projects, especially commercial resources, which not only saves effort but also maximizes benefits. "For practitioners in this sector, the most important thing is to learn to speak with numbers as one

does in the business sector. If linear analysis, can be introduced into philanthropy in the future, it will become another professional strength for Amity."

"Some people believe that there are discrepancies between the needs of companies doing CSR and the directions of foundation running the projects. But I disagree," said Liu Li. "If a company wants to become a century-old brand, it must to walk hand-in-hand with a renowned social organization. A company's social responsibility strategy is sure to contribute to the process of sustainable social development. Nowadays, many big companies are seeking core brand power in charity projects. The main challenges Liu Li faces are finding and cooperating with companies that share the same discourse system or values with Amity, and achieving mutual growth through such cooperation?"

"The most difficult aspects of cooperating with companies are seeking common values to pursue and building recognition for their brand values." Based on her experience over the past few years, Liu Li believes that brand values are reflected in how a party behaves and operates. "If you work diligently and practically, recognition will come naturally."

Liu Li tries to embrace negative emotions that emerge from time to time. "I like this saying very much: It's better to fly against the wind. It makes me feel that all adversity happens for a reason, and when you overcome it, you emerge a better self."



The Amity Cooperation and Development Team was established in 2018 and is responsible for cooperation with companies, offline activities and volunteer services.



► In 2018, Tian Meimei (second from right) participated in the roadshow of Lukou Street venture philanthropy meeting

Tian Meimei: "There is a long way to go for the specialization of social work"

Many Chinese people might be confused if they're asked what social work means. The term "social worker" was only first included in 2010 version of the "Occupational Classification Code of the People's Republic of China". Social work is a professional undertaking with an altruistic nature which is reflected in providing systematic and effective services to those in need.

Tian Meimei, who joined Amity in 2006, has 13 years of experience in NGO development work, and a deep understanding of this field.

She explained that in China, social organizations include societies, foundations and social service institutions; the latter two are very different. Foundations focus on charity and philanthropy, planning projects, finding resources, and providing funds. In terms of human resources, foundations prioritize talents with related majors, such as environmental protection, sociology and other diverse backgrounds. On the other hand, social service institutions mainly focus on providing social work services, as well as receiving and allocating resources.

The government has invested many resources in the field of professional social work. This has given room for professionalism in social work to improve, such as in specialized fields related to children and the elderly. Moreover, theoretical research from colleges and universities is being applied more commonly to practice, which further promotes specialization. In addition, there are many institutions in the sector dedicated to the capacity building of social work organizations, such as NGO development centers. Many professional workers have been cultivated, and the working procedures and capabilities of organizations have been greatly improved.

Amity was established in 1985. In Amity's early developmental stage, there were very few domestic organizations that could provide services to groups with special needs. On the other hand, the international community attached great importance to this field. Therefore, Qiu Zhonghui, chair of the board, proposed that Amity focus on promoting the development of the sector by learning and sharing knowledge: "If you go alone, you might

reach your goal quickly. But if you go together with others, you can reach further goals". Mr. Qiu hopes to see more organizations that provide professional services grow alongside those that provide professional social work services.

The Nanjing Amity NGO Development Center was initiated by the Amity Foundation in 2009. It is the first supportive social organization founded by a public fundraising foundation in China. The center aims to cultivate more social service and social work organizations through promoting professional practitioners and organizations while helping them find more social resources. The center also advocates at a higher level, raising government and public awareness on social services to help build a good sector ecology.

Meimei recalled her early days in NGO development. "No one knew how to do it when we started," she smiled. "What we did at the time was to summarize Amity's project experience and share it with other organizations, including advice on setting up an organization, internal management, project management and fund raising, etc."

"In the first year of Amity NGO Development Center, Amity and the government worked together to promote the development of professional social organizations. Amity's experience and model were even recommended by the government in a bulletin. President Xi read and commented on the bulletin. After that, many provincial governments followed the example of Jiangsu by providing venues and purchasing services from social organizations to support social work."

In the first 10 years since 2009, Meimei closely witnessed the growth of NGO development in China.

"At the beginning of 2009, the number of social organizations in Nanjing was over 10,000, the most in China. At the time, the number of social organizations per 10,000 people was probably less than three. After 10 years of development, that number has now reached more than 20 per 10,000 people. You can see in almost every community all kinds of social organizations. Although not every social organization is big, the total number is very large and widely distributed."

