

將愛帶到痲瘋康復村去

冼偉強
天鄰基金會
拓展及行政主任



三月的天鄰昆明輪椅隊探訪痲瘋康復村之旅，已然曲終人散，各人回到自己的工作崗位和家庭去。

但幾個月下來，腦海中還是常常泛起一些山中的記憶，在山坡上，在小麥田中，猶記得行程中的一天，隊員迎着春風去到一個只剩下五個痲瘋康復者居住的村子裡，其中一個快六十歲的婦人是個基督徒，她和老父和那與老父同齡的丈夫一起生活，他們過着確確實實、硬硬淨淨的生活，從他們的好客、樂觀、寬厚的臉容上，我們看見堅韌的基督徒生命力，和那一抹對艱困處境不妥協的態度。相對於來自嬌慣了的城市信徒如我們，實在相形見绌。

這次輪椅隊除了組裝送贈輪椅給痲瘋康復者外，更給這些老人們提供醫療服務。我們這個小隊共探訪了7條康復村，其中5條在昆明，另外2條村則在大理。頭三天探訪的村子規模較少，大多是只住了十個、八個年邁的康復者，國內於上世紀五十年代在偏遠山林中規劃了一些地方，隔離着這批為數約五十餘萬的痲瘋病患者，因建村時間久遠，很多康復者都相繼老死，現時一些村子裡，祇剩下幾個孤苦老人相依為命。雖然痲瘋已有藥物可治病，發病情況受到控制，但國內每年仍有超過一千宗新症出現。

輪椅隊的最後兩天，大理醫療主隊派出醫療小隊同行，由鄒錫權醫生領隊，我們進到大理附近的兩個痲瘋村去。兩個村都是建於上世紀50年代，其一住了27個平均70歲的康復者，另一則住有48個康復者，連家人共70多人，其中4個是6歲以下的第三代小孩。他們在這裡一小群人居住了幾十年，他們的身體外部常有潰瘍，且多眼疾、高血壓和胃病等問題，國家醫療系統人員不多入村，老人又不良於行，往往因小病拖至重病才被送到醫院，能救回生命的已然更趨殘弱。

我們進到村後，隊員幫他們清洗傷口、檢查身體，又教導他們護理知識，猶其眼部護理。這次旅程，我們看見神開了路，讓我們可以服侍到孤苦年邁、遺世隔絕的一群痲瘋康復者，將上帝的愛帶到這些偏遠無助之民。

讓我最感動的是在村子裡，天鄰的每個隊員或坐或跪的與康復者傾談和交流，一個握手、一個擁抱，都讓這群基本上不會踏出村子半步的康復者，從到訪客人處得回尊嚴，離別時他們都顯露依依不捨之情，說明了這個旅程著實給這班偏遠之民帶去了安慰和鼓勵。

現時，全國共有600多個痲瘋康復村，有20多萬痲風康復者，其中有2萬多人生活在這類隔離的村子裡，雲南則佔了129個村，仍然居住着一萬多名痲風康復者。他們的後代大多沒有患痲瘋，但一些因不想掉下父母而留下，相依為命，久而久之，病人的第二代第三代都出現了，因著長期遭到外界歧視，現在他們想出村讀書都變成非常困難，很多村童因而沒有求學機會，他們又將一生困在這裡.....

回到香港後，我常常想起行程最後一天，在水一方，那鐵索吊橋後面一條村子裡，四個適齡入學但礙於被外界歧視未能就學留在村子的痲瘋後代的幾個孩子，他/她們的人生又將會是如何？往後我們還可以為他/她們做些什麼嗎？



HIS Foundation sent a wheelchair team to Yunnan, China in March 2012. The team visited 7 leprosy villages. Five villages are in Kunming and 2 in Dali. The team donated wheelchairs and provided simple medical treatment for the patients.

The mission was accomplished and all team members already returned to their homes and workplaces. However, the images of the leprosy patients, their families, the villages and the environment such as the hills and cornfield remain vividly in my mind.

On the last day we visited a leprosy village with only 5 residents. An almost 60-year-old lady there is a Christian. Her husband is about the same age as her father. The lady, her father, and her husband live together harmoniously. They are hospitable, optimistic, and filled with joy even in face of the very harsh living situation. The smiles in their faces showed us the uncompromising attitude toward adversities. We saw the vibrant life of a Christian in this lady. It seems a contrast to many Christians like us living in comfortable urban environment.

In the 1950s, there were over 500,000 leprosy patients in China. The government relocated the patients to remote areas, virtually segregating them from the society. Over the years many patients died. The villages the team visited during the first three days have only 8 to 10 old leprosy survivors. Nowadays leprosy can be effectively controlled by medicine, however there are still over a thousand new cases every year in China.

In the last two days, the team was joined by medical personals led by Dr. S.K. Chow (HIS Foundation has a medical team serving in Dali at that time). The team visited two leprosy villages near Dali. Both villages were built in the fifties. The first village had 27 residents, all about seventy years old. The second village had 48 leprosy survivors. They live with their families and there were a total of over 70 people including 4 children less than six years old. Many residents have foot ulcers, eye problems, hypertension, and stomach illnesses. Medical personals from government seldom visit the villages. Many patients have difficulty walking. So unless the patients have something serious, they seldom seek medical treatment from the hospital, which is far away. Sometimes even after successful medical treatment, the patient's health had significantly deteriorated.

HIS Foundation volunteers examined the patients and cleaned their foot ulcers. They also taught the patient nursing skills including the care of the eyes. I feel that God led our team to the remote villages to share HIS love with a group of old lonely helpless patients.



I was very impressed when I saw our volunteers sat down or squatted down, talked and listened patiently to the patients. A handshake or a hug can mean a lot to these isolated patients who were already forgotten by the society. It gave them a sense of dignity. From the emotion they expressed at our departure, I knew that our visit gave them comfort and encouragement.

Currently there are about 600 leprosy villages in China. There are about 200,000 patients recovered from leprosy. About 20,000 of them still live in leprosy villages. In Yunnan Province, there are 129 leprosy villages with about 10,000 leprosy survivors. Many of their children do not want to leave their parents behind and continue to live with their parents even though they do not have leprosy. As these children have their own children, the third generation of residents in the leprosy villages appear. These children are of school age. However, due to discrimination to leprosy patients, it is very difficult for them to attend schools, which are located outside their villages. Will they become victims of segregation?

After I returned to Hong Kong, I keep remembering those 4 young children standing in the far end of the suspension bridge separating their village from the outside world. What is their future? What can I do for them?