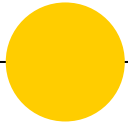


My Trips to China

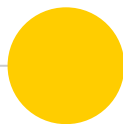
Evelyn Howe



*The best way to find yourself is to
lose yourself in the service of
others - Mahatma Gandhi*



“

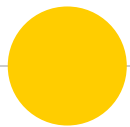




Introduction

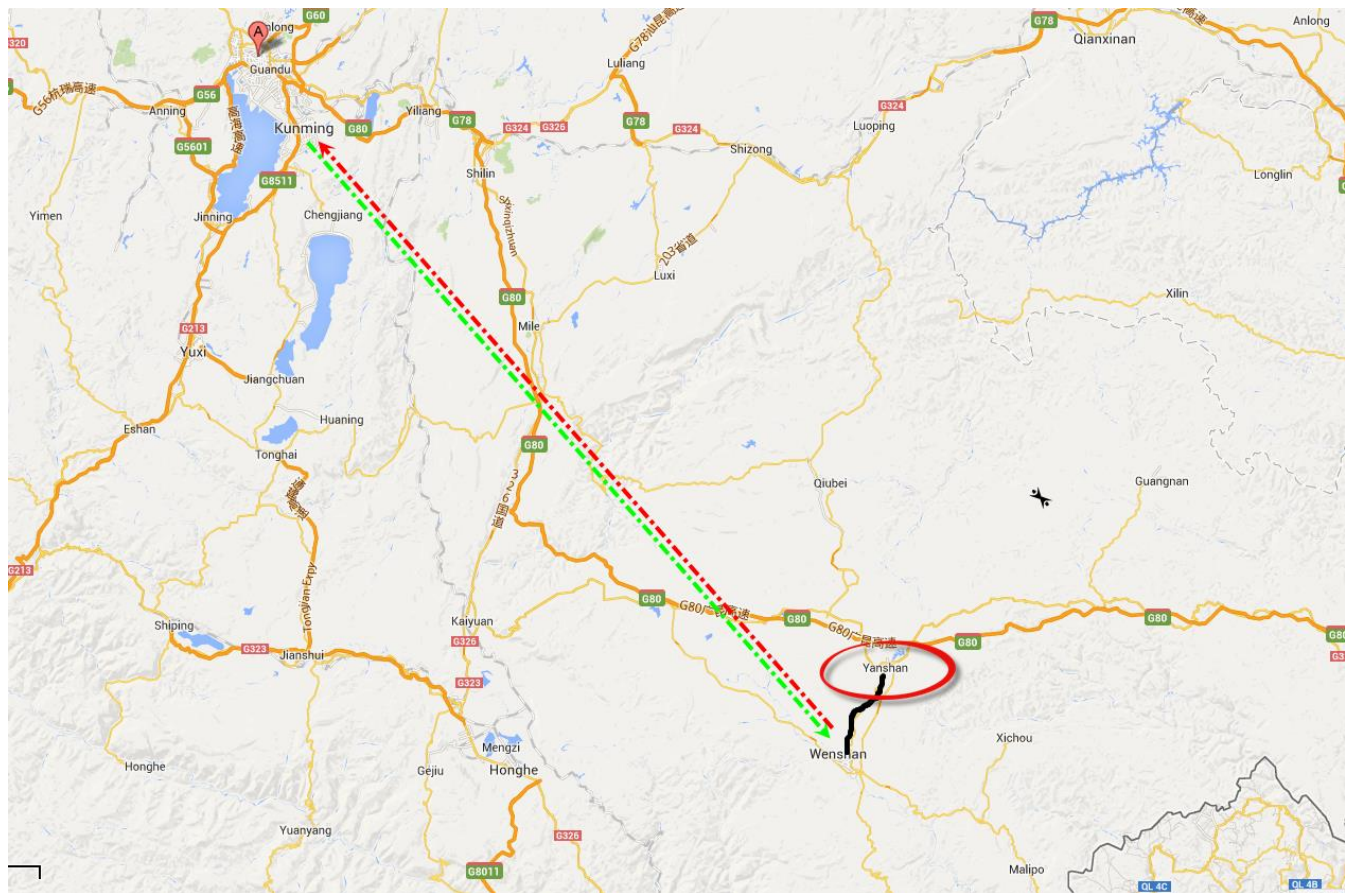
For 10 years, my family and I have been going to rural parts of China to visit underprivileged students and schools, which my parents donated money to build and develop. Each trip, we get to interact with the students (playing games, giving gifts), we get to visit their village and homes, and understand more about their ways of living. These trips have been the most enriching and meaningful experiences that I have participated in. As a privileged young woman visiting these less privileged students and schools have really opened my eyes to a world which I was unaware of and helped to build my character and taught me many important life lessons:

- ◉ Love for service - Fueled my passion for service by allowing me to help others who are in need and showing me how rewarding it can be.
- ◉ Gratitude - Taught me to appreciate the opportunities I am given as not everyone is as fortunate as I am.
- ◉ Selfless - Helped me realize that my main focus should not always be about myself and what I want, as there are millions of young people who are in need and it also put my problems into perspective.
- ◉ Money doesn't mean happiness - Although these students often come from very poor backgrounds, they were extremely happy, kind and grateful. They taught me that one does not need money to live happily.
- ◉ Larger world view - Gave me a better understanding of the world and the people who live in it, allowed me to step out of my privileged bubble and to live like others do.
- ◉ Pushed me out of my comfort zone - Travelling through rocky terrain for 6 hours a day for consecutive days and living in rural China was something that really pushed my limits, but in the end definitely worth it.



Wenshan, Yunnan

November 2010, Age 8





My dad's friend gave a speech to the school, about how we really wanted to help this school, and let more children go to school. The school put on a little show, children and adults sang and danced. I think the show means a lot because it represents how thankful they are because we donated money to the school. After the show, we also gave the children little presents, like, pencils, stickers, toys, etc. Also, as a gift from the school, the school also gave me this beautiful red dress with different sequins on it. It's special to me because it represents their gratitude.

After this first experience, I realize how lucky I was to go to a school that was like CIS. The school in China was much different than mine. In my school, I had all these learning utilities that I never thought was that important. In this school, they have much less utilities than my school, they even have trouble getting enough textbooks! I found out how lucky I was.





勵志新寨小學教學樓 奠基

This time, the principal at the school gave a speech about how thankful he was that we gave donations to his school. After that, this school also did a show. The children sang and danced. I think they put a lot of effort in this show, I think that they would have taken a lot of time to make the show so great. They also gave me a giant teddy bear as a present. I think it represents how thankful they are, so that teddy was really special to me. (But my dad made me leave it in the hotel because the teddy was too big!) After, I gave all the kids candies. It was a real pleasure to do that because I could see all the happiness in their eyes.

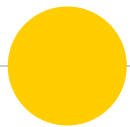
I think it was another life changing experience because I found out that some students home weren't near the school, so they would have to sleep at school in the weekdays, only going home at weekends. I am lucky that I live in Hong Kong where everything is close to each other, so I would never have to sleep at school. Also, I wonder if they would miss their parents and family? Can they ever see them? I feel very thankful for what I have.



新寨小学冯裕伟刘宇池先生捐资援建励志新寨

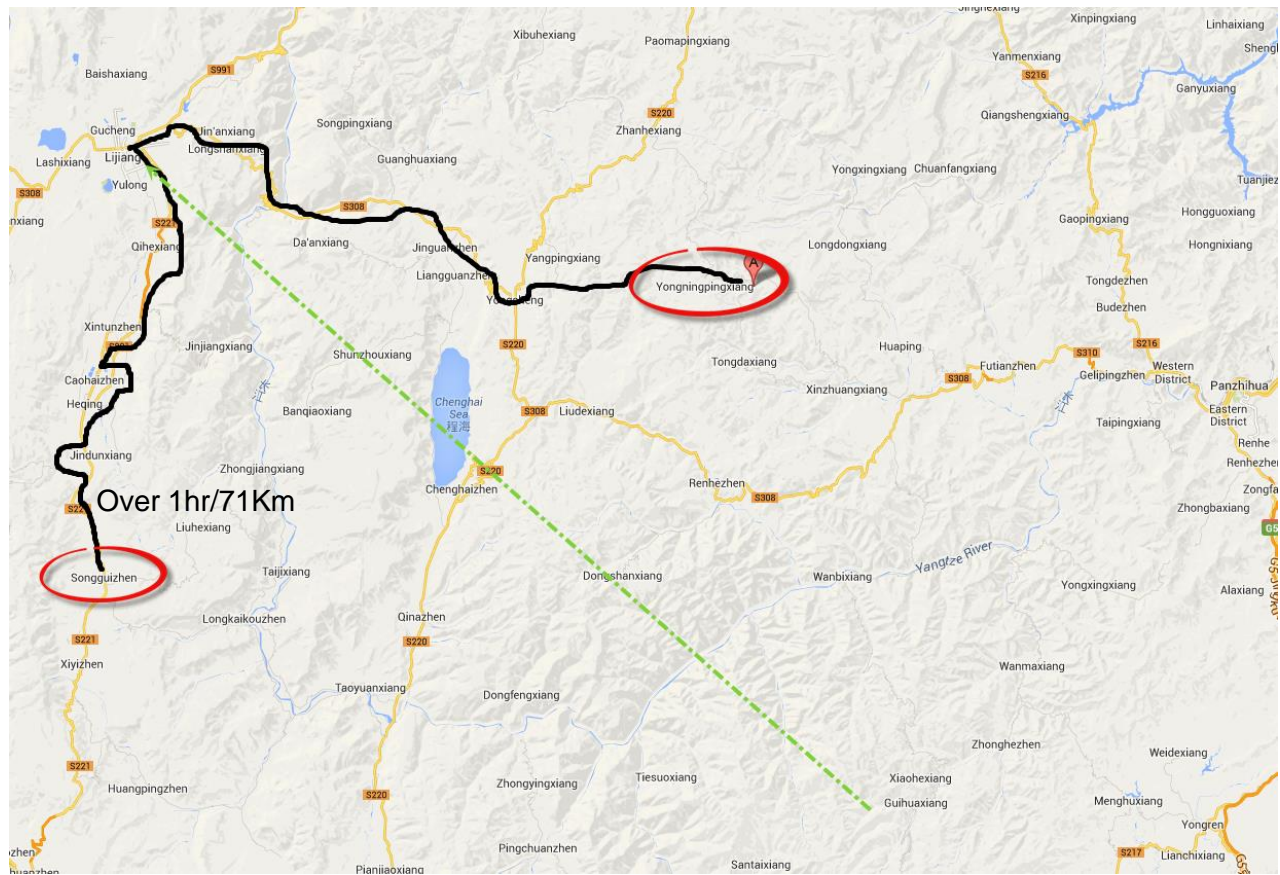






LiJiang, Yunnan

April 2012, Age 9





We were first welcomed by students clapping for us to come into the school. Then we said a speech to the school about how we are happy to donate money to their school. Then we gave the students lollipops and stickers. We also gave them presents like tennis balls, rackets, bags, pencils etc. Once we gave them these toys, they were all so happy and they were like trading their stickers, playing with the balls, they were all very excited. Afterwards, we ate the lunch that the school prepared for us. The meal had chicken, rice, vegetables, bread etc. That meal meant a lot to me because in that village, it was very far from civilization, so it would be very hard to get all these foods. I think they saved all these good foods, so we could eat it. I think this is a way of thanking us. After we ate our lunch, we looked around the school and the village.

The school was in a village in a mountain. This school was very far from civilization, some villagers never even left that mountain! All the students that go to the school live in the village. I wonder how it would feel like to live in that village, and not ever having the chance to leave? I feel very lucky that I live in Hong Kong, and have the life that I have, because I would never be in that consequences. I feel very pleased that I had the opportunity to be able to give these children toys and other stuff, because I really want them to be happy. This experience was life changing.



The meandering road which I travelled



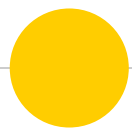


雲南麗江寧蒗縣 踏地坪勵志教學樓 竣工

When we first walked in, some students were lined up near the door, clapping for us. When we went in to the school, we saw thousands of students sitting on chairs waiting for us! After our family sat at the “Judges table”, some students came up and said a speech about how thankful they were for us to donate money to their school. After, they had a show for us. They danced and sang, it was wonderful. They also invited us to dance with them! Later we gave the students stickers and sweets. We also gave excelling students stationery and new school bags.

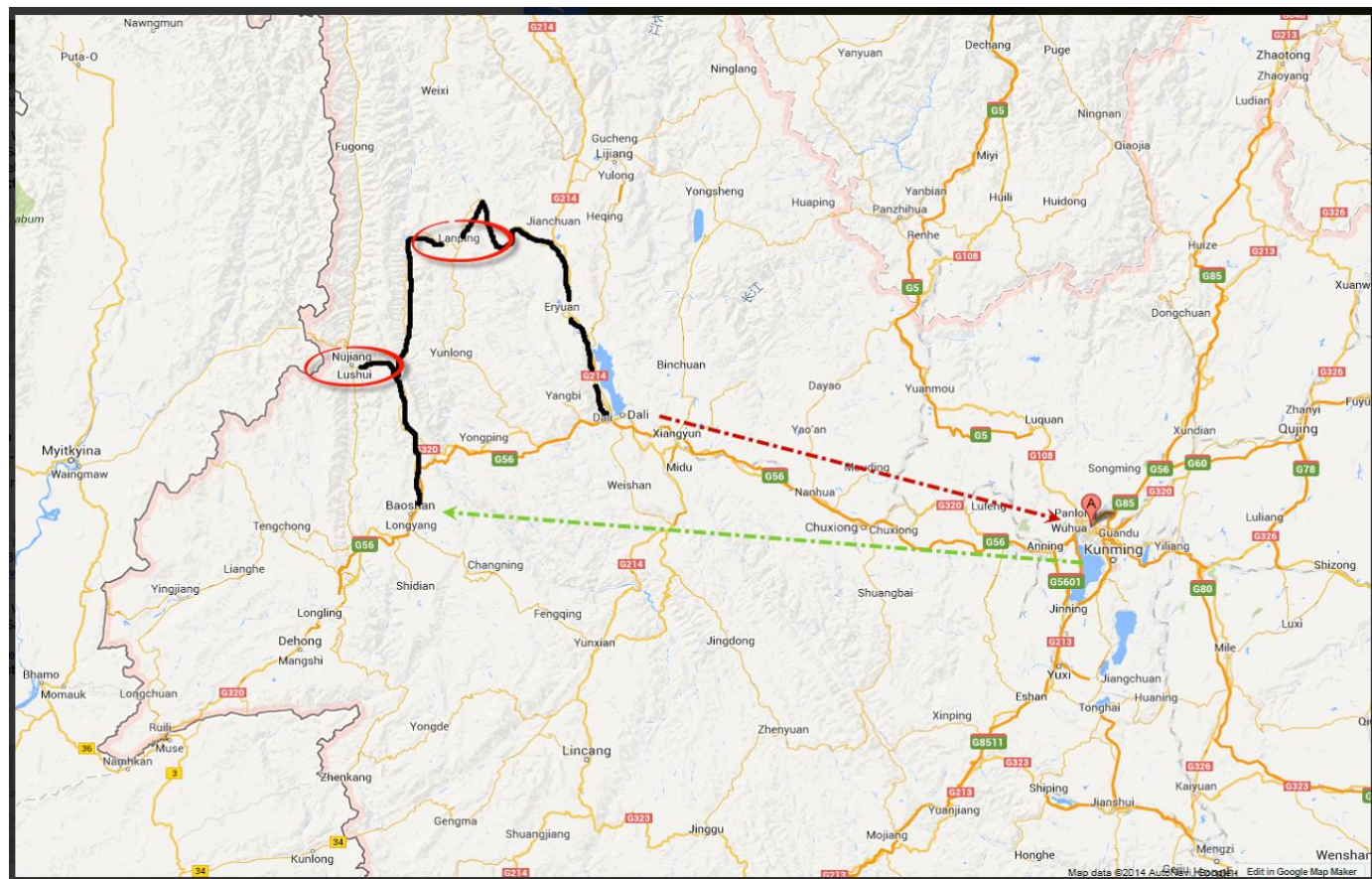
This school was better than the other schools that we visited, their school had floors, and it was a good school. But when we gave out the bags and stationery, we could just see how happy they were. I could just see how grateful they were for just some sweets and stationery. I would be grateful if someone gave me sweets and stationery too, but not just as happy as them. So I learned that I should appreciate everything in life, because some things that mean very little to you, can mean a lot to another person.





NuJiang, Yunnan

April 2014, Age 11





We first took a long and bumpy ride through the high mountains till we reach the school in a small village. When we first got there, we were greeted warmly and my parents, their friends and the government workers sat on benches, in front of them rectangular tables. Students have started to form two tidy groups of boys and girls. The ceremony started and my siblings and I started handing out candy, small jewels for the girls and stickers for the boys. We also gave them stationery and other gifts. At the end, they sang ‘感恩的心’ a Chinese song to express their gratefulness. After, we ate a delicious lunch they provided for us and also talked with the kids in their dorms. It was a fabulous experience to see the new school and also all the children.

The journey to this school was 4 hours long, though it was worth the hardship. I was really amazing to see how grateful the children were when we gave them the small presents. They were very polite and said thank you in a very warm way whenever we gave them the presents. When we visited their small dorms while they were supposed to take naps and we had a friendly conversation. I was really impressed by the school and also how the children acted with such a happy attitude. Mostly all the student and teachers were not from that village. They came from other villages to stay at that school and learn. After 10 days of learning, the students would go back home for 4 days. The farthest student home was a few kilometers away! This school taught me to appreciate what I have and to have a happy attitude even when times are hard.



"Li Zhi" Partners Projects for Grace Charity				(13/8/2014)		
1st project - School in Bijie (畢節市) Guizhou						
Date	Receipt no.	In name of	Donation Amount	Purpose/Name of School in 貴州	Donation paid/disbursed	Remark
5/26/2008	7,051	Mr. Warren Peter How	78,000	勵志塘丰小學	150,000	Completed and paid
6/20/2008	7,196	Mr. Warren Howe	70,000	勵志塘丰小學		
3/23/2009	8,363	Mr. Warren Howe	32,850	勵志塘丰小學 desks, playground additional donation HKD30,000. (HKD850 is the gifts to students in the opening ceremony)	30,000	Completed and paid.
			180,850		180,000	
Total cost	HKD607,848 (CNY533,200)	Govt Paid	HKD427,848 (CNY375,300)	We paid	HKD180,000	
2nd project - School in Qingqang (慶陽市正寧縣) Gansu 甘肅						
Date	Receipt no.	In name of	Donation Amount	Purpose/Name of School in 甘肅	Donation paid	Remark
5/25/2009	8,630	Mr. Warren Howe	62,000	勵志下溝小學	180,000	
6/12/2009	8,723	Capital Research Co.	62,000	a corporate matching gift from Mr. Warren Howe of "The Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation"		Completed and paid
6/12/2009	8,722	Capital Research Co.	58,458	rebuild educational facilities in the poor and remote regions of China. Confirmed with Warren, this fund will be used for 勵志下溝小學		
			182,458		182,458*	
Total Cost	HKD1,053,474 (CNY924,100)	Govt Paid	HKD873,474 (CNY766,205)	We paid	HKD182,458	
3rd project - 2 schools in Nan Rong Prefecture (納雍縣) in Guizhou						
Date	Receipt no.	In name of	Donation Amount	Purpose/Name of School in 貴州	Donation to be paid	Remark
11/6/2009	9,723	Mr. Adam Lau	90,000	勵志大坡小學 6-classroom Da Po Primary School - sponsored amount HKD170,000 (Investment CNY584,000); 勵志坪山小學 12-classroom Peng Shan Primary School - sponsored amount HKD280,000 (Investment CNY1,000,000) (Totalling HKD450,000) PROJECT TERMINATED	HKD250,000. Amount transferred to 4th project.	1st instalment (HKD135,000) have been paid after the founding ceremony in December 09. However, the project had been terminated as the local government cannot start to build the school.
11/6/2009	9,724	Mr. 馮裕偉	90,000			
11/6/2009	9,725	Mr. Warren Howe	90,000			
11/6/2009	9,726	Mr. Vincent Gao	90,000			
11/6/2209	9,727	Mr. 蔣學源	90,000			
Total Cost	terminated	Govt Paid	terminated	We paid	(Refund)	
	terminated	Rate @ 1.14	terminated			
4th project - 2 schools in Lin Shan Prefecture (臨山縣) in Yunnan						
Date	Receipt no.	In name of	Donation Amount	Purpose/Name of School in 雲南	Donation to be paid	Remark
4/14/2010	9,994	Mr. Adam Lau	125,000			
4/14/2010	9,995	Mr. 馮裕偉	125,000	勵志新寨小學教學樓 10-classroom San Chai Primary School - sponsored amount HKD250,000 (Investment CNY1,239,000);	HKD500,000	2 School projects completed. 1st instalment (HKD150,000) paid. Balance will be remitted in
4/14/2010	9,996	Mr. Warren Howe	125,000	勵志車白泥小學教學樓 12-classroom Peng Shan Primary School - sponsored amount HKD250,000 (Investment CNY1,198,000)		



This school wasn't as far up the mountains like the other one, though it was still in a village. When we first got there, these family members including the elderly and babies were waiting for us to join the ceremony at school. I was touched by this and gave candies to the little kids. When we first got there, the students were sitting down on one side and other family members and teachers on the other. Then the ceremony began. The principal said some information about us and a small student came to say a thank-you speech to us. At the same time, we gave different gifts to the kids. At the end, there were a special performance and some students also sang '感恩的心'. It was a great experience.

Even though I felt the kids at this school didn't show it as much, I knew that they were grateful in their hearts. The way that the young students helped clean-up after the ceremony really impressed me. No one asked them to help, but they did it without any command. Their beds were in the same room as their classrooms and they learned there every day. I really wondered how it was to live a life like that. I knew it would be hard and they would endure difficulties, though I would never experience their life and understand it really well. All in all, I am really lucky to have this kind of life, to live in this kind of environment, to have this kind of family. I could have been a kid like them, going to school in a small village in the mountains. I am really grateful for what I have.



慈恩基金會有限公司
Grace Charity Foundation Ltd.

香港九龍新蒲崗彌敦道499號德士古大廈1字C座 電郵: grace789@gmail.com
電話: 2321 1999 傳真: 2321 1886 網址: www.gracecharity.org

No. 14929

收 OFFICIAL RECEIPT 據

日期
Date: 5/5/2014

品收到 Received from Evelyn Howe (侯靜) & her classmate

港幣 the sum of H.K. Dollars Three Hundred Only HK \$300.00

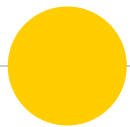
用作捐助 in respect of Donation to Gifts to The Students

現金 Cash	謝謝您的支持! Thank you for your caring support! 捐款全部用於開支開支用途, 慈恩不會扣除任何費用。 本會為香港特別行政區認可之合法慈善機構, 其捐款獲稅務局批准免稅, 捐款5000或以上可獲加減稅款 (稅務編號 916177)	For and on behalf of 慈恩基金會有限公司 Grace Charity Foundation Ltd.  <u>Kenneth Tang</u> Authorized Signature
支票 CK No. <u>✓</u>		
銀行 Bank		

收妥後作實

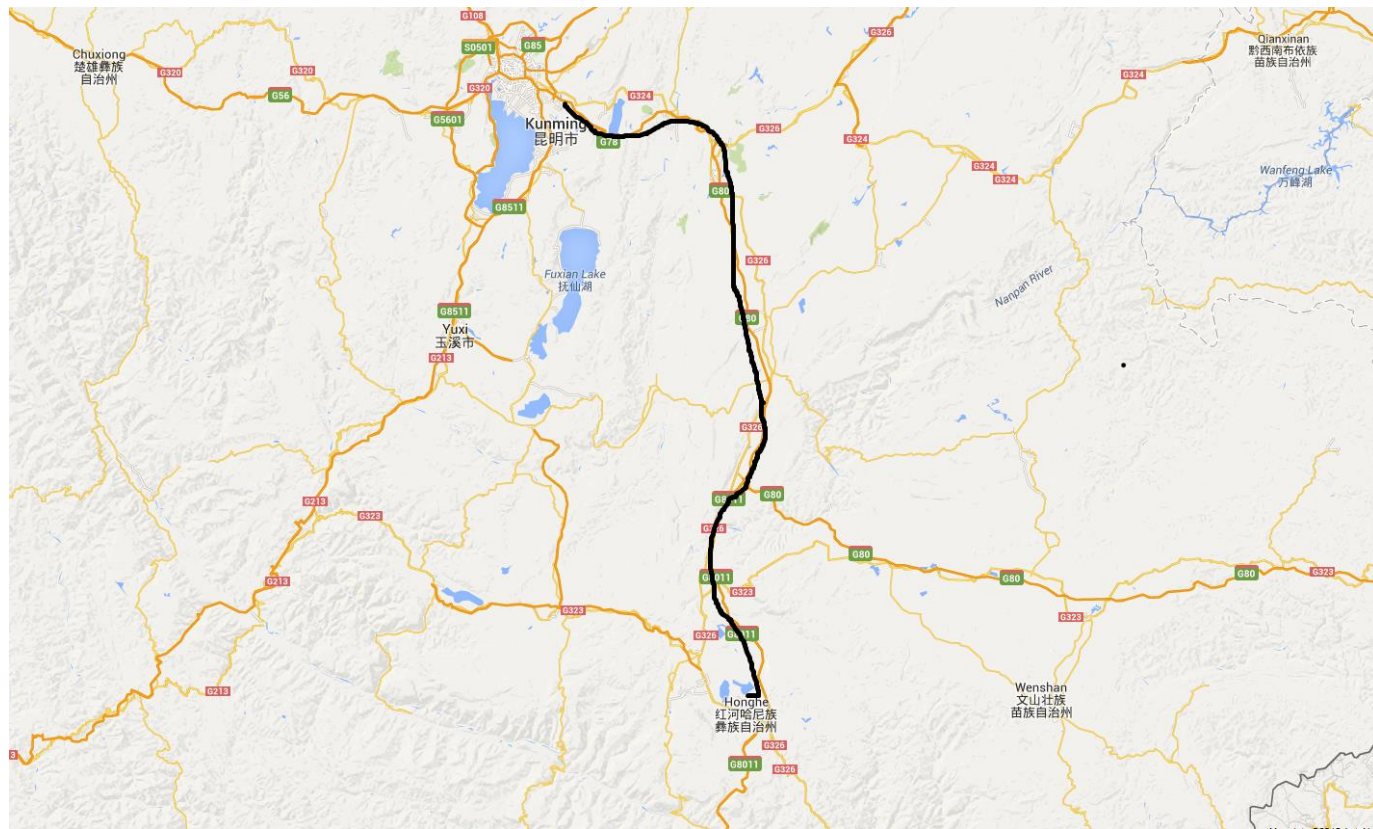
The money I donated





Honghe, Yunnan

April 2015, Age 12





After 2 hours of a bumpy ride, we finally arrived at the school. Children and teachers lined up at the door, probably waiting for us for an hour already, and happily greeted us. The school was relatively big, with dorms, classrooms and a kitchen. My family, friends and I sat at a table with the kids in front of us in rows. It was very hot that day, and even though the students had to stand in the sun for about 1 hour, none of the children complained. Later the children in the front row tied a red handkerchief to our necks, and the school's principal and teachers made a speech. I also made a speech (which I will show on later.) We later gave them candies, and I made friends with the some students. After that, we toured the school and the students ate lunch and we left.

The students there were extremely friendly. Whenever I waved or said hi, they would always say hi back or wave back at me. I feel like even though they have so little, they can still be so happy, and that made my heart warm. I feel that they are genuinely good kids, and I'm really happy that more of them can get better learning opportunities, and I hope they will use these opportunities wisely. Also, Since we donated money to build more dorms, more students can stay at the school, which will give more opportunities and make it easier for more kids to learn.



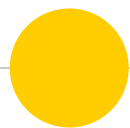


新街鎮中巧小學

This school was in a village that was relatively large, so we had to walk through the village to get to the school. It was very interesting to see the student's lifestyle and their environment. When we got to the school, the kids were already standing in rows, and there were about 200 students. We sat down at the panel, and gave out our speeches. The students were very polite, after every speech they would always clap. But they were also a bit shy, as whenever I made eye contact with them, they would hide behind the student in front of them, not wanting to be seen. After that we handed the students sweets and snacks, and we toured the school. Since this school had more students, it was bigger, with more classrooms and a larger play area.

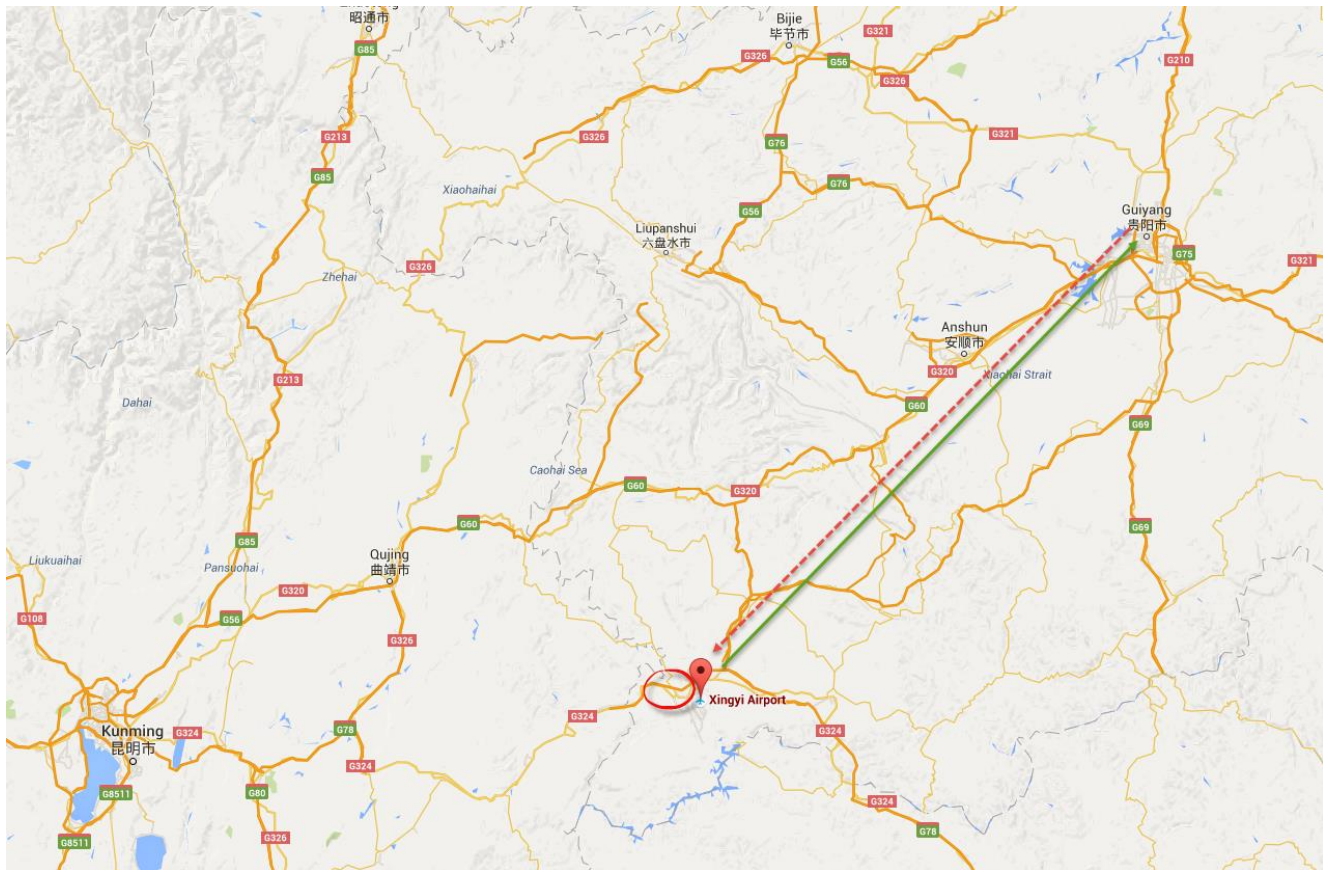
I thought it was really cool to be able to go through the student's village. There were wild animals roaming everywhere, and their houses were made out of stone and mud. It was an entirely different atmosphere and environment from that I have grown up in. It's amazing to see how we live are only hours of travel away, but our lifestyles are totally different. These students seemed really happy, even though they did not have most things that people living in first world countries would have, but they are still contented with what they have.





Xingyi, Guizhou

March 2016, Age 13





After a short car ride, my family and I arrived at the school. As I walked into the school gates, I saw young children running around and parents trying to calm them down. They looked at us in awe as we approached, but also in admiration. The school had a bookshelf stacked with books which they called their library and a playground which only had two basketball hoops. It also had 3 school buildings, one of which were built with the money we donated. The children and parents stood in lines as the principal and my dad's friends said their speeches. My siblings and I gave candy and stickers to the children, and at one point I heard a parent whisper: "Look at her!" Another one replied: "Of course, she grew up in a different environment." This comment surprised me, but I knew it was true. The children were very thankful for their new presents and couldn't stop smiling. Later, we took lots of pictures with the parents and the students, and also ripped off the red cloth which covered the plate that stated my dad had donated to this school. We also gave the children new sports equipment and stationery.

This school is a primary school and it has 800 students. With the new building, they will be able to enroll 1000 students in the coming year! I think that is pretty amazing and I'm very happy that other children will also have the opportunity to receive education. I know that education can make a big impact on one's life and it makes me terribly happy to see these children get a greater education with better resources. It was also weird to see the children and parents treat us differently, like we live in different worlds, which to some extent is true. This experience allowed me to further appreciate my life.



*This year not only did we visit a school, but we also visited students. Grace Charity had a program which they give financial aid to bright students who can't afford to go to university. The students who are first recommended by their schools and if they get into a university the charity will use \$40,000 RMB to pay the student's university fees. We went to the student's house to see if they truly needed financial aid.



叶有权

叶有权 is a 17 year old boy who lives with his aunt and uncle. His dad died while working in a mine and his mother ran away, leaving him and his elder brother. He currently boards at the school he is studying in.

What: 叶有权 lived in the mountains and it took an hour and a half to get there. Since his parents are no longer with him, he shares a house with his elder brother, which they stay in when he comes back from boarding school. Inside his house there is a small living room which is smaller than 100 square ft, with a ratty sofa, a small fridge and a tv. The walls are made out of brick and the floor is dusty and dirty. He has a bedroom which he shares with his brother. Inside there are two beds and the only source of light is from a hanging light bulb. The pillow and cotton blankets are old and tatty. (The reason why 叶有权 has a tv and a fridge is because when his father was still alive they could afford these things but now that he is no longer providing for 叶有权, they cannot afford many things.)

Seeing this student's housing environment and hearing his background story really allowed me to further appreciate how lucky I am. I am so lucky to have a family that loves me and cares for me and that I have a house which is very comfortable to live in. Not only that, but this student inspires me to be a better student. Although his parents have not been with him to mentor him, this student is still on the top students in his school. His persistence and endurance inspire me, and I am so happy that Grace Charity can give him an opportunity to continue studying.



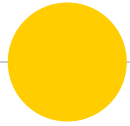


王必凤

王必凤's house is near the mountains and took more than an hour and a half to get there. We entered the gate and inside there were two small brick houses, chicken pan, a small piece of ground to grow vegetables and a open space. One of the houses is where 王必凤 and her grandparents live and the other is where they keep their cows. They also breed chickens which roam around the house and two very fierce dogs. In their house there is a cooking room with pots and pans and a very old and dirty sink. To one side there are piles of white bags which are full of peanuts that they grow and sell to make money. They also have a small living room where they pray and rest. It is full of random things that make it very hard to travel in and out of. They also have a bedroom about 80 square ft and has two beds. The beds are covered by cloths and the blanket and pillow are very dirty and tatty. Hanging from the bedroom ceiling were pieces of meat, which are air dried so they can eat one whole piece throughout a year.

Feelings: This student and her family depend a lot on their animals and farming to make extra money. For them it is natural to have chickens roaming around in their house, but it is certainly not normal for me. This shows me how different my lifestyle is compared to them and once again shows me how lucky I am. Something that I found strange was how there was meat hanging from their bedroom ceiling. In my household we always put meat in the fridge and I eat meat nearly everyday. However this student and her family treasure meat and only get to finish one piece to eat for a year. This again reminds me to be thankful of my surroundings and lifestyle as mine is very different to many others.

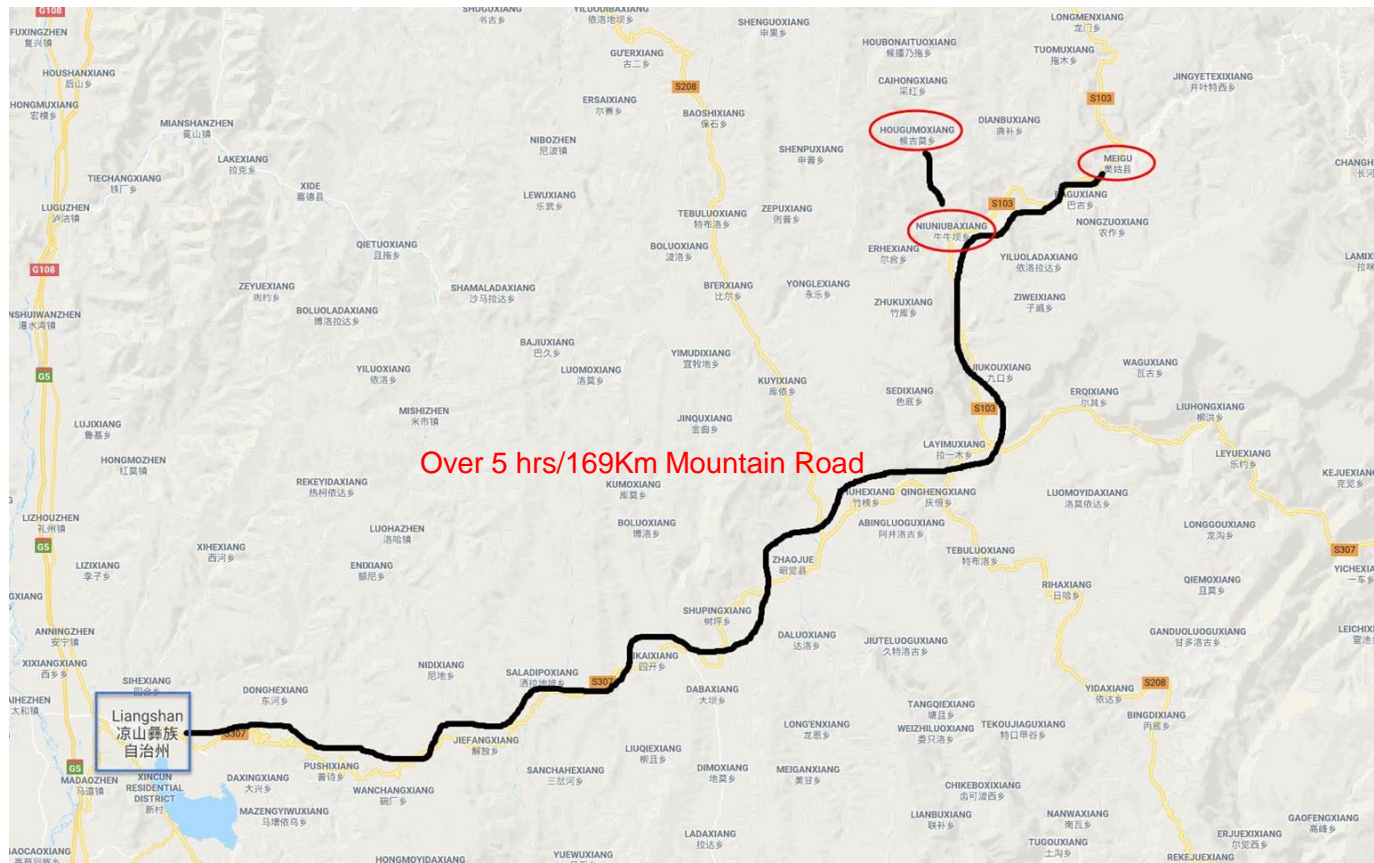




Meigu, Sichuan

March 2018, Age 15

Video: <https://youtu.be/uT0x59PcqEU>





牛牛壩學校

After 5 hours of driving from the city of Xichang, we made it to 牛牛壩學校 the main primary school of Meigu village. My parents donated money to build new classrooms as many students from rural areas were relocating to the villages, and therefore new classrooms and teaching resources were in demand. Firstly, we visited two classes, one with 10-12 year olds and another with 13-15 year olds. Each classroom has around 50 students from different grades. The younger class dressed up in their traditional clothing to showcase their unique culture and sang traditional songs. Secondly, we gave the students small gifts such as candy, stickers and every single one of them said thank you with a sincere smile. Thirdly, the students gave us a traditional headpiece as a gift and helped us put it on. I felt very touched by their gift and honored to be able to wear a piece of clothing from their culture. We then played some games with the students, including “octopus”, “rock, paper, scissors splits”. they even taught us a new game which is called “媽鷹抓雞仔”. Afterwards, my family and I visited some of the dorm rooms, which house 8 students each and the construction site for the new classrooms we helped to fund.

In such a short span of time, I had made many new friends and we shared valuable memories. All the children that I met at 牛牛壩學校 were extremely friendly and kind. They were polite when we gave them sweets, always enthusiastic and excited to play games. They treated me with hospitality - holding my hand and bringing me everywhere, like we have known each other for years before this. All these children were so full of life, had a passion for learning and were very well behaved. It really showed me that one didn't need money or a lot of materialistic things to be happy. Although these children came from poor backgrounds they were extremely happy and joyous. I hope our visit and small presents gave them immense joy and that they will continue to work hard and have a love for learning. Hopefully the classrooms which my family funded to build can help more children to have learning opportunities and chances to reach larger goals in their lives. Currently, 牛牛壩學校 teaches 1,200 students, after the new classrooms are built, 500 new students will have the opportunity to get an education. I can't wait to visit these children again next year and make even more friends.





Other Schools

During this trip, we visited 4 more schools, which all had an irrigation problem. In the village, many schools often had a lack of water or no water at all due to the fact water is scarce and the water system in the village is extremely poor.

This is evidently a large problem. In one middle school, which has around 2000 students, there is no water supply going to the school. Therefore none of the students wash their hands after going to the bathroom and many of the boarding students do not shower for weeks at a time. To try and combat this problem, the school has hired a truck to deliver water everyday, however it is an expensive service and it does not deliver enough water to serve hundreds of students.

In such a short span of time, I had made many new friends and although our time together was short, we shared valuable memories that I will remember for a long time to come. One thing that surprised me was how full of life, how happy, excited and grateful these young children were, even when they were living in poor conditions with little resources or opportunities. It reminded me that one does not need money to be contented and that I should be grateful for all the opportunities that I have and use them to the best of my ability. I hope that we will get to visit these students again soon, but most importantly will continue to work hard and have a love for learning.