Changes have also happened in sector vision and cooperation. After Amity started NGO development, many of its staff built connections with other social organizations and started cooperation with them. These connections helped build a network for Amity. In the past, Amity's disaster relief work was usually carried out jointly with local governments; last year, however, Amity cooperated with local social organizations to carry out flood relief in Henan with great efficiency.

Amity has contributed much to and benefitted greatly from partnerships with other organizations. Especially after the rise of Internet philanthropy in China, Amity united many social organizations to raise funds together online and has ranked among the top ten in the country in terms of Internet crowdfunding.

Over the past 10 years, social service organizations have grown greatly in numbers. The downside, however, is that the field has turned into the survival of the fittest. Meimei told us that most social organizations in China are still small with limited resources with unstable professional status. It

is not conducive to professional development in the long run. An organization that cannot make special contributions or reflect special values in their profession is easily sifted out.

In recent years, with the decrease of international resources and the increase of government purchase, the bulk of resources come from domestic companies and the government. Localization has become one of the features



of social work projects. As a result, these projects tend to be more in line with China's local conditions.

"When social organizations obtain government or company funds," said Tian Meimei, "they have to address many requirements in addition to the project goals themselves. This helps enhance the comprehensive planning ability of the organization." Social organizations must now

consider their communication and advocacy, such as how to attract the public, improve their image, and respond to crises.

"This is very socialized operation, which requires abilities in communication, resource integration, response, while maintaining transparency and credibility."

Going forward, Meimei believes that social work will become more specialized and focused. Current approaches are more

general as social workers are still exploring professional and specialization for social work in China. "Take community service as an example, there may only be one or two social workers who have to take care of all matters in a community. They will usually organize some community activities, but they have no more time or energy to focus on solving problems in an in-depth manner. In the future, I think there will be more professional organizations



Tian Meimei (third from left) attended a lecture on short video development trends ◀

► Tian Meimei shared her thoughts in the strategic planning meeting of Amity





focusing on elderly care, child work and services for people with disabilities. In addition, I believe there will be more organizations dedicated to providing services for spiritual and cultural needs such as marriage and family."

In terms of human resources, social work will require more on overall competency. In the past, requirements for a background in professional social work restricted many people with comprehensive ability and experience from working for the sector. Today, there is a greater need for people with stronger abilities and management capabilities, especially in social work entities. Furthermore, excellent leaders are necessary for maintaining a good standing, sustaining resources and providing professional services to the needy.

"Attractive wages will be a key factor," said Meimei. At present, there are limits on the costs of services and staff when the government buys services from social organizations. Moreover, most foundations in China are actually "foundations without funds". Some of them consider their covering operating costs and insufficient management expenses with investment activities, which are sometimes risky. Many small organizations try to seek resources from the government or foundations to solve operational problems, while some capable social organizations diversify their efforts by providing services that meet market needs, such as running nursing homes.

Meimei hopes that more companies will be willing to support the management expenses of foundations, to promote the professional development of the whole sector so that more professionals will be incentivized to enter the field.

In recent years, many large Chinese companies have set up their own foundations to carry out public

welfare projects. "The provision of social services is diversified, with both philanthropic factors and market factors. Corporate action in this sector cannot be replaced by social organizations. Foundations need to have a clear understanding that in some fields, such as rural e-commerce, companies can do it more efficiently, and their actions can enhance employment."

"I think there will be more corporate forces joining in the social service, and then social organizations can look towards new areas of development."

As for Internet fundraising platforms, Tian believes that although Internet companies have their own project logic, these platforms offer an alternative for social organizations. When faced with the impact of technology and digitalization, social organizations should not just focus on their own expertise but strive to improve through interaction with the platforms.

"The new issues that emerged from the Internet era put forward a lot of considerations for research and development of social organizations," said Meimei. "In the past, when our economy was bad, social organizations faced merely issues of material support and assistance, which was easier to handle. Today's problems are complex, with many uncontrollable factors, which require us to find security in more aspects. The newest challenge faced by social organizations is to be able to satisfy deeper and more diversified needs."

The Amity NGO Development Center is dedicated to building four platforms: sector advocacy, capacity building, resource support and community service based on cultivation bases and community governance platforms, and to providing all-round support to organization, human resource and ecological constructions. By carrying out projects, the Center mobilizes members of the community and social organizations to participate in community affairs, in order to meet the multi-level and diversified service needs of the people, and to build a community governance pattern with greater participation, joint contribution, joint governance and sharing. So far, the Center has helped develop and supported more than 1,200 social organizations, operated and supervised nearly RMB 100 million projects, and benefited more than 150,000 people from community service projects.

As shown in the Blue Book of Social Organization:

Report on Social Organization in China (2020), there were 531,000 licensed social workers nationwide in 2019, an increase of 92,000 compared with the number in 2018. This shows that the team of professional social workers is growing rapidly. With the development of social organizations, social work professionals, with knowledge and expertise, are playing an increasingly important role in service provision, policy making and organization management.

After China's 13th Five-Year Plan, social work was again included in the 14th Five-Year plan proposal. In the section "Strengthening and Innovating social governance", it is clearly stated that "we should give full play to the role of mass organizations and social organizations in social governance, and smooth and standardize the ways for market players, new social classes, social workers and volunteers to participate in social governance."

Children of the stars – together to the future

It was a sunny day. With excitement in her eyes, Doumiao welcomed her teacher from the Amity Child Development Center who had come to visit her. Doumiao took her teacher by the hand to show her the little tadpoles she had been raising at home, asking her mother to play her favorite song on her mobile phone. When she saw that one of the visitors from Amity was wearing a T-shirt with Bing Dwen Dwen (the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics Mascot) on it, she burst out laughing: "Look, Mama, a cute panda!"

Doumiao is a 10-year old girl diagnosed with autism. "We began to notice developmental difficulties when she was six months old. For example, it was difficult to keep her legs apart when changing her diapers. At the time, we thought it was just a problem with limb coordination. But by the time she was two or three years old, we found out that she had cognitive difficulties." Said Doumiao's mother.



Doumiao was discussing
with mom on what
teacher taught in class

In raising her daughter, Doumiao's mother has experienced all sorts of emotions. From pain and despair to patience and acceptance, Doumiao's mother has come to understand that the only helpful way forward for her child is to face the challenges head on. Our neighbors in the community know about my daughter's condition. I feel grateful for their tolerance and support. They even actively extend their help in taking care of my daughter.

As Doumiao's father shoulders the heavy responsibility of working to provide for the family, the duty of taking care of her is usually undertaken by her mother. "As long as I manage my time properly, we can get by. What worries me is how I might teach her when I have no experience with autism."

Doumiao enrolled in a mainstream primary school for 1st grade, but it proved to be too much of a challenge. She struggled to remain seated for more than 40 minutes and couldn't keep up with the pace of teaching. Although her teachers were very tolerant, they were unable to give Doumiao extra attention while managing a class of over 40 children. Doumiao told her mother repeatedly about her reluctance to go to school. "I found that every class was tormenting her. If I continued to send her to an ordinary school, it would be a waste of time and may bring more psychological harm." Making up her mind, Doumiao's mother sent her to a special school where she could focus on adapting to daily life routines. With less pressure, she thought, her child could grow up a happier child.

It has been a year since Doumiao enrolled in that school. There are six kids in Doumiao's class. According to her class teacher, Doumiao has adapted to the class very well, kept up with her studies, and even helped the teacher in classes to the best of her ability.

Hard journey towards autism intervention

In addition to attending school, Doumiao continues to receive rehabilitation training. Last year, it became apparent that Doumiao had outgrown the training classes she had been taking. Under the recommendation of the Disabled Persons' Federation, the family contacted the Amity Child Development Center, whose new site was near their home. Doumiao now goes to the Center twice a week after class. This year, the center consolidated its courses to be held on Saturdays and during the summer holidays, focusing on teaching self-care and general knowledge through both outdoor and indoor activities.

Ma Xiaobo, deputy director of the Teaching Management Department of the Amity Child Development Center, has 11 years of experience in working with children with developmental disabilities. She found that most people confuse autism with mental illness and assume that if the kids are given enough love and care, they will become willing to communicate or even grow into geniuses.

"Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder. The biggest problem lies in the social and sensory problems. Intervention is a hard journey, requiring a lot of willpower, hard work and perseverance for uninterrupted and continuous education. During this process, parents are usually very stressed. Each child with autism has his/her unique cognitive, linguistic and social behavior, and that's why individualized education is particularly important to help them learn social rules. Our ultimate goal is to help integrate into society."

This process can be exhausting. Progress can be slow, instructions need constant repetition, and the

children may sometimes exhibit behavioral problems that cause frustration to others. But on the flip side, their innocence shines through.

Doumiao's mother agreed, "There are some tasks that seem simple to us but must be broken down into tiny steps while explaining to my daughter. Sometimes I lose my patience with her and scare her, which causes her to become even more introverted. I don't want to propagate this vicious cycle.

Doumiao has been staying at home under the COVID-19 restrictions. Teachers from the center would send short videos for the kids to practice at home at their pace. After Doumiao's online class in the morning, her mother would take her to the food market. When they return home, Doumiao would help peel the beans and prepare the vegetables. Doumiao also helps her mother hang out the laundry. She's happy that she can help her mother in some way. "As long as she makes an effort to help, to whatever extent, I would encourage her a lot. Practice makes perfect!"

Rehabilitation and intervention sessions bring financial pressure to families. Doumiao also has epilepsy, which requires her to undergo tests at hospital regularly. Every six months, Doumiao needs tests to ensure her medicine doesn't stimulate premature body development. These sessions cost RMB 1,400 each time.



► Teachers of Amity Child Development Center were taking videos of dancing class for kids at home

Before Doumiao was six years old, the family was under especially great financial pressure. At that time, Doumiao studied in a training center and the tuition fee was around 4,000 to 5,000 yuan a month. Her extra annual training cost amounted to 70,000 to 80,000 yuan, which drained the savings of the family.

Before seven, Doumiao's family dreamed that one day she would be able to attend a regular school, which was why her mother did not apply for a disability certificate for her, fearing that it would leave a psychological impact on her. Without the certificate, hospital fees were a great burden on the household. Last year, after Doumiao received her disability certificate, her medical insurance could cover her medical treatment, and the subsidy from the government for rehabilitation could basically cover her rehabilitation expenses at the Amity Child Development Center.

"In the recent two years, we can feel that the social support and inclusiveness we have received are greater than before, and the government's policies are also improving."

Hard journey towards autism intervention

At present, the government's rehabilitation subsidy for patients with autism only covers the nine-year compulsory education stage before the age of 14. After that, some individuals with weaker social skills can only stay at home under the care by their family. They are not old and not capable enough to work. This brings great pressure to their family. Staying at home for long could even lead to the losing of their developmental progress.

Some families choose to send their kids with autism to vocational classes in special schools, but Doumiao's mom is still worried: what if Doumiao's ability cannot meet the requirements for employment? She can only hope that the national policy on supporting children with special needs develops faster, so that parents like her can ease their anxieties.

"All I can do is to get prepared for her future. I bought several policies of commercial insurance and wealth management insurance for Doumiao, hoping that she can get monthly support from the insurance."

This year, Doumiao's mother came up with a new idea: how about teaching Doumiao how to make use of money?

"It would be great if there were a social organization to help us take care of Doumiao. I am worried about who would take care of her after we pass away." Doumiao's mother sighed.

Social organizations serving patients with autism have the same wish. Jin Lina, founder of the Henan Xuchang Aixing Special Children Rehabilitation Training Center, states that the center supports 63 full-time students, with half of them coming from families in difficulties. These students meet the criteria for relief from the Disabled Persons' Federation. Xuchang is a fourth-tier city. Many parents from the countryside and townships had to rent cheap apartments near the school to allow their children to come to the center for rehabilitation. Some families are so poor that they cannot even afford a monthly rent

of RMB 200. Their solution is that several families rent a small home together to share rent.

"Our center helps the students apply for government relief every ten months. According to the regulations, the application file for each child must include details of their learning abilities and rehabilitation, right to know laws, signatures of the parents and so on. This means that after each training cycle, the teacher needs to handwrite more than 100 pages of files. The government is paying more attention to special groups, which is really helpful. We also hope the relief may cover a wider age range, so that they may come to social organizations like us to study and recover, free of charge, and relieve their family burden."

The oldest child in the Jin Lina's center is 15 years old and has been doing rehabilitation since the center opened in 2016. This family cannot find a care institution or school of inclusive education for older children with autism, so they continue to send their child here.

Although there are more than a dozen classrooms in the center, the building area is only 400 square meters, making it impossible to separate activities for older and younger children. Ideally, older children should go out once a week to go shopping or go to the community, but the lack of resources and manpower is limiting the development of the children's social skills.

"The inclusion and living arrangements of the older children remains our biggest challenge. I know in Nanjing there are older children with autism working in Amity Bakery, but some of our kids are

unable to even leave the center to go shopping in community spaces, let alone integrate into society.

