



Orphanage Visit August 2010

Bernadette, Caitriona & Lizzie visit to the Orphanage, August 2010

Caitriona

On Saturday 14th of August, I boarded a bus with my mum, my friend Lizzie who was visiting me from London and about 20 other volunteers (many of whom were from SAP). We had just started our 9hour journey to Anhui. I didn't know what to expect from this trip and, to say the least, I was quite nervous as to what was to come. My mum had often told me about MiFan MaMa and the various fundraisers/projects that they were doing. I knew she had wanted to go to the orphanage and see it first hand so I decided to go with her when I was home in Shanghai for the summer.

I had just spent two months in India earlier during the summer, one of which I spent living and working in a center in the slums of Hyderabad. At the center, daily classes were run for children with disabilities and who had no health care. However, this did not in any way prepare me for Lao Wang's Orphanage. As we pulled into the main courtyard, we saw the kids running up to the side of the bus waving with smiles on their faces. Over half of the children had disabilities. Had they been treated as babies, many of their disabilities could have been avoided, however, there just isn't the money to take care of them as they deserve to be. On the other hand, I was particularly struck by the amount of love that the A Yis gave to the children. They are fortunate to have landed in such good hands and with people who genuinely care about them and want to make their lives that much better.

As we walked through the orphanage my mum pointed out some of the things that Mifan Mama has been involved in, such as the crocs that all the children were wearing, a new cot for one of the babies etc. It is truly inspiring the work that Julie and everyone has been doing. Seeing the orphanage was very tough yet gave me an insight into how important it is to fundraise for cleaner sanitation, health care for the children and educational opportunities.



Bernadette

It is 7am on Saturday 14th August, a scorching hot day. We are setting off on a 9hour bus journey to the Orphanage in Anhui. In hindsight, I can now say that this was the event that bonded me to MiFan MaMa.

I arrived in Shanghai in January 2010 and met Julie in March. I was immediately taken by her commitment, passion, enthusiasm and the overwhelmingly love that she exuded for the children of this Orphanage. I therefore decided to go to a few meetings and take it from there.

During the bus journey, we were prepared in terms of what to expect and what we would be doing there. I was very anxious and nervous about what I was going to encounter and how I would deal with it. On arriving into the courtyard, the children, adults, A Yis all swarmed around the bus and very shortly around us, in eager excitement to meet us and see what we brought. I was completely overwhelmed by the sight that beheld my eyes. It was truly "heart wrenching". I was now experiencing the emotion of those tears that I had often witnessed from fellow volunteers. I felt glued to my seat, not knowing would I ever be able to get off the bus, until my daughter took me by the elbow and said "Come on Mum, you will be fine". I immediately pulled myself together and found an inner strength to do what I came to do and forgot about myself.

When I saw for myself, the living conditions, the children that are desperately in need of health care, some severely disfigured or with little hope for life, I was injected with a strong commitment to want to help. There is a huge need for lots of fund raising to support living, medical, educational, sanitation, etc.

I will forever keep the memories of that visit in my heart and mind. I hope that I can help make a difference to the life of some of these children.



Comments from Lizzie after her trip to the Orphanage

* We had a great group and it was a nice bonding time being on the coach, however i would recommend a train trip in the future so that more time can be spent at the orphanage - 4 hours was definitely not enough!

*For me it seemed such a shame to have so many volunteers around and for us not to do something to help the orphanage: for example cleaning the courtyard out, or cleaning the bedrooms, or helping if they needed anything manual done.... (a lot of things I noticed definitely involve the hygiene aspect of the place. Once the well has been sorted for clean drinking water, maybe the running of the orphanage could be organized in terms of hygiene, the organization of age groups, setting up some form of learning environment/organized play for the younger ones and teaching those with learning difficulties some form of skill that they could use as a source of income)

*The kids were absolutely beautiful, and I could tell that they were happy, especially the ones with learning difficulties, but I cant help but think about those who are mentally and physically healthy. I really hope they fulfill their potential and are not restricted in their dreams. Seeing the scholarship given was so great and the organization should definitely keep encouraging those kids to do their absolute best to succeed and become independent adults.

*Finally I was very grateful to experience this trip, what the organization is doing is absolutely fabulous in improving the quality of life of these children