

The children's Club in Wabaiguo

By Nayla, September team 2006

It was quite a hassle to carry the big box of books all the way to Wabaiguo. We had to borrow a motorcycle to carry it, and sit on the back of the 3-wheeled motorcycle we were thrown around on the bumpy mud road. The dust and sand from the dry earth was blown into our faces, and the sun burnt down onto our heads. The view, however, was magnificent, the green hills spreading endlessly into the distance. Don't look down however, as next to the road; the way to the bottom of the valley is quite far and steep...

We, the DI's are Yixin from Guanxi, Kim from Korea and me, Nayla, from Germany (all from September team 2006) are currently working in the Xinhua project area. One of our tasks in Wabaiguo (one of the 6 villages we work in) for March was to form a children's club for the primary school children. Currently there are 12 primary school children in Wabaiguo, ranging from grade 1 to grade 6. On Friday afternoon they come back from the school and stay at home until Sunday when they go back. As the school is 2 1/2 hours walk away, the children sleep in the school during the weekdays. The children's club should provide the children with an opportunity of learning something different from school, such as art, games, using their head and hands...and of course that they can have fun! Which was the reason why was carrying a giant box of books to Wabaiguo. So that with the club the children can also have a library to borrow books. There were over 30 brand-new books, bought with the money that SOS International had donated to YID.



When the children came back on Friday from school, we invited them to come by the preschool the next morning. However, to make a nice surprise we did not mention anything about our bookcase! The next morning we went to the preschool, and there were 9 children waiting for us! With that our first official club meeting began. We offered everyone a glass of water and Yixin began explaining our idea. The children all thought that forming a club was great and together we began discussing the club. At first everyone had to write down

their name, age and grade on the board, so we could record who wanted to participate in the club. The next activity was that everyone had to suggest what they would like to learn or do in the club. The list included the following: dancing, singing, learning English, learning Mandarin, playing games, painting, learning how to wash and brush the teeth, making things out of paper, playing basketball...and much more.

I was a little surprised that they suggested learning how to brush their teeth but on the other hand it is good that they are interested! The next was making some rules for our club. As one thing they wanted to learn was Mandarin, Yixin suggested that speaking Mandarin should be mandatory in the club. Then the boys suggested that those who does not speak Mandarin has to do 10 push ups. However, the girls disagreed and after some fighting between them, it was decided: 6 push ups for the person who does not speak Mandarin. Finally it was agreed that the club would meet every Saturday from 9 to 10:30 am.

Development Instructors tell their story...

Then it was time to open the bookcase! However, first we had to discuss what a library was. We explained the basic idea of a library to the children, and together we decided some rules for the books.

- Everyone can borrow one book only.
- You can borrow a book for one week.
- If you break or destroy the book, then you cannot borrow any book for one month.

The last thing we did was putting two people in charge of the library. The children voted that Li Jiang, a boy from grade 6 and Pu Yun Fen a girl from grade 6 were to be in charge. When someone wanted to borrow a book, one of these two would have to write down their name and lend it.

I don't think that I remember a moment when I have seen children so happy and excited, as the children in Wabaiguo were when they crowded around the bookcase as Li Jiang opened it. Everybody grabbed a book and flipped through it, comparing it with the books their friends had and discussing it eagerly. From stories about adventures, fairy tales, art, different countries, love, excitement, happiness - there was a little bit of everything!

Lijiang was very busy recording everything as every child wanted to borrow one, except one boy. Yixin asked him why he did not want to borrow a book. "Because I will break it" he said. "And I don't want to break these new books for the other children". It was only after Yixin explained to the boy how to keep a book clean – that you should wash your hands and not throw the book on the floor that he agreed to borrow the book. One week later he returned the book - and it was clean!

With that our first club meeting ended. Until now we have had two meetings in our club, each one very successful. We taught the children how to paint on collected stones and wood and how to draw a map of their own village. Some of the children come to our DI room every weekend at all times of the time, eating lunch with us or wanting to do our dishes. Li Jiang has taught me how to play cards and how to use a slingshot. There was hardly a moment in my life when I was so happy, as when I gave these children the books and saw their faces when they looked at the books. The children have given me so much and I can only hope that with my presence in Wabaiguo I can give something to them as well.