Today, 24-year-old Dai Jiacheng, who works at Amity Bakery in Nanjing, has become the hope of many parents of children with autism. "Other parents may think that we are lucky, but they don't know our hardships," said Dai Jiacheng's mother. "We weren't able to catch up with the government's rehabilitation subsidies, so we had to bear all the expenses ourselves."

She hopes that the public can become more accepting of individuals with autism and other disorders, while the government can support older people such disorders through their policies. "We are waiting for a sounder social work system to help solve these livelihood problems."

More importantly, she wants to tell parents of children with autism their children require lifelong support. The parents themselves need continuous learning and improvement, rather than merely waiting and relying on others.

In her words: "Take the first step, and your child will surely have a bright future!"



► Trainers of Amity Bakery was teaching trainee Dai Jiacheng to make cookies



Amity facilitates South-South Cooperation Project on Snow Leopard Conservation & Community -Based Ecotourism

The Amity Foundation has teamed up with NGOs from Tajikistan and China for a trilateral ecological conservation project. The South-South cooperation partners started a cross-border program in the mountainous highland regions – the habitat of the “vulnerable” (IUCN Red List of Threatened Species) snow leopard. The programme engages local communities to monitor and better protect the snow leopard and explore possibilities for eco-tourism.

Since January 2021, the Amity Foundation and the Shan Shui Conservation Center have carried out wildlife conservation programmes in Qinghai Province. Local communities on the Tibetan Plateau at 4,000 metres high altitude suffered losses of their livestock to the leopards and other carnivores. The project trains locals to operate camera traps and monitor the wild animals. The aim is to raise awareness for wildlife protection and to promote and develop eco-friendly nature experience

projects in the regions. As of March 2022, the programme compiled and developed measures and manuals for monitoring and eco-tourism projects, laying the foundation for future programmes.

In addition, Amity Foundation aims to promote exchanges and cooperation between domestic snow leopard conservation institutions and their international counterparts. With the support of the United Nations Development



Programme Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (UNDP GEF SGP), the project cooperates with Kudak va Jomea, an NGO from Tajikistan. By facilitating exchanges between the implementing NGOs – Shan Shui and Kudak va Jomea, the programme aims to conduct community-based monitoring and improve community livelihood through eco-tourism. By promoting community participation in wildlife protection and monitoring, the participants can

share experiences of their work and enhance their capacity in snow leopard monitoring and conservation.

The project also includes exploring and designing eco-tourism routes and training local host families for sustainable community-based eco-tourism. Due to the pandemic, exchanges have taken place online. In the future, the partners from China and Tajikistan will further explore and promote community engagement and ecological protection, and carry out non-governmental cooperation in the field. By facilitating people-to-people exchanges, Amity helps to enhance China-Tajikistan relations and to realise the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Tajikistan is the first SCO member country where the Amity Foundation has engaged in the implementation of social development projects.

(Photos have been provided by our partner: The GEF Small Grants Program China – <http://www.gefsgp.cn/appdetail.php?id=512&fid=22&cid=22>)



► Local communities being trained in workshops



► Online Zoom meetings are organized to exchange and coordinate between Chinese and overseas partners

Solidarity between ACT Alliance Members In the Aftermath of Super Typhoon Rai

Super Typhoon Rai (locally known as Odette), which made its first landfall on December 16, 2021, on islands in the central parts of the Philippines, is the most destructive tropical cyclone in history, second only to the devastating Super Typhoon Haiyan (locally known as Yolanda) in 2013. In the aftermath of the natural disaster, The Amity Foundation (Amity) and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), both members of ACT Alliance, mounted a joint relief project to provide humanitarian aid to 9 barangays in 7 different municipalities in the Province of Southern Leyte, bringing timely and life-saving relief to over 10,000 most needy survivors.

With wind speeds reaching 195 km/h, Typhoon Rai brought torrential rains over two days, causing floods and landslides, and more than 400 casualties and widespread damage to mainly farming and fishing communities. Urgent needs for



emergency supplies, including food and water, arose after the complete destruction of houses and livelihoods left thousands of people destitute.

Amity had been closely monitoring the development since the disaster took place. Dialogues and discussions between Amity and NCCP since December 22 led to a decision of a joint relief project. Throughout the Christmas holidays, NCCP conducted ground need assessment and proposed an initial relief plan. With first-hand needs analyses from NCCP, and leveraging the rich disaster-relief experience of Amity's Nanjing Headquarters, Amity Hong Kong Office applied on December 26 to the Hong Kong Disaster Relief Fund. The donation was granted through the fast-track mechanism promptly. The Consulate General of the Philippines in Hong Kong issued a letter of appreciation in recognition of the quick responses on the part of both DRF and Amity Foundation.

Amity and NCCP are both members of the Christian ecumenical network ACT Alliance with 140 members working together to provide humanitarian aid and fund social

development projects to people in need worldwide.

Amity has provided disaster relief to the Philippines for five times, including in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan (2013), Typhoon Mangkhut (2018) and Typhoon Vamco (2020).

NCCP's work in the Philippines is backed through a country-wide local network, which not only includes NCCP member churches, but numerous ecumenical organizations and local community leaders. Such a network has proven to be particularly important in times of major disasters in this country, consisting of many island communities.

During implementation of the joint relief project, NCCP and its ecumenical partners had to overcome severe logistical challenges due to complete destruction of infrastructure and communication in the target areas. The urgency to deliver the supplies was hindered by a present surge of Covid-19 and the remoteness of the affected target communities, which could be only accessed through long trips on the road and exhausting boat rides spanning dozens of hours. Ultimately, the success

of the operation owed much to the many hours of coordination and preparation with bottom-up contributions from local partners.

The joint relief project was able to leverage a supportive ecumenical network with 65 local churches and volunteer groups. Thanks to this network, the project delivered drinking water, rice, dried fish, canned food, beans, sugar, cooking oil to 2,360 households in Southern Leyte Province and completed all distribution on 19 January.

In a debriefing Zoom session involving personnel from the two ACT Alliance members, it was recognized that "collapsing into 16 days all the activities of coordination, identification of beneficiaries, canvassing and tendering of relief items, packaging, transport, organizing volunteers, putting Covid-19 security measures in place, and last but not least, ensuring all distribution be done in fair and just manners, was a major challenge of the program," explained Ms Tong Su, the Project Coordinator of Amity Foundation Hong Kong.

Bishop Jerome Baris, Chairman of the Eastern Visayas Regional Ecumenical Council(EVREC)

shared in the debriefing that the actual aid distribution operation was efficiently completed within 5 days. Through the coordinated effort the most vulnerable people in 9 barangays have been served.

Mr Edward Santos, Assistant Program Secretary of NCCP's FWS Humanitarian Response division, and Mr Almond Del Rosario, NCCP's Emergency Response Officer, braved the long and treacherous journeys to the affected areas in Southern Leyte from Metro Manila to coordinate and oversee the relief project. Both of them witnessed the vast scale of devastation and felt there was still a huge gap between aid already provided and what is still in need. When sharing his experience, Almond said: "My heart was melting as I told those who were not listed as beneficiaries that we could not help them because there were just too little resources."

Anthony Tong, Executive Director of Amity Foundation Hong Kong, called the timely and successful implementation a miracle, as the ecumenical partnership between the two ACT Alliance member organizations shifted to a high gear in the face of multiple challenges due to the widespread destruction and Covid-19 Pandemic.

In this regard, this year's unity statement of the NCCP and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines is relevant: *"Christians must unite in solidarity with the most vulnerable among us. The Filipino people are in need of accompaniment and aid in these difficult times."*





(Photos have been provided by our local Philippine partner NCCP – if you want to support the people affected by Odette, you can donate here)



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Headquarters

71 Hankou Road, Nanjing 210008,
Jiangsu Province, China
Tel: 86-25-83260800
Fax: 86-25-83260909
E-mail: amitynj@amity.org.cn
Website: <http://www.amity.org.cn>

Bank Details:
The Amity Foundation
Bank of China, Nanjing Xuan Wu Sub-branch
16 Hong Wu North Road,
Nanjing, Jiangsu, PR China
A/C #: 5105 5820 9952

The Hong Kong Office (HKO)

13/F Ultragrace Commercial Building
5 Jordan Road Kowloon, Hong Kong
Tel: 852-27238011
Fax: 852-23662769
E-mail: amityhk@amityfoundation.org
Website: <http://www.amity.org.cn>

Bank Details:
Amity Foundation, Hong Kong
Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp.
238 Nathan Road
Kowloon, Hong Kong SAR, PR China
A/C #: 127-5-017372

International Office in Geneva

150 Route de Ferney, P.O. Box
2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 791 6502

Amity Office in Africa

Near Western University College,
back of AMCE, Addis
Ababa, Ethiopia

Amity Kenya Office

A-block-A8, Canaan apartment,
Matumbato road, Upper Hill
district, Nairobi, Kenya